

Sudden and Great Storms

From: Overcoming the Overwhelming:
A 40-Day Journey toward Rediscovering Faith in God

Taken from Day 22: Sudden and Great Storm

by C. D. Hildebrand

Many overwhelming situations we face are longterm—something with which we’ve struggled for months and maybe even years. Thankfully, as we put our faith in Jesus, things gradually begin to improve. We start to relax and breathe easier thinking the circumstances are finally going to change for the good. Then suddenly, without warning, an unexpected and great storm arises in that area. A check we were expecting to cover certain expenses doesn’t arrive—in fact; it’s not coming at all. A relationship that was on the mend takes an ugly turn, and we feel devastated. We have a setback with our health which we thought was improving. When these types of storms arise, we wonder if we are making any progress at all. We are blinded to the successes we’ve seen by the winds and waves that beset us.

Other times, we are just innocently going about our business with no particular problem at all, and without any warning, we are struck by a storm we hadn’t anticipated. These storms can sometimes be actual, like an earthquake, tornado, fire, or flood, which can alter our futures forever. Other times, the storms are more privately perceived. The doctor calls and is concerned about the results of one of your medical tests, and it’s one of those areas that could threaten not only your health but your life. Your mind begins to race, and your thoughts swirl with unanticipated emotions. Or perhaps your finances, which have always been in control, are put at risk by some whim of the financial market or a betrayal of trust. Others, thinking their marriage to be relatively solid, discover that their spouse has been having an affair, maybe for a very long time—it seems to come out of nowhere.

All of these sudden storms are magnified by their abruptness and importunity. Life is demanding enough—who has extra time and energy to deal with these types of problems? You want the world to slow down so you can have a chance to catch up, but

does it? No, it just keeps turning, seemingly uncaring about the shock you are experiencing.

You might find yourself devastated by the realization that the battle you've been facing is still not over, or if the storm was completely surprising, you might feel numb and unable to process it all fast enough to meet the decisions you have to make.

Sudden storms can be shocking, horrifying, and devastating. They can render us seemingly powerless by their perplexity. At the moment they hit, however, we can tap into a power that is higher than every wind or wave, one that will calm the storm within us and give us clarity to face any situation. We have a choice when the tempest arises. Will we have faith in Him or will we fear?

Matthew 8:23-27

*Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. ²⁴And **suddenly a great tempest arose** on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. ²⁵Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!"*

*²⁶But He said to them, "Why are you **fearful**, O you of little **faith**?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. ²⁷So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"*

Without a doubt, this event spoke to the disciples of Jesus' deity. Indeed, He calmed the winds and the sea, and they obeyed Him. Yet, when we take a closer look, we see a parable to help us when a sudden tempest arises in our lives.

It might seem at first that Jesus was a bit harsh when He asked the disciples, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" However, taking into consideration what they had just witnessed, the question becomes reasonable. Just before this storm, the disciples had seen amazing things. Jesus had given what we call His Sermon on the Mount. What amazing truths had proceeded from His lips! After that, a leper was completely healed, a centurion's servant was healed without Jesus even touching him. Peter's mother-in-law was healed of a fever. Many demon-possessed were set free. He healed "all who were sick."

Multitudes were following Him, so Jesus gave the command to go to the other side. Perhaps they were basking in the glory of all they witnessed. Maybe the boat ride even promised to be an enjoyable break from a very busy season of ministry. There likely wasn't a cloud in the sky about which they were concerned. The waters were calm. Jesus lay down His head and fell asleep in the boat. Maybe a couple others followed His lead as the rest navigated to the other side. Sounds idyllic, doesn't it—you and I, resting together in the boat of life, obeying His command to go to the other side with not a care in the world except maybe to take a nap?

Then “suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea so that the boat was covered with the waves.” Does this sound familiar? You are minding your own business, maybe even in rest mode, pursuing what you believe to be God's calling on your life, and enjoying His many blessings. Maybe you have also just recently witnessed His glorious miracles in your life, or you have been amazed by His great love for you. Then, whack! You are hit by a sudden and great storm. God didn't send it. You did nothing to deserve it. It just happened, and there you are being tossed by the wind and waves, and it looks like you are going under.

Will we freak out and ask God why He is asleep when we need Him most, or will we instead express our trust in Him?

Recently, I had a sudden storm come into my life. When it hit, my world as I knew it began to come undone; my feelings were off kilter. I didn't know how to deal with it at all, but I saw at that moment **I had a choice to believe God or fold in despair.**

I prayed, “God, I don't know how to process this. I don't know how to feel. How do I respond? What do I do?”

Now, it wasn't in words exactly that God immediately answered me, but if I could put it into words what came into my heart, it went something like this, **“It's OK to feel, but don't fear.”** God understood how I felt. He wasn't in any way displeased with me for my immediate emotions. In fact, He was there to help and comfort me. It was perfectly normal for my whole being to respond to what had just happened, but **would I allow the winds and waves to overcome me or would I trust in God?**

Needing immediate encouragement, I printed out Day 9 of this book, the chapter I recommended that my readers bookmark

to read when they might need some good news. With my personal storm raging, I began to preach good news to myself as I gave thanks to Him for His faithfulness.

“Father, I thank You that You are right here with me right now. I am one spirit with You. You see me in all this swirl of feelings that I don’t know how to process. You hear my heart. You know I want to please You by my faith. You care about what I’m experiencing. You know the truth about my love for You, and You know exactly what the truth is about this situation. You are for me in this circumstance, not against me. Nothing is impossible for You, God, and nothing is impossible for me because I believe in You. You will take this awful situation and work it together for my good. You are not only able to help me but You are willing, and You will help me. You will not forsake me at my time of need. You love me, Father. I am Your child. You see the faith I have in You, Lord, and it pleases You.”

Then, I fell asleep and rested in my boat as the storm subsided and His love rested upon me. When I woke, even though the threat of more storms was on the horizon, I felt peace. **I knew deep in my heart that my faith in Him had brought Him joy**, and I sensed that He would give me the strength to continue pleasing Him through it all.

We can speak to the storms that rage in our lives. No, we are not God, but we can speak with His authority. “Wind and waves, I command you in the name of Jesus, to be still.” Sometimes, we are surprised by how quickly the storm subsides. That “person” who suddenly brought us too much drama just calms down. That threat of financial ruin amazingly turns out for our good. The doctor’s report that seemed to threaten our very life turns out to be nothing at all.

Yet even if the storm continues, we can rest in His great love for us. We ride the waves of the storm instead of being pulled under by them. When we do this, He is pleased. He is proud of us as His child simply because we trust in Him. He isn’t expecting us not to feel or to “be brave” or not to respond when more wind and waves arise; rather, He will be there for us when they do, and each time we choose faith over fear, we put a smile on His glorious face because our faith pleases Him.

Baby Joey

When our second daughter, Joella, was born, we knew something was wrong when they didn't bring her in to see me. She was in an incubator gasping for each breath. Before they took her to a bigger hospital for evaluation, they rolled her into my room so I could see her. She was beautiful, and my arms ached to hold her. Her bushy red hair filled my heart with delight. Before she was two days old, the family started calling her Joey. The next hospital decided to fly her to U.C. Davis Medical Center because she needed 100% oxygen.

I knew our church was praying for a miracle. This was so comforting as I was very weak right after my C-section. I only had just enough strength to say aloud, "Satan, you can't have my baby." A short while later, my husband, who was with her, called me, and he said, "Satan can't have our baby." I told him I had just said the same thing. We believed God's Word that the fruit of my womb was blessed (Deut. 28:4).

I could feel the support of the prayers of our church. I knew she would be fine, but it was serious.

The valve between her lungs and heart that closes at birth had remained open.¹ We waited days to see if it would close naturally, but it didn't. We consented to experimental medicine to close it, but it didn't work.

The next step would be surgery.

My understanding of Joella's medical condition was that it had to do with her breathing only. One day while on the phone with a nurse, she said something about her "heart" problem, and I said, "What about her heart? I haven't heard anything about her heart," which resulted in me being put on hold and the nurse immediately retrieving a doctor to explain.

¹ (PDA) is a congenital heart defect wherein the ductus arteriosus fails to close after birth.

It was like a storm in the midst of a storm, but David and I continued to believe that the fruit of my womb was blessed and that Satan could not have our baby. I prayed, "Lord, I don't believe You take babies." Shortly after this, the valve closed.

We asked the doctor about what happened. He told us plainly that the valve did not close because of the medicine, because there were only a limited number of hours it could be effective, and they had long passed. He said there was no explanation for it closing by itself. We said, "Then it was a miracle." He said that it would seem so.

Joella is an adult now with five, count them, five children of her own and perfectly healthy. She is a long-distance runner, too. She loves God with all her heart and knows He saved her life. God was faithful to His Word, and now she lives to serve Him.

Psalm 46:1-5

*God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.*

*²Therefore we will not fear,
Even though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains
be carried into the midst of the sea;*

*³Though its waters roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with its swelling.
Selah*

*⁴There is a river whose streams
shall make glad the city of God,
The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.*

*⁵God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;
God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.*

Psalm 5:11-12

*Let all those who put their trust in You rejoice;
Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend
them;*

*Let those also who love Your name
Be joyful in You.*

*¹²For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; With
favor You will surround them as with a shield.*