

Calm Down

Faith in the Midst of the Storm

March 27, 2022

Today we're building our faith for battling our storms with calm!



Gettin' shipwrecked last Sunday with Paul was sure a lot'a fun! But did you notice *this* little detail: **It was the 14th day of a raging storm before the sailors pray!** *Two weeks!* Maybe they prayed before, and it's not recorded; but the *soldiers* had to cut the *lifeboat* loose, to *trap* the *sailors* onboard, to keep 'em from leaving everyone to *die*, which makes me think they weren't the *godliest* ol' seadogs.



So, **how often do you wait too long to pray?** *That's* the question. *Marriage. Family. Job. School. Disputes. Health. Country.* **If prayer isn't our first instinct, we're late gettin' out of the gate.** Because, **before the crisis, there's often not a lot of soul searching, and seeking God's way;** aligning *our* will with *His* will through *His* Word in *our* heart, concerning the *unknown* coming *crisis*. And then, **during the crisis, we're often all over the place with our prayers;** asking God to change our *circumstances*, or to change *others*.



But somewhere deep in a big crisis, there'll be a moment for most believers when we *quiet* down and *listen* up and *look* within to *figure* out, with God's *help*, **what it is we need to face and see and change.** A *see-change*. *That's* when we *truly* start to pray. **How often do you wait too long?** *Too often?* Well *thank* the Lord and take *heart*, cuz **it's never too late to start.**



The *thing* about the *Lord*, we don't like to *think* about, is how **He'll lead us into a storm, if it's for our eternal best** ... *especially* if it's the *only* way to get our *full* and *faithful* attention. Paul was *obediently* sailing to *prison* in Rome when he was *led*, not only into a *storm*, but a **14-day hurricane** ... followed by a **shipwreck** ... followed by a **struggle to shore** ... followed by a **deadly snake bite** ... followed by the **test of Malta** Island (three *months* of godlike status in *paradise*) to *try* Paul's *heart* to *see* if he would *continue* to *follow* God's *lead* into that **Roman prison**. Yeah. We don't like to *think* about *that*.



But, He only leads us where He needs us, to *position* us, **to best show and train and teach us** the *truest* extent of His *power* and *authority* **to calm the storm, or to calm us in the storm, or both.** Which is *exactly* what He *did* years before, on the Sea of Galilee, off the shore of Capernaum (His base of operations) with *twelve* apprentices and 72 junior disciples.



And *this* story takes place right *here*, where He called Peter and Andrew and James and John, who *worked* on these waters and *knew* 'em quite well.

Now, life-threatening waves are rare on the Sea of Galilee, because it's *actually* a large *lake*.

But every so often a violent storm takes everyone by surprise. This was captured on video in 1992.



And this sudden storm produced 12' waves, which would've quickly swamped the 15-passenger boats of Jesus' day. **So let's weave it, receive it, and believe it!**



When evening had come, [Jesus] got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side of the lake." And *other little boats were also with Him [for the 72]* And they launched out. But as *they sailed He fell asleep. And suddenly a great windstorm arose [and] came down and a great tempest arose on the sea, and the waves beat into the boat, the boat was covered with the waves and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy. But He was in the stern, [the back of the boat] asleep on a pillow. [And when they realized they're not gonna bail themselves out of this one] They came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us!" "Master, Master, we are perishing!" ... "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"* – Mt 8:23-24; Mk 4:35-38; Lk 8:22-24 NKJ



Okay, that *last one's* more *accusation* than *question* – much like *our* panic-prayers.

But how long do you think they battled that *storm* and tried to bail themselves *out* before coming to *Him*? Based on, "*we're perishing!*" I'd say the usual, 'too long'. And *when* we wait too long, our nerves are *frazzled*. But why the *accusation*? And why does the one *accusing* call Him "*Teacher*"? To understand *that* we need to *weave in* the *line* I left out, that *makes* it make sense.

[They] awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" But [He didn't get up, or even help bail 'em out; instead, He chose *this* moment as a *teaching* moment, and] *He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?"* [He's not *scolding*. He's *teaching*. *Testing*. *Training*. Asking them in *that* moment to look *within* and answer] "*Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?*" [And] *Then* He arose ... *Then* He arose ... – Mt 8:25-26; Mk 4:38-39 NKJ

We're *not* reading *into* it; we're just *actually* reading it, *word* for *word*.



I remember taking a bath at my grandma's farmhouse, when I was very young, and accidentally kicking the water on, in her old claw-foot tub; and not knowing *how* to make it *stop*; and *running* downstairs *screaming* for help; and grandma *being* so *frustratingly calm*, and *slow* to respond, that when she *finally* shut off the water, it was only like 12" from going over! Close call.

So I *get* how they *feel* when Jesus won't *react* with the *urgency* their frayed nerves demand. But *then*, whose *fault* is *that*? And yet, **what's He expect?** They're *fragile*, *drown-able*, *mortals!* And *most* of 'em don't even have a *Jesus* in their boat! But, **He expects the faith, of those who know He's in their boat, to override their fear.** He expects *us* to *know* who He *is*, and to act *accordingly*.

[Because] *Faith comes from hearing the message, [of Christ] and the message [of Christ] is heard through the Word of Christ. [That's where we get faith]* – Romans 10:17 NIV



So *that's* what He expects. The OT not only declares that **He rules the raging sea, and when it's waves arise He stills them**, (Ps 89:9) but in a passage written 1,000 years earlier, not *about* them, but *tailor made for them ... and us ...* His Word in Psalm 107 clearly says:

Others went out on the sea in ships ... [and] saw the works of the Lord ... For He spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. ... [And] in their peril their courage melted away ... they were at their wits' end. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. – Psalm 107:23-29 NIV

Wait. Go back. He stirred up the storm? Think it happened against His will or took Him by surprise? He's got a lot'a faith to build in these boys, and little time to do it! So He puts 'em in a boat, goes to bed, and whispers to the wind to blow. And if they'd had Psalm 107 locked and loaded, they would've woken Him much sooner and calmer. But they were of little faith hearing the message through His Word. So they were of little conviction and confidence and calm. Otherwise one of 'em would've said: "Hey! I think we're doing Psalm 107!" "Oh, cool!"

But when He asked "*Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?*" **They didn't know they didn't know Psalm 107.** Why? Cuz they *never* thought *they'd* ever need to really *hear* the message of Psalm 107. And if they *did* know it, they obviously didn't think *He's* the One it's *describing!*

So there He sits in a raging storm, calmly asking a question. Somebody paint *that* picture! He can be *so frustrating* that way! "*Teacher, don't You care if we drown?*" "*Pupil, don't you know My Word?*" But time really *is* of the essence *here*, so He just *gives* 'em the *answer*: "**Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?**" "**Uh ... because we're of little faith?**" "**Correct! Okay! Good talk.**"

Then He arose and rebuked the wind and said to the raging sea, "Peace, be still!" [As though directing, with authority, Thing One and Thing Two] And [here's the thing] the wind ceased and there was a great calm. – Mt 8:26; Mk 4:39; Lk 8:24 NKJ

And here's the thing too: **we limit Him by our limited knowledge of Him.** So He sends us to sea, cuz we *need* to see how we *underestimate* His power and authority. They had *no clue* He could do Psalm 107. Know how we *know*? The *Bible!* Watching the wind suddenly cease is pretty *cool*. But when He *says* to the sea, "**Be still!**" the waves *collapse* in a mirror-like *calm*, and the boys are *terrified ... of Him!*

He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? Where is your faith? ["How do you not see we're doing Psalm 107?! We sing it in church all the time!"] How is it that you have no faith?" And they were afraid, they feared exceedingly, and marveled, and said "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, ["Not since Moses at the Red Sea – and even He had to call to God!" So] "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" ["Can He be who Moses was calling to?"] – Mt 8:27; Mk 4:40-41; Lk 8:25 NKJ

I think their alarm comes, *not* from having *no* idea, but from suddenly *realizing* who it actually is they're trapped in a boat with: the *actual Creator!* And they just *woke Him up* and *told Him off!*



I picture the boys crowding the bow, like the kid on the lifeboat with the tiger in *The Life of Pi*. Only with something *way scarier!* And they *realize* they had *more control* over the *storm* than over *Him!* So **they fear Him exceedingly more than the storm.** Which is *as it should be.* Which is *part of our* problem. We tend to fear the *storms* of life more than the One who *gives* life and takes it *away.* But **He's infinitely more powerful than our little ups and downs down here.**

And they're beginning to grasp the fearsome Lion that's *in* their *boat.* Are *you?* That's why *Paul* could say: Keep up your *courage!* We're about to go *down;* but God will be *with us all the way!*

[Because] [Our God] will be our guide even to death. – Psalm 48:14 NKJ

If we'll *let* Him. “But I don't like to think about death.” *Nobody* does. But *you better.* Cuz *it's* inevitable, and we're *all* in *that boat together.* And *until you do,* He'll be *unable* to comfort *you.*

“But don't You *care* if we *drown?!*” “*Absolutely 100% yes!* But *you still* might *drown.* And if you do, I'll *catch* you on the other side. *Trust Me?*” *Not* without building *our* faith by *His* Word. And only *then* can we *show* Him that we *know* Him. Because **trust is the test of faith;** and **calm is the test of trust.** So don't leave Him in the back of the boat while you try to bail yourself out.

In other words, **don't wait too long to pray.** You can start right now, *today.* Just ...

Humble *yourselves* ... under God's mighty hand, that *He* may lift you *up* in *due* time. [In the meantime] Cast *all* your anxiety on *Him* because *He* cares for *you.* – 1 Peter 5:6-7 NIV

Right in the *midst* of the storm, if you'll *let* Him, and *trust* Him; not only because of who *He is,* but knowing *He alone* knows *when,* for *our* eternal *best,* *He needs* to *calm* things *down;* and when *He needs* to *stir* things *up;* and when *He needs* to *run* us *aground;* (Acts 27:22-26) and when *He* maybe even *needs* to prepare a *big fish* to swallow us *up* and *spit* us out! (Jonah 1:17; 2:10)

Go figure. Cuz **the critical factor in faith isn't its strength, but its focus.** And *if* it's *founded* on the *One* with *all* the authority and power, *all you need* is a mustard *seed* – like say, Psalm 107.



So where's your faith? And more importantly, **where can faith be found?**

“Uh ... *the Bible?*”

Correct! Okay! Good talk.