

Walking On Water

Introduction. In Matthew 14:24-33, Jesus had just finished His miraculous feeding of 5,000. He wanted to stay behind for a time to pray. But He decided to send His disciples ahead over the Sea of Galilee to the other shore. If we will investigate this account, there are some fantastically challenging and comforting lessons to learn from when Jesus walked on the water.

I. Jesus Came To Them

- A. It was just when they needed Him.
 - 1. Interestingly, a lot of these men were experienced sailors, but one of those sudden storms, for which the lake is noted, descended and swept over the water, lashing the waves furiously.
 - 2. The disciples were fighting for their lives, and after so many hours they must have been at the point of exhaustion. They were out in the sea without the Master. But when strength and hope were nearly gone, in the hour of the disciples' need, Jesus came to them.
- B. Jesus comes to us in the midst of troubled waters.
 - 1. In life, the wind and waves are often contrary.
 - a) There are times when we are up against it and life is a desperate struggle with ourselves, with our circumstances, with our temptations, with our relationships, with our sorrows, and with our decisions.
 - b) Man gets dejected and wants to give up (cp. Job 14:1). At such a time, no one need struggle alone, for Jesus comes to us across the storms of life, with hand stretched out to save, and with His calm, clear voice bidding us take heart and have no fear.
 - 2. Jesus wants us to cast our cares, both physical and emotional, on Him and the Father (Matthew 11:28-30; 1 Peter 5:7).

II. By Faith Peter Did The Impossible

- A. He stepped out in faith.
 - 1. He disregarded the waves and winds, keeping his eyes on Jesus. Christ encouraged the disciples to have faith as a mustard seed (Matthew 17:20), and Peter was willing to display that faith.
 - 2. Peter truly was an illustration of what Paul would write decades later in Philippians 4:13. Our faith can give us the victory over the world (1 John 5:4).
- B. God wants us to step out in faith to do His will.
 - 1. A more complete definition of faith and one that is more generally applicable could not be devised than the one in Hebrews 11:1.
 - 2. The men and women who follow in Hebrews 11 all believed the unseen, they all trusted a promise, and for that they had to wait and hope. When they did, they pleased God (Hebrews 11:6).
 - 3. For this life "faith" is everything, the all-sufficient substitute for "sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). It deals with the unseen as if it were seen (Hebrews 11:13).

III. But Then Peter's Faith Wavered

- A. He took his eyes off Jesus.
 - 1. Doubt is the enemy of faith, and many great people of old succumbed to it: Abraham (Genesis 12:12-13), John the Baptist (Matthew 11:2-3), and the disciples (Matthew 28:17).
 - 2. Unbelief is a key theme of the book of Hebrews (3:12, 19; 4:6, 11). The writer constantly exhorted his readers to "take heed" and "labor" to overcome it.
- B. We should have Paul's attitude in Romans 8:31.
 - 1. This kind of confidence can only come from knowing and appreciating God's unchanging and faithful nature (Psalm 33:11; Isaiah 49:23).
 - 2. We know that every good gift comes from God (James 1:17), and that we can overcome the evil one (1 John 4:4).

IV. Peter Began To Sink

- A. We can be overcome too.
 - 1. A lot of people are overcome in temptation and it feels so good to give in, but Peter describes it as a grotesque scene (2 Peter 2:20-22).
 - a) Maybe it begins in your marriage innocently by viewing an Instagram profile or reading a message on Facebook or WhatsApp.
 - b) Maybe it begins in your business by a little white lie to cover up sin, but it blossoms into continual deceit that gnaws away at your conscience.
 - c) Maybe it begins in your personal life by dealing with the crushing issues and discouragements with health or coping with the death of a loved one.
 - 2. In the context before us, the multitude wanting to make Him king was one of Satan's temptations to Jesus, and the sending these crowds away shows the temptation overcome.
 - a) And thus the prayer in the dark that stormy night may well have been an outpouring of His heart to the Father for the renewed victory.
 - b) He furthermore could have interceded for all His disciples that they might not be led away by these false Messianic conceptions.
- B. But God promises to help us overcome the world.
 - 1. A temptation that is "common to man" means that it is not above human strength to withstand (1 Corinthians 10:13).
 - a) God sets fixed bounds even for the devil, beyond which temptation cannot go as we see so clearly from the case of Job (1:12; 2:6).
 - b) Christ encouraged His disciples to "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). An effective way to overcome the world is to pray.
 - 2. Christians have been born of God, and have been filled with strong, spiritual life, making them victorious over the world, over this power which would interfere with their keeping of God's commandments.

V. Peter Cried Out To Jesus

- A. He recognized his need for God (cp. Luke 18:13). Great men of old, like David, knew their need for God too (Psalm 69:1-2).
- B. Peter's failing was only temporary.

1. All fail at one time or another. Peter would certainly know later what it meant to fail (Matthew 26:75) and to be restored (John 21:15-17).
 2. The grace of God will not abandon any of God's children; it is mightier than "the thorn," mightier than any "messenger of Satan." It will support us in every ordeal and shine the brighter as pure, undeserved grace the more it is put to the test (2 Corinthians 12:9).
- C. Peter had to appeal for help.
1. We have to open the door to Jesus.
 - a) What do you think would have happened if Peter would have thought, "I can handle this. I know it looks rough, but I'll pull through."
 - b) How many times have you thought you could handle a compromising situation, only to fall into sin?
 - c) Jesus stands at the door and knocks (Revelation 3:20). People have to give up their stubborn will and foolish pride, and let Him in.
 2. God offers forgiveness if we will turn to Jesus.
 - a) For those outside of Christ (Ephesians 1:7; Galatians 3:27).
 - b) For erring Christians (1 John 1:9; Acts 8:22).

Conclusion. A preacher wrote of his own experience snorkeling at La Jolla Cove in San Diego. He said, "I was snorkeling in a broad, shallow cove with a very narrow inlet, with a college buddy. Because the cove is protected, it is virtually always calm, the waters are always placid, and even inexperienced swimmers are safe there. When the tide is out, a small rock, just big enough for three or four people, juts up out of the middle of the cove. I had just bought new fins, mask, and snorkel and wanted to try them out before going out to the open water. So I grabbed my friend and headed for the beach. Having adjusted the straps on our fins and getting the snorkel keeper in the right place, we paddled around the water, and had a great time looking at the fish, the formations, and the aquatic plants. Eventually we found ourselves out in the middle of the cove and decided to climb up on the rock to rest for a while. After clambering up on the rock we removed our fins, masks, and snorkels and laid them beside us. The sun felt good, the ocean sounds were relaxing, and everything seemed great — what more could a couple of college guys ask? Suddenly, an unexpected, large swell pushed its way into the neck of the cove, rolled its way across, and unceremoniously tossed us and our brand new equipment into the water. We never did find our gear; for all we know it's still resting at the bottom of La Jolla Cove some twenty years later."

That's how it is when we think we're secure on any rock other than Jesus Christ. A little squall, a little swell and you're swept off along with everything else. How many times do we feel helpless, ready to drown in a sea of troubles and cares, and need Jesus to come to us? Anchor yourself to the Rock and you will be secure forever (Matthew 7:24-27; 1 Corinthians 3:11; 1 Peter 2:6-8).