

Weathering Storms

“Red sky at night, sailor’s delight.

Red sky in morning, sailor take warning.” (Attributed to CHH)

As far back as I can remember I have been around boats. One of my oldest recollections is going fishing with my dad and his friend in a rented 16 ft outboard powered rowboat in Salem Willows, MA. We would head out to the entrance of Beverly harbor near some of the small island’s or towards Mackerel Cove to fish for flounder or pollock. Once in a while we’d get lucky and catch a stray cod just outside the harbor.

I remember my dad saying more than once, “Red sky in morning, sailor’s take warning.” We would check the sky and it would be clear so we would head out confident of a good day. Later I asked where that saying came from and my parents and grandmother told me my grandfather, Chauncey Henry Hartley a Navy veteran of 31 years and two world wars, would say it when he saw a red sky in the morning. It would not be until many years later that I found its true origin.

Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came to *Him*, tempting *Him and* asking Him to show them a sign from heaven.

But He answered *and* said to them, “When evening has come, you say, ‘*It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.*’

And in the morning, *you say*, ‘Today *it will* storm, for the sky is red and lowering.’ Hypocrites! You know *how* to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot *discern* the signs of the times.

(Matthew 16:1-3)

One of the greatest joys of boating is the peace you feel, especially when you are miles offshore with no land in sight, just cruising possibly catching a glimpse of a breaching Humpback whale or northern dolphin jumping through the wake. You also learn very quickly, especially on the ocean in New England, to be prepared for those sudden squalls that seem to just come out of nowhere.

Serious boaters and captains will always be prepared for those squalls or storms making sure they have the proper equipment on board. We know we are going to run into a storm or squall and having the right equipment and attitude is critical to survival.

As Christians we also know we will be tested. We know we are going to have those squall’s that will seem to pop up out of nowhere. Small tests to try us. Sometimes we will get a storm, a larger test, to see how we are progressing.

God uses these squall's or storms to perfect us. He may use them to get our attention if we have areas that need correction, a sin we haven't dealt with or even something from our past we are still holding on to.

That concerning your former conduct, you put off the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts;
And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind;
And that you put on the new man, which according to God is created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.
(Ephesians 4:22-24).

At sea there is a device called a drogue, or sea anchor. It is deployed when you are in a storm or heavy seas and it tends to slow the forward motion and improve the overall stability of the boat to allow it to better weather the storm and handle the sea. This would be similar to a friend or minister who counsels you when you are trying to weather a personal problem or storm. No matter what your level of understanding is when a storm hits close to home it is sometimes difficult to see what is really going on. They want you to slow down and take the time to contemplate the issues at hand. They should lead you to Bible passages that relate to your particular situation. This can be your drogue, slowing you down and increasing your stability so you may better deal with the storm at hand.

Every once in a while the storms are severe, and the best thing is to deploy the anchor. In ancient times large stones, or rocks, were used as anchors. As Christian's our anchor or rock is the Bible, God's Word to us. Similar to the situation on boats we need to be familiar with all of our survival equipment if we are to successfully weather the storm. We need to read and study our Bibles because within are storms others have faced and how they were able to weather them. We can survive storms, or not. Much of it has to do with our preparation.

For all the things that were written before were written for our instruction, so that through patient endurance and encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.
(Romans 15:4).

Like too many boaters who never test or properly learn how their equipment functions there are too many people who claim to be Christians who never open their Bibles. You cannot survive storms if you don't know your equipment. How comfortable and familiar we are with the equipment will usually determine the outcome. God wants us to survive but we need to secure ourselves to the rock, the anchor, God's Holy Word.

The only way we can grasp God's plan is to read and study His Word. Again, within are the instructions on how so many brethren weathered their storms. It is all there to help us on our journey. The apostle's actually weathered storms and saw Jesus calm the seas.

And when He entered into the ship, His disciples followed Him.
Now a great tempest suddenly arose in the sea, so great that the ship was being covered by the waves; but He was sleeping.
And His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing."
And He said to them, "Why are you afraid, O *you* of little faith?" Then He arose *and* rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.
But the men were amazed, saying, "What kind *of Man* is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"
(Matthew 8:23-27, see also Mark 4:37-39)

Jesus showed them that through Him seas could be calmed, storms would be quelled. His word rebuked the wind and the sea, and it was calmed. We can receive this understanding in dealing with storms if we stay focused on God and His Word. Our knowledge of the strength of His Word will give us confidence, calm our storms and light our way if we have fellowship with Him.

And this is the message that we have heard from Him and are declaring to you: that God *is* light, and there is no darkness at all in Him.
If we proclaim that we have fellowship with Him, but we are walking in the darkness, we are lying to ourselves, and we are not practicing the Truth.
However, if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, *then* we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us from all sin.
(1 John 1:5-7).

God wants us to survive these storms and grow in grace and knowledge. Jesus was sent to us to save us from our sins so that we may have eternal life with Him.

So that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life.
For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life.
For God sent not His Son into the world that He might judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.
(John 3:15-17)

Storms are going to increase not only for each of us individually but collectively as a nation, culture and a fellowship. The secular humanists now have the opportunity to push their godless agenda on society. As we follow the news here and abroad we

can see the same patterns emerging. Violence and riots are increasing, the Paris Accords are setting a radical green agenda to “protect” the environment, the promotion and integration of a perverse sexual curriculum in primary education which includes teaching children they may determine their own sexual identity. A godless, satanic era is fast approaching. We have to be diligent in our Bible study, prayer and meditation on God’s Word. The anchor to the true believer is God’s Word.

We need to be strong in the Lord and proficient in His word so we may be well equipped to help others. Each of us has received this holy calling and we have accepted it through our baptism.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of sound mindedness.

Therefore, you should not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but jointly suffer with *me for the sake of* the gospel, according to *the* power of God,

Who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling—not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which *was* given us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time;

(2 Timothy 1:7-9).

It is more important now that we stay firm in our convictions, stay rooted in God’s Word, realizing we have the one who chose us before the ages of time in our corner supporting us and guiding us. He is true and faithful. I think the apostle Paul stated it very well in Hebrews 10:

Let us approach *God* with a true heart, with full conviction of faith, our hearts having been purified from a wicked conscience, and our bodies having been washed with pure water.

Let us hold fast without wavering *to* the hope *that* we profess, for He Who promised *is* faithful;

And let us be concerned about one another, and *be* stirring up *one another* unto love and good works;

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, even as some *are* accustomed to do; but rather, encouraging *one another*, and all *the* more as you see the day drawing near.

(Hebrews 10:22-25)

As long as we stay true to God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and support one another we can and will weather any coming storms.