



God's Word for Today

Sonja Hunt Ministries

Teaching Letter 45

Winning By Holding the Course

*“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”
(Romans 8:31 NKJ).*

You may never have guided a ship through a storm. Neither have I. However, I have been a ship's passenger a couple of times on very rough seas; and you can believe me when I say I was not happy. Lives were not in danger, but it was scary, nevertheless.

On some seas storms arise seemingly out of nowhere, and vessels that are caught in the maelstrom may find themselves struggling to maintain course or even to stay afloat. In the New Testament, Paul tells that he was shipwrecked three times (2 Corinthians 11:25), and the Gospel writers tell how, more than once, Jesus rescued His disciples midst hurricane-like storms on the Sea of Galilee.

Though most of us have not faced tempests of the ocean kind, we do know very well what it is like to face the storms of life. God wants to remind us it is possible—with His help—to hold the course through whatever storms we face and to reach the other side not merely intact but victorious. Nothing is impossible with God!

In my Christian journey I've known victory and defeat. (By the way, I prefer victory—don't you?) And I've noticed something surprising about navigating a storm that I now find encouraging when I'm still in the middle and the going is rough. My discovery has also been helpful when I have emerged from a storm, thinking things had not gone my way—feeling I had gone under instead of over. I've learned that a victory can at first look and feel like defeat. Let me explain.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are

perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—“ (2 Corinthians 4:8, 9 NKJ). That is a picture of a storm. Nothing about it sounds pleasant or victorious; yet another perspective emerges. “Hard-pressed” is countered with “yet not crushed.” “Perplexed” is balanced by “but not in despair.” “Persecuted” is offset by “but not forsaken.” And “struck down” is tempered by “but not destroyed.” This is the picture of someone coming out on top, through a difficult struggle, having held the course.

The difficulty for us arises when, as our boat is rocked by an unexpected storm, the fierceness of the storm is all we notice. Because negative events come at us swiftly and repeatedly from the right and from the left, because we did not see the storm coming and because it is so outrageous, we find ourselves dazed. Our feelings tell us we are “hard-pressed”. . . “perplexed”. . . “persecuted”. . . and “struck down.” I know you have heard this before, but I will remind us: feelings do not tell the whole truth.

Feelings let us know we are facing a storm and the blows are coming. That's all. They do not give an accurate report on how the battle actually is going or what outcome we might expect. They do not tell us how we are doing in the battle. The question is not what do our feelings say—but what does God say? He says: “yet not crushed” . . . “but not in despair” . . . “but not forsaken” . . . “but not destroyed.” Because we have God with us and for us, that is the truth. That is the truth that will help us hold the course in the midst of life's storms.

Sailors can face fear and confusion in the midst of a storm. Jesus' disciples were experienced fishermen and had faced many storms. Yet even the storms they faced with Jesus in the boat drained all hope of surviving. They cried out in fear and desperation.

As God's children, we will face life's storms; however, we have assurance of things that people who do not belong to God do not have. God is with us and will work His plan in, despite of and even because of life's storms. We will have much greater peace if we will do some very simple things through the onslaught.

I've already made the point, but it's an important one. In the middle of a storm, remember things are not completely as they appear or feel at the time. Paul wrote to the Roman Christians: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28 NKJ). Behind the scenes in the sometimes very distressing circumstances of our lives, God works for our good. Often it is later that we recognize the good that God worked in us or for us.

We know Jesus held the course all the way to the goal. Foremost to Him was His love for the Father and His confidence in God's love for Him. Secondly, He knew He was on assignment from God. Knowing He was doing God's will meant Jesus could be confident He had the help, the blessing, the guidance and protection of God in every situation. This assurance was a steadying force for Him when people plotted to kill Him and attacked Him verbally. When He faced Calvary, He was able to hold the course through the physical and emotional pain and suffering, knowing He was squarely in God's will. He was called to die for the sins of the world. However, while the greatest victory ever was being won, those who watched saw only defeat. God's perspective was quite the opposite.

Had Jesus followed his feelings, He would likely have given up on unbelieving humanity. Many rejected Him, spoke evil of Him and tried to turn others away from Him. If He had depended on the support of His friends, He would not have gone to the Cross. All of them abandoned Him. Even at one point on the Cross, Jesus felt abandoned by God. He felt every blast the storms of life and death threw at Him. Yet Jesus proved that even death—

including ours—is not a defeat when we have held the course in doing God's will. Tremendous strength can be ours when we trust God and remember that. Sometimes only you and God will know you won.

Scripture tells us the Apostle Paul endured three shipwrecks, was stoned and left for dead, was beaten with 39 stripes three times, was imprisoned more than once and was finally beheaded by Caesar in Rome. Humanly speaking, some might say, "What a waste! What a defeated life!" Yet God had called Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. And WOW did he ever! It's been nearly 2,000 years, and he is still preaching! Though Paul was often opposed vigorously, until God was finished with Paul, he—like us—could be hindered but not defeated as long as he held the course.

Holding the course means staying true to God and to His calling on your life. No matter what happens. No matter how things look. No matter how you feel. Results are God's department. Our part is to pray, trust God, believe Him, yield to Him, obey Him, live for Him, treat others as God would have us, be faithful to our calling. The world will not always count us very successful. We may even think things have gone down the tubes. What matters is God's verdict.

Storms come and go. Trust God and never give up. Do things God's way. You will win if you hold the course. You can win! **SH**

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