

The Unfailing Hope That Will Calm Your Storms

“Good morning, everyone,” the TV announcer said. “Let me correct that. There is nothing *good* about this morning of Sept. 26, 2004.”

Trying to maintain composure, we tracked Charley’s path. At first, the action outside was not much different than the usual storms in Florida. But we knew that this was no ordinary storm. It was a preamble of a dangerous hurricane

“Everyone grab a pillow and a blanket,” I said. I made a mental note of the supplies we would need: a flashlight, water and our cell phones. Grabbing the small transistor radio with fresh batteries; a bit of reassurance trickled in while huddled in our confined shelter.

As expected, the lights went out. The TV was silenced. In the dark, the rage of the hurricane became more audible. As the wind howled, it whistled as if to announce, “I’ve arrived.” Its ominous nature intensified our vulnerability.

Charley had a vicious and unique personality. It was capricious, first giving the impression it was headed in one direction and then at the last minute, changing directions. It had its own madness as it ripped through neighborhoods mercilessly.

“Hush!” I ordered. I turned the volume up on the transistor radio I held on my lap. “Listen!” I added with urgency.

Our family huddled, attempting to tune out the loud roaring outside. We hung on each word coming from the radio, the only device connecting us to the outside world: “It’s headed for Orlando; the winds here are unbelievable. With the last moments of daylight, we could see the roaring winds snapping

trees in half like pretzel sticks. In other areas, the trees were yanked with force, their roots entangled in blocks of cement tossed aside like toys.” Static interrupted his description. Then he continued, trying to catch his breath: “The huge glass windows of buildings nearby moved in and out in a swaying motion, attempting to resist the fierce wind with no success.”

Lord, I cried out in my thoughts, guard our family.

Then the silence of my prayer was interrupted with more reports. I appeared calm on the outside, but with every sound outside and every detail of the report, I wondered if God was indeed listening. I questioned whether He’d answer before the worst happened. I doubted if my words were appropriate enough to reach Him. And I was certain that my emotions were blocking my pleas to Him. The more I tried, the more the hurricane of doubt thrashed in my heart.

“Now the road is in total darkness,” the reporter said. “Even some traffic lights are gone.”

Without air-conditioning, our cozy area turned into a small oven. But safety replaced comfort. Charley’s rage grew closer. The strong winds thrust sporadic bangs, rattling our garage door. The hurling debris against our front and back doors as well as those slamming against the large windows gave the same sensation as a “tick ... tick ... tick” of a bomb. We knew it would strike, but didn’t know exactly when, nor did we know which window would burst or what part of the roof it would yank away first.

No one spoke. But suddenly I heard a strange noise.

“What is that scraping?” I asked.

“It’s my yogurt cup,” my mom said with her characteristic calmness. “It’s my bedtime snack,” she added with a matter-of-fact tone.

How can she eat at a time like this? Does she not realize the danger we're in?

"My hope is in the Lord," she said, "He will protect us. Do you think this hurricane is catching Him by surprise? He is always faithful. Hope in Him is all we have."

I had heard those same words from the pulpit. They brought mild reassurance as I sense no danger in that pew surrounded by painted glass windows.

But now what painted my mind was images of us under a rubble of destruction.

Outside noises emphasized my imagination. We heard more banging and crashing outside. I changed my pleas: "Lord, I know You're in control. I have the certainty that You will see us through. And I know that You will calm this storm in my heart and also outside."

But my words still echoed with doubt.

Charley's furious winds struck with more intensity in some areas, yanking off roofs like boxtops, and the roaring winds hurled traffic lights, smashing them to the ground. Some fatalities were reported.

"The tracking shows Charley is now in Orlando's downtown area," the radio reporter announced. We all went silent to make sure we'd heard the good news (for us, at least) correctly, and then it was confirmed. Charley had moved north; it had finally passed us.

God did show up, promptly and swiftly.

We breathed a sigh of relief. And I gave a silent, *Thank you*.

We stepped out of our stuffy room and headed outside, glancing with disbelief at the mess, the debris and broken pieces of items from tree branches to trashcan lids, to unidentifiable

items.

While we all gasped at the destruction, a deep yawn slipped from my mom's lips, and she tossed her empty yogurt cup in the wastebasket. "There was no need to worry then; no need to worry now. God is in control. Good night everyone," she said.

"We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name." (Psalm 33:20-21, NIV). It was in the "waiting" that God worked in me—teaching me to trust in the midst of winds of fear. To be secure when I hear threatening sounds, and to rest secure when others blurt bad news, gloom or warnings of destruction.

With renewed faith, gratitude removed the last of the dark clouds of the storm and brought new meaning. My hope was in God, not in the circumstances or in those around me.

The next morning's sun uncovered the radiance of God's promises that He will answer our pleas, promptly and swiftly. His faithfulness becomes visible not so much in the calmness of my life, but during the storms and emotional hurricanes that test my faith.

Let's Pray

Father, as we face all storms that threaten our lives, we rest in the comfort of Your promises that You never abandon us, never leave us. But without fail, You shelter us with Your love and protection. In Jesus' name, I thank You. Amen.

What is testing your faith right now? {eo2}

Janet Perez Eckles is an international speaker and the author of four books. She has helped thousands conquer fear and bring back joy.

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