ST. PAUL BAPTIST CHURCH
Gonzales, Louisiana

Finding God When the World Caves In

Sensing His Sovereign Presence in the Storms of Life

2026 CHURCH DECLARATION

Jesus Christ — Our Only Hope

Introduction

- **The Big Mistake:** We naturally assume that if we are doing what God wants, life will be smooth sailing. When a storm hits, our first thought is often, "Where did God go?" We trick ourselves into thinking God's presence equals an absence of trouble.
- **The Big Shift:** Throughout the Bible, the storm isn't a sign that God left the building; it's actually the exact place He chooses to show up and reveal His character. God is the ruler over the chaos, not a victim of it (*Psalm 29:10*, "The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord is enthroned as King forever").
- **Core Truth:** God rarely gives us an immediate escape hatch from our pain; instead, He offers us His presence right inside of it (*Isaiah 43:2*, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you").

I. The Blindspots: Why We Miss Him in the Mess

- **The "What Did I Do Wrong?" Trap:** We fall into the transactional trap of thinking bad circumstances mean God is punishing us. However, obedience does not exempt us from hardship. In fact, the disciples found themselves in a life-threatening gale precisely because they obeyed Jesus' direct command to get in the boat (*Matthew 14:22*, "Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side").
- **The "Hollywood" Expectation:** We hunt for God only in flashy, jaw-dropping miracles—the booming voice, the sudden lightning bolt, or the instant rescue—and completely miss His quiet, steady whisper. God corrected Elijah's expectations by showing Him He wasn't in the wind, earthquake, or fire, but in the gentle whisper (*1 Kings 19:12*, "And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a gentle whisper").
- **The Do-It-Yourself Routine:** When crisis hits, our anxious instinct is to grab the steering wheel and frantically try to fix everything ourselves. This desperate self-reliance creates structural blindspots, keeping us from seeing that God is already entirely in control.

II. The Anatomy of Presence: How God Actually Shows Up

- **He Defies the Chaos:** Jesus didn't just stand safely on the shore and shout instructions to the struggling disciples; He walked directly *on top of* the very waves that were threatening to drown them (*Matthew 14:25*, "And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea"). What terrifies us is simply a walkway for Him.
- **Unexplainable Internal Quiet:** God's presence doesn't always instantly alter our external situation; it alters *us*. It manifests as a deep, supernatural peace that defies logical explanation amid the surrounding turmoil (*Philippians 4:7*, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus").
- **The Body of Christ in Action:** God frequently shows up wearing skin. When a fellow believer brings a meal, sends a timely text, or shares your burdens, that is God's hands and feet actively reaching into your storm (*Galatians 6:2*, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ").

III. Shifting Your Focus: Training Your Eyes to See Him

- **Let Go of the Oars:** True faith isn't forcing God to stop the wind; it's surrendering our illusion of human control and trusting His heart while the wind blows. Scripture literally tells us to drop our weapons and stop fighting to see His sovereignty (*Psalm 46:10*, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!").
- **Filter the Noise:** The storm is incredibly loud—filled with fear, bad news, and anxiety. To hear God, we must deliberately tune our minds out of the panic and anchor ourselves to His permanent, unshakeable character (*Hebrews 13:8*, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever").
- **The Evening Review:** Make it a daily discipline at the end of a hard day to look back intentionally and ask, "Where did I see a glimpse of God's goodness today?" (*Psalm 77:11*, "I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old"). You will be surprised by how often He was working behind the scenes.

IV. The Blueprint: What the Storm is Actually Doing

- **Building Spiritual Muscle:** Just like physical muscles only grow when they hit heavy resistance, our trust in God only matures when it is tested by life's friction. Hardship is the tool God uses to forge endurance and unshakeable character (*Romans 5:3-4*, "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope").
- **From Theory to Reality:** It's easy to believe God is a provider when the bank account is full. But in a storm, your relationship shifts from "secondhand information about God" to "firsthand experience with God." Like Job sitting in the ruins of his life, you move from knowing *about* Him to truly *knowing* Him (*Job 42:5*, "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you").

Conclusion & Life Application

- **Summary:** Stop waiting for the weather to clear up before you start looking for God. He is simultaneously the Master commanding the storm, the Savior walking on the waves, and the Anchor holding your soul steady (*Hebrews 6:19*, “We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul”).
- **Reflective Inquiry:** In your current struggle, are you wasting all your energy begging God for an escape hatch, or are you looking for what He wants to reveal to you right where you are?