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People tell how prayer connected them with a helping, saving power that brought them out of situations where they were stranded or alone, in fear or in danger.

The following is one of four short stories appearing in the March 15, 2004 Sentinel of finding practical help from God.

Quick help on rough seas

By Beverly Goldsmith

My husband, David, and I visited the Fijian Islands several years ago. During our stay, we boarded a majestic old wooden schooner, which had been featured in an Australian TV series, for a day-long sail to a small offshore island. It was windy and overcast, but the crew showed no signs of concern about the weather—until we sailed out of the sheltered bay into the Pacific Ocean and were hit by gale-force winds.

The schooner pitched and rolled violently in the heaving seas. Three crewmen took hold of the ship's large wheel to keep the vessel from capsizing. David and I clung to a nearby pole for dear life. Surrounded by other terrified passengers, I even considered putting my passport between my teeth and swimming to the far-off shore. Then I remembered that David couldn't swim very well. I knew I couldn't keep both of us afloat in the rough seas, so I started praying.

I thought of Jesus and his friends in a small boat during a huge storm (see Mark 4:37-40). He wasn't afraid. The Bible says, "He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." It's clear that he didn't see the situation as beyond God's control. "Why are ye so fearful?" he asked the others. "How is it that ye have no faith?" This reminded me not to panic. God was in control, no matter how bad things looked. I knew from experience that I could put my confidence in God—and as a result not be afraid. So while the ship struggled against the wind and big seas, I kept praying.

By the time we landed on the island, many passengers were visibly upset, and we were all deeply concerned about another nightmare voyage back. After lunch, David and I walked to a quiet section of beach to pray. I recalled some lines that share ways to pray from Mary Baker Eddy's book *Science and Health*: ". . . cling steadfastly to God . . . Let neither fear nor doubt overshadow your clear sense and calm trust . . . Let Christian Science, instead of corporeal sense, support your understanding of being, and this understanding will . . . silence discord with harmony" (p. 495). I felt even greater confidence that God's power was with us and would bring protection.

As we boarded the schooner for the return journey, I continued praying. Everyone stood on deck as we left the lagoon's tranquil waters, waiting for the onslaught. But nothing happened. To our amazement, the open ocean was like glass—calm as a mill pond. Everyone cheered, and David and I thanked God for His loving care. Who knows how many of the other passengers might have been praying in different ways?

While I'm sure that our experience couldn't be compared to a major tropical storm, I continue to build on what I learned that day about God's control and care. It helps me pray about cyclones, as well the severe thunderstorms we have in Brisbane.

It's currently cyclone season in the South Pacific, and the unpredictable nature of tropical storms makes this a troubling time. In January, Cyclone Heta left a trail of damage in Samoa and American Samoa and then moved to the tiny South Pacific Island nation of Niue, devastating Alofi, the capital, and killing one person. Residents of Darwin, the capital city of Australia's Northern Territory, still remember Christmas Eve 1974, when Cyclone Tracy devastated their city, killed 65 people, injured over 600, sank boats, and caused extensive damage. Such occurrences prompt me to pray for the whole region. Every prayer of affirmation that God controls and cares for us, I believe, can help safeguard people, on land or at sea.

My prayers also have shown me that I don't have to consider all storms as being necessarily bad. In Northern Australia, storms can produce good soaking rain for towns and cattle stations [ranches] in this dry outback region. Such deluges are often an answer to prayer. That's why in February, although Cyclone Fritz caused widespread flooding that isolated properties and inland communities, many of the locals felt it was a small price to pay after years of heartbreaking drought.

It can be frightening to be pounded by destructive winds and torrential rain. But I know that even in their grip it's possible to feel God's protecting power and stay safe from harm. The Creator did not make a universe prone to destruction. Remembering this fact has helped me be fearless about storms on land or at sea. I've known cyclones to cross uninhabited coastal areas and destructive storm cells to fizzle out. Jesus indicated that it's not futile to pray about these phenomena—that our prayers can have a calming, healing effect. We can have confidence that no situation is beyond God's control.

Beverly Goldsmith is a contributing editor who lives in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.