

Tribulation

FINDING GOD IN THE STORM

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In the early hours of the morning on Wednesday Dec 3, 2003, Melbourne was hit by one of the biggest thunderstorms in living memory. Some suburbs receiving as much as 100mm of rain within a two hour period. Despite millions of dollars of storm damage and extensive flooding there were, surprisingly, no fatalities.

In my heart I have felt betrayed by God... like he called us out on a limb to take steps of faith, only to abandon us and let us fall, to feel the pain of isolation and the loneliness of defeat. God has been silent, and as one who has known the sound of His voice in the past and as one who understands that true life only comes from every word which proceeds from His mouth, that silence has been a burden too heavy to bear. But after a long silence, God showed up... in the form of a huge thunderstorm!

I was awoken in the middle of the night by our dog scratching at our bedroom door. For some reason dogs don't like thunder and lightning. Personally I find them exhilarating but my dog needed the comfort of being near her master when the floor began to tremble and flashes of light lit up the house. In the distance I could hear the rumblings of the storm drawing closer so I let her settle on the end of our bed. She seemed content just to be near someone, but her ears remained pricked and

her body tense with anticipation of the storm that was approaching.

As the storm grew closer the fireworks began. Night seemed to momentarily turn to day as one flash of lightning followed immediately upon another. The floor shook and the walls quaked. My heart revived. God was here and He was demonstrating His power. Amidst the thunder and lightning something happened to me. A surge of confidence... and revival of hope. Amidst the flashing light and peels of thunder I felt that I could, at long last, pour out my heart to God who had too long seemed too distant. To me God was revealing his awesome power, majesty and presence through the storm - and He was as close as our back door.

With each rumble and crash of thunder my heart responded with words that came to mind from the Psalms, "Rend the heavens and come down, oh God! Let the mountains quake at your presence! Let your glory be revealed throughout the earth. Overthrow the powers of injustice, send forth your might to save the afflicted. Establish your power and glory upon the earth on behalf of those who are true and righteous - on behalf of those whose hope is in you! Have mercy upon your servants, oh God, and hear their desperate prayer! Vindicate your chosen ones!"

For some unknown reason, in the midst of the storm,

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my heart felt free to carry to God in prayer many burdens that I have felt that I've carried alone for some time. Up until that time, somehow God had seemed too distant, my heart too unsettled and my prayers too ineffective. But with such a demonstration of power and glory lighting up the sky around our home and the floor trembling with each peel of thunder, I felt that God was accessible

Then came the downpour. Heavy rain with hail. The gutters of our house overflowed with rain and our driveway turned into a river. The forest behind our house seemed to gladly receive the rain as if the trees were receiving the quenching of a long thirst.

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at last. I asked him to step in and put right what has been wrong - to see all that we have endured and to answer us.

Then came the downpour. Heavy rain with hail. The gutters of our house overflowed with rain and our driveway turned into a river. The forest behind our house seemed to gladly receive the rain as if the trees were receiving the quenching of a long thirst. “From your lofty abode you water the mountains oh God; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth fruit from the earth!”

By this time the whole house was awake to the spectacle of light and quaking thunder. The flashes of light continued and the hills and valley below seemed to echo with the thunder of His commands - God was on His throne and all the earth was subject to His awesome power!

After some time the storm moved on into the distance and the night again grew silent and perfectly still. I pondered in my heart all that I have sacrificed to God, for God, and for His cause on earth. Amidst the silence I felt the word of the Lord came to me through the Holy Spirit... “sacrifice and offerings I have not desired... to obey is better than sacrifice”. And “The sacrifices acceptable to God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, these things God will not despise”.

As I considered these words, it dawned upon me that at the heart of my disappointment with God was the belief that God hadn't played by the rules. We had given so much to him, so why had He remained so silent? Why had He not chosen to bless all our plans with success? Why had our sacrifices not been acceptable on His altar? Then I realised that “the rules” that God had not played by were, in fact, our own rules, and that God has no intention of ever playing by our rules. He is God and he needs nothing from us... none of our time, our money, our efforts, our talents - nothing at all. In fact, there is NOTHING that we could ever do for Him or offer to Him to ever commend ourselves to God. We are nothing and we have nothing that he needs!! Of all the things that we

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hope for and desire, of all the things that we would like to accomplish, it all rests with Him. We have nothing to offer Him that He did not first freely give to us.

Perhaps as you read this you are also struggling with some sense of disappointment with God. There seems to be a lot of that going around right now - you are not alone! My experience of God in the storm left me exhilarated, humbled, rebuked, as well as comforted by those corrective words the Holy Spirit spoke to me. The precious Spirit of God also left me with a renewed sense of promise... that God WILL do that which He has purposed in the earth, that He WILL establish His plans and WILL deal with His enemies and that He WILL accomplish His plans for our lives. But of all the things that our hearts desire and wait for, the day of His appearing promises to bring everything and more than we could ever hope for... the day when we see His glory, when it is fully revealed on earth - that day when we ourselves are transformed by His appearing and His glory shines out brightly from us and all those who have fixed their hope on Him!

“As lightning strikes in the east, and shines to the west, so will the coming of the Son of man be...”

Amen! Come Lord Jesus, we long for that day of your appearing!

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