

Warning: Upcoming Turbulence in 2019

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 on a recent overseas flight. I was not aware that rough weather was raging below. All I knew was that our journey through the dark vacuum of space reminded me of Doctor Doom's Fearfall—a theme park ride I have enjoyed many times in Orlando. (That ride lasts only a few seconds, and it is firmly bolted to the ground. The stomach-churning turbulence over the Atlantic Ocean 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 sea. I recalled a conversation with my brother-in-law, a Delta pilot. He assured me that no one dies in turbulence.

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 midair. When we descended below the cloud cover, and the lights of civilization 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. Some are facing job loss, financial hardships, health problems or unusual spiritual challenges.

Meanwhile, many churches today 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. On top of that, the world is going through unprecedented political and economic shaking. You can expect more of that in this new year.

It's not going to be easy. There are going to be some roller-coaster moments in this season. My best advice is to put on your seat belts now.

Some of us find ourselves digging our fingernails into the armrest 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 encircled me, and the torrents of destruction terrified me ... In my distress I called on the Lord, and cried for help to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry for help came to His ears."

In describing God's just-in-the-nick-of-time rescue, David borrowed imagery from the day when God opened the Red Sea. "The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High gave His voice ... Then the channels of water appeared, and the foundations of the world were discovered ... He sent from above, He took me; He drew me out of many waters ... He also brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me because He delighted in me" (v. 13,15,16,19).

David's transition wasn't easy. In his most difficult moment, he realized God had "made darkness His hiding place" (v. 11, NASB). 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.

As we enter this turbulent time of 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 middle of the sea. He can make a way where there is no way.

Don't try to handle the anxiety yourself. Ask the Lord to carry you. Turbulence never lasts forever. 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 blessing.