

STORM-BEATEN FAITH

INTRODUCTION

Picture this... life is great, your motto is "LG", "life's good" All is well, you have a great family, a great home, plenty money in the bank. Lots of people working for you. A Ferrari in the garage, a Porsche Cayenne 4x4 parked on the driveway, an Olympic sized swimming pool (some would call it a fire pool...ha,ha). You have your own heli pad and private helicopter with a personal pilot. You own a little holiday mansion in Mauritius. You are a philanthropist, giving money wherever you feel like. You have a beautiful wife, an ex-Miss Universe. Your children are amazing, straight A students attending the best private schools. Life simply couldn't get better.

Then one day, life happens... an earthquake hits and your house crumbles down in a heap, under this heap is your crushed Ferrari. You get into your Porsche Cayene to race out of there but the heli that is busy taking off with your children in it hits a powerline and crashes on top of your Porsche. There are no survivors, only you.

You then find that your wife is still alive because she was visiting with your good looking neighbour. In fact the two of them are having an affair and now that most of your goods are destroyed, she sues for divorce, takes the house in Mauritius and empties your bank account using the credit card you gave her.

You sit down on your broken, messed up driveway and say to the Lord, "What now?"

Well, that's my modern-day version of the story of Job. I hope I got your attention!

Most of us will never go through that amount of disaster in our lives, but what is sure is that in this life, we will all face one kind of disaster or another.

Today I want to briefly speak about the disasters I see people, good people, people in our congregation facing and ask, "How will we deal with this?" Or alternately, in the words of my modern-day Job, "What now".

MESSAGE

A few weeks ago we actually dealt with this very question in our life groups. We asked the question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" This was the answer:

Christians also face bad things

We live in an imperfect world! The cause is sin! Even Christians can go through bad things. Just ask any of the apostles, ask John the Baptist who

was beheaded, ask Paul and Silas, sitting in prison, beaten, in stocks and in the dark with rats eating at their wounds. Christians certainly do face bad things.

Jesus warned us that it would happen:

John 16:33 (NKJV) These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

Aside from the imperfect world, we have encouragements from the Apostles:

James 1:2-3 (NKJV) "My Brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces **faith**.

ONE OF THE GREATEST TRIALS PEOPLE ARE FACING RIGHT NOW!

Like Job who lost everything, I believe there are people here this morning that have either lost everything, are at risk of losing everything or are fearful of losing everything.

- Companies are closing down.
- Retrenchments are taking place.
- People are being put on shirt-time.
- Commissions are small because people don't have spending power.
- People are facing unexpected tax burdens because SARS has caught up with them.

We are feeling it in the church, offerings are down. People are not tithing what they were either because they are earning less or because its seen as an optional expense and people just reduce what they are giving the God who is the very one who gives them the ability to earn wealth. In January this year, this church's costs exceeded its income by around R 23000. So even the church, and by implication, the employees of the church are feeling this financial pinch.

What can we do about it? There is only one thing. We have to trust the Lord. I wrote this encouragement on Thursday last week:

MONEY...

Matthew 17:27 (NKJV) Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you."

- Jesus shouldn't have had to pay temple tax. He was the King of the temple, the people just didn't realise it.
- It was clear that He and Peter did not have money. Don't believe anyone who tells you that Jesus will make you rich. Jesus never promised to do so. He had very little when He walked on this earth. In fact He said in Matthew 26:11, "The poor you will always have with you".
- Jesus did pay temple tax, this was to prevent offense, but don't think you are exempt from tithes and offerings. In another place Jesus told the Pharisees, it was good that they tithed, Matthew 23:23.
- When you need money, ask the Lord, but don't expect that it will arrive from where you expect it to. He sent money in the mouth of a fish, He may provide for you from the strangest of places.

Let me add that not giving offerings or tithes because you are struggling financially is not scriptural. Jesus pointed out the poor widow giving her two mites: **Luke 21:1-4 (NKJV)** And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, 2 and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites.³ So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; 4 for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

Psalm 37:25 (NKJV) I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread.

MY PERSONAL BATTLE

Discuss the storm and the damage, the lack of support, the back pain and effect of the medicine and the struggle with a level of depression and then the news of the church finances...

Discuss how my own faith has been affected, then share the scriptures the Lord Give me this morning!

WE FACE OUR STORMS WITH FAITH!

The answer to being storm-beaten is faith – I'm not speaking about saving faith here, I'm speaking about mountain moving faith – Jesus told us to have faith in God and He demonstrated it!

Mark 11:20-22 (NKJV) Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. 21 And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away." 22 So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God.

So how does that apply to our storms?

Mark 4:37-40 (NKJV) And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. 38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" 39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still (be quiet)!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. 40 But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

Speaking about not worrying, Jesus gave this example:

Matthew 6:30 (NKJV) Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Where do we get this faith from?

Luke 17:5-6 (NKJV) And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." 6 So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."

We can ask God for this kind of faith; He will give it to us!

Romans 10:17 (NKJV) So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

By hearing God's word our faith is built up. Don't stay away from church when you're going through tough times, the devil wants to keep you weak!

Doubting, or wavering in our faith is not an option!

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV) But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Are you really going to allow that storm you're in to cause you not to please God?

Just because we don't see a result is no reason to stop having faith:

2 Corinthians 5:7 (NKJV) For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Paul reminds us that we need faith because we are in a battle!

Ephesians 6:16 (NKJV) above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

It's faith in our Living God that's going to give us victory in this storm. Paul says, "Above all, take up the shield of faith!"

The prayer of faith is powerful!

James 5:15 (NKJV) And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

CONCLUSION

Romans 5 in the NKJV gives this heading: **Faith Triumphs in Trouble**

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

- We have grace through our relationship with Jesus and because of it we have hope.
- This enables us to glory (rejoice, thrive and even be blessed) in tribulations because there is a Progression of virtue that they bring about:
 - Tribulation brings about perseverance.
 - Perseverance brings about character.
 - Character results in hope.
 - Hope does not disappoint.
 - Why? Because it introduces us to the love of God which he pours out into our hearts when we are facing tribulations!

Job lost everything. All he had left was his aching body and his critical wife but he made some remarkable statements:

Job 13:15 (NKJV) Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.

Job 19:25 (NKJV) For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth.

How will we respond to our trial and tribulation? Will we trust the Lord even if it is Him who is causing our suffering?

I remind you of four words of Jesus from Matthew 11:22 "Have faith in God!"

This morning we have heard about faith in the storm – The storm may still be raging but if we are willing to have faith in God no matter what, we will surely make it through. Who is willing to renew their faith right now!