

Matthew 14:28-36 The Lesson of Peter Walking on the Water

We are continuing in Matthew chapter 14. Our text is actually Matthew 14:22-36, the latter section of the chapter. Last week we took verses 22 through 27, Jesus Walking on the Water. Today we are finishing up this section of Peter walking on the water. Jesus went first and He walked on the water, and that sets the scene for us, for Peter in our text today.

So, after feeding the five thousand in verses 15 to 21, Jesus goes down to the shore and he constrains, or literally forces, or compels the disciples to get into a boat and to row to the other side of the sea. *Forced them*, is what *constrain* means in the Greek, **ἀνάγκη** (anankay), it's a *forceful pressure*. Jesus set this whole thing up. He forced them to get into the boat. It was the Lord's idea. It was the Lord's purposes.

We see that also, because of this He purposely sent them out into a storm. Catch that. You start noticing these things in Scripture when your focus is on the Lord instead of people. The focus, usually, in this section is on Peter. But the focus is really on Christ. He designed the circumstance. He forced the circumstance. He purposely sent them out into the sea without Him, physically. And sent them purposely into a storm.

So, they had been rowing, we found out last week, for almost 9 hours. And the wind was contrary to them, or opposing them, so they are rowing into the wind. And the waves are, as the King James text says, *boisterous, strong*. And they got out to between three and four miles from the shore when the incident of Jesus walking on the sea happened. So, they have been rowing for about nine hours, to go four miles.

In Mark 6:48, we saw last week, that they were weary from rowing. That is how tough it was. We also learned from Mark 6:48 that Jesus was watching them. You remember, He sent them away out into the sea, He dismissed the multitudes and crowds that He had fed - the five thousand, and Jesus went alone up onto a mountain, privately, alone. But Mark 6:48 says that from that mountain top, He could see the disciples out on the sea struggling. The Lord was watching. So, why didn't He go and help them if He knew they were in trouble? Because the Lord, in His wisdom, has a perfect time and a perfect way to solve every situation.

And, as we will see in our text today, not like back in Matthew chapter 8 where Jesus stilled the storm, He calmed the storm, brought it to silence; He didn't calm the storm. It is not always His will to take away the difficulty of the circumstances.

Do you notice how we pray? Most of our prayers, we thank the Lord for our food, and we have a few little tidbits here and there that we mention to Him; but most of our prayers are, "Lord, I'm in difficult situations, remove the difficulty, remove the hardship." He will not always do that. The reason why? He doesn't need to.

Do you remember with the feeding of the five thousand, the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Lord, dismiss them because they're getting hungry and we don't have a way to feed them. So, dismiss them." Jesus said to them, "They have no need to leave." The problem has no need

to leave, with Jesus there. That's what Jesus is teaching us. The harder the difficulty, the more He is manifested as Lord over all. He is stronger than any difficulty and any circumstance. And you'll find that as you grow older in your walk with the Lord, and as you mature in the things of Christ, you'll find you that your difficulties will grow more difficult. If you're feeding on milk as a young Christian, your difficulties will seem monstrous to you, but in reality it's pretty light to what you're about to face in the future. Because only when we are ready for the more difficult situations, only then will the Lord entrust us with those, because it's through those that we really get to know Him. So, how much do you want to get to know Him?

So, the disciples were out in the sea and Jesus came walking, and again Mark 6:48 says that Jesus walked by them as if He's passing by. He didn't come directly to them. When they saw Him three things happened, and we mentioned these to you last week.

(1) The disciples were troubled, that is, they were terrified. **παράσσω** (tarasso). They were terrified.

(2) Secondly, they thought they were seeing a ghost. They said, "It's a spirit," but in the Greek text, the Greek word is different than the normal word for *spirit*.

πνεῦμα (pneuma) is the word for spirit, this is the word **φάντασμα** (phantasma), a phantom. They thought they were seeing a ghost, a phantom walking up upon the sea.

(3) And thirdly, they became afraid, understandably.

So, when Jesus stopped He told them three things to counter their three things.

(1) When they were terrified He says, "Be of good cheer," which literally means, *have courage*. Remember Joshua 1:5-6, God told Joshua, "I will be with you wherever you go and no one will be able to stand before you to stop you. So, because I'm with you, have courage." Face life with courage.

(2) Secondly, they thought that they saw a ghost. The English text read that Jesus said, "Have courage, it is I," but that is not what the Greek text says. It doesn't say, "It is I." It says, **ἐγώ εἰμι** (ay-go ay-me) which is the name for Yahweh God of the Old Testament. He said, "I am," showing His mastery and control as Creator and control of all things. So, in saying, "I am the great I AM of Exodus 3:14."

(3) But yet thirdly, when they became afraid, he says, "Do not be afraid. Have courage, the I AM is here with you, the creator of all of this. So, do not be afraid."

So, Jesus was not teaching them - this is the lesson we learned last week - Jesus was not teaching them to walk on water, but rather He was revealing Himself to be the Creator and controller of all of nature.

And, as we continue on now today with verse 28, continuing to study Peter walking upon the water, in verses 28 to 29 we study The Command of Jesus. Verse 28 says, **And Peter**

answered Him and said, "Lord, if it be You, bid me (or command me) to come to You upon the water." Three things:

(1) The phrase, *if it is you*. "Lord, if it is You." The word *if* in the Greek text is what is called *the first-class condition assumed to be true*. So Peter is not questioning Jesus saying, "If it's you, because I really don't know if it is or not, so, prove it, prove that it is You." He is saying, "Since it is You," he already knows that it is Jesus. "*Since* it is You."

(2) Secondly, "Command me." Ah, it is fascinating. That's why we have to take these in small portions because people read right over and don't notice the implications of the text. Peter asked the Lord to command him to come out onto the water. Peter did not command the water himself. Peter did not claim any promises, but rather he submitted the circumstance to the Lord's command and to the Lord's will. "Lord, command me to come out onto the water."

(3) And thirdly, "To come to You upon the water." Interesting. Peter did not want to walk on the water, to walk on water's sake. He wasn't interested in saying, "Hey Jesus, you're walking on the water, I want to do that too. I want to come out there and walk on water with You." So, he didn't want to walk on water for the sake of walking on water, but to come to Jesus. That's huge. "Lord, since it is You, command me to come *to You* upon the water." The only way to get there, to Jesus, is the walk upon the water.

Verse 29, **Jesus said to him**, one word, "**Come.**" That's a command. Interesting how the Lord is in charge, isn't He? Peter was not in charge. Peter was not told to be in charge. Peter submitted to the Lord by saying, "Command me." In other words, without the Lord's command Peter could not have gone out on the water.

You don't know how many sermons I've heard over the years where people have said, "You know, if you just have enough faith. If Peter had enough faith, he could have just got out on the water and gone to Jesus." No, it had to be under the command of Jesus Christ. If the Lord does not command it, it's not going to happen. It is not up to Peter claim anything, except to acknowledge that it must be under the Lord's command and under the Lord's control.

So, Jesus says, "Come." Jesus did not choose to stop or calm the storm. Remember that all this time the storm is still raging. We have a tendency to not see that because we are involved with the implications and the specifics of what's going on. But the wind is still blowing and the waves are still raging. Jesus did not choose to stop the storm, He just said, "Come."

Can you imagine, some people would be thinking, "Well, if I was in Peter's spot I'd say, 'Yeah, I'd like to, except you know, these waves, can you just kind of make it calm for me?' So that when I come to Jesus it is going to be calm. It not always calm to come to Jesus. He doesn't have to stop the storm. All He has to do is say, "Come," and Peter comes. Here Jesus was doing what God can only do. He commands the forces of nature in order to accomplish His purposes.

He's doing only what God can do. He is in control of all the forces of nature to accomplish His purposes.

So it tells us, **And Peter was come down from out of the ship, and he walked upon the water, to go to Jesus.** So, he is out of the ship. He walked on top of the water, again we are told, in order to come to Jesus. Not to be skipping around out on the water experiencing some kind of miraculous experience. He did it to come to Jesus.

We learn from these two verses that we are not in charge; in spite of the fact of the more modern teachings of our day, which teaches people and encourages people to take charge of their life. The Lord is in charge and it's our job to submit and follow His command. His command will bring about His will.

Verses 30 and 31, The Call of Peter. I am going to read this in the literal translation, verse 30, it says, **But when he saw,** (literally, *while seeing*, it's a present participle). **While focusing on the wind boisterous,** I love that word *boisterous*, **ἰσχυρὸν** (*ischuron*) is the Greek word that means *strong*. **When he was focusing on the strong wind, the boisterous wind, he became afraid, and when he began to sink into the waves he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"**

Now, there are people who teach and say from these texts that if Peter had enough faith, he would not have sunk into the waves. What they're really saying is that if Peter had enough faith, he would have no need to call to Jesus. He wouldn't need the Lord. He says, "Lord save me!" That is what the Lord is there for. It exhibits the weakness of man. It exhibits the faithfulness of God. He would need the Lord's help. You ever notice that some of the teachings that are around today encourage people to be strong within themselves, their own faith, their own positive thinking. That you are a weak Christian if you have to ask for the Lord's help. How much that must offend God. Because we have the gospel displayed right here in front of us, as we read on.

We see that in this text that when Peter took his attention off of Jesus and he became occupied with the storm, he sank into the storm. It tells us something, teaches us something: Jesus is always in charge, He is always stronger than the storm, He is always in control of the storm; but we become whatever our focus is. We are one with the person or thing that we are occupied with. That's what the Bible teaches. We study that from Matthew 6:24-25. A person is at one with the person or thing in which they are occupied with. If you are occupied with the storm, that's what's going to control your thinking. If you are occupied with Jesus, in Matthew 6:24 it says you can't be occupied with two things at the same time. And we will see in a moment that that was Peter's problem. Coming to Jesus, but now he's occupied. He's focused on this storm. You get sunk right into the storm.

In the book of Proverbs it tells us, **As a man thinks, so is he.** As we get together, as we talk about our situations and circumstances, we display in our conversations what is really on our mind. Sometimes we can hardly wait to find somebody to tell them all the problems that we have, that we are going through, and, "If we don't get help pretty soon, we are going to be destroyed. I mean life is over! Nobody knows the trouble I've seen." I mean, "You people

might have problems, but I really have problems." So, we are at one with the person or thing in which we are occupied with. And we can be in the middle of two things but we can only be occupied with one thing at a time.

And then it says, in verse 31, **And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand.** Remember, Peter cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately, didn't wait around, immediately responded, **and stretched out His hand, and He took hold of him.** Interesting, that Peter made it all away out from the boat to about an arm's length away from Jesus. He almost got there, traveled all the way. In fact, he got to the exact spot he needed to be in order to learn this lesson, when Jesus took ahold of him. The Lord was teaching him that the Lord was not going to let him sink. In fact, it was impossible for Peter to sink. Impossible. Because no matter what his frame of mind, or what he was occupied with, Jesus was there. It was Jesus who pulled him up from sinking. So, the Lord was revealing the truth about Himself and His relationship with His people.

In John 15:5 Jesus said, **"Without Me you cannot do one thing."** So, as Peter took his attention off of the Lord and looked at the waves and the storms, and began to calculate what might happen to him, Jesus is showing, "Without Me, you can't make it." But it is impossible for you not to make it with Jesus there. That's His faithfulness.

And so, I mentioned just a few minutes ago that in this story we have, actually, the gospel message; where man is caught in the storms of life, in the difficulties of life, and the difficulties of life are pulling him in, he is sinking down into them. We talked in our time of prayer of people who are searching for answers but life just seems to be causing them to sink in, as they get obsessed with the problems themselves. But, in reality, what Jesus wants is for them to say, "Lord, save me." See, that's the gospel message. All of life is pulling me in. "Lord save me." And what does the Lord do? He reaches out and He saves the person. That's all you need to do, is to come to Jesus and say, "Lord, save me," and the Lord will reach out and pull you out and bring you to Him. Even if we get caught up in the circumstances, the Lord is there to pull us out. It is not based on our performance. Peter had a pitiful performance, if you are going to rate his performance. That's exactly what Jesus wanted to emphasize and to amplify.

And then Jesus says to him, look at the end of verse 31, **"O thou of little faith,"** the English says. Actually, in the Greek text it is only one word, a compound Greek word: **ὀλιγόπιστε** (oligopiste), which means *little faith one*. A person of little faith. Jesus was not challenging him to have faith, He was stating Peter's current condition: "You have very little faith." When I say He is stating his present condition, it is because we know from Galatians 5:22 that it is the fruit of God's Spirit that produces faith. They did not have the indwelling of God's Spirit there, so they were little faith ones. Not full of faith, but little faith, whatever faith they had is because Jesus was there supplying that faith for them. He was revealing to Peter, Peter could not have had faith in all of this, because he didn't have any. "O little faith one."

Then He says, **"Wherefore (or literally, for what) did you doubt?"** Now, the word *doubt* in the Greek text literally means *to stand between two opinions*. So, it means *to waver, to fail to stand firm*, looking in two different directions and you are standing right in the middle. So, we see that we are not in control. We are confused. We get distracted in different directions

and different ways and different things. But the Lord is faithful. He's in control. He's in command and He is in control. That is what we are learning in this text. Peter learned his failure and the Lord's ability, that's what we learn in our circumstances. We learn our failure, but we learn the Lord's faithfulness and His ability. He pulls out every time, in every situation.

It was Peter who said in I Peter 1:5-7, Peter says, **We who are being kept by the power of God through faith for salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.** We are being kept for salvation. **In which, you greatly rejoice, even though for the time being, if need be, you are in heaviness (or grief) in various trials.** We rejoice in our salvation. We rejoice it is being reserved for us. We rejoice that through faith we have salvation in Jesus Christ. But in the meantime, in this earthly life, we experience some grief through the heaviness and the grief of various trials. **In order that the trial of your faith, (literally means *the proving of it*, putting it through the tests and solidifying it) being much more precious than that of gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory in the appearing (or revelation) of Jesus Christ.** So, we are being put through a testing process that refines our faith. It strengthens, it establishes our faith, which is what the Greek text is saying in I Peter 1:5-7. So, Peter says we rejoice that we are saved, but in the meantime we got storms. And the Lord sends us out into the storms. And the Lord sends the storms. The Lord is in control of the storms. It is Lord's command that makes the storms happen, and it is the command over us that brings about His faithfulness to us. But He says to Peter, "For why did you doubt? Why were you standing there and looking at the waves and then coming to me? You are going in two different directions, O little faith one."

In verses 32 and 33, The Confession of the Disciples. **And when they (that is, Jesus and Peter) were come into the boat, the wind ceased.** Now all of that that happened, that we just studied, happened while the storm was still going. But when Peter and Jesus got into the boat the wind stopped.

Not like Jesus did back in Matthew chapter 8. You remember, He was asleep in the back of the boat and the boat was filling up with water. And the disciples said, "Lord, save us or we are going to perish." And He gets up and He stops the storm. And they look at Him and they say, "What kind of Man is this, the even the winds and the seas obey Him?" They knew what kind of Man He was. But it's interesting, it gives us insight into the various trials and tribulations we have to go through. We can come to know the Lord in one circumstance, and yet, when the circumstances change, we don't know Him. It is the Lord's desire that His people come to know Him in every circumstance. You get to know Jesus a little better and a little differently based on the circumstances. What I came to know Him in yesterday, today it is going to be all new because the circumstances are different. So, therefore what Jesus commands and what He controls it is going to be different for me. So, I have to learn to trust Him.

The wind ceased (verse 33) and when the ones who were in the boat came, they worshiped Him. Interesting, the word *worship* means *to bow down*. It doesn't mean to sing. It means *to bow down as an expression of submission*. They were bowing down to Him in the boat as an expression of submission, honoring Him as the great I AM God of the Old Testament, the creator of all things, the controller of all things. They learned their lesson.

They worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God." They worshiped Him because of who He was. They said, "Thou art the Son of God. *Son of God* is a Messianic title that attributes the deity of the Messiah. *Son of man* is His humanity, *Son of God* is His deity. They were confessing Him to be God.

Next section, verses 34 to 36 as we finish up, The People Healed by a Touch. Verses 34-35, The Coming of the People. **And when they were gone over** (that is, they got to the other side of the lake) **they came into the land of Gennesaret.** Gennesaret was on the northwest shore of the lake. There was a forested valley just south of Capernaum and yet north of Tiberius. So, when they arrived at Gennesaret, **When the men of that place had knowledge** (or literally, *recognized Him*) **they sent out into the whole region,** (the whole countryside) **and they brought to Him all that were diseased.** Literally, *the ones having illness*. The Greek word there at the end for *disease* or *illness* was a general term for all kinds of sicknesses, all kinds of physical difficulties.

Verse 36, The Conclusion. **And they were pleading with Him in order that they might only touch the fringe of His garment.** It is interesting, you need to know the background of this garment. This garment that they are talking about is called the *tallit*. The rabbis and the priest would wear this robe, that is called the *tallit*, and in Numbers 15:38-39 God gave the command to the people to put what are these little tassels on the corners of the tallit. These tassels on the corners were called *tzit-tzits*. And they were commanded to put there to remind the people to keep the commands of God. So, every time you saw a priest or rabbi or someone walking and they have the tallit robe on and the tzit-tzits are hanging down at the four corners of the robe, it is to remind them to keep the commandments of God.

In Jesus' day the people were superstitious. They said that if a priest or rabbi was anointed by God, you could come up and bow down and touch the tzit-tzits on the bottom of his robe and a miracle would happen. So, if a miracle didn't happen, it is because that priest or rabbi was not anointed by God. So, they came, they said, "The only thing we want to do, we don't want to bother You, we want to touch the hem of your robe, your garment, your tzit-tzits."

And as many as touched were completely cured. One-hundred percent completely cured. Everybody that touched these tzit-tzits were completely cured, hundred percent success. Notice the literal translation, "Completely, thoroughly cured." When Jesus does the healing, let me tell you this, when Jesus does the healing it's one-hundred percent and complete. No monkey business. No hocus-pocus. I want you to notice that there wasn't anything mentioned about faith in there at all. When Jesus does it, it happens one-hundred percent and it is complete.

Now, what does this section tell us or teach us? That Jesus is in command and in complete control of our circumstances because He is the Lord God Almighty. Whatever we realize and understand about Jesus is revealed and exposed in our circumstances. No matter how difficult the circumstances are we respond with who we think Jesus is. "Okay, He's the Son of God and He is the Savior, the Bible says, from 2000 years ago and He rose from the dead, He is up in heaven He sent the Holy Spirit." Okay, but who is He? He is here now. Who is He compared to the circumstances? He is the Lord God Almighty. If He chooses not to calm the storm but take you through it, that's His will and He can do that because He is God. He's

stronger than the storms. That's no problem. We are to focus and be occupied with the Lord while going through the storm, not look to have Him stop the storm, nor be occupied with the storm, because then the circumstances draw us right down in, we sink right down in. But know this, that even if that happens - in what we would call our failure and our weakness to not focus on Jesus anymore, and to focus on our difficulties and problems - He is faithful to pull us out. He is faithful to keep us from being swallowed up by the storms of life. Neither storm nor sickness can prevent the Lord from pulling us out and putting us on dry ground. Nothing. No storm nor sickness. If Jesus wants you healed, you'll be healed. If Jesus wants to pull you out of the storm, He will pull you out and He'll put you on dry ground because that's His faithfulness, that's Him revealing who He is to us in the midst of our failure and our weakness.

Let's close with prayer.