

...FOR THOSE SEEKING THE EMPOWERING PRESENCE OF THE *Holy Spirit*

LutheranRenewal

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THE STORM WARRIOR'S MISSION

By Mahesh Chavda

The apostle Paul demonstrates this storm warrior lifestyle. His testimony through shipwrecks and arrests and hunger and prison was not just a story of personal survival or ministry success.

Because Paul was in tune with the Holy Spirit's frequency, he could offer prophetic insight. "Men:" he said, "I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives" (Acts 27:10). The captain and crew considered their own knowledge of the sea superior to this preacher tentmaker's viewpoint. They ignored Paul's advice and set out in a soft southerly wind.

Lessons in the Storm

Storms can be the vehicle God uses to reveal the hindrances and attachments that are weighing us down and preventing us from completing the mission He has planned for our lives. Storms will come. Both in the natural and the spiritual, there will be storms. Here are some "quick tips" in this story that help us stay focused.

1. Go with the Flow

When the tempestuous headwind arose, the little ship could not make headway. So the crew "let her drive." There will be times that you may feel as though you are being tossed about or even blown off course. Yet the response when circumstances are beyond your control might be to go with the flow.

It is better to let the storm carry you rather than wearing yourself out struggling mentally or emotionally against every new difficulty.

2. Give Yourself Permission to Relax

God will provide islands of refreshing in the midst of the storm that serve as an intermediate refuge. It does you no good to refuse rest because you feel either "super spiritual" or guilty! Get your mind off the battle and come back refreshed and clearheaded.

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3. Let Go of All Options but God

You might find yourself seeking a dinghy to hop in and row out of difficulty. Beware of the temptation to cling to an escape backward, thinking that if you retreat the devil will leave you alone. This is a time for you to become an intercessor to usher God's glory into the lives of those around you in the storm.

4. Shore Up Your Foundations

There is no substitute for your personal relationship with Jesus! There is no substitute for your personal relationship with the Holy Spirit! And there is no substitute for your personal relationship with the Bible! When the storms of life strain and stress your ship, strengthen your foundations.

5. Strike Sail

Cease to insist on personal ambition. Sometimes personal plans, prejudices, traditions, opinions or agendas act as a mighty mainsail, catching the gale force of opposing winds. Insistence on keeping those mainsails aloft in the face of a storm can bring a whole family, a whole church congregation, a whole people into ruin.

6. Lighten the Ship

Prioritize: Kingdom first, family second, sinners and saints third, self last. *"Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us"* (Hebrews 12:1, KJV).

Your weaknessesóthat "extra baggage"ówill come to the surface in times of opposition and difficulty. Toss that stuff overboard. Old hurts, bitterness, crippling memories and past failures should be hurled into the sea of God's forgetfulness.

7. Hold Only a Few Necessary Things

Do not wait for someone else to come along and tell you to get your act together. There are really only a few things necessary for life: food and shelter. Oftentimes depression and discouragement come from being too weighed down with the "affairs of this life".

8. Hang on!

"Having done all ... stand" (Ephesians 6:13). There will be a point where all natural and human resource and ability come to an end. At those times, however, the presence of a Spirit-filled believer is a lifeline into a different realm. Paul was that lifeline, bringing hope, encouragement and instruction from heaven that preserved the lives of all.

9. Keep Your Personal Disciplines

Paul kept his faith vital. His life of discipline sharpened his spiritual discernment, and because of it he was able to give practical recommendations to the men who ran the ship. A storm warrior should be established in regular spiritual disciplines



10. Give God Glory and Others Comfort

The true prophetic spirit is the Spirit of Christ. He was clear, full of truth and yet did not always have to be talking or even have the last word. Likewise, Paul knew when it was time to speak and when it was time to remain quiet. When he did speak, Paul said, *“Take heart.”* He was an emissary of grace and truth. You are anointed with the same grace to comfort, edify and encourage.



11. Realize You Are Not Alone

Paul's confidence was in the Captain who guided his life through the storm. We are never alone. The mighty Captain of angel armies is with us at all times.

12. Do Not Be Afraid

The Spirit that is in you is greater than all other power. *“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”* (2 Timothy 1:7). When everyone else is in a panic, turning inward and intent on saving him or herself, the believer is an anchor in the storm.

13. Complete Your Mission

God had a mission for Paul. He has a mission for you and He desires that you fulfill it. Storms and circumstances will not prevent God's blessings. Jesus is looking for men and women who will be faithful to the end no matter what comes against them.

14. Stay Faithful

The storm warrior is unwavering in his faith. When the voice of the Lord came to Paul he was able to receive heavenly direction and practical wisdom. Into the fear and hopelessness, Paul gave voice to the Captain of his heart.



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Mahesh will be speaking at the August 6-9, 2008 Holy Spirit Conference, **“He Who Promised is Faithful.”**



Back TO THE Future

by Paul Anderson

We live with three time zones before being transported into eternity: the past, the present, and the future. *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever”* (Heb. 13:8). So He can help us relate to what stands behind us, what is upon us, as well as what is yet to come. Without His grace, our connection with any of these zones becomes distorted.

THE PAST

We worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We take our cue from history and observe the faithfulness of God to our forefathers. The Hebrews appreciated history because God acted in it. The Bible gives us stories of real

families who encountered God in time and space. A respect for their elders demonstrates their dignity for yesterday. They gave names to places where God showed up so they wouldn't forget His impeccable record. Monuments to the past, such as a pile of stones, were building blocks for their future. Those boring chapters of the generations prove their romance with the ages. We put our family records in scrapbooks; theirs are preserved in Holy Writ. Blessings and curses on the third and fourth generation mean less to us—until we need deliverance. They would not buy the lie that any man is an island.

The Scriptures relate ancestry to destiny. Family trees are not dismissed as incidental or accidental. We rejoice in the faith of our fathers, and it predisposes us toward a rich tomorrow. Jews celebrate the past with great festivals because they propel them into the future. We mark special events so that we don't forget what predecessors have learned in the past. Moses exhorted those on the brink of the Jordan in his final sermon, “Do not forget...” Only the fool walking into the future disregards the past. To forget the past is to repeat it—the worst part of it.



Some skeptics say that it doesn't matter whether Christ actually rose from the dead. The important truth, they argue, is that He rises up in our hearts. Such disdain of history would never occur to a Jew. Truth is anchored in a sure past, as the phrase, “...as it is written,” suggests, giving hope for the future. The past is our friend. The “now” generation stumbles through the poverty of the present, hopelessly detached from its past.

But those carrying the pain of the past into the present cannot appreciate yesterday either. Regret condemns its victims to an unhappy present. While we are commanded to remember the past, we must not keep unhealthy emotional ties to it, or we cannot escape from its controlling grasp. To live in either its glory or shame yields the same bitter fruit—

discouragement. When we live in yesterday, time flies—with a broken wing. I once asked a sister, broken by sorrow, how she dealt with the tyranny of yesterday. I knew she embraced her healing when she announced, “I don't look back.”

Protestants, in particular, must remember that church history did not commence in 1517. Our roots go deep in the early church fathers to those who hammered out creedal statements in the midst of controversy. We claim St. Ignatius and St. Augustine as our family.

We need a relationship with our past. Jesus said, *“Do this in remembrance of me.”* Paul wrote that he was *“forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead”* (Phil. 3:13). Talk about a forward look. And yet the same apostle told us that the past instructs us: *“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us...”* (1 Cor. 10:11). So futurists cannot cut the chord with the past, or they drift with no anchor.

THE PRESENT

God is the great “I am,” not the “I was,” although the self-described Alpha and Omega more than covers all time zones. The One who inhabits eternity speaks out, “*Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts*” (Heb. 3:7,8). Life in the Spirit presupposes immediacy. Obedience that does not come accurately and quickly betrays a misled loyalty. “Today” does not mean “tomorrow,” and those inclined to procrastinate miss the action of the Spirit.

“*Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Come back later; I’ll give it tomorrow’—when you now have it with you*” (Prov. 3:28). Solomon also said, “*Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth*” (Prov. 27:1). So looking into the future does not mean avoiding our responsibilities or opportunities today.

Jesus said, “*Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own*” (Matt. 6:34). Nor are we to assume that we can predict the future. The brother of Jesus said that rather than assuming we know the future, we should say, “*If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that*” (Js. 4:15). He brings us back, like Jesus, to the present by saying, “*Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins*” (v. 17). Responsibility demands that we have eyes for what God puts before us today, not simply dreaming about what may come down the road in the future.

When Jesus read to the hometown folks from Isaiah 61, then said, “*Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing,*” they did not misunderstand Him. They tried to throw Him over the cliff for attempting to inaugurate the Day of Jubilee on His own merits. He was essentially telling them that the kingdom of God arrived with Him. His “today” meant “today.” When He moves in our midst, we are given a window of opportunity that will disappear in a moment. When blind Bartimaeus decided to still the voice of the crowd with louder shouting, he received his healing (Lk. 18). Tomorrow would not have worked for him or for anyone else in the throng. Jesus rode into Jerusalem to start His week of destiny a few days later. I suspect that some of the people who tried telling Bart to shut up wished they had lifted their voices as well. They missed their “today.”

In the very next passage, we hear Jesus saying to a small tax collector with a large bank account, “*I must stay at your house today*”



**“IF IT IS THE LORD’S WILL,
we will live and do this or that.”**

James 4:15

(Lk. 19:5). When we comment casually, “Let’s get together sometime,” we are hiding our indifference. The compelling and compassionate words of Jesus pulled Zacchaeus out of his past and into a new present. Jesus announced, “*Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham,*” rooting him in the faith of his fathers. He

had a family, although the religious leaders treated him as if he didn’t.

Just as stirring are the words of Jesus on the cross to a criminal who could boast of no future. And yet he reached out to the Savior in his final breath: “*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom,*” as if to grab onto a single shred of hope. Jesus didn’t respond with hypothetical wishes or fanciful idealism but with astounding authority, “*Today you will be with me in paradise.*” Luke, in particular, draws us into the present tense faith of Jesus.

THE FUTURE

Visionaries see what others cannot, possessing faith for the unknown. They are willing to step in the water, believing that it will part. Usually it does. When it doesn’t cooperate, they are not consumed by failure. They accept corrections on the way to their destiny. History is their teacher, not their tyrant. They learn from the past without being shackled to it. They know a simple truth: the past is past. They don’t live in yesterday because they are traveling into tomorrow. They can enjoy today because they see the horizon. Hope turns a regretful past inside out, replacing the clothes of

mourning with the dress of praise. They don't yield to despair because God has made them eternal optimists. Leaders must build up an immunity for discouragement; otherwise the landscape is clouded over with fog, making strong and decisive leadership difficult. Faith directs us into the future. The trustworthiness of God in the past gives us boldness for tomorrow. Ten spies disqualified themselves as leaders, too absorbed in their present predicament to see beyond.

Fate and faith are found close in the dictionary but miles apart in reality. Fate curses those who possess it to an undesirable present. They sing the lie, "Que sera sera, whatever will be will be." Those who live by faith rather than fate know that destiny belongs to those who embrace it, not those who relinquish responsibility and acquiesce to "whatever." They know that the future is theirs to see—by faith!

Vision, however, comes with its own particular liabilities, like presumption, for instance. Visionaries can talk as if they know from today what will happen tomorrow. Not true. They don't even know the next minute, let alone the next day. Pride surfaces as a second liability. Visionaries tend toward optimism, which, if pushed, slides into cockiness as if we can brag about what's next on the agenda. They will eat their words; God loves to prove slick visionaries wrong. A third potential problem is running with a vision and missing right priorities. We can love the vision more than the Vision-Giver. A fourth liability shows itself in the passion of youth. Idealism gives them the kind of hope that can make them explorers. But if not married to reality it will eventually kill their dreams.

So, in summary, we look back with gratitude, we look ahead with faith, and we walk with obedience in the present. The psalmist was battling depression. Thoughts bombarded his weakened mind: "Where can I go and meet with God? Where is your God? Why are you downcast?" He looked to the past and remembered the joys of corporate worship: "These things I remember... My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan..." That enabled him also to project toward the future: "Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him..." (Ps. 42).

How does eternity relate to the future? Eternity travels beyond time; it engulfs it. Eternity contains time, but time does not control eternity. Heaven lives in the eternal, but it also recognizes the passing of time. Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, but now real scars mark His hands and His side. For Hebrews eternity was multiplied time, not the absence of time, time to the n^{th} power rather than its elimination. Eternity was not set in contrast with time as is often regarded, probably enabling the Hebrews to appreciate their history even more.



Another look at those well-traversed Greek words for time can give us perspective. "Chronos" is measured time. Think of English words beginning with "chron." They denote the succession or duration of time. "Kairos," in contrast to "chronos," occurring half as often as "chronos," signifies time as opportunity and is often translated "time(s)" or "season." Kairos time is descriptive time, such as the time of harvest or the fulfillment of prophecy, a time for its purpose. Vine says that "chronos marks quantity," while "kairos denotes quality" (Vine's Expository Dictionary of the Bible). Jesus wept because Jerusalem did not recognize the kairos of God's coming to her. They missed their moment. Had they shown more attention to their history, they would have been better prepared to walk in obedience in the present and to embrace their preferable future.

Only the Holy Spirit can enable us to walk alive to the present and yet to wait in peace for what is coming. The same Spirit can lift us from the oppression of the past, pointing us to the cross where we receive forgiveness and the power to forgive. The Spirit of truth, our ever-present teacher, also instructs us with lessons from the past to give us a more sure future. And the Spirit gives us blazing hope for what lies ahead, the one marked by time, as well as the one projecting us into the personal and eternal presence of God.

SO HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO LEADERSHIP?

1. The past. We cannot overlook people's past when considering them as players on the team. I once hired a young man based on promise rather than on performance. I was even warned against doing so, but I ignored his past because of blind hope, and I regretted it a year later. I've seen this repeated many times by well-meaning leaders, who let optimism trump reality or who tripped over their heart of mercy. People must make friends with their past in order to play successfully on a team. Emotional weakness will express itself even at the height of success, and ministries will come crashing down.

2. The present. When God says, "Now," we must not stutter or say, "Sometime—maybe." Two qualities stand out in the teaching of leadership from the lips of Jesus—humility and boldness. The two work hand in hand. Humble people demonstrate courage, because they know it is not about them. So they are willing to step out of the boat (and the box), when more cautious leaders continue to review their options and vote by default for the status quo. Humble boldness qualifies leaders to lead!

3. The future. Fatalism consigns us to an inferior today, while faith propels into a joyful tomorrow. Leaders learn to negotiate change rather than to submit to late resisters who have a record for killing prophets. The future belongs to the seers—who see it!



by Paul Anderson

"Welcome Home, Betty Denny"

April 16, 1927—May 2, 2008

Betty Denny, longtime friend of Lutheran Renewal, went to be with the Lord May 2, 2008. Along with her husband Dick, she was one of the pioneers of the Lutheran Renewal movement. She and Dick had been married for 62 years at the time of her death.

Four children were born into their family: Rick, Elaine (Barb), Roger and Brian. In 1968 their son, Rick, was killed in Viet Nam. Rick's death hit the whole family hard. Dick and Betty had been good church goers, "Sunday go to church Christians," they expressed. But that was not sufficient to comfort them in their grief. They heard the call to commit their lives wholeheartedly to the Lord, which they did, and they sought the filling with the Holy Spirit. Their lives were forever transformed.

In 1970 after the spiritual transformation in their lives, Betty began speaking in the five-state area about Rick's death and God's grace in the midst of the pain. She contacted 1,500 Minnesota families that lost a family member in the Vietnam War and she personally visited many.

They joined North Heights Lutheran Church in 1970 where they became heavily involved in ministry. Dick served as national coordinator for Lutheran Renewal for twenty years. Betty was the officer manager in the Renewal office for many years. Larry Christenson, former Director of Lutheran Renewal, wrote: "Remarkably, at the ring of a telephone, she could switch gears

from any practical activity to Spirit-led counseling and encouragement."

Dick and Betty opened their home for Bible studies and meetings which were attended by more than 2,000 people over the following years. A large number committed their lives to Christ, were filled with the Holy Spirit, received deliverance, were healed, and were strengthened in their faith.

Betty was a frequent speaker at women's retreats and conferences and her goal was to see others filled with the Spirit and to then grow in the Lord and live to their potential. She had a beautiful singing voice and she frequently gave prophetic words through song during the Holy Spirit Conference. She was filled with the joy of the Lord, and as her long-time ministry partner Linda Morken shared, "We would frequently have to pull off of the road as we traveled because we'd be laughing so hard!"

We thank the Lord for Betty Denny, for all she was in Christ and all she did by the Spirit. Many can trace their spiritual ancestry back to her. Blessed be the memory of our dear sister in Christ!

Dr. Morris Vaagenes

Pastor Emeritus, North Heights Lutheran Church



RESOURCES

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