

11. PEACE AFTER THE STORM

*Sometimes there's a calm before the
storm, but also a peace after it.*

#NCSAMENTALHEALTHDEVOTIONS

PEACE AFTER THE STORM

Timothy 3:1: "But mark this, there will be terrible times in the last days."

Are you familiar with the saying: 'There is a calm before the storm'? On the other hand, have you ever noticed in nature how peaceful and quiet everything is after a storm? After the storm, people go out and walk around and animals are scavenging. Usually there is this quietness, a stillness about the world after a terrible storm.

I believe there is a great storm coming, a storm that this world has never faced before. How will we prepare for the storm? How are we preparing right now for this crisis that will soon overtake the world? The world as we knew it, has already changed drastically in the last few weeks and months and we were unprepared for it. When a crisis hits and fear grips our hearts, how will we respond? How are we responding right now? COVID-19 is a crisis that we are facing right now and possibly a sign of the last days that are coming closer, although I do not quite think it is the end yet.

Although we do face crises in our personal lives and work everyday, this too is also not the end. The Bible speaks about the end and about a terrible crisis that will soon come upon this world. The Bible says there will be terrible times in the last days. COVID-19 is part of these terrible times of the last days. There could possibly be worse coming to our world, but we need not fear because God is our God. He is our refuge, our ever-present help in time of trouble.

THERE IS A SAYING: "THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM". HOWEVER HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED IN NATURE HOW PEACEFUL AND QUIET EVERYTHING IS AFTER A STORM?

I've often wondered what exactly people mean when they say: "There is a calm before the storm." When they use the expression, do they actually say: "Don't get too comfortable even when things are going well, because there is a storm coming?" In other words, we are in the calm of the storm now, but we need to use the time to prepare for the coming storm to make sure that we will be ready when the storm arrives.

When I was a small child probably around the age of eight, our family visited my uncle (actually only a family friend) on his farm. I remember it always was a very peaceful time for our family, being in nature among the chickens and the goats, the cows and all the beautiful streams and hills and the luscious greenery. It really gave us a calmness within our hearts. The farmer's wife used to prepare very nice meals and freshly baked breads and butter. It was so nice and quiet and we enjoyed getting away from the hustle and bustle of city life. A real calm time for our family to spend with theirs.

One evening while we were sitting around the kitchen table as we usually did, talking, relaxing and laughing, a massive hail storm hit the area. The hail was so huge, probably the size of golf balls (or even bigger). I do not really recall but what I do remember is that the farm was left in devastation. When the hail started falling, my uncle and my dad immediately jumped to their feet and rushed outside, obviously to try and prepare and try to save what could be saved. Some of the animals were out in the field and had to be brought in under roof. The cars were outside and had to be covered with sails. The workers, in their small tin homes, had to come into the house because their shelters had been destroyed completely by the wind and the storm. I remember the dogs running into the house for protection.

**BECAREFUL OF THE CALM, IT USUALLY
PRECEDES THE STORM. USE THE CALM
AS A TIME TO PREPARE FOR POSSIBLE
UPCOMING STORMS.**

Even some chickens came in through the back door. It was very loud and very confusing and very scary.

I wondered to myself, if my uncle and us knew that such a storm was coming, how much preparation would have been done in order to secure the farm, in order to secure livestock, in order to secure their belongings on the property. It would have been a bit less scary if we knew it was coming, but because it caught us unaware, we were afraid. If we had known it was coming, we would have been better prepared. If the world had known that COVID-19 was coming, we probably would have been better prepared also.

The Bible tells us that there is a storm coming. We do not need to be caught unprepared. The Bible is warning us. There are many prophecies in the Bible that spell out exactly what the storm is going to entail, what the signs of the storm are and what we can do in order to prepare ourselves. God doesn't want us to be caught by surprise. He gives us the signs and we definitely need the information as the time increases for the world to end. In the book of Matthew in the Bible, Jesus shares with us some of the signs which indicate that the end is nearing. He warns us of famines, diseases, pestilences, nature acting out, people losing their natural love for one another, people becoming more lovers of pleasure than lovers of God. We see all these things happening around us. God is warning us that the crisis is soon about to hit the world. There is going to be a great storm that will hit us, before God can give us peace.

We may see this pandemic that we are in right now as a crisis, but it is part of the calm before the great and terrible storm. So much worse could be coming and we need to be prepared.

**THE BIBLE TELLS US THAT THERE
IS A STORM COMING. WE DO NOT
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WARNING US.**

The preparation that needs to take place for God's people today is not so much a physical preparation. The Bible warns us against trying to prepare physically for that which is about to hit the world. It says that we should not prepare what we are going to say when people ask us about our faith; we should not store up food; we should not prepare where we are going to live or what we are going to eat. God says He will take care of these things. The preparation that needs to take place now is a spiritual preparation.

There is a group in South Africa whom I am sure you're aware of. They are bent on preparing for a civil war in South Africa. Out of curiosity, I went to one of their meetings. They literally had everything prepared if ever a civil war was to break out within the confines of the borders of South Africa. They told the people to have little backpacks prepared with non-perishable food, medical supplies and just the basic necessities that you need to have so that if something was to happen, you could grab your bag and run. Their escape routes were already planned and they mapped it out for those who attended the meetings. Places of refuge were identified in isolated areas where nobody knew where they were. All of this, I believed in my heart of hearts, would end up to prove to be futile preparations.

The truth of the matter is that we can never truly prepare for the future because we do not know how it is going to play out. We do not know how it is going to happen or what is going to happen. **Only God knows.** As Christians we should learn to trust Him, to rely on Him that He will preserve our lives and also fully supply our needs according to His riches in glory. We do not need to go for self-defence classes or fighting classes in order to preserve our own lives. God will take care of our physical lives. We do not need to try and save ourselves.

**WE SHOULD LEARN TO TRUST GOD,
TO RELY ON HIM, HE WILL
PRESERVE YOUR LIFE AND ALSO
FULLY SUPPLY YOUR NEEDS.**

Deuteronomy 31:8 says: *"The Lord Himself will go before you and will be with you; He will never leave you, nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."* The true preparation that we have to take part in during this time, during the calm before the storm, is a spiritual preparation. The biggest difficulty we are going to face as the end approaches, is whether we are confident enough to trust God, come hell or high water. In other words, do we practise our trust in God in the small storms of life now, so that when the bigger storms come, we will have no doubt. When things start going wrong, will we cling to God, our refuge, the One who has promised that He has gone ahead of us because He knows the future? He assured us that He knows exactly how these things are going to play out. Will we trust the One who has promised that He will never leave us, nor forsake us?

We do not need to be afraid. The only preparation that we have to do right now, is to learn to trust and to obey God, so that when the time comes, we will continue to trust and obey Him and not give up on Him. Will our faith and relationship be so secure in God that we will be able to stand strong? Will our faith be so secure to emotionally and cognitively trust God that He will take care of our physical needs during that time? *"God will supply all our needs according to His riches in glory"*, the Bible says.

How do we face this crisis spiritually? How do we prepare for the storm spiritually during this time of calm? During this time of the lockdown many of us are fortunate to have time off and to still receive a salary. We have time to spend in the Word of God, to pray more, to strengthen our relationship with God. The thing about the calm is that we are not in so much of a crisis, but we must still spend time on learning to trust Him in the small things of life, so that we can trust Him in the bigger things.

**"THE LORD HIMSELF WILL GO BEFORE
YOU AND WILL BE WITH YOU; HE WILL
NEVER LEAVE YOU, NOR FORSAKE YOU.
DO NOT BE AFRAID; DO NOT BE
DISCOURAGED."**

If you have some time now, I'd like to recommend that you read 2 Chronicles chapter 17 to chapter 20. I'd like to highlight some principles on how we can prepare spiritually to face the real battle that is coming, by using the story of King Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was the fourth king of Judah. He also had a period of calm in his reign as king. As a matter of fact, God blessed him because he followed in God's ways. God gave him a time of peace, but there was also a time when King Jehoshaphat was faced by war. People who he used to be at peace with, came and they attacked him. God was with him during the storm he had faced. God was with him during the battle he had to go through because he had sufficiently prepared during the calm.

2 Chronicles 17:16 tells us that he was a highly spiritual man, that he was deeply committed to the ways of the Lord. Are we also deeply committed to the ways of the Lord today? The Bible also tells us that he was so deeply committed to the ways of the Lord that, while his kingdom was at peace, he sent out officials and priests throughout the land to teach the people the laws of God. How wonderful is that! He sent officials out with copies of the law of God to go and convert those who were not yet converted to the law of God. They were telling people to prepare spiritually and to follow the ways of God.

2 Chronicles 20:30 says that his kingdom enjoyed peace all around and that God blessed his reign because of his loyalty to Him. This peace gave him a time of calm during which he himself, as well as the people of his kingdom, could prepare for what was to come, so that they could trust God fully when the storms of life arose. Jehoshaphat used this time very wisely spiritually, learning to go to God and to trust Him in all things.

**TIMES OF PEACE SHOULD BE USED
TO GROW SPIRITUALLY AND
TEACH OTHERS OF THE WAYS OF
THE LORD WHILE THERE IS TIME.**

As a matter of fact, whenever he was faced with a difficult decision to make, he always went to God in prayer first, enquiring of God what he needed to do.

Unfortunately, the storm did come during his reign. In 2 Chronicles 20:1 and 2 we read: *"Aftersometime, the Moabites and the Ammonites and some of the Meunites came to make war against Jehoshaphat. Some men came and told Jehoshaphat that a vast army was coming against him from Edom."*As I mentioned before, we are also going to face a crisis, a crisis that is much worse. A vast army that will come against us. This army is not necessarily a physical army. It is Satan's army that will intensify its attacks on our lives, to bring more crises into our lives in order to get us to not trust God anymore. The attacks can be in the form of persecution, or maybe people who lived in peace with us, might come against us, even family members. Matthew 10:21 says that there will come a time when *"... brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death,"*

We have no idea, apart from what God has told us, what this world is going to face soon, but we need not fear because God is giving us a time of calm now to prepare, not physically, but emotionally and spiritually, to be strong so that we know when difficult times come, we are safe in Christ, in His hands. There is a storm that is brewing. We can already see the signs all around us.

When war came to the doorstep of King Jehoshaphat, he reacted in specific ways.

**PHYSICAL OR SPIRITUAL ATTACKS
MAY COME FROM THE PERSONS
YOU LEAST EXPECT IT, PERSONS
YOU HAVE LIVED IN PEACE WITH
MAY TURN ON YOU.**

I believe that we can learn from his reactions:

- The first step King Jehoshaphat took when he heard about the vast army that was approaching, was to **enquire of the Lord**. Jehoshaphat was terrified and he begged the Lord for guidance. He called the land and himself to a period of fasting. He prayed before the people of the land, asking God to help him. He acknowledged his dependence upon the Lord God and said: *"We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon You Lord"* (2 Chronicles 20:12b). He begged God for help, he fasted, he prayed and he acknowledged his dependence upon the Lord. During this time we can also prepare to face this vast army, this storm that is coming towards us. This is the time where we can ask God for help, even though we might be afraid. This is the time to fast, to pray and to say: "Lord we cannot help ourselves. We are not going to be able to go through the storm. Please be our strength and our shield and our fortress."
- God came with an answer to him and Jehoshaphat said to the people: *"Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army that comes against you. For the battle is not yours, but God's. You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance that the LORD will give you. Go out, face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you. Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa"* (2 Chronicles 20:15-20). The second part of facing the storm, is to **obey** God's instructions during the crisis. Firstly God told Jehoshaphat not to be afraid; secondly that the battle was not his; thirdly to go out and take their positions. Go out and face the army, but stand and see how God will deliver you. You will not have to fight this battle, but only obey God.

WHEN EXPERIENCING OUTSIDE
ATTACKS OUR FIRST MOVE
SHOULD BE TO ENQUIRE OF THE
LORD THROUGH PRAYER WHAT TO
DO.

- Do not be afraid, go and stand against the enemy in God's strength and God will deliver you. I believe that, as the crisis approaches, we can follow the very same example of Jehoshaphat in trusting God that He will fight the battle for us. We do not need to be afraid, but we need to stand up and say: "Lord, we are obeying you." The only preparation we need to make is to obey and to trust God that He will take care of the crisis which lies ahead.
- The interesting thing about the response of Jehoshaphat after God gave him this promise, is what we find in the Bible. It tells us that: "*Jehoshaphat and the entire Israel bowed down, face to the ground and **worshipped** God*" (2 Chronicles 20:18). During the times of crises when things start to change all around us, we should not neglect to worship God, to pray and to spend time in God's Word.
- We should also learn to **believe** God's promises, believe what He has said through His Word, believe what He has said through His prophets. Jehoshaphat called the people to task and said to them: "*Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld [in other words you will survive if you have faith in God], also have faith in His prophets and you will be successful*" (2 Chronicles 20:20b). As the time of the storm approaches, we too need to claim the promises of God everyday. Recite them in your mind, call them to your remembrance, believe what the prophets of God said and what they have written, so that you can be ready. We will make it through when we have the faith in God we are called to have.

**YOU SHOULD CLAIM GODS
PROMISES AS WE FIND
YOURSELVES FACING OUTWARD
ATTACKS, AND CONTINUE TO
STEADFASTLY WORSHIP HIM.**

- We should also show by our actions that we have faith in God. The Bible tells us that faith without works, is dead. King Jehoshaphat understood this principle. In 2 Chronicles 20:21, the Bible tells us that Jehoshaphat did something interesting as they went out to face the vast armies. It says: *"The king appointed singers to go ahead of the army."* He trusted God's promise, he went out in faith and his actions showed that. He knew he was not going to fight, therefore he put the singers, the song writers, the carolists in front of the army because they were not army men, they were not fighters. He showed God by faith that he was not going to rely on his own strength. We also need to show God through our actions that we rely on Him completely.
- As the singers started singing and playing their instruments, the armies of Moab, Amnon and Mount Seir which they were approaching, were so confused that they started fighting against each other and killing one another. God truly **plundered** the enemies in front of King Jehoshaphat's army.
- 2 Chronicles 20:25 and 30 tell us of the **reward** they received when they arrived on the battlefield where they were supposed to meet the storm – the battle was already completed and only a bunch of dead bodies and plunder were left behind. The plunder was so vast that they carried it away for days. It says: *"They carried away the plunder for three days, and with joyful singing in their hearts, they returned to Jerusalem and God gave them rest on every side."*
- After this event, God gave them a peace that lasted until the end of the reign of King Jehoshaphat.

SHOW BY YOUR ACTIONS THAT
YOU HAVE FAITH IN GODS PLAN,
EVEN WHEN A GOOD OUTCOME
SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE TRUST HIS
GUIDANCE.

If we as Christians follow the steps King Jehoshaphat followed, that is if we **enquire** of the Lord when we face a crisis; if we **obey** Him; if we continue **worshipping** Him; if we show Him by our **deeds** that we trust Him, God will go ahead of us and destroy the storm we are going to face. He will **annihilate** it, He will keep us safe and not only that, He promises that after the storm there will be an **eternal peace** for us when we go to heaven. We too will have a time where we will carry away the plunder. God promises that we will have so much more after the storm on earth, after this battle that we have faced. We too will have a time period of rejoicing when we go to heaven. The Bible tells us that we will sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Only those who have gone through this tribulation will be able to sing this song.

God has promised us that we too will have rest on every side. In Hebrews 4:3 we read: *"Now we who have believed will enter into His rest says God."* In Revelation 21:4 there is a further promise that we will have rest and not hardships anymore: *"And God will wipe away all the tears from our eyes and there shall be no more death; neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things have passed away."*

As we are in this calm, preparing for the storm spiritually, my prayer is that we will be strong in the Lord and that we will trust Him to carry us through the storm, and then one day, after the storm, each one of us will see each other in heaven where we will be with God the Father, with Jesus, with the Holy Spirit and all the angels and together we will enjoy the peace that comes after the storm.

**ENQUIRE OF THE LORD WHEN YOU
FACE A CRISIS; OBEY HIM; CONTINUE
WORSHIPPING HIM; SHOW BY YOUR
DEEDS THAT YOU TRUST HIM, GOD
WILL GO AHEAD OF US AND DESTROY
THE STORM YOU ARE GOING TO
FACE.**

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