

THE FIRST 15

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As we endeavor to build our lives on Christ the Cornerstone, we see how God's grace moves us from self-concern to concern for others.

OPENING PRAYER

Blessed and holy Lord God, I come to this quiet place to spend some time alone with You. I quiet my noisy thoughts and still my restless body. I breathe deeply and slowly, inhaling the promise of Your love and peace. Open my heart to receive a fresh experience of Your Holy Spirit. Open my ears to hear the message You have for me today. Open my mind to sympathize with the struggles and disappointments of others. Open my mouth to offer words of kindness and encouragement. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:1-6

REFLECTION

Most organizations, churches, and families encounter times of disagreement, conflict and crisis. How we respond in those times is what matters most. Disagreement, crisis and conflict will come, just like storms that brew and eventually break. We must rise above the storms and see what good God can do in troubling times. Family members that love each other sometimes disagree. Sometimes they disagree vehemently. If those disagreements are not handled well they can escalate rapidly into conflict, crisis or cut-off.

One night, I was awakened by a severe thunderstorm. I looked out of our front window and was amazed at how the world had changed. The wind was blowing, rain was pounding against the house and the street, rafters shuddered from the thunder, sky lit up with lightning. The water in the small lake near our house was churning and violent. I imagined what it would be like to be out on the water in a boat during a storm or up in an airplane. Sailors talk about what it is like to get your "sea legs." Sea legs are the ability to walk steadily on the deck of a boat or a ship even during turbulent waters or in a storm. The storms of life help us get our sea legs. During storms we determine what we are going to stand on. Are we going to stand on Christ the Cornerstone or something else?

When Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians, the church was struggling with disagreement, conflict and division. Paul said, "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2-3).

The morning after the storm, I awakened and peered out the same window I had the night before. The change was amazing. The scene outside was calm, beautiful, refreshed by the recent rain. Oh, there were a few limbs down, and the water in the lake was murky. But the air was fresh and the birds were singing. I took a deep breath. I thought about what it must be like to be out on the water the morning after a storm. Knowing that you have come through a dark, violent night, looking around to see who is “in the boat” with you. Being on deck and standing stronger, feeling your “sea legs”.

Sometimes an airline pilot will fly right through a storm. The seat belt light chimes on, you hear the sound of the captain's voice, passengers set themselves to endure a rough ride, drinks sliding, airplane shaking, gripping the arms of the seat with both hands, tightening seat belts. But, the captain can see on the radar that if he can rise above the storm and over the turbulence, if he can fly right through it and above it, there is sunshine, peace and calm. You've seen that happen, haven't you, when you break through the clouds above the storm and it is blue skies and sunshine.

When storms hit your home, family, or workplace – look for the opportunity to stand firm on what you believe and be the person who can “rise above” the storm. When you can do that, you know you have got some “sea legs!”

Ask: Where are storms brewing in my life - my relationships, my family, my workplace or my church? How can I rise above the storm and stand on Christ the Cornerstone?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Blessed Lord God, when life is uncertain around me and the storms of life brew, remind me of the firm foundation of Christ my Cornerstone. Help me live with love and integrity and rise above the storms of unrest, division, distrust and discouragement. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and give me a sense of peace and calm in the midst of change and discord. Show me how to live as Paul encourages in his letter to the Ephesians - with humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another in love. Amen.