

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, September 23, 2017

Compared to hurricanes, tornadoes and tsunamis, the storms we experience in our personal and business lives may seem inconsequential, but they can cause irreparable damage in our lives as well. We can rebuild or relocate from natural disasters, but the internal storms we face may be much more difficult to repair. When I returned from Vietnam after serving eighteen months in that infamous conflict, no one had any idea what effect the war had taken on the many who served. Over the years I've gotten a pretty good handle on the impact that time had on me personally. After two failed marriages, you would think a guy would realize there was something causing such instability. But let's look at the storms of life on a more general level.

What types of storms might we possibly encounter during our existence? There will be financial storms such as the loss of a job, the loss of a business, out-of-control debt, bad investments and possibly bankruptcy. There will be personal storms such as unfounded rumors and outright lies spread maliciously, loss of friendships, accusations, infidelity and perhaps divorce. We also will face health storms too numerous to mention, but eventually we will all succumb to death unless the Lord returns before we take our final breath. So, we need to consider just how we will handle the many inevitable storms we will certainly face.

Paul understood the storms of life. In 2 Timothy 3:10-11, he shares with the younger Timothy *"You, however, know about all my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings – what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them."* In Hebrews 12:2 the writer instructs us *"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

We can't very well depend on a personal strategist to forewarn us of all the dangers that may well lie ahead. The storms we will face are only known by our Heavenly Father and there's no way we can know the timing of those storms of life. The good news is we don't have to go through those storms alone. In Hebrews 10:25 we are reminded *"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching."* We are living in tenuous times and we'd be wise to not go it on our own.

Personally my Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is the One I truly want to lead me through the valley experiences I will certainly face. In Psalm 23:4 King David proclaims *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."* I find those words consoling as I await the future storms that I know will come. Yes, the ultimate storm will be death, which often comes slowly with much pain accompanying the process.

In conclusion, Jesus prophesies in John 16:32-33 *"But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these things so you might have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* Those of us who know Christ personally have assurance that we are not alone, since the Holy Spirit dwells in us and provides the peace that transcends all understanding. It's not too late to come to Jesus! He awaits your plea for help.

Passages to Ponder: Job 38:1-7; Psalm 22:25-28; Luke 8:22-25; Philippians 4:6-7; James 4:7-10; 1 Peter 3:13-17

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Job 38:1-7 New International Version (NIV) The LORD Speaks

38 Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm. He said:

²“Who is this that obscures my plans
with words without knowledge?

³Brace yourself like a man;
I will question you,
and you shall answer me.

⁴“Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?
Tell me, if you understand.

⁵Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!
Who stretched a measuring line across it?

⁶On what were its footings set,
or who laid its cornerstone—

⁷while the morning stars sang together
and all the angels shouted for joy?

Psalm 22:25-28 New International Version (NIV)

²⁵From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;
before those who fear you I will fulfill my vows.

²⁶The poor will eat and be satisfied;
those who seek the LORD will praise him—
may your hearts live forever!

²⁷All the ends of the earth
will remember and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations
will bow down before him,

²⁸for dominion belongs to the LORD
and he rules over the nations.

Luke 8:22-25 New International Version (NIV) Jesus Calms the Storm

²²One day Jesus said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side of the lake.” So they got into a boat and set out. ²³As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger.

²⁴The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master, we’re going to drown!”

He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. ²⁵“Where is your faith?” he asked his disciples.

In fear and amazement they asked one another, “Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.”

Philippians 4:6-7 New International Version (NIV)

⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

James 4:7-10 New International Version (NIV)

⁷Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

1 Peter 3:13-17 New International Version (NIV)

¹³Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.” ¹⁵But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. ¹⁷For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.