



## *Holding Onto Hope in Life's Storms*

Storms of life happen. Sometimes they're quick-lived, but other times they feel relentless—like now. Who would have thought a two-year pandemic would ease just in time for a war to begin?

Keeping hope alive amidst unceasing wind and waves can be difficult, but it's the one thing we can't afford to lose, according to John Maxwell. We can recover from other losses, he says, but "when a man loses hope, there's nothing to do but bury him."

One dictionary defines hope as "a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen." But, for Christ's followers, hope runs deeper than an optimistic outlook or wishful thinking. The Holman Bible Dictionary says hope is a "trustful expectation, particularly with reference to the fulfillment of God's promises. Biblical hope is the anticipation of a favorable outcome under God's guidance."

Biblical hope based on God's promises bolsters our strength and gives us courage. I found this to be true during every storm I've faced, most recently when sitting vigil at my mother's bedside, when helping my youngest daughter through the last trimester of a high-risk pregnancy, and when praying for my brother's recovery while he was on a ventilator in ICU. Here are five promises I've found especially meaningful.

- **God is with us.**

The biblical character Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, taken as a slave to a foreign country, and imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit. Caught in a storm that lasted more than a decade, he may have sometimes wondered if God had abandoned him, but that was not the case. Scripture repeatedly says God was with him. (Genesis 39:2-3,21,23)

When wind and waves pummel us, we might feel as though God is nowhere near, but let's take to heart the words Jesus spoke to His disciples: "I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20) We hold onto hope because the truth says we are not alone even when we feel alone.

- **God is still sovereign.**

God didn't wake up one morning, gasp, and wring His hands over the world news. He knew the war was coming and how it would affect the world and you and me.

Global circumstances are not beyond His control. Neither is the personal situation that breaks our heart. God has plans we cannot understand, and He will accomplish His purposes. "I am God, and there is none like me. Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish" (Isaiah 46:9-10). We have hope because God is still God.



- **God the Holy Spirit prays for us.**

Sometimes our circumstances seem so dark and difficult that prayerful words escape us. That's when we need promises like Romans 8:26-27— "And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will." Hope comes when we rest in the truth that the Spirit covers us in prayer even when we can't express what's in our heart.

- **God will provide for our needs.**

A plaque on the wall above my writing desk begins with text from Psalm 23: "The Lord is my Shepherd. I lack nothing." A shepherd's primary focus is his flock's well-being, so he's diligent to make sure his sheep have everything they need to flourish. Psalm 23:1 assures us that our Shepherd has equipped us to survive this wild ride. Need wisdom? We just need to ask in faith believing He'll give it to us (James 1:5-6). Peace? It's ours when we give Him our concerns and thank Him for all He has done (Philippians 4:6-7). Strength? It's ours when we make Him our focus (Isaiah 40:28-31).

- **God will wipe away our tears.**

This storm shall pass. Someday, somehow, God will bring about a good outcome. No matter what the future holds, He will eventually make everything right. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever" (Revelation 21:4).

Chuck Swindoll writes, "God keeps His promises. It's a major part of His immutable nature. He doesn't hold out hope with nice-sounding words, then renege on what He said He would do. God is neither fickle nor moody. And He never lies. As my own father used to say of people with integrity, 'His word is His bond.'"

God holds out hope to us through His promises, and we hold onto hope by clinging to those promises.

