

A Confident Faith

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Matthew 8:23-27

Bunkertown COB

One night outside a small town in Minnesota, a fire started inside the local chemical plant, and in a blink of an eye it exploded into massive flames. The alarm went out to all the fire departments for miles around. When the Firemen arrived, the company president said, "I will give \$50,000 to the fire department that saves all of our secret formulas." But the roaring flames held the firefighters off. Then off in the distance, a lone siren was heard as another fire truck came into sight. It was the nearby rural township Volunteer Fire Company composed mainly of men over the age of 65. To everyone's amazement, the little run-down fire engine passed all the others and drove straight into the middle of the flames!

Outside, the other firemen watched as the old-timers jumped off and began to fight the fire with a performance and effort never seen before. Within a short time, they had extinguished the fire and saved the secret formulas. The grateful company president announced that for such a superhuman feat he was upping the reward to \$200,000 and asked, "What are you going to do with all that money?" "Well", said the 70-year-old fire chief, "the first thing we do is fix the brakes on that truck!"

Sometimes it's absolutely amazing what people can accomplish in the middle of a looming catastrophe. Most times people can handle a lot more than they think. For a Christian, it is during these storms of life that we most often turn to Jesus. Take, for instance, what the disciples did while battling a storm of their own.

¹⁸When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he instructed his disciples to cross to the other side of the lake.¹ ²³ When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him.²⁴ And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. ²⁵ And they came to *Him* and woke Him, saying, "Save *us*, Lord; we are perishing!" ²⁶ He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

sea, and it became perfectly calm. ²⁷ The men were amazed, and said, “What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?” ² (Matthew 8:23-27)

I remember the little Flannel Gram boat my Sunday School teacher used when telling this story. And as the boat tossed about on the waves, there was Jesus standing on the bow with an outstretched arm. Good News! Jesus can calm the storm. Next time I’m out on the water and a squall hits, I’ll be sure to turn to Jesus for help. But I wonder if I will get rebuked as well for having little faith.

You would think that Jesus would have been pleased that His disciples turned to Him for help; that they knew He was the One who could save them. So then why did Jesus scold the Disciples about their lack of faith? Were they supposed to calm the sea on their own? Was this another one of those “Faith the size of a mustard seed” illustrations? You almost expect to hear Jesus say “Do, or do not. There is no try”. But if you look more closely, you’ll notice Jesus was the one who gave the direction to go to the other side in the first place (verse 18). And, He was the first one into the boat (verse 23). Jesus gave the direction and took the initiative to lead the Disciples out on the sea. He was there with them in the boat out in the middle of the storm.

Does the phrase “Where God ordains He will sustain” mean anything to you? As a paraphrase of Hebrews 1:3 (**The Son radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God, and He sustains everything by the mighty power of His command.**³), it basically means that if God has led you to a place in your life, you can be sure of two things; you will not journey alone and He will be with you throughout the ordeal. So His rebuke of faith in verse 26 has more to do with their lack of assurance in His leading rather than in their ability to calm the storm on their own (which really gets me off the hook. I can’t even stop a ripple on the pond!).

Here you have Jesus and His Disciples heading out to do more work for the Kingdom. So perhaps the storm was Satan’s way of trying to get their minds off of where Jesus was leading them or to turn them aside from the work Jesus called them to do. Well, if that’s true then here is where their faith failed. My word, think about

²*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update.* LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

³Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation.* Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

it; Jesus gave the clear instruction, was the first one in the boat, and traveled with them. Did they honestly believe Jesus would abandon them?

For most of us though, it's just natural to rely upon our own knowledge and strength when problems and difficulties arise. But **"if God is for us, who can ever be against us?"**⁴ (Romans 8:31) argues Paul. And to have God with you means that He will travel with you into the fire and through the storms of life. And in that thought we can find a confident faith. So when we do find ourselves facing a storm of our own, should we not do so with a certain level of calm or peace? And what must it say to the rest of the world when we Christians face a crisis with peril and panic?

But may I also point out that after the storm was calmed and after the Disciples learned a lesson about the sustaining power of Jesus, there was something else to learn as well. Did you notice that Jesus was with them in the boat after it became calm? It's a point most of us miss. Of course we turn to Jesus when things in life get rough. Like the disciples, we try to shake Him awake and wonder if He really cares about what we're going through. But do we recognize Him in the boat with us when all is well; when life is calm?

What impact should it have that Jesus is with us when things are calm? What would it be like if Christians learned to find strength in the fact that Jesus journeys with us all the time? If because of our faith we can shine in the midst of the fire, what would it look like when Christians follow Jesus with a confident faith during the calm? We would be loving boldly, working confidently, and serving with strength knowing that this is where Jesus has sent us and is the task He has called us to do. He is there with us in the boat.

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline"⁵ (2 Timothy 1:7) writes the Apostle Paul. If we can face the storm with peace and calm, how then should we face the rest of life?

⁴Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁵Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.