



# DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

MATTHEW 7

MARCH 2021

## STABILITY IN THE STORMS

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*“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like the man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall.” (Matthew 7:24-27 NRSV)*

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Storms should not surprise us when they come, yet we often find ourselves overwhelmed by their ferocity or rapidity. Like a child playing in the surf who is hit by an unexpected wave, before we can get up and wipe our face another one comes crashing in. Jesus predicted that storms would come into all of our lives, and that they would expose the foundations of what we are building.

Jesus' emphasis in this discourse was the necessity of building on “these words of mine.” All previous words from God had been partial and predictive. Jesus fulfilled the promises, prophecies, and predictions of the Old Testament spokesmen. His word is full and final. Building on anything less is certain foolishness. The storms of life serve to expose the false security we seem to accrue and the false theology we inevitably develop. But,

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more than anything, they serve to reveal greater dimensions of Jesus that we have not yet discovered.

One of the myths that continues to surface in our culture is that we deserve a stormless life. Whether because we are citizens of a particular nation, or because we are Christians, or because we are not as wicked as some others, we tend to feel betrayed when the storms arise and threaten our castles. Because the longing for paradise is so strong in us, we rush to interpret the abundant life in Jesus as one of personal comfort, convenience, and ease. The truth is that we are made for so much more than comfort, convenience, and ease. We are made to partner with God in displaying His glory in a world that is desperate to see Him—yet blind to even the possibility. Like scurrying ants when their mounds have been disturbed, millions of people are fighting to create stability that cannot be destroyed by storms. Jesus called us and commissioned us to be a voice of peace pointing to Him. To fulfill that commission, however, we have to be in the storms.

Currently, we are experiencing some

stormy times. The COVID-19 pandemic, political skepticism, economic uncertainty, global unrest, and societal breakdowns confront us daily with opportunities to fear. Fear makes us vulnerable to false narratives and conspiracy theories that offer explanations for the angst we feel. We find ourselves reacting from fear instead of responding to God, and that is always a sure way to anxiety. It can lead to erratic behavior when we conclude that things are so bad that the only way out is violence or that people are so bad that they are irredeemable. Such conclusions are strategies from hell that operate when fear overtakes peace. When even Christians are buying into these narratives, society is left rudderless in the storms.

One time when Jesus was traversing the Sea of Galilee with His disciples, a sudden storm came up. The storm was life-threatening, even though some of the disciples were experienced fishermen and savvy about the weather around Galilee. As waves were swamping the boat and fear took over, the disciples noticed Jesus was asleep in the stern. Their false security and faulty theology

were exposed. Confident they could handle a boat on those waters, they were surprised when their ability was not enough. They accused Jesus of not caring. Sounds familiar doesn't it? I have heard that accusation arising in my thoughts: "If He cares for me, why is He letting this happen?" Maybe the disciples were thinking: "If he had not expended so much energy on those crowds, many of whom weren't even paying attention, He would not be too tired to help us, His special ones. We thought we were a priority for Him. Guess not." False security and faulty theology needs to be exposed so that real security and true theology can be embraced.

Frantic, the disciples woke Jesus. He seemed amazed that they were operating in fear. When He rebuked the wind and spoke peace to the sea, the disciples were astounded! They had seen Him do some miracles and heard Him teach heart-changing truths, but now they were discovering a dimension of Jesus they had not seen before. That is the purpose of the storm. Storms of that magnitude don't come to teach us to be better managers of

storms. We don't need lessons or instructions on better practices. Overwhelming storms reveal Jesus. *"Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"* (Mark 4:41 NRSV). Once you know who He is and what He controls, and you know that He is with you, security takes on a different meaning. If He is the last word, then we can build on Him.

Not to take the story beyond its intended message, but, for many, Jesus still sleeps in their boat. They "invited Him into their hearts" long ago, but have not seen the need of His being awake and active in their lives. Maybe the recent storms will awaken more of us to His presence and to a greater vision of who He is in us. I think we will find that He is easily entreated. He wasn't angry that the disciples woke Him. He was eager to help and desired that they learn to rest in the middle of the storm. The disciples did not disturb Jesus with their desperate plea for help, and neither are we when we call out to Him. He loves to act on our behalf and to show us that He rules over all. He is not waiting in heaven to rule on earth. He rules in heaven and on the earth now through His

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people who represent Him. He has chosen to do things on earth through humans who reflect Him and His kingdom. Though we are not yet at the culmination of the process, we are working in light of His finished work. He is Lord now. He already sits on the throne prepared for Him. He is ruling through the counter-intuitive power of love and mercy. Tyranny and political force are not His way. He grants peace in the middle of turmoil while we wait for the day when turmoil will cease. His place in the heavenlies guarantees our future because where He is, we are and shall ever be. Death does not threaten those who have already been through it in Him. *“To live is Christ and to die is gain.”* (Philippians 1:21 ESV).

God has privileged us to represent Him in a world fraught with fear and panic. We are His voice of calm, not because we don't see the threat, but because we see Someone greater than the threat—and we know that He loves us. Jesus is developing disciples who are stable in the storms of suffering and secure when the winds of heresy blow. He is using them to reveal the foundation

of what can't be shaken. The things we know (maybe can't prove, yet can't deny), will last no matter what comes. They are the foundation stones on which we build: There is one Lord. He loves us. He will never forsake us. He has redeemed us, and we are His own. If one has been born of the imperishable seed of the word, these “knowings” are present in the inner man. Storms reveal them and amplify them.

We all would like for the storms to stop. Until they do, we are safe with Jesus in the boat, and we are stable because He rules over all.



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