



SUSTAINING FAITH THROUGH LIFE'S STORMS

Primary Verses: *Mark 7:24-27*

Takeaway: With strong faith in Christ Jesus, you will weather every storm!

What was the first verse of Scripture you put to memory? Write it on your handout. Take a moment right now, grab your pen and scratch out your verse. If you're like me, you memorized it because it was meaningful. It spoke to you. What was the first verse of Scripture you put to memory? And don't say "Jesus wept!"

- ***John 3:16*** is a strong contender. It's one of the best in the Bible!
- ***Jeremiah 29:11*** is another favorite. God says, ***"I know the plans I have for you..."***
- Any verse from ***Romans chapter 8*** is worthy of our first memory verse.
- Of course, there's ***Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart..."***
- Here's a winner: ***"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*** ***Phil 4:13***

There are so many powerful verses to memorize. My verse is also good, but it's not very popular. It's rarely quoted in sermons. I Googled the top **50 most beloved verses** in the Bible ... mine did not make the list! I upped the ante and perused the **130 most popular verses** in the Bible. Notta!

My story...

- I'm a new believer and I'm reading my Bible ... and bam ... this verse detonates right in front of me.
- It captured my attention, and I knew in my spirit this verse needed to be in my arsenal ... so I memorized it. ***1 Peter 1:7...***

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:"

Peter points to a fundamental truth: Your faith, my faith ... it will be ***"tested by fire."*** Jesus addresses the reality of storms in one of his parables...

²⁴ "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

²⁶ “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

Throughout my life, I have obsessed with saying the right thing.

- Probably due to my own insecurities.
- I heard the Lord say, quit trying to say the ‘**right**’ thing, and say the ‘**real**’ thing!
- That was a liberating moment for me.
- So, this year I have come to this conference to say the real thing!
- Let’s start with this...

If you are seeking to live trouble free – Christianity is not for you! Just walk away! Some will argue bad theology. But that has been my experience. You have been given armor for a reason. There will be seasons of difficulty. This parable supports my claim.

Three lessons emerge...

1. The sensibility of the builder.
2. The stability of the foundation.
3. The severity of the storm.

THE SENSIBILITY OF THE BUILDER

The man who built on the rock understood the **significance of preparation**.

What are we preparing for? The Storms!

- The storms are coming! (Hardship / calamity / betrayal / etc)
- You can prepare for them, but you can’t stop them!
- Storms are inevitable, unpredictable, and temporary (approximately 20 minutes)
- They can wreak havoc in a short span of time.

In the church, preparation is often underrated and undervalued.

- The quality of your preparation will influence the strength of your stance.
- The man who built on sand was ill prepared. His plan was sufficient for the sunshine...
- Heavyweight Boxing Champion Mike Tyson says, “*Everyone has a good plan until they get punched in the mouth!*”
- Sand is okay so long as there is never storm! But...
- Sunny days and stormy days will happen.
- You can’t control either, but you can certainly be prepared for both!

- Bottom line: to worry less, prepare more.

Our confidence is in our preparation. In the boxing world the phrase 'Champion of the World' is awarded to the winner.

- The title Champion of the World is not awarded to someone whose killing it in a boxercise class!
- Titles are attained, not granted.
- You stepped into the ring and fought for it. You won.
 - To earn the title overcomer ... you must overcome something!
 - To say "I am more than a conqueror ... you've got to conquer something!"
 - To declare "I'm a survivor ... you've got to survive something!"
 - The term victor can only be awarded to you when you have defeated something!

THE STABILITY OF THE FOUNDATION

The stability of the foundation determines the security of your future.

THE ROCK VS THE SAND

Jesus said that the ***"wise man built his house on the rock."*** The other builder was foolish because ***he built his house on the sand."***

Q: Why does the Foundation Matter? A: Because there will Always be Storms!

- Tony Evans said, *"You are either in a storm, just heading out of a storm, or about to experience a storm."*
- Each house was subjected to the same storm. One house survived. The other fell.
- The glory is not in the house; it's in the "foundation" upon which it is built!
- The foundation is hidden, dull, and underappreciated ... until the storms arrive.
- When your life, or your marriage, or your ministry, or your church are built on the wrong foundation (sand), the storms will dismantle it.

Waves, winds, storms, torrents, and the like will come and go, but we get to choose what we build our lives on. Build on the rock! Hang

- When the wind and rain come, we'll know our foundation.
- When the tide turns, we'll know where our anchors are.

THE SEVERITY OF THE STORM

The Bible tells us that ***"the driving rain, and the rising floods, and the gale force winds blew and BEAT on the house."***

Here's what I know, not all storms are created equal! In the natural realm storms are rated by their intensity.

- A **dust devil** is the least ferocious. He is small and isolated with minimal intensity. This storm represents distractions, irritations, or mild inconveniences.
- A **tropical cyclone**, on the other hand, is a beast! They are tenacious, destructive, and unrelenting. The devastating force keeps pounding you. Maximum level of intensity.
- This storm type is testing your faith, resolve, courage.
- As their name suggests, **firestorms** are a type of storm that is caused by major wildfires. wildfire can spawn convective systems which could include **gale-force winds**, severe **thunderstorms**, **straight-line winds**, **lightning**, and a **tornado**.

I am celebrating 40 years of ministry this year ... I know **firestorms**!

- A state overseer pressured me, and I took a pastorate I didn't want to take.
- Within four months a firestorm erupted – rebellion, discord, inherited financial challenges, staff layoffs, lawsuits, rapid decline.
- A perfect storm was mounting. It was intense! We were sinking quickly. Go under.
- **1 Samuel 26. "The Lord caused a deep sleep to come upon them."**
- If you listen to me, I will put your enemies to sleep!

For those who are facing a firestorm ... take a deep breath / cancel the noise / get alone with God / and listen to him. **HIT REPAET!** Let's put the enemy to sleep. He cannot inject lies when he is sleeping!

Here is my response to firestorms...

1. **Pray.**
2. **Practice the Word.**

Jesus starts the parable by saying, **"...whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them..."**

How does the wise man build? Very simply. Two ways: By **hearing, and doing, the words of Jesus**. How can you build on that foundation? The same way.

- It's not what you hear. It's not what you know. It's what you **do**!
- The Bible has no promise for those who only 'hear'.
- Protection in a storm is in direct relationship to the **practice** of the Word.

3. **Play your storm song.**
4. **Pick up the mess.**

Storms leave behind evidence of their presence that often requires post-storm clean up. You likely need to do some post storm cleanup yourself. Practice forgiveness. Repair the breaches. Initiate love.

CLOSING

Jesus reminded us that in the ***world we will have tribulation.***

- The Bible is a “anything is possible” manual.
- It is also a “anything can happen” manual.
- In its pages you will find that the miraculous and the mayhem intermingle.

Here’s the promise ... ***“When the enemy comes in like a flood the Lord will lift up a standard against him.”*** The standard is always greater than the storm.

Here is my declaration...

- My **problems** do not **overwhelm** me! My **rivals** do not **intimidate** me!
- My **mistakes** do not **own** me! My **concerns** do not **control** me!

These declarations are not sermon sound bites ... they are an adopted attitude! They embody reasons I can boldly declare **with strong faith in Christ Jesus, you will weather every storm!** My faith enables me to weather the stormy seasons!

STORMS I AM FACING RIGHT NOW