

Revelation 2
When I'm At My Wit's End
Pastor JD

KAPONO: Would you join me in a word of prayer? Lord, we thank You so much. Lord, we thank You for all You've done. And we declare, Lord, that You are the everlasting Lord, ruler of this kingdom that can never be destroyed. We thank You for this time that we can come together in prayer and also to learn, Lord. So would You take us to Your word and have us learn what it is that You have for us this evening, Lord? In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

PASTOR JD: Amen and amen. Good evening. You can be seated. So glad you're here tonight. Those of you online, we're so glad that you're joining with us. This is probably as good of a time as any, for those of you that are here to get the prayer list right up here. We've got some work to do tonight.

So I'm just making a couple of notes here. If you'll give me one second. I want to highlight a couple of things. Okay. So let me give you the drill. Oh, first, I should let you know that this Thursday, in a couple of days, is the 4th of July. And as I mentioned on Sunday, we're going to have not only the Bible study but communion as well. And we're in *Daniel Chapter 8*.

We're going to pick it up and resume our study through Daniel in what is, again, arguably one of the most profoundly prophetic chapters in the entire book. So much there. We're also going to, at the conclusion of the Bible study, partake together of communion. So we're hoping that you'll join with us as a church family on the 4th for our time together in God's word, *Daniel Chapter 8*, and then also for the communion celebration after.

I will do, by the grace of God, maybe I should throw in the word miraculously, finish early enough to get you — don't the fireworks start Kailua, 8:30? Okay, that's a good answer. So if they do start at 8:30, I'll do my best to get you there as close to 8:30-ish as I possibly can, heavy on the — very heavy on the ish and depending on how fast you drive, too, which I know you're law-abiding citizens and you'll drive the speed limit. As will I, of course. So that's this Thursday. Hope you're able to join with us. And happy 4th of July to all of you.

I want to start with a brief teaching tonight, something, again, the Lord has impressed upon my heart concerning prayer out of the Psalms. And then afterwards, I will open it up for corporate prayer. And then Pastor Mac will close, a closing prayer. And then, of course, Kaponu will come up and close in song.

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But I do want to open up the prayer meeting after the teaching with a powerful praise report, which I'm really looking forward to, but still not out of the woods. Really need prayer, two particular, prayer requests that I want to — well, I'm privileged to be able to open up the prayer meeting with.

And then I'm going to toss the baton to you. and as the Spirit leads please pray. The many who are on this prayer list have taken the time to ask us to pray for them, and I think that it warrants us taking the time to pray for them. And so that's where you come in. And we're going to do that tonight.

So what I want to talk with you about tonight is those times when you're at wit's end, as they say. You know what I'm talking about, where I mean, the bottom falls out, and, I mean, you're just at the end of yourself, and you're at your wit's end, and you don't know what to do. And everything you've tried to do has only made matters seemingly even worse. You know, as I was, praying through the prayer list — by the way, this is helpful to me. Maybe it'll be helpful to you, especially those of you that get this by way of email.

I go through them, and, of course, I'll read them first, and then I'll pray, you know, but I'm not going to re-pray them or pray read them. Let me try that again. I don't just read it, you know. No, I read it, and then I realize these are real people who have just reached their wit's end. Just a couple, even on the first page — don't look at them right now. You'll have plenty of time. Of course, that presupposes that I start and finish this brief teaching that I'm wanting to share with you.

The reason I'm wanting to do this is because I know there are many who are in this place called “wit's end,” and I want to provide all of us, myself included, by the way, encouragement, hope. Because sometimes — I know this might sound crazy, but wit's end can oftentimes be the best place that you can be. Because when you reach that place, God shows up.

And we're about to see that here in *Psalms 107*. And I want to draw your attention to *verse 23* where I want to start reading, and we'll go through to *verse 32*. The psalmist writes in *verse 23*, **“Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on great waters, they**

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see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. *[Now everything's good so far]*
[Would you agree?] [Then listen to verse 25] **For He commands and raises the stormy wind."**

Okay, wait. I was fine with doing business on a ship, on great waters, and in so doing, seeing the grand and glorious works of the Lord. But now you're telling me that it's God himself that commands, sends, raises the storm?

We see it in the Gospels. Jesus knowingly sends the disciples into the midst of a perilous storm there in the midst of the Sea of Galilee. And here they are in the storm of their life, hanging on for dear life in the middle of the Sea of Galilee, and yet they're in the middle of God's will for their lives.

I say that because oftentimes we do err greatly when we misinterpret or misunderstand adversity in our life as being synonymous with maybe being out of God's will for our life. You know, when everything is smooth sailing, we're all prone to think: wow, you must be, I must be in God's will. You know, everything's good right now. I'm just going to glide and abide.

And sometimes nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, those are the times where I get very concerned, when things are going too well. I think to myself, uh—oh, the storm's coming, and God's going to be the one that sends it.

You've probably heard it said. It's such a perky saying. Not really. That was sarcastic. You're either coming out of a storm or a trial, you're in the midst of a storm or trial, or you're about to go into a storm or trial. Doesn't that just bless your heart? Translated: You're going to be — the majority of your Christian life is going to be in the midst of the storm that God Himself commands and even sends.

Now it gets worse. So let me start over. *Verse 25, "For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens. [I don't know how many feet these waves are] They go down again to the depths. [Are you seasick yet?] [Does that sound like your life yet?]* **Their soul melts because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end."**

Oh my goodness, what an apt description of the life of a Christian. Would you agree? There's those times in life where times of uncertainty, you're up and down, and the waves

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are hitting and the storms of life, the trials of life — the one thing about waves — and I'm not a, you know, big water guy. My son Levi is. He tells me about it.

So this is — I'm learning this by proxy. He talks about how, you know, the waves just kind of hit one after the other. You know, I remember — I don't do this anymore because I would certainly be hospitalized if I tried — but I used to try to boogie board. That ship has sailed. That was a long time ago, and the dock, again, that that ship was docked to sunk. That's how long ago it was.

But I used to — I actually enjoyed it. I was starting to get the hang of it, you know, just little three footers. But you know, just boogie board — man, that high that you get when you just get that sweet spot, and I mean, you just glide in. It's kind of like, wow, I get to go back out. I'm just really enjoying this.

Well, one time, which was, by the way, the last time, it wasn't so fun. That wave just pummeled me nose first into the sand, and I'm trying to gasp for breath, and I'm, you know, (gurgle sound) Then boom! Here comes another wave. I'm like, five feet from shore, you know, Kailua Beach, right? You know, I'm screaming like a — I was going to say, girl. That's probably not appropriate. You know, oh, God, what are You doing?

And that's what we do when the trials and waves and storms of life hit. And the trials and the waves, and the storms of life hit, do they not? And I mean, you're just getting pummeled, and you just keep going down. And this, wording translated from the original of “their soul melts,” it has this idea of your heart sinking, your soul melting, hope melting away that you're going to ever get out of this thing.

And then if that weren't bad enough, you're so staggered by this trial. You're reeling to and fro. Your head is spinning. You're so disoriented. Trials have a way of disorienting you. You just gotta kind of get your bearings straight, as they say because this thing has just hit so hard, and you weren't ready for it. You weren't steady for it.

And here it comes out of the middle of nowhere, and it hits. It might come in the way of a phone call that you would never want to be on the receiving end of, or an email, or a text, or someone at the door, or a diagnosis at the doctor's office. It comes in many forms, but adversity strikes.

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And I want you to hang on to *verse 25* because it's going to be germane to our understanding of why God allows these storms. And what I mean by that is He's the one that sent it in a in the first place. He's the one that commanded it. He's the one that orchestrated it. He's the one that allowed it.

Now, why would God allow something like this to happen to me? Because He's got a purpose. He has a plan, and you have no idea what He has in mind because who knows the mind of the Lord.

And it's almost as if God — and it's not that God doesn't want us to know or He's keeping it from us. It's that God can't let us know because there's no way that an infinite God could communicate to a finite man His purpose, His plan, His mind, His will, what He's wanting to accomplish in the midst of this storm that you're in that He sent you into.

I still marvel at the accounts in the Gospels where Jesus, again, knowingly sends the disciples — that one in particular, where He says immediately — this is after the feeding of the multitudes. He's protecting them from a greater trial of pride, protecting them from the destruction that always ensues from pride.

Because if I'm there, and we just got done miraculously feeding what some believe to be, at least conservatively, 20,000 people — because, you know, in the Scriptures it records only the men, 4000, the multitude, the feeding of 4000, the feeding of 5000. Well, you add to that their wives and their keiki, and you got 20,000 people conservatively. And you got a boy's lunch, sack lunch that his mom made, had no idea that it was going to feed that many people.

And here they are, putting their hands in the basket, miraculously witnessing the multiplying of the fish and loaves and the leftovers even. And how interesting the detail of Jesus saying, hey, gather the leftovers. If I'm there, I'm thinking, Jesus, listen, no need. Let them take them home, you know, doggy bag, you know, the take-home box, *[What do they call them now?]* *[I don't get out much]* Because we could just do this tomorrow again.

No, there's a reason why He had them do that. There's — that's another sermon for another time. But here's my point. He got them immediately, with an urgency into that boat and on to that Sea of Galilee to get them to the other side.

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And you don't see this word very often associated with Jesus, the word "immediately." I never see Jesus in a hurry. In the Gospels, I never see Jesus late for an appointment, like, oh, hey, sorry I was late; got a lot of people I had to heal. The crowds were bigger than I thought. Sorry.

You know, I never see Him running late or, you know, hurrying. He's never in a hurry. But this time He is. Why is He in a hurry? What's the urgency? Well, He wants to get them to the other side of the Sea of Galilee and away from the multitudes because had they stayed there, that would have been the greater trial.

My point is this: Sometimes God will allow the storm, command the storm, send that trial into our lives, if for no other reason other than to protect us from the greater trial. Had they stayed where they were at, they would have started the First Church of the Feeding of the Multitudes or the Second Church of the Feeding of the Multitudes. And then they would have a split, and it would be the Third Church of the Feeding of the Multitudes. They would have stayed right there. They would have had an instant mega-church.

And Jesus knew it because they would then have become filled with pride, full of themselves, having fancied themselves as this miracle having to do with themselves. So what does He do? He gets them out of there to protect them from themselves. He gets them in the boat immediately.

He says, I'll meet you on the other side. Sends them into the Sea of Galilee. It's not long before right there in the middle of the Sea of Galilee, as is often the case, by the way, storms can come out of nowhere. It's a really interesting — for those of you that have been to Israel with us, the boat ride in the Sea of Galilee, one of the highlights of the trip. But storms can come out of nowhere.

Thank God all the times I've been on the Sea of Galilee, no storm has hit. I prayed, please, God, this would not be a good time for a storm. We already got the gospel account. I think we're good. We don't need a real, live repeat of that account. So calm. Beautiful. Oh, my goodness, just serene. But everything was fine. Then all of a sudden, boom! Out of nowhere, here comes this storm.

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And they're terrified. And they're basically thinking, this is it. They're at their wit's end. And then out of nowhere, here comes a figure. And they're even more terrified because they didn't know it was Jesus. The details in the text tell us they thought it was a ghost. And Jesus, knowing that, says, hey, it's Me!

And this is the account when Peter says, **“Lord, if it's You, bid me come.”** And then he walks on the water, and then he takes his eyes off the Lord and looks at the storm. And then he sinks. And **“Lord, save me!”**

And thank God, God answers three-word prayers. So He saved him. And you know the whole, the whole account. But here they are. And I wonder what — if there was a conversation with Jesus because, by the way, they made it to the other side. That alone should be of great encouragement.

You're going to make it through to the other side you know; you're not going to perish in the middle of that trial. That's just not going to happen. You're going to get to the other side. It's going to be a little bit interesting. Buckle up. Hang on for dear life. You're going to have the time of your life but it's not going to be the end of your life. You're going to make it through that storm. They make it to the other side.

Now, if I was there — probably not, but just for purposes of illustration, I would say, Lord, You sent us into that storm knowing there was going to be a storm. Why did You do that? I'm not getting a witness here on this, am I? And Jesus' answer would be because I wanted you to learn a couple of things: First, that I was protecting you from the greater trial that had you'd stayed. And secondly, that I'm with you in the storm and that I will see you through that storm even when that storm is so perilous that your soul melts, your heart sinks, and you're at wit's end.

Now here's where it gets good. *Verse 28.* **“Then [Key word] they cry out to the Lord in their trouble.”**

Isn't that how it is? If we're honest with ourselves, it's only when the storm hits that we have the word, **“then”** we cry out to the Lord. See, absent the storm, absent the prayer. Present the storm, present the prayer.

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You know how it works. When things are going good, it's all smooth sailing as they say. Well, your prayers are pretty generic, you know. Lord, bless me, bless this, bless them, bless that. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Well then, let adversity strike. Now we're getting real. Oh, God! Loving Father in heaven, hearken unto the voice of my cry, O God. Who is like unto You, O God?

I just picture God in heaven going, it's about time. I'm sorry it had to take a trial to bring you to this then so that you would come to Me and cry out to Me in your time of trouble. Now, what happens when we do that, when we cry out to Him? **“He brings them out of their distresses. [Verse 29] He calms the storm, so that its waves are still.”**

God is the God of the storm. You know, when Jesus comes walking on the water, He's walking on the very thing that they are terrified of. Why? Because He's the God of the storm. He's the God over the storm.

When — you know when He's sleeping — remember the other account? Man, these guys must have spent a lot of time in that boat. Well, there's another account when — Jesus, this time, is in the boat with them in the storm. And what is Jesus doing? The Savior of the world, what's He doing? He's sleeping.

You know the text tells us they had to wake Him up. And it was kind of like, Lord, how could You sleep at a time like this? Don't you know we're going to die? We're all going to die. Look at you. You're sleeping! I mean, I know You're tired, but You're sleeping. And Jesus is like, man, you ruined a really good nap. I needed to catch a little bit of shut eye, and He just makes the storm stop.

And they're like, who is this that can command the storm to stop and calm the storm and still the waves? That's because He's the God of the storm. Would to God that in our times of distress, we would cry out to the Lord, that that would be our first response and not our last resort.

Because there's nobody we can call or text or email that is going to be of any help to us. I mean, you're going to waste at least an hour, conservatively, at least an hour, minimum, just trying to bring them up to speed about what it is that you're going through this trial that has hit your life. The Lord already knows it. So you've saved an hour right there.

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So don't call them and say, man, okay, so this happened, this happened... You just call upon the name of the Lord. You say, Lord. And Lord's going, yeah, I've been expecting your call. I'm the one who sent it because that's the only time I hear from you is when you need Me, when you're in trouble. That's the only time you call Me. So I send the trouble because I just want to hear your voice. Because we haven't talked in a while.

This is Ecclesiastes 7:14. We've talked about it often, where Solomon writes that, you know, during times of prosperity, when things are going good, enjoy it. Don't feel guilty about it. Praise the Lord. But when, not if, when adversity strikes, stop and consider. God's got your attention now, doesn't He?

See, God allows the prosperity alongside with the adversity so that man will always be reliant upon Him. Because isn't it true that when things are good during times of prosperity, it kind of lullabies us into a spiritual slumber, like it's always going to be like that, where we start sort of putting our trust in that season of smooth sailing?

And it comes at a cost. And the cost is our relationship and intimacy and closeness with the Lord. So God, that's why God brings alongside the prosperity because God brings the prosperity, but so too does He bring the adversity.

And by the way, the sooner we as Christians become more comfortable with adversity than prosperity, the better. And I'll explain why that is. Prosperity is more difficult for a Christian to handle than is adversity.

It is a rare Christian that can handle prosperity and still maintain a closeness to the Lord because the tendency is that that prosperity takes us away from the Lord, and adversity is what brings us closer to the Lord, on our face before the Lord, not prosperity. We learn more during times of distress and difficulty, and trials and storms and adversity than we do during times of prosperity, times of ease.

You look through Scripture, and you need look no further than the likes of King David, when he was at the most prosperous time of his life as King of Israel. And so prosperous is King David that he doesn't, as kings would, he decides to just kind of rest on his laurels, enjoyed the fruits of his labors, and just stay back in his palace and not go off to war. And this is a man of war.

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And it's during this time that he commits adultery with Bathsheba that leads to the murder of Uriah, her husband. You know, idle hands are still the devil's workshop. And the busier we are in the Spirit, the less time we have for the flesh.

You know, the sin of Sodom was their prosperity. I mean, surely it was their sexual immorality which led to all this time they had on their hands because of their prosperity. We get into more trouble during times of ease. But during times of trouble, that's when we come close to the Lord.

I wonder sometimes, if the Lord just is, I guess, for lack of a better way of saying it, on standby, just waiting at the ready, knowing he's going to call upon Me. He's going to cry out to Me in this storm that I sent so he would. And I'm going to immediately respond and bring him out, sometimes through that trial, that distress. I'm going to calm that storm. I'm going to still those waves.

And then *verse 30* is where we're heading in our prayer meeting tonight. **“Then they are glad because they are quiet.”**

I like that word “quiet,” by the way. So today I had an appointment. I showed up early, and, you know, I did it deliberately because I just wanted to sit in quiet. No phone. No 1,500 emails every day. No 825 text messages. No nothing. I just wanted to be quiet so I could hear that still, quiet, small voice of the Holy Spirit. I needed the volume turned down. And I had a good 30 minutes that I would not have otherwise had. I think — I forget who it was, but it's three S's. Solitude, silence, and — I knew I'd forget the third one. It's a gift.

Try this. Talk about easier said than done. Try to get alone, and in that quiet time, we call them, with just silent solitude with the Savior. It is so hard, especially in this world that we're living in now with all the competing time demands that we have, the clamoring of all of those voices for our attention. It is — the hardest work is to just have that quiet time.

And when you do, — listen to the rest of *verse 30*, **“So He guides them to their desired haven.”**

You know what I see here, not so easily seen at first read? Were it not for that storm, were it not for me praying and crying out to the Lord in that storm, I would have never otherwise

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seen God calm the storm. How's He going to calm a storm that's not a storm? How's He going to still the waves that aren't just crashing in?

And I taste from the cup of the joy of the Lord, those quiet times where He guides me to my desired haven, a safe haven, a safe sanctuary, a place that I could not have otherwise been guided to had it not been that storm.

Have you ever had a trial in your life where, though you would never want to have to go through it again, you wouldn't trade what God did in that trial for anything? You know what I'm talking about, right?

Of course, that's always after. I've coined it — well I pray, Lord, remind me of the after: before and during. You know what I mean? Because I always forget about “after” because already in this storm in the midst of this storm. During the storm, even before the storm, it's like, Lord, remind me that there's an “after.”

After, what's the after? That desired haven, that quiet. And then *verse 31* is the direction that I want for us to go in the prayer meeting tonight because the psalmist writes, **“Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! Let them [*Listen to this, verse 32*] exalt Him also in the assembly of the people, [*That's here, the assembly of the saints, the church*] and praise Him in the company of the elders.”**

There's something about public prayer, corporate prayer, church prayer. There's something about — in the assembly of God's people, like a prayer meeting here tonight where we lift up our voices and we give thanks to the Lord for His goodness. I think our prayers are lacking in the area of thanksgiving, praise and thanksgiving.

I think our prayers oftentimes are riddled with petitions. Nothing wrong with that. But they're lopsided prayers. I think our prayers need to have a, a balance between the adoration of God, the awe of God, thanking God, praising God, then petitioning His throne, and then glorifying God.

I mean, what kind of a relationship would it be with your children if the only time they ever talked to you was when they had a list of things they needed from you (Struggling to get words out) and never said thank you?

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And oh, by the way, the Lord takes notice of that. You remember the ten lepers that He healed? And only one came back after he was healed and thanked the Lord for healing him.

And I find it very fascinating that God would deem it necessary to have that account rise to the level of being included in the inspired canon of Scripture, that God notices when people are thankful. And He says, wait a minute, let Me count how many there are of you. One. Where are the other nine? I healed nine. Only one comes back and says thank you?

There are two words in many forms that are the most powerful words in the English language, as faulty as it is. One of those two words are, "thank you." — And the other of those two words are, "I'm sorry." And "genuine."

Listen, don't try to manufacture it. People can see right through you if it's disingenuous. It's kind of like, I'm sorry. (Very cold tone)

Wow, that was very sincere. I could just feel such a heartfelt... No you're not. And by the way, you're sorry because you got caught. It's not a godly sorrow that leads to a genuine repentance.

No, you'll know that it's a godly sorrow when it's evidenced by a genuine change. All repentance means — I think this word has just been twisted into a pretzel, a scriptural pretzel that is so far beyond its meaning — It just means to change your mind, to do a 180, to turn around, to change your mind. And when you change your mind and repent, God changes your heart.

So what I'm hoping we can do tonight — I just want to share one more thing and then we will — What I'm hoping we can do tonight is exalt the Lord in the assembly of this prayer meeting and praise Him. Surely we're going to petition His throne for the many needs on behalf of those who have asked us to pray, but let's not forget to thank Him. Oh, how much we have to be thankful for, just even the little things.

Yeah, but Pastor, I'm really struggling. I'm at my wit's end.

Oh, but you still have something to thank Him for. And sometimes there needs to be a much-needed change in our perspective. You know that saying: That I complained about my shoes being too tight until I saw a guy with no leg. That puts it into perspective.

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The world has a saying for it. That's a paradigm shift. That's where you, where you all of a sudden, I mean, just all of a sudden, you snap back, you come back to your senses. Here I am complaining about this. And look at that. Oh, forgive me Lord. Thank You, Lord, that I still have both my legs. I take them for granted.

Thank God for — thank You Lord, for my fingers. How would I text if I didn't have fingers? How would I... No?

Okay. I hope that we could do that tonight. Let's petition the throne. But let's praise the Lord as well. All right, I want to turn a corner, and I'll bring it in for a close. But before I do, I want to talk a bit about those storms in life that push us beyond wit's end.

You know what I mean by that? I mean you're way past wit's end. Wit's end? I'll take wit's end. I'm way past that. This thing is so hopeless. I feel so helpless. I'm not at wit's end. Wit's end was like two weeks ago. I'm way past that. This storm, now this storm is how it ends.

Can I draw your attention to what is one of the most stunning accounts recorded in Scripture that speaks to this having hope in the storm when you're pushed past wit's end? And it comes out of *Acts 27*, get this, with none other than the Apostle Paul, who had a PhD in shipwrecks. He was a pro at it. And when we hit *Acts 27*, he is now in his fourth shipwreck, or about to be. You would think, after surviving three shipwrecks [*I'll just speak for myself, okay?*] [*I'll take one for the team*]

If I've been shipwrecked three times, you're not getting me on another ship. I'm over it. I'm done. Hey, you want to get on the ship? No. I'm good. I've been shipwrecked three times and you want me to get on another ship? No, I can take a hint. You know, three shipwrecks, and here he is on another ship. God put him on that ship. And here comes the storm. And this storm is so bad that even the Apostle Paul has given up hope.

Now, *verse 20* of *Acts 27* really is the — kind of the zenith, the — you know, of when, after, for days — I mean, they're throwing all their food overboard. They're trying to strap this thing together. The lifeboats: Those things were long gone.

And, I mean, this thing just keeps raging, and the waves keep crashing. And these are seasoned seamen. I mean, they know what they're doing. This isn't their first rodeo. It's

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Paul's fourth, actually. But they know what they're doing. I mean, they're throwing over all of the equipment, all of their supplies, just to lighten the load, just to survive. And everything they do is to no avail.

Now, we're told in *verse 20*, **“When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days...”** [*How many days?*] [*I don't know, but many sounds like too many*] **“... and the storm continued raging...”**

This thing would not let up. You're on this ship. How are you sleeping? First of all, who's eating? Who's going to have an appetite? And then even if you did, we already threw the food overboard. So you're not eating. Are you sleeping? I don't think so. You're just hanging on for dear life for many days. And this storm just keeps raging.

And it is so bad that Luke, by the Holy Spirit, writes the following. And I want you to pay particular attention to two words. **“...we finally gave up all hope of being saved.”**

Did you catch that? Who's **“we”**? Luke, Paul, and Aristarchus. We, all of us. Finally. The word **“finally”** infers that they were hanging on to hope but they came to wit's end, pushed past wit's end, they just finally said, we ain't making it out of this one. This is how it ends. And they gave up all hope. There's no hope at all that we're going to survive this thing.

And again, if that word **“we”** wasn't there, this wouldn't pack as much punch. But it is. Because the **“we”** includes none other than Paul, who had already survived three shipwrecks. But this storm was the storm that even Paul thought: This is it.

Now, here's Paul; imagine he's resigned himself to the reality that this is not only how his life will end, but it's also when his life will end. But God. **“But God [*As only He can*] sent Paul a reminder.”**

Stop right there. You know, we need to be reminded because we forget. This Thursday, we're going to partake together of communion, as is our privilege to, the first Thursday of every month. And Jesus says, when you do this, **“...as often as you do this, do this in remembrance of Me.”**

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It's a commemoration and a celebration. Why? Because we forget. What do we forget? We're saved. We live our lives like Jesus didn't die on the cross to purchase our eternal lives. Did you forget? Oh, yeah. This isn't — this is — this is as bad as it gets.

Doubtless you've heard the saying that for the Christian, this is the most hell we'll ever know. And for the non-Christian, sadly, this is, conversely, the most Heaven they will ever know. And again, it's that reminder that this is not my final destination. So we need to be reminded because we forget.

And notice the detail. We're told in the text that he's reminded. He, Paul, is reminded in that dark night. The night — you know those nights it's so dark, the storm's so bad, you can't see any stars.

And by the way, that was how they navigated in that day. The compass, the navigation equipment had never been invented yet. That's how they knew what direction they were going. They're aimless. They can't see stars. They have no idea where they're at. They have no hope of surviving the storm. It's so dark. They don't see any stars. They don't see any moonlight.

And in the dark anguish of the night, that's when the messenger comes. The angel of the Lord comes to Paul and reminds him of something that he apparently forgot. What did Paul forget? Well, apparently Paul forgot that he was to go before Caesar in Rome, which is where that ship was on route to.

Listen to *Acts 27:23-25*. This is Paul now telling everybody on board who were — there already writing letters which will probably never reach their loved ones. I love you. Sorry I wasn't a better father. You know, my passwords and login credentials are in the safe. And the combination — anyway... I mean, this is it. Get your affairs in order. We're done. It's just a matter of time.

Paul stands up and says, **“Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, Do not be afraid.”**

Those four words are a word fitly spoken for maybe someone tonight. Do not be — maybe better said, you have nothing to be afraid of. You have nothing to fear. **“Paul. You must**

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stand trial before Caesar. [Remember?] And God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you. So keep up your courage, men."

Wait a minute. Three verses, or whatever, earlier they had all finally given up all hope. And now here is Paul: Renewed strength, renewed hope, renewed courage. Why? Because he was reminded of the promise of God that he forgot. If God says you're going to stand trial before Caesar, guess what? You're going to stand trial before Caesar.

Yeah, but this promise might be the first promise in the history of mankind that does not come to pass because we're all going to perish in this storm. No, it's not. You'll get there. I just have a detour on your itinerary.

"So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me."

[Congregant says, "Amen!"]

And it did. I mean, can you imagine? The guys are going, Okay, wait, wait. So we're going to make it? Yeah. Your God told you that? Yeah. You God promised you that? Yeah. I'd like to know more about your God. You will. Wait till we crash on the island of Malta and all of the islanders get saved. You're going to get saved, too.

And not only that, [*Only God could do this*] God gets Paul through this storm and to the house of Caesar for the salvation of those in the house of Caesar. And this could have never happened had it not been for that storm.

Never, ever, ever underestimate why it is that God has allowed that storm in your life. He is going to do things that you could have never imagined that he could not have otherwise done. You think that — you know, even on the island of Malta today — you can go visit it — there's still strong Christians there, sound, solid believers, brothers and sisters in Christ because of this shipwreck on the island of Malta.

You know the account. It's — I mean, had that ship not wrecked and those islanders, those locals not gotten saved, and then they get on another ship, and sure enough he makes it to Rome, stands trial before Caesar. And then I'll end with this.

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Philippians 4:21-22. And this should give every single one of us, myself included, so much hope when we come to that place where we're at wit's end. Here's Paul signing off at the end of his letter to the church of Philippi.

Listen to what he says now. We usually read past, fast, the ending, like the credits at the end of a movie. Who sticks around eating popcorn? Wow, I want to see the — wait there's credits — shh. Nobody. No, we leave.

Well, these are the credits. This is the ending, and they're scrolling. Don't read past those because there's something in them, and such is the case here, *verse 21, Philippians 4*. **“Greet every saint...”** *[He's in Rome, here, writing to the Philippians]* **“Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, but especially [Listen to this] those who are of Caesar's household.”**

What? He makes it to Rome. This is his fourth shipwreck and final shipwreck. Thank God. I'm exhausted with all the shipwrecks. Anyway, he makes it to Rome and Caesar's household comes to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Hum. I wonder if that's what God had in mind all along? How do you know that God doesn't have you in that place for such a time as this?

Because He's got those in Caesar's household that He's going to use you — He'll get you there. It's just not going to be on a cruise ship. It's not going to be the way you think, how you think, when you think. It's not going to be smooth sailing. He'll get you there His way, in His time, and for His glory. Let me close. God's going to see you through. He'll never forget you. He'll never leave you. He'll never forsake you.

Think about this. God's got a lot invested in you, you know. You're an investment. How much did He invest? Everything. How much did it cost to make this investment? Everything. His life. He's your anchor of hope. He sent the storm to begin with. He's controlling the storm. He's the God of the storm. And He truly cares about that storm you're in even when you're at wit's end. You take heart, and you be encouraged, and you wait.

Psalms 27:13-14. I love it. It's what I call the 'Just wait. You'll see' psalm. David is just at wit's end. He says, **“I had almost given up, had it not been for remaining confident that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.”**

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And then he has a talk with himself. Not self-talk. That's different. They have institutional terms for that. This is not self-talk. This is having a talk with himself. And throughout the Psalms you see this. It's like, boy, sit down. Why be of such — in such despair? You will again have reason to praise the Lord, *Psalm 42 and 43*.

In *Psalm 27:14*, he says, **“Take heart.”**

He's telling himself, take heart. Sometimes, I think we just need to look at ourselves in the mirror. I don't — I don't want to do that. It's not — it doesn't work for me. I used to, but now it's — anyway... Just, you need to talk to yourself.

JD, be of good courage. Wait on the Lord. Be strong and wait on the Lord and you will see. Just wait. You'll see. Yeah, but I don't know what — this just doesn't look good.

Yeah, but it may not look good, but God is good.

Yeah, but this is really bad.

Yeah, but no matter how bad it is, it cannot change how good God is.

Okay, I'm going to stop yelling at you. I hope that's of some help to you, especially if you're going through a really rough time, you're at wit's end.

There's an “after,” and you have no idea if — I love when God says — I forget to who it is — even if I told you, you wouldn't believe it. It's kind of like God — it's like God wants to tell us. But He says, no, it's too unbelievable. If I told you what I've got in store for you in and through this storm that I sent into your life, you wouldn't believe Me even if I told you. It's just so off the charts.

Okay. I want to open up the prayer meeting. And I'm going to start with, actually, Walt and Kate. We affectionately refer to this brother and sister: Walt and Kate plus eight. They have eight children. They have a place on the mainland in Oregon and a place here. So they're here when they're here.

Well, I got a text on Wednesday and — was this Wednesday? Yeah, from Kate about their daughter, Elena, who was in an accident where she was taken by ambulance after a two-foot-wide log rolled over her back and head at the lake.

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So I immediately had Gail and Jessica put them on the prayer list. Kept asking for updates. Kate told me she had a lacerated spleen and broken teeth [*Six*], was admitted overnight [*This is now on Wednesday*] and was waiting to see a trauma surgeon. So I keep checking back. I try not to be a pest, by the way, when you know, something like this, a crisis like this happens.

And, but we do get it out to all of our prayer warriors. So I just reached out to them again. She's out of surgery and did amazingly well. Praise the Lord. Eating and drinking and smiling. What a gift to have our girl back. She was a few millimeters away from being a paraplegic. God spared her. A year of recovery ahead.

Walt got here last night. A lot of pain last night, but under control now. Moving out of ICU. Please keep praying. How's Kellie? [*That's just like Kate*] How's Kellie? [*No. How are —*] [*Kellie's a trooper*] [*This is the priority*]

So she's going to be in a body brace. Now, this was, Wednesday — no, Friday morning, early. She, at this point, was going to be in a body brace for three months at all times except sleep. Rods and screws for six months, minimum. Then, I emailed her back, and she said, *Psalm 27:14* [*The one we just talked about*] was the verse she was meditating on as she went under. And then she got the report that the rods and screws are probably going to be in her forever [*Get this*] till that trumpet sounds.

[Applause]

This is a miracle. Anyway, I wish I could show you the pictures. They went home [*This is — this*] [*Only God could do this*] on Sunday. And she's walking. And I have pictures of her standing. Her — completely crushed, pulverized. Rods and — absolute miracle. So I want to start by praying for her.

Then the second one I'm going to pray for — and then I'm going to turn it over to you guys. And then Mac will close. And but I'm going to pass the prayer baton to you. The other one I want to pray for, to open up the prayer time is for Anastasia. And this one, of course, got my attention. She's six weeks old and diagnosed with Trisomy 18, [*Which is what our daughter, Noelle was diagnosed with*] and she's currently in a neonatal intensive care unit. Difficult path. [*I know all about this*] [*My wife and I know this all too well*]

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Have to be fed by tubes. *[My wife and I used to take shifts]* Around-the-clock care. Asking for prayers for their daughter, Anastasia, with Trisomy 18.

So I'm going to pray for these two. You're welcome to as well. But when I'm done, we'll just go ahead and turn off the AC. In fact, let's do that now so we don't forget. So — and we're also going to end the livestream after I'm done praying. Thank you for joining us. Hope you were encouraged. So let's pray.

Father in heaven, I first of all, I just thank You for Walt and Kate and their friendship — they're friends of this ministry, and they're such a blessing. Their whole family, all of their eight adult children are just amazing. But Lord, You, for only reasons You know, allowed this to happen. And you performed a miracle. And what a powerful testimony.

And Lord, certainly You must have something in mind for all of them as a family to go through this. But who knows Your mind, O Lord? So Lord, we just want to continue to pray for them for a continued, miraculous, speedy recovery that is so unmistakably You that all of the surgeons and physicians will be baffled, knowing that it wasn't them, that this had to be the hand of Almighty God.

Lord, I pray for there to be no fear, no anxiety, or trepidation about the long road ahead because it will be long and painful and difficult, and perhaps even riddled with setbacks. But O God, You're so faithful. Thank You for saving her life, sparing her life, and Lord, doing this miracle just within a matter of days after such a catastrophic accident. So thank You, Lord, for them. We continue to pray for them.

For Anastasia, this is a heartbreaking one, but yet You allowed it in Your sovereignty for reasons only You know. And by faith, this precious family with their Trisomy 18 girl, six weeks old, You're there with them in that storm, and You'll see them through in ways that they could have never imagined.

So thank You, Lord, for the privilege that is ours to be able to pray for these precious people that have asked us to pray. Would You now hear from on high as we pray together as a church, thanking You and praising You in the midst of the assembly, giving You all the glory due Your holy name. Lord, thank You. Thank You. In Jesus' name. Thank You, Lord.