

IN THE MARGINS: Finding peace in the storm

By Tony Martin

Editor

Imagine this: You're in the middle of a storm. The wind is howling, rain is pounding against the windows, and the sky is dark and furious. Inside your home, however, you find a sense of calm. There's a fire crackling in the fireplace, you're wrapped in a warm blanket, and you feel an inexplicable peace despite the chaos raging outside. This is the kind of peace God offers us as Christians – a peace that stands firm, even when everything around us feels like it's falling apart.

Thriving in Chaos

Chaos is a part of life. It's unpredictable and sometimes overwhelming. But as Christians, we have a unique promise from God that allows us not to just survive but thrive amidst the chaos. Jesus Himself said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (John 14:27, ESV). This peace isn't the fleeting, fragile kind that the world offers. It's a peace that anchors us, like a strong, steady lighthouse guiding us safely through a storm.

Take the Apostle Paul, for example. Talk about thriving in chaos! Here's a man who faced shipwrecks, beatings, imprisonment, and threats on his life – yet he remained unshaken in his faith. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul writes, "I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content... I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:11-13, ESV). Paul's life was anything but calm, yet his spirit was filled with peace. He wasn't just surviving; he was thriving, and his secret was his unwavering

trust in God's sovereignty and goodness.

A Modern-Day Case Study: Sarah's Story

Let's bring this idea into a more modern context with the story of Sarah (not her real name), a friend of mine who recently went through an incredibly chaotic time in her life. Sarah was a nurse working on the front lines during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The hospital was overwhelmed with patients, many of whom were critically ill. The staff was stretched thin, the hours were long, and the emotional toll was immense.

To make matters worse, Sarah was dealing with chaos at home. Her husband had lost his job due to the economic downturn, and they were suddenly facing financial uncertainty. Their two young children were trying to adjust to remote learning, which added another layer of stress to an already difficult situation.

Yet, in the middle of all this, Sarah radiated a kind of peace that was almost palpable. I asked her one day how she was managing to stay so calm. She smiled and said, "I'm not managing it at all. It's God's peace holding me together." She went on to share how she would take a few minutes during her break at the hospital to read Psalm 46: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea" (Psalm 46:1-2, ESV).

She told me that those words reminded her that no matter how chaotic things seemed, God was her refuge. He was her strength. And even if everything else fell apart, she could still stand firm, knowing that He was in control. She wasn't just getting through her days; she was thriving – finding moments of joy, sharing words of encouragement with her coworkers, and praying with patients when the opportunity arose.

Sarah's story is a powerful reminder that thriving in chaos isn't about having everything under control. It's about trusting the One who is in control. It's about knowing deep in our hearts that God is with us in every storm, every trial, and every chaotic moment. It's about holding on to His promises, even when the world around us seems to be spinning out of control.

The Promise of Peace

The peace that allows us to thrive in chaos is rooted in God's promises. Isaiah 26:3 says, "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you" (ESV). Notice it doesn't say God gives peace to those who have it all together or to those who never face problems. No, God's perfect peace is given to those who keep their minds and hearts focused on Him, who trust in His unchanging nature.

When we shift our focus from the chaos to Christ, we begin to see things differently. The storms may not subside right away, but our perspective changes. Instead of seeing the wind and the waves, we start to see the One who walks on water. Instead of focusing on the noise, we hear the still, small voice of God whispering, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10, ESV).

So, how do we thrive in chaos? We thrive by anchoring ourselves to the One who is unshakeable. We thrive by trusting that God is working all things, even the chaotic ones, together for our good (Romans 8:28). We thrive by resting in His presence, knowing that His peace is not the absence of trouble but the presence of God Himself in the midst of our trouble.

The next time you find yourself in the middle of a storm, remember Sarah's story. Remember Paul's words. Remember that you are not alone. God is with you, offering a peace that surpasses all understanding, a peace that will guard your

heart and mind in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7, ESV). And with that peace, you can thrive, even in the midst of chaos.