

WHEN YOU COME TO WITS' END

PSALM 107: 23-32

Introduction:

I have some good news and some bad news for you. Let me share the bad news with you first—life is like a voyage and life is stormy. And it is extremely likely that you will encounter some severe storms before you finish the voyage.

But there is some good news. The Lord God is the Master of the storms, and can bring you through. This is one of the comforting pictures that the Psalmist gives us of the faithfulness and goodness of the Lord our God.

The multiple pictures in the Psalm point us to God in our time of need. In the first picture, the traveler is lost, but he experiences the goodness of God. In the next picture the person almost dies in a severe illness, but experiences the goodness of God. In the next picture great sin is committed, but the guilty one experiences the goodness of God in forgiveness. In the last picture, the people go through a severe, crippling drought, but the goodness of the Lord is there. Then this picture of the seamen is especially helpful.

The metaphor of the storm can be seen in many ways. The storms of life may take a different form at different times.

The storm may be an economic storm—one which sweeps away your resources. The economy takes a terrific down turn and your financial situation undergoes a dramatic change. Such a storm will scare the life out of you, especially if you are at my stage in life.

The storm may be a spiritual hurricane that comes against your life. Without warning you find yourself faced with an attack from the enemy. It threatens to take you under.

The storm may be a physical storm—one that buries your good health. Suddenly each day becomes a trial as pain wrecks your body and saps a way your strength. Just to make it through the day becomes a challenge. You feel the limitations that ill health imposes on you—it is a real storm when you are used to sailing on the seas of good health.

The storm may be a relational storm—one that batters the very support system of your life.

The storm may be a political storm—one which leaves you in a very unpredictable situation

Whatever form the storm may take, you should not be surprised. They are to be expected along the way. They can bring you to Wits' End rather quickly. Wits' End is a place where you run out of wisdom; a place where you have more problems than you solutions; a place where your skills are not enough;

a place where all of your resources have been expended; a place in which you become painfully aware of your human limitations; a place where you experience a great need; a place where human solutions no longer work; a place where you discover just how much you need God.

God will bring all of us to wits' end sooner or later. This Psalm will help you know what to do when you come to wits' end.

As a general rule the greatest storms may come toward the end of life. The worst storm may be the bad health and the results of aging that comes as we get close to the end of the journey. Everything you have known about God may be put to the test in this storm.

You will know that you are there when life's answers no longer work. You will know you are there when the situation defies your ability and your wisdom.

I. WHEN YOU COME TO WIT'S END, GOD PUT YOU THERE.

In our materialistic and scientific world we are inclined to look for explanations that exclude God. The Biblical person always considers God when looking for an explanation. The Psalmist shares his certainty that God explains every thing. If you are at Wit's End, God put you there.

1. God chooses the timing of the storms.

God is sovereign over time. “This is the day that the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.”

“For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea.” He decides whether we will have smooth sailing or encounter a storm. There may seem to be a natural explanation for the storm, but behind the storm there is the presence of the supernatural.

Some hesitate to see the hand of God in the storms of life, but the Biblical view of God reveals a deity involved in all of life. He is sovereign over all of the events that we meet in life. He commands the storm and chooses the time that it will manifest itself.

2. God sets the limits on the storms.

“They mount up to the heavens; They go down again to the depths; Their soul melts because of the trouble.”

He determined how far Satan could go in testing Job. God always controls the size of the waves and the depth of the troughs that we go through. He will never allow us to be tempted about our ability to bear.

Why would God put you in the storm? Why would He bring you to wits' end? The ultimate purpose is hidden in the mind of God, but any experience of life that helps us realize our limitations and God's greatness is a good experience.

(1. He put you there to expose your limitations.

(2. He put you there to develop your character.

II. WHEN YOU COME TO WITS' END, GOD WILL NOT BE AT HIS WITS' END.

The sea is one of His “works” and is still under His control. Even the “devil” is God’s devil, according to Martin Luther. God does not share our limitations or our concerns.

1. God knows what to do.

Since God made the sea and made the storms, He knows what to do. They are no mystery to Him. He understands them thoroughly. He is never out of answers.

“He calms the sea.” All it takes from Him is a word.

You will remember what happened when Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee with his disciples. A sudden storm scared the life out of his disciples, even though some of them were seasoned fisherman who had made their living on this lake. They awoke him with their screams of fear, “Lord, do you not care that we are perishing?” They were at their Wits’ End, but He was not. He was perfectly calm and composed before the storm for He knew himself to be in charge.

2. God has the power to do it.

He knows how to speak just the word that will quiet storm. It will lay down at His feet in contentment. The storms are all his servants. He can stir them up or lay them down any time He pleases.

Disease is one of His servants.

Economies are His servants. They move gladly to do His will.

Circumstances are His servants. They perform as He commands them to perform, and change to conform to His will.

A. God's wisdom is inexhaustible.

B. God's power is more than adequate.

C. God's goodness is constant.

III. WHEN YOU COME TO WIT'S END, GOD WILL HEAR YOUR CALL.

“Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble!” Some men just cry out when the storm comes! They shout words of complaint, or words of fear, or words of desperation. But then some cry out to the Lord. They send an urgent petition toward heaven in a hurry.

1. He demonstrates His care.

“And He brings them out of their distresses.”

This is what Paul did when he was faced with shipwreck. He was on a ship bound for Rome when the storm broke. It went on for almost two weeks. The captain and his crew had done everything they knew, but nothing was helping—the storm just raged on. They threw valuable cargo overboard. They were so distressed that they gave up eating. They were at Wits' End.

But Paul had access to the Keeper of the Storms and the Master of the Seas. He came with a word of assurance that God had heard his cry, and had spoken. He had promised Paul that not one life would be lost! And Paul believed Him (Acts 27:25). He was sure that God would bring them out of the storm as He had promised.

2. He demonstrates His power.

“He calms the storm.”

3. He demonstrates His faithfulness.

“So He guides them to their desired haven.” The Psalmist was sure of the ways of the Lord with His people. He might send them into a horrible storm and bring them to Wits' End, but in the end He would bring them to their desired haven.

What is your ultimate destination? In the case of Paul it was Rome. For the disciples, it was probably Capernaum, which was on the other side of the

Lake. For us it is probably the heavenly Jerusalem—the city of God. Be assured, dear heart, God will bring you through. He will deliver you safely on heaven's shore.

4. He confirms His goodness.

Memories of such deliverance should stir God's people to joyful acknowledgement of His goodness. He makes the stop at Wits End a profitable experience, an enriching experience.

“Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness.”

The word goodness is repeated several times in this Psalm. Newer versions may translate it love, or lovingkindness. In the last verse of the Psalm it is translated “lovingkindness.” It is that wonderful Hebrew word *hesed*, which refers to God's covenant love. It is God being loyal to His people, God keeping His promises. God will bring us out and bring us through in such a way that we will be more keenly aware of His *hesed*, His love.

Alternate Outline

- I. WHEN WE ARE AT WITS END, WE REMEMBER GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY.
 1. He chooses the time of the storms.
 2. He controls the extent of the storms.

II. WHEN WE ARE AT WITS END, WE DISCOVER OUR
LIMITATIONS.

1. The limitations of our wisdom.
2. The limitations of our ability.
3. The limitations of our resources.

III. WHEN WE ARE AT WITS END, WE EXPERIENCE
GOD'S CARE.

1. He hears our prayer.
2. He meets our need.
3. He brings us through.