

Lessons from the Rain

By Jane Titrud

This summer I took a roadtrip through northern Montana. It really is “Big Sky Country” out there. With fewer trees than most areas in the Midwest, one generally has an unobstructed view in all directions. Oftentimes, there are both rain showers and sunshine in the same vista, and the sky is always changing. This can make for an interesting drive despite the general bareness and monotony of the landscape.

I made it a goal this trip to try snapping a few pictures of some typical Montana skies, so I could use them in the present newsletter. I knew the theme was going to be “trials and tribulations,” and this got me thinking of an adage having to do with rain.

Probably, most people have heard the saying, “Into each life some rain must fall.” To me, this spoke of trials and tribulations. They just seem inevitable. I was not sure where the quote came from but thought perhaps it was from the Bible. After some searching, however, I found that this was not the case. The author was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and it is found in the last stanza of “The Rainy Day” poem, which reads:

Be still, sad heart and cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;
Thy fate is the common fate of all,
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.

Yet, researching the quote left me with a different impression of it than what I had originally. For instance, Longfellow’s poem sounds very dreary, which is usually not the way the Bible depicts rain. It also seems fatalistic, which is not at all the way the Bible depicts trials and tribulations.

I noticed right away that rain is generally not used in the sense of doom, gloom, and sadness in the Bible, nor is it usually a bad thing. Instead, it is normally depicted as a reward or blessing—something that brings vitality, growth, and refreshing. Note the following verses: “*If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out, then I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit*” (Leviticus 26:3-4, NASB).

“*And it shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil*” (Deuteronomy 11:13-14), “*and I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing*” (Ezekiel 34:26). “*But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous*” (Matthew 5:44-45).

By contrast, the lack of rain is typically associated with judgment: “*But it shall come about, if you will not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today...The LORD will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed*” (Deuteronomy 28:15, 24).

Too much rain may also be associated with judgment, as in the days of Noah when God sent so much rain upon the earth that it led to a worldwide flood: *“For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made”* (Genesis 7:4).

But it is the storm and not just ordinary rain that tends to be the most destructive and worrisome. That is because storms contain elements of violence and destructive power.

Sometimes storms are associated with judgment in the Bible, as in the following cases: *“Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will call to the LORD, that He may send thunder and rain. Then you will know and see that your wickedness is great which you have done in the sight of the LORD by asking for yourselves a king”* (1 Samuel 12:17), *“and with pestilence and with blood I shall enter into judgment with him; and I shall rain on him, and on his troops, and on the many people who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire, and brimstone”* (Ezekiel 38:22).

Yet, Jesus slept in the stern of a boat during a strong storm that seemingly threatened the lives of its passengers. After being aroused from His sleep, He told the wind and waves to be still, and they obeyed (Mark 4:35–41). The purpose of this incident seems to have been to demonstrate that Jesus spoke with the power and authority of God—not judgment.

Paul was also caught up in a storm when his captors tried to escort him to Rome during a dangerous time of year for storms (Acts 27). Once again, the purpose seems to have been to demonstrate the power and protection of God and not judgment.

The trouble with storms, as opposed to ordinary rain, however, is that they seem threatening whether they are associated with judgment or not. The same goes for trials and tribulations, which may be likened to the storms of life. Just as the darkness of a storm and pouring rain oftentimes keep us from seeing beyond or through it, various elements of trials and tribulations keep us from seeing beyond the immediate circumstances. When events seem overwhelming and swirling out of control, this mimics the wind, hail, lightening, and thunder that surround a person caught out in the middle of a rainstorm unprotected.

In the Montana plains, storms may frequently be seen coming and going. One can usually tell the beginning from the end. That is what makes watching them so fascinating to me. Yet, it is oftentimes difficult to see the end of a trial while in the midst of it.

Trials and tribulations are real and not to be minimized. Yet, the Bible does not necessarily depict them as bad things either. They can test our faith, but they can also verify it. And, if we learn from them, they can lead to spiritual growth as well as great reward in heaven.

No one must seek out trials and tribulations. As Christians, they will surely find us. It is important to remember, however, that a Believer is never left to face such things alone. *“God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble”* (Psalm 46:1).