

God Is in the Turbulence

I despise airplane turbulence. Even though I enjoy high-speed roller coasters, there is something about hurling through stormy skies in a commercial jetliner at 37,000 feet that turns my knuckles white. This is why I always ask for a window seat. Whenever we hit rough air and the seat belt sign flashes on, I feel safer if I can look outside.

But that didn't help me recently when I was flying into Canada. I was not aware that rough weather was raging below and that parts of Vancouver were flooding. All I knew was that our journey through Canadian airspace reminded me of Doctor Doom's Fearfall—a theme-park ride I've enjoyed many times with my daughters.

That ride lasts only a few seconds, and it is firmly bolted to the ground. The turbulence over British Columbia lasted half an hour.

It was 11 p.m., and I couldn't see anything outside my window except horizontal rain. I kept reminding myself that the pilot was using radar and other high-tech instruments to avoid crashing into the side of a mountain. But my knuckles did not believe this. I clutched the armrest, prayed and—for a few seconds—wondered how my wife

would plan my funeral.

Of course the plane did not break apart
in mid-air. When we descended below the cloud cover and the
lights of
the city became visible, all my color returned. I breathed a
prayer of
thanksgiving when I heard the familiar sound of wheels
touching the
runway.

You may not share my fear of turbulence,
but all of us have walked through scary times in life when we
couldn't
see the path in front of us. Many people I know are going
through such
times right now because of the economic downturn. Some are
facing job
loss, financial hardships, foreclosures or unusual spiritual
challenges.

Churches, too, are finding it hard to
navigate change. More people than ever are in a season of
transition
because old business models don't work, and ministry paradigms
are
shifting. Some of us find ourselves digging our fingernails
into the
armrest while the plane is bouncing all over the stormy sky.
And when
we look out the window we see nothing but darkness.

I have found comfort in the words David
penned after he escaped from Saul's pursuits. He wrote in
Psalm 18:4-6:
"The cords of death encompassed me, and the torrents of
ungodliness
terrified me. ... In my distress I called upon the Lord, and

cried to
my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, and my
cry for
help came into His ears" (NASB).

In describing God's
just-in-the-nick-of-time rescue, David borrowed vivid imagery
from the
day when God opened the Red Sea to deliver His children from
Egypt.

"The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High
uttered His
voice. ...Then the channels of water appeared, and the
foundations of
the world were laid bare. ...He sent from on high, He took me;
He drew
me out of many waters. ... He brought me forth also into a broad
place;
He rescued me, because He delighted in me" (vv. 13-19).

David's transition wasn't easy. In the
most difficult moment he noted that God had "made darkness His
hiding
place" (v. 11). We must remember that darkness is not a sign
that God
has abandoned us. It became stormy just before the Red Sea
split open.
Yet God was working behind the scenes, even when the clouds
were black
and the wind was violent.

If you are in the midst of a transition,
hold tightly to His promise as you enter this new year of
2010. You can
trust Him. Better things are still to come. In yet a little
while He
will intervene.

Don't focus on your job crisis, the bad economic news,
your lack of options or the bumpiness of the ride. Call upon
the Lord.

When His lightning flashes, He will split the obstacles in
front of you
and make a dry roadbed in the midst of the sea. He can make a
way where
there is no way.

Ask the Lord to transport you. Eventually you will hear
the sound of wheels touching down on the wet runway. You are
helpless
to make this transition on your own, but your Deliverer will
safely
carry you from your present crisis into a broad place of
future
fruitfulness.

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