

Be Not Afraid

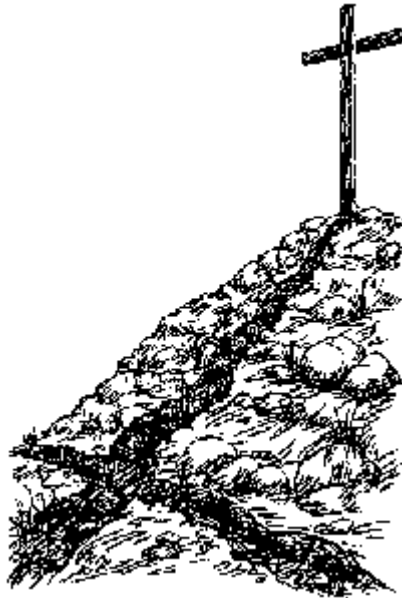
Matthew 14:22-33

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Matthew 14:22-33 KJV^{Focal text} "And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. {23} And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. {24} But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. {25} And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. {26} And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. {27} But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. {28} And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. {29} And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. {30} But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. {31} And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? {32} And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. {33} Then they that were in the ship came and worshiped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

Of all the disciples who followed Jesus during His earthly ministry, three stood out as as *distinct*, even set apart from the others. Of these three, Peter - James - and John - only one stood head and shoulders above the rest. That one was the disciple - one day to be the Apostle -

Peter. In the four Gospel writings, Peter is mentioned by name 94 times, whereas James is mentioned 29 times and John (the brother of James, NOT John the Baptist) just a few times. Peter was given a special name, Petros (small rock), or Cephas (in John 1:42, small stone). This was prophetic, for Peter would become the lead apostle in the early Church, and one of its greatest preachers (Acts 2:41). He preached the first Gospel message:

Acts 2:38-39^{KJV} "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. {39} For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

With three thousand souls saved in one day, Peter was certainly the *Billy Graham* of the early Church. But Peter was far from perfect. His sins and shortcomings are clearly presented in the Scripture. He was brash, nearly arrogant at times, yet Peter - even when he failed - bounced back stronger each time. What was his secret? Well, it's not a *secret*, but it is a series of Biblical principles. Let's see what our text has to say.

Avoid The "Herd Mentality"

Though Peter many times failed the Lord, he learned that the Christian is designed not to follow the crowd, but the Lord. Many have discredited Peter for sinking in the water that day. He did sink, that's true, but at least he stepped out on the water! I find it interesting that Peter (and Andrew his brother) *began following Jesus* when he

stepped away from a successful fishing business:

Matthew 4:19^{KJV} "And [Jesus said] unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Peter *continued to follow* Jesus when he *stepped out* on water:

Matthew 14:28 "Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. {29} And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus."

Later in his life Peter would write, under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit:

1 Peter 2:11^{NASB} "Beloved, I urge you as **aliens and strangers** to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul."

Peter considered himself, and other **Christians**, to be *aliens and strangers* or as the King James puts it, *pilgrims and foreigners*. The world and the Christian are Biblically supposed to be miles apart from one another. It is not *normal* to walk on water. Conventional wisdom, the wisdom of this world, tells you that "if you try to walk on water, you will sink. It's just not possible!". What is impossible with man is *more than possible* with God. As Jesus said:

Mark 10:27^{KJV} "... With men it is impossible, but not

with God: for with God all things are possible."

The Christian serves the God who made all things. Our God is the God of the impossible. Our God is *not* the god of the masses, for the masses follow a god of pleasure and of ease. The masses follow the gods of evolution, abortion, sexual deviation, hatred, money, and anything

<p>1. The world and the Christian are supposed to be _____ from one another.</p> <p>2. What is impossible with man is _____ with God (Mark 10:27).</p> <p>3. The Christian God is the God of the impossible. The gods that the masses serve are _____, _____, _____, _____, among other things.</p>

that "whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.(Revelation 22:15^{KJV})". A good illustration is found in the context of our focal Scripture. Just prior to Peter walking on the water Jesus fed a multitude of people off of a few fish and loaves. The Bible says:

John 6:13-15 NASB ^{Parallel text} "And so they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, which were left over by

those who had eaten. {14} When therefore the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is of a truth the Prophet who is to come into the world." {15} **Jesus therefore perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force, to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone."**

When Jesus fed them the people thought, "Let's force Jesus to be our King. With that kind of power we will soon be out from under Roman rule!" Jesus didn't come to establish Himself as King over Israel - at least, not at this time. Jesus Himself was a *stranger and a pilgrim* on this earth:

John 8:23^{NASB} "And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world."

The King of Glory come down from the glory of Heaven to suffer and die for us. Jesus came down to purchase we who believe from the slave market of sin:

1 Timothy 2:5-6^{KJV} "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; {6} Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

To be the *Mediator*, the Ransom for all mankind. But listen Beloved: You cannot follow the herd mentality and be saved, no more than you can follow the herd mentality and be recognized by God as a *good and faithful servant*.

Peter not only heard the Gospel, but he *stepped out on faith*. He walked away from a successful business to

4. Both Jesus and those who follow Him, who are saved by faith in Him, are _____ and _____ on this earth. (John 6:13-15; 8:23)

5. There is only _____ mediator between God and men, and His name is _____. (1 Timothy 2:5-6)

follow Jesus, and he stepped out on water when every pore in his body, every brain cell in his head said that what he was attempting was impossible.

There is a reality that the masses go by, and there is the reality that God is. The Christian is not designed to follow the world. He is designed to be *a light for Jesus in the world*.

Too many of us have a Christian vocabulary rather than a Christian experience. We think we are doing our duty when we're only talking about it. (Charles F. Banning)

Jesus Controls The Situation

Matthew 14:22-25 KJV^{Focal text} "And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. {23} And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. {24} But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. {25} And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. "

Jesus *constrained* or, in modern English, *ordered* the disciples to get in the ship - and they got in the ship.

John 6:18-19 NASB^{Parallel text} "And the sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing. {19} When therefore they had rowed about three or four miles, they beheld Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened."

We must be careful to remember that, as long as we're *obedient to Jesus*, no more can happen to us than He allows. Jesus is in control! If Jesus tells you to get in the ship and you get in the ship, He'll never be far from you no matter how high or rough the waves of life may be. When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water they were all frightened. After all, this wasn't a nice day on the beach. Yet only one person of the twelve told the Lord:

Matthew 14:28-29a KJV^{Focal text} "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. {29} And he said, 8

Come..."

While the rest of the disciples were trying to decide whether what they saw on the water was Jesus or a ghost, (see **Mark 6:54**) Peter put his faith in action. He stepped off of the boat and walked on the water - that is, as long

6. If you're following Jesus and He puts you in the ship, then He is in _____ of the _____. (Matthew 14:22-25; John 6:18-19; Matthew 14:28-29)

7. Do trials come on Christians? (1 Peter 1:6-8)

8. Will trials greater than I can handle come into my life? (1 Corinthians 10:13)

as he kept his eyes on Jesus. Peter would later (under God's guidance) write about trials, about the wind and the waves of life, and what these trials mean to the Christian:

1 Peter 1:6-8^{NASB} "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, {7} that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; {8} and though you have

not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,"

God uses trials in a number of ways to reach our hearts. One of the finest preachers I know, Dr. David Jeremiah, was diagnosed with lymphoma, cancer of the lymphatic system. Dr. Jeremiah writes:

"As God permits pain in the lives of His children, He also bestows equal measures of Grace never experienced outside of suffering. In trials and tragedies, we enter into a fellowship with Christ's sufferings."

Jesus works through the trials of life to strengthen and bless the Christian. Just as the weightlifter strengthens his muscles by repeatedly coming into contact with heavy loads, the Christian's spiritual muscles are *strengthened* as he steps out on faith where Jesus leads. Peter stepped out - not a calm pond - but a terribly disturbed sea. In fact, Peter's ship was *several miles out from the shore* when he stepped out on the water. This was neither a calm sea, nor was it shallow water! You can imagine the white caps of the waves as they rolled toward the ship, causing it to toss and turn. Did Peter fail? Yes, he did:

Matthew 14:30 KJV^{Focal text} "But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me."

but even as he did his best - and failed - he cried out **Lord, save me.** Jesus may ask of you the impossible - at least, it may seem impossible. But if you follow His command, if you are obedient to go where He leads, then you need not fear complete destruction. Will God put more on you than you can bear? Well, yes and no. The Bible says:

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NASB) "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."

This verse doesn't necessarily say that God won't put a

9. What is my means of escape when I am going through a trial? (Matthew 14:30)

burden on you, but it does say that **He will always leave you a means of escape.** When you, like Peter, cry out and say "**Lord, save me!**", that nail scarred hand will reach out and help you bear that burden. The life yielded to Christ is ever aware that no trial comes that cannot be overcome, if only we grab that Blessed Hand.

Christians are like the flowers in a garden, that have each of them the dew of Heaven, which, being shaken with the wind, they let fall at each other's roots, whereby they are jointly nourished, and become nourishers of each other. (John Bunyan)

Learning - And Growing - Through The Failure

Peter had a number of failures in his lifetime. He failed at the Mount of Transfiguration:

Matthew 17:4^{KJV} "Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

when he wanted to build three equal monuments to Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. God the Father corrected Peter when He reminded him that:

Matthew 17:5^{KJV} "... This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

Peter failed when he told Jesus that the Savior wasn't going to go to the Cross. Jesus told Peter:

Mark 8:33^{KJV} ".. Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men."

A Christian *acts like Satan* when he promotes the things of this world instead of the things of God. Peter failed to pray with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane:

Mark 14:37^{NASB} "[Jesus] said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?"

and Peter failed to stand with Jesus when he denied the Savior, cursing God's holy name.

Matthew 26:74-75^{KJV} "Then began [Peter] to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. {75} And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly."

Peter failed Jesus many times, but he also *confessed his sins to Jesus freely*. It is required for salvation that a person freely admit their failure, their need for Jesus to save them. The Prodigal son failed God - yet even in the midst of failure he said:

(Luke 15:18-19 KJV) I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, {19} And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

When a person yields himself to God, putting aside all pride, God can work with that yielded life. You see, God is perfectly righteous, just, and holy, and knows our limitations as humans. **Dwight L. Moody** gave this illustration:

A farmer went with his son into a wheat field, to see if it was ready for the harvest. "See, father," exclaimed the boy, "how straight these stems hold up their heads! They must be the best ones. Those that hang their heads down, I am sure cannot be good for

much." The farmer plucked a stalk of each kind and said: "See here, foolish child! This stalk that stood so straight is light-headed, and almost good for nothing; while this that hung its head, so modestly is full of the most beautiful grain."

Jesus works - and brings forth fruit - from the surrendered life. Peter is the proof of that statement.

10. Did Peter ever fail Jesus? (Matthew 17:4-5; Mark 8:33; 14:37; Matthew 26:74-75)

11. How do we recover when we fail Jesus? (Luke 15:18-19; 1 John 1:8-10)