

Series: Created to Fly
3a The Eagles and the Storms
John 16.33

Today's message is an introduction to what I will be sharing next week.

A sailor was asked if he had been in a storm, to which he replied: "Yes, many times and some were giant!" "So, why do you keep sailing?" His response was profound. "All sailors know that storms are part of your life. It's not about escaping the storm but knowing how to navigate through them when they arrive."

In John 16.33 The Lord warned his disciples that: **Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.** You may be in the will of God and still go through storms and suffer with others. The Christian life does not exempt us from storms.

If anything is guaranteed in life is that we will all face a few storms, some are small and others huge. Some can be seen coming from a distance, but others come when least expected. Some are created by us, while others are not our fault.

But while some see God's punishment in the storms, for others it doesn't even cross their minds that God may be trying to talk through them. The two extremes are wrong. When thinking about storms, we usually focus on negative things, but the truth is that storms can do positive things in our lives. There are at least 3 types of storms we face in our lives.

1. Storms of Correction - **And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you. For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child." As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? Hebrews 12.5-9** Corrective storms arise because God loves us, and therefore He discipline us.

If a parent really loves his children, he corrects them whenever necessary. A good father does not remain indifferent to the disobedience of his children, and that is why if we are disobeying, God will correct us.

Some believe that if God loves them, then they won't go through storms. But the opposite is true. Because he loves you, He will allow storms in your life to teach you, strengthen you, to take you back to Him and walk in obedience. God's discipline is a sign of love.

Example – Though Jonah was a servant of God he had to face a storm of correction. He not only disobeyed but fled the Lord and so God had to correct him. He boarded a ship going in the opposite direction from which God wanted, and a great storm arose as a result of his disobedience. It is important to note that the purpose of the storm was not to hurt Jonah, but to take him to return to God's will. Whenever we take the path of disobedience to God's will for our lives, we will face storms of correction because God loves us.

Application - It is possible that the storm that you are facing right now is corrective. God loves you and He might be trying to let you know that there is disobedience in your life. His desire is not to hurt but to restore your life so that He can bless you again. He wants you to return to a proper relationship with Him. You just have to obey, and if you don't, more storms will come and the intensity will be greater. The choice is yours.

For those who have not yet surrendered their lives to God, He uses the storms in your life to grab your attention in order for you to come to Him.

2. Storms of Direction - After the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified and ascended into heaven, Christians experienced many storms. Acts 8:14 *A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria... But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went.* The Christians had done no wrong; they were in the perfect will of God and still suffered persecution. But the Lord used these storms for the benefit of the Gospel. Because of the storm, they had to leave Jerusalem and as they went they preached the Gospel. If it wasn't for the persecution, the storm, they would have stayed in Jerusalem and many would not have accepted Christ.

When I came to the US it was with the intent to return to Portugal. The years passed and I was still here, though I wanted to be there. I prayed that God would provide an opportunity to return and one day I received an invitation to pastor a church there. My family was very excited and we asked for God to confirm if this was his will. Suddenly I lost my voice because of nodules on the vocal cords. I had pain whenever I talked. I was very confused with this storm as I couldn't speak normally and had to re learn how to do it. Because of this we did not accept the invitation; and now we see clearly that God was directing our lives through this storm, as soon, we began the Loveland Bilingual Church. If God was not calling us to go, He had called us to stay. When we obey His call through the storm, we discover His will and find that many times there are hidden blessings in storms.

Another example is the Apostle Paul. Before he had an encounter with God, Saul persecuted the Christians to imprison them or condemn them to death. He thought he was doing God's will. One day, on the way to Damascus, God touched his life and he lost his sight and was incapacitated for several days. I imagine that Paul was confused in the middle of this unexpected storm. Then the Lord commanded Ananias, a Christian who lived in Damascus, to go and pray for Saul so that he might regain his sight and tell him what to do. God used this storm to correct Paul's actions and provide direction for his life.

Perhaps God is using the storm that you are currently facing to guide you. Maybe He wants you to do something you never would have thought of on your own, something that is not part of your agenda. Something you will not do unless it is through the storm. It may be that He allowed the storm so that He could take you to a place where He wants to use you, or because He wants to change the trajectory of your life.

But perhaps you're going the opposite direction of God's will for your life, and He is allowing the storm to correct the trajectory of your life.

3. Perfecting Storms - 1 Peter 1:6-7 *There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. Perfecting storms make us more like Christ and prepare us to serve God.*

This verse reminds me of the almost two years that I spent in the military. During that time I was prepared for war, to serve my country, and the truth is that I disliked undergoing the training. We did go through trials and many times all I wanted was for it to be done; but without this training I wouldn't be ready to serve my country and I wouldn't be as strong as I became. The "military storms" perfected me, changed me as a person and prepared me to serve God.

It was this type of storm that a young Joseph faced in Egypt again and again. Joseph had done nothing to bring trouble on himself, as his storms were caused by others. But God used these storms to mold his life, to prepare him for a bright future and make him the man God wanted him to be.

Many Christians want to be like Joseph, Peter or Paul, but they don't want to go through the storms they had to face. We can't be one thing without the other. The trials made them to be servants of God worthy of honor. There isn't maturity or spiritual power without going through storms.

God may be using your storm for the same purpose, to transform you into the man or woman that He needs you to be. To prepare for a bright future that is not possible without perfecting you.

Conclusion - I hope you now have a better picture of what God does for us through the storms. It is important to discern what the purpose is behind the storms of our lives and cooperate with the will and direction of the Lord. Whatever the type of storm, God's purpose is never to harm you, but to bringing blessing to your life.

A young man was learning to dive in a pool with his father. He received many hours of training but the day finally came when I had to go to sea and apply what he had learned. When he got there it was windy, the sky was dark and the sea rough. The boy was obviously scared and the father told him. "Look at me. Remember everything I've taught you and do it!". With these words the father calmed the boy and everything went fine.

When we face storms that cause us anxiety and fear, we must follow the same advice. First we must look to our instructor, Jesus, and remember everything he taught us and do it. It is He who tells us in John 14.1 **Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. Don't be afraid. Take courage. I am here.** Focus your eyes on me, do not worry with the waves, do not worry with the circumstances, have no fear.

Often we don't realize that God is with us in the midst of storms because we do not expect Him to be there. We need to remember that the storms are in His hands and He loves us too much not to take care of us. Next Sunday we'll talk about how to respond to the storms that come into our lives.

But today it is important for you to know that the storms you've gone through, or may be going through don't mean that God doesn't love you or that He has forsaken you. What we have to do is analyze the storms and discover what God is trying to accomplish through them.