

Trusting God During Turbulent Transitions

In this stormy economic season, trust the Lord to transport you to the other side.

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 last week 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 have 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.)

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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 arm rest, prayed and—for a few seconds—wondered how my wife would plan my funeral.

Of course the plane did not break apart in midair. 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 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 arm rest while the plane bounces all over the stormy sky. And when we look out the window we see nothing but darkness.

I have found my 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" (v. 13,15,16,19).

David's transition was not 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 is not with 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 turbulent transition, hold tightly to this promise. You can trust Him. 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. 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. Although you are helpless to make this transition on your own, your Deliverer will safely carry you from your present crisis into a broad place of future fruitfulness.

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