

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA

Stormy Weather Faith

By

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Villa Rica July 25, 2004

Matthew 8:23-27

²³When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. ²⁴And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. ²⁵And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!" ²⁶He said* to them, "**Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?**" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm. ²⁷The men were amazed, and said, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" Matt. 8:23-27

Our Lord had been very busy ministering to the needs of the huge crowd that had come seeking him. Though he was God in the flesh still his flesh required rest the same as yours and mine. After he had given the order to depart to the other side of the lake and his disciples had followed him, getting into the boat with him, he lay down on a cushion in the stern of the little ship and fell asleep.

He had been not only doing miracles of healing on Peter's mother-in-law but many others. The teaching that had gone on was about discipleship and the tests that would come to those who followed him. He told the scribe that had come saying he would follow him wherever he went, **The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head.**" But the disciples were not expecting the storm that suddenly came upon them while he was asleep.

I. Faith Will Go Through Stormy Weather

First let me say that whatever storms come are not by accident. Every storm is presided over by the Providence of God. Nothing happens by chance. As the Psalmist wrote, **The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all. Psa. 103:19**

The passage under consideration this morning verifies that, for Christ did rise from his sleep and still the tempest with a word so that all became calm and peaceful. He let the storm come and threaten the disciples.

The Lord told the disciples that they were men of little faith. Why? It would seem that they had enough faith to wake him up and urge him to save them from drowning. What was it about their faith that was puny and timid? Let's see if we can get inside this episode personally so that we can sense the alarm of those disciples and be in that boat with them.

This storm had come up suddenly. It was not just a rainsquall. It was a great storm in the sea. Can you imagine the waves washing over the boat and hear the thunder sounding and the wind blowing fiercely. Christ seems oblivious to this storm. He is fast asleep as though dead to the world. They are only in this boat because of him. But all seems about to be lost. They are about to drown in the depth of the sea. Panic has seized upon them and they rudely awake him. **"Save us, Lord; we are perishing!"** Mark in his account adds this, **"Don't you care that we are perishing?"**

You can sense their consternation and reproach of Christ for lying there asleep when the ship is about to go down. Isn't that the attitude we are tempted to feel when we get into a bad situation? Lord, where are you when I need you? We instinctively blame God when things go wrong, especially when there seems to be no one else to blame. This was one of those times. The Lord had bid them join him on the boat and all of a sudden they are in a storm that threatens to destroy them all.

I recall a time when Judy, Rachel and I were on vacation to Branson, Missouri and we had driven to Eureka Springs, Arkansas to visit the Holy Land Tour and see the Great Passion Play. Judy was driving home that night after the play and we got into a fierce storm. We could barely see the road. We were not familiar with the road and it wasn't marked well either. We wanted to stop but there was no place to stop that seemed safe. We had the radio on

and it was telling us how bad the storm was all over Arkansas and Missouri. They were advising people to stay off the roads. But the rain had soaked the ground so much that to pull off the road might have gotten the van stuck in a ditch or the mud or damaged the vehicle. Trucks and other cars were behind us and to stop in the middle of the road might have meant being hit from behind. There was nothing to do but to press on. We did what those disciples did. We began to pray. Even though the storm did not let up God saw us safely through that storm. Judy still talks about our drive through that storm and credits the protection of God for getting us safely back to Branson.

Storms can come on land and at sea unexpectedly and all of us can relate to those disciples in the boat with Jesus. In our scripture today we can at least say in defense of the disciples that they went to the Lord and sought his help. They may not have had as much faith as they should have in their crisis but they had enough to go to the Lord Jesus for help.

But let us return to the question I broached, why did our Lord say that these disciples were afraid and had no faith? In Mark's gospel he is quoted as saying, ⁴⁰**And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith?" Mark 4:40** The NASB speaks of "little faith."

It is really quite a rebuke. No doubt the reason he said that is because they had seen enough of his miracles to acquire a strong faith in Him. Those who have Christ have all they need for any emergency. There is no problem too hard for him. They had seen visible displays of his awesome power. With a word he cast out demons, healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, cleansed lepers. They had heard him teach them about God, and they had him with them on the ship. Why the panic? Why the sudden doubt when a storm comes along? With the Son of God with them on that ship there should have been no fear at all. But they doubted his love for them. They doubted his concern for their welfare. They doubted his wisdom in bringing them into these troubled waters. Like so many who say they trust Christ, there is a total lack of trust in a crisis. They go to pieces. When illness strikes, when financial disaster comes along, when the bottom falls out of their little ship on the waters of life, they panic and get terribly afraid. They have not learned to trust the Providence of God, that all things are working for good and that the Lord Jesus can bring them safely through the storm.

II. Jesus Is Mighty To Save

Let me ask you this question, If Jesus Christ can save you from death and hell; can he also save you from temporal problems, even storms? Of course he can. But how can your faith and my faith be verified, certified as genuine? Those disciples were in the ship with our Lord and when the storm came they reacted according to the measure of their faith. It was either weak and timid or seemingly "non-existent". It might have sounded quite strong before the storm but in the storm they grew terribly afraid. They had to go through that storm in order to have their faith confirmed and strengthened. Faith must receive God's Word and then receive Christ as Savior and Lord, but that faith will be validated in trials that come. They did the right thing. They went to Christ. They prayed to him, and although he told them they had no faith he answered their prayer. He calmed the storm, so much so that they marveled. **"What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" Matt. Vs. 27**

Without the storm they would have remained with a timid and untried faith. Faith is not stamped genuine until it has trusted Christ in a time of trouble. He says in His Word, **"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.**

When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,

Nor will the flame burn you.

³ **"For I am the LORD your God,
The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I have given Egypt as your ransom,
Cush and Seba in your place. Isa. 43:2-3**

It is only by trusting the Lord during a crisis that your faith will be validated and stamped genuine. There are those who take Christ for a time and then when trial or trouble comes, they fall away. Christ said it would be that way.

Jean-Paul Sartre in his autobiography *The Words* wrote, "I have just related the story of a missed vocation. I needed God, He was given to me, I received Him without realizing that I I was seeking Him. Failing to take root in my heart, He vegetated in me for a while then He died. Whenever anyone speaks to me about Him today, I say, with

the amusement of an old beau who meets a former belle: Fifty years ago, had it not been for that misunderstanding, that mistake, the accident that separated, us, there might have been something between us." -- Jean -- Paul Sartre, *The Words* (New York: George Braziller, 1964) pp. 102-3.

Apparently Jean-Paul Sartre started to have faith but something came along that interrupted his trust. He ran into a storm or a crisis that robbed him of his fledgling faith. In the parable of the Sower our Lord told of those who would believe for a time but when affliction or persecution came because of the Word of God they would fall away. And then there was the person who would hear the Word and the worries of this life, the temptation that came to play by the world's rules instead of God's rules, the deceitfulness of riches he called it, choked the Word of God in his life and he doesn't maintain faith in Christ". (see Mt. 13:18: -23)

There may be someone here today that is going through a storm, a crisis, a great difficulty that seems ready to engulf you and ruin your life. You may be like those disciples in the ship ripped by giant waves and about to be swamped. Your faith may be timid but Christ will not ignore you if you call upon him for help.

L. B. Bridges served as a Kentucky pastor with his wife and daughters. Tragedy struck and he was called home from a winter meeting. His family had perished in a fire that swept through their home. Now he was alone. How do you cope with such unmitigated sorrow and still maintain your faith? L. B. Bridges stood in ashes of his home and wrote: "*All my life was wrecked by sin and strife, discord filled my life with pain, Jesus swept across the broken strings, stirred the slumbering chords again.*"

The Lord can see us through any storm. He can calm the waves and bring peace to the troubled heart. As we go through trials Our faith is being purified as gold is purified so that when we come to that final experience in this life we will be full of faith to meet Him who is our Savior and our Lord.

Sidney Lanier was a brilliant young poet who lived about a hundred years ago. When Lanier was in his thirties, he developed tuberculosis. He knew he wouldn't live long, for few survived that disease in those days. He went down to the Coast of Glynn County, Georgia and sitting there one day; looking across the marshes, he wrote one of his finest poems, "The Marshes of Glynn."

In that poem is this immortal couplet: "*As the marsh hen secretly builds on the watery sod, Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness of God.*"

The disciples went through that storm with the Lord and their faith was stronger after they came out than when they went in. They marveled at His power to bring calm and peace, saying, "**What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?**" **Matt.**

What kind indeed! He is the God man, the Son of God, the Christ of God who doeth all things well. He can handle your crisis. He can resolve your problem. Turn to Him and Him alone for the solution. And all will be well. When you come to Christ he does not promise that you will never have problems or go through storms. But he promises to be with you in the storm as he was with those disciples. He is able to restore peace and calm to your soul. He is an ever-present help in a time of trouble, a shelter in the time of storm.

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