God and Storms (like Hurricanes)
Psalm 107:
(1st Reading: Psalm 107; 2nd Reading: 2 Corinthians 12:1-10)

(This message was delivered one week after Hurricane Frances hit Florida and knocked out our power and phone service. It was two weeks to the day before Hurricane Jeanne hit again, and again knocked out our power and phone service. The following is not a transcript of that sermon, but are the notes from which the sermon was delivered. The actual recorded sermon has some variations to this.)

Bulletin Outline:

1. Storms are controlled and used by God (they do not come by chance).
2. Storms come from the orderly guidance of God’s good hand.
3. Storms are used by .
   A. To show His displeasure for sin, for correction and amendment
   B. For trial and exercise of His graces
   C. For other special and excellent purposes
4. Storms produce suffering that shall turn to our profit and all things work together for our good IF
   A. We make sanctified good use of them.
   B. Do not despise His correction or use of them.
   C. Do not become weary in well-doing.

Given the nature of what we have experienced for the past week as a result of the preparations for and aftermath of Hurricane Francis, I think it is appropriate for us to take a short hiatus from our series on Ephesians and see how God relates to Storms like Hurricane Francis, and soon, Hurricane Ivan.

The first thing for you to notice is that the weather and such phenomena as hurricanes, tornadoes and earthquakes are all controlled and used by God (they do not come by chance). The circumstances of bad weather will almost always evoke the phrase “mother nature” from everyone, including Christians.

The word “nature” comes from the Latin “natura” which means “birth”. When you combine that with “mother”, it would mean the “one who gave us birth”, and thus “mother nature” literally means much more than weather or nature, but the mother goddess who gave us birth or creation. For all practical purposes, from the earliest of times, sinful man has attempted to make God out to be feminine rather than masculine. One source says: NETER was the name of the Ultimate Supreme Being, and She was Female even though lying white male writers translate Her as a He, hence "God." Neter is Goddess, and the source of the word Nature. Despite their attempt to suppress this Great Truth, Neter as "Nature" is still called "MOTHER Nature"! Mother Nature (Neter) is the Feminine Power that creates and nurtures."

As you can hear from this, this is clearly a denial of what the Scriptures say. Consequently, we should avoid the use of this term, as well as such terms as luck or even fortune. Luck and fortune are matters of chance, not order or direction.
In contrast to this, let’s look at our passage from Psalm 107, verse 21:

**Psalm 107:21** Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men! 22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing. 23 They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters (that means that they travel the oceans for commerce and trade). The psalmist now speaks of those who travel on the seas and says 24 These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. 25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. In other words, the Lord commands storms and He raises up the winds. He makes the hurricanes to blow as they do. These storms and the waves they produce 26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: we now know the height of the clouds to be very great and also they reach right down to the ocean itself. And because of the obvious power of these storms, it says of these sailors: their soul is melted because of trouble. 27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits’ end. In other words, they don’t know what to do. They see the wind and the fury and the total uncontrollability of the wind and rain and storm. They have no choice.

Watching the TV interviews with the various people who have ridden through the storms in areas that were very difficult like Punta Gorda with Hurricane Charlie last month, as they describe what happened when their house began to fall apart around them, it is extremely common to even hear from these non-Christians: “All I could do was pray to God to help me.” Look now what the Psalmist says in verse 28: 28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. 29 He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. 30 Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

In this case, the psalmist is speaking of sailors, and when he brings them to their desired haven, it means that he brings them safely through the turmoil, difficult as it was. Rock legend Phil Collins said in an interview about his sudden loss of hearing in one ear and his impending retirement, “I guess whoever or whatever is in charge up there, or wherever or whoever, or whatever; wants to get my attention. So, I guess I will see what is next.” God is in charge of all things in this world, including tragedies and storms and He often uses them to get people’s attention. **Exodus 4:11** And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? God takes credit for being in charge and the thing that man needs to do is not complain or
bellyache that they will not worship such a God who would do such things. Instead, they need to search out this God and seek to know what His purpose in such things is.

You children, and maybe some of you adults who don’t yet have this figured out yet, don’t get angry at God. Don’t start questioning His goodness. He made you, He is good. Question your perspective on life. When you are living in an upside down condition, in a “me and mine are the most important” state of mind, you are the center of your universe. From that perspective, things that don’t go the way you think they should or the way you think is fair will always come into question because you have made yourself into your own little god. So when the real God comes along and crosses you, you get angry. How dare Him act that way. I wouldn’t do that. We then begin to judge God by our standards rather than His.

Look over in Psalm 148:7 Scripture says: Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour; STORMY WIND fulfilling his word: Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl: Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven. Notice what it says in verse 8? Stormy wind fulfilling His word. God commands and the winds obey.

TURN OVER TO Mark 4:37 In Mark 4 Jesus spoke in parables to many of the people, but not to the disciples. After he was done preaching, he spoke about going across the sea to another area. And our text picks up then. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm…. verse 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

Now, why do you think that He did this? He did this to show them that He was the Lord who controls the storms, the wind, the sea. In other words, there was no Mother Nature, there was only the Lord God, who in the form of man was the Lord Jesus Christ. It is with great comfort that we can know that God is in control of all these things and that storms come from the orderly guidance of God’s good hand. Our task then is to prepare for them (obviously something that God teaches us from storms is preparation, and that
is a good thing), to expect them, to not get upset when they come and to learn from them, in case there were things that we did not understand that we now understand.

God teaches us many things and storms like Hurricane Francis should teach you children that there will be not only these kinds of storms, but other kinds of storms in life for which you must prepare. Home training, school and church are the most important places for this preparation. Have fun as a child, but remember, you are being trained to be an adult, and a parent and a grandparent; not a child the rest of your life. The task of your parents is to train you for these storms so that when they come, you are neither dismayed nor unprepared. That is a huge responsibility for parents, and mistakes will be made.

To minimize these, God has put godly grandparents and elders into the equation to be helpful to parents. Those who have raised children see things with a perspective that those who are raising them don’t have. We don’t want to go into a hurricane learning from mistakes that have already been made. That is why we need to ask as much as possible and learn as much as possible from the mistakes of others. The same is true to prepare ourselves and our children for the storms of life: we need to ask lots of questions of those who have been through this process and not go it alone with an adult version of “I can do it, I can do it.” We need to ask others, “What else should I do? Is there anything we are not seeing? Is there are better way to put up these storm shutters, or prepare this child for the storms of life.”

So storms come from the orderly guidance of God’s good hand to teach us many good things. We find many of these things in Scripture. Storms are used by God for at least three different things: 1) To show His displeasure for sin, for correction and amendment; 2) For trial and exercise of His graces; and lastly 3) for other special and excellent purposes.

Let’s consider briefly the first one: God uses storms to show His displeasure for sin, for correction and amendment. In Psalm 83:15 we hear this about God’s enemies: So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. It is very clear from the quickness of evacuations and from all the interviews on the radio and television that hurricanes scare people. What one of us does not hear about a tornado and immediately begin to think: where would I go. My wife and I were concerned enough that when we built our own house, we built a saferoom. That is where we would go if there was a tornado. We have drills with our grandchildren who live next door to go to the saferoom in case of a bad storm. Such preparation makes us feel safer. BUT, even then, we have to trust in the Lord and we can do that because we know where we are going if we die. BUT for God’s enemies, they fear these storms
because they know they kill people and they have nothing to look forward to after life other than hell and eternal punishment.

Listen to what Isaiah says in Isaiah 28:2 Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand.

And then in Isaiah 29:6 the prophet says of a wicked nation, Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire. Let us not forget what God did to Sodom and Gomorrah, how He destroyed them.

Nahum 1:3 The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. It is very clear from all of these Scriptures that God uses storms to scare people, to bring them to their senses, and cause them to seek after Him and repent. If they do not, then He uses these powerful storms to punish them and give them on earth just a slight taste of hell, so that they will desire to seek after Him instead of continue in their rebellious ways.

The Lord also uses storms for trial and exercise of His graces. Psalm 46:1-4 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. 4 There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. In fact, in Isaiah, the prophet speaks even more directly to God being a refuge from storms when it says: Isaiah 4:6 And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain. And then again in Isaiah 25:4 For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

In the same way that God shines the sun and the rain on the just and unjust alike, so also does God often bring both the righteous and the wicked through temporal testings like hurricanes, tornados and other non-weather type storms of life. You know the verses (and you children need to memorize these early and learn them well): Turn to 1 Corinthians 10:13 13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be
tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. God does not say He will eliminate the trial or the suffering. He says He will bring us through it and enable us to bear it. That is where the grace comes from through trials such as storms and hurricanes.

Turn to 2 Corinthians 12: Listen to the experience of the Apostle Paul when he was plagued by poor eye sight since being struck blind on the road to Damascus. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10  
7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. God sometimes send us storms, or gives us small failures to keep us from being exalted above measure.

The other day, Dave (Card) felled a tree that did not go where he wanted it to go and after it was all over he said to those of standing around him, “Well, I don’t think I will ever mark the exact spot where a tree will fall again” meaning that perhaps he recognized he was getting a little over-confident. God sometimes sends storms into our lives to keep us from being “exalted above measure”, as the Apostle Paul says.

In the case of God’s blindness, Paul had asked that it be taken away in the same way that we asked for Hurricane Francis to be veered away from us. 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

So, we see that God teaches us to rely upon Him, and draw upon His strength, His grace and His power in times of our weakness and that He will see us through all these things.

Finally, God uses storms for other special and excellent purposes. One major storm in my early life before I was a Christian was when my wife and I lost our second child. God used that storm in our life to start a learning process. That storm got my attention about life after death. That second child was Kimarie’s younger brother and Jason’s older brother back in 1970 or 1971. That was a tragedy by any human standard, but it got my attention and through that tragedy, God eventually put me on a track that brought me to Him. So, God is in control and God works through the storms of life and those storms serve His purpose. Not one of them is done because He is a mean God or an uncaring God. He always works good through the storms and hurricanes of life and
we need to live with that in mind as we face them, because try as we might, we cannot avoid them. So, they are all there for a purpose and if we don’t learn from them, then if it is His purpose to do so, He will continue to send us those storms until we do learn what He wants us to learn from them.

And that brings us to our last point and that is that God’s storms produce suffering that shall turn to our profit and all things work together for our good IF through those storms, we do the following three things: 1) We make sanctified good use of the suffering and learn and grow from it rather than simply suffer through it, 2) if we do not despise His correction through them, and 3) do not become weary in well-doing.

Storms can defeat us or make us into champions. They defeat us if we use them as an excuse for not doing things that we should do. Storms tend to break down the routines of life and in some cases that is good because the routines are bad. BUT, in other cases, the routines are good and they should be re-established even while the effects of the storm are still with us (as in many of our cases where we don’t have our power back on yet). It is so easy to use the lack of power as an excuse for not doing things we should do. Now, in some cases, lack of power is a good excuse, but in other cases, it is not. You will have to decide what those things are, but it is very important that we not let chaos reign during prolonged times of suffering.

Orderliness in the home, cleanliness of body, routines of prayer and such should be as regular as eating. Sure, these take more work than when there is power, but that is where God’s strength is made perfect in our weakness. Our children and grandchildren need to see us being diligent in our responsibilities as parents (and even as grandparents), so that they know that there is no excuse for idleness and indolence or laziness when storms in life come. How we weather these storms and the excuses we make during them will be long-time examples that will impress their minds.

God brings storms to life to make us stronger, not give us more excuses. God brings storms into our lives to strengthen our resolve and determination and quickly recover a semblance of the necessary routines of life, particularly as it pertains to orderliness, and responsibilities and such like. Oh, for sure, some things must change: but just like eating, while the food might be different and prepared with more labor and less flair, nevertheless we will find time to eat because eating is important to us. In the same way, we need to establish the same things in all the other routines of our life that God has established as important so as to glorify God in the midst of our suffering rather than become an excuse-maker and a complainer from which others will learn.

We must avoid complaining and grumbling and disorderliness in the care of ourselves and others as though God has given you more than you can bear. We must not be weary
in well-doing even in the midst of our suffering or we miss the blessings that God has for us. We also must remember There hath no testing that has taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tested above that your ability; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Rise to the challenge. Get through it. Let His strength be made perfect in your weakness rather than your weakness being an excuse for dropping those things that will glorify God in your life in the midst of the trials.

These are the ultimate child-training opportunities in life, witnessing opportunities in life and God-glorifying opportunities in life. Let us glory in them, rise to the challenges through them and glorify in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon us. Let us say with the Apostle Paul, Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Our text says in Psalm 107:21 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! 22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing. ... 25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. 26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: ... 28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. 29 He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. 30 Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

From all indications, that desired haven of power is still at least a week away. That desired haven of deliverance from hurricane season is still a good few months away. The testings are still about us, therefore, we must rely upon His grace to cause us to grow through them and glorify Him in them. May God bless you with His strength in our weakness from this day forth, until He brings us unto our desired haven, not just with the restoration of power and the clearing of properties, but that ultimate haven in eternity when all the trials and tribulations of life have been set aside for the eternal life of fellowship in the perfection of the Lord our God forever and ever. AMEN