

## Faith During Storms

The story has been told of an oil man whose oil well caught fire. It was so bad that he offered \$30,000 to anyone who could put it out. All the large fire departments in the area showed up, but they couldn't get closer than 200 yards to the blaze. Then a small volunteer fire department came barreling up in an old dilapidated fire truck, sped right on past everyone else, to the outskirts of the fire and the men jumped out and started beating the fire with blankets and throwing buckets of water and sand on the inferno. They soon had to retreat but the oil man was so impressed with their nerve that he awarded them \$30K right on the spot! He then asked them what they would do with the money, and the trembling chief said: "The FIRST thing we'll do is get the brakes fixed on that stupid truck!!"

We have all, likely, found ourselves in an unnerving situation through sheer happenstance. We did not choose to be in the situation yet there we are. We are in one of life's storms. Those storms try our faith. How well do we maintain our faith during those storms?

Many of us are like the man who brought his son to Jesus. His son had convulsions and this was dangerous in that his son would at times be thrown into the fire. The man had seen Jesus helping people and he wanted Jesus to help his son. Jesus asked if he believed and the man response is found in Mark 9:24.

**Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief." (Mark 9:24 NASB)**

We believe but there is something lurking in the shadows that causes us to doubt. Before we go to our scripture for this morning, let's review a few things. We will spend most of our time in Mark's gospel. Mark is the earliest recorded gospel. It is written to introduce Jesus to a Gentile reader. It is the only synoptic gospel that omits the birth and young childhood of Jesus choosing to begin at the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus. Immediately following His temptation, Jesus assembled His apostles. These are the twelve men who followed Jesus throughout His earthly ministry (Mark 1:16-20).

From the early days, these apostles saw the many miracles of Jesus. Some of those listed in Mark, include: casting out demons (Mark 1:21-28); healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-31); healing many other people (Mark 1:32-39); cleansing of a leper (Mark 1:40-45); healing of a paralytic (Mark 2:1-12); and healing of the man with a withered hand (Mark 3:1-5).

We have covered a lot of ground in the first three chapters of Mark. Jesus had done many things to demonstrate His power and ability. In the fourth chapter, Jesus tells several parables about the productivity of the planted seed. In the last parable, Jesus speaks of small things growing into great things

**And He said, "How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? *It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR can NEST UNDER ITS SHADE.*" (Mark 4:30-32 NASB)**

There are many lessons which we might glean from these three verses. We could discuss the fact that the mustard seed is not the smallest of all seeds but is the smallest seed planted in that region and also the smallest seed that produces a plant large enough for birds to nest. We could discuss the minutia of the various words and their meaning. However, the point of this parable is that the amount of faith required to achieve much in the kingdom is small.

After these parables, Jesus is tired from a full day of preaching and wants to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. It was evening and we begin reading in Mark the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter with 35<sup>th</sup> verse.

**On that day, when evening came, He said to them, “Let us go over to the other side.” Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still.” And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?” They became very much afraid and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” (Mark 4:35-41 NASB)**

As we focus on this event one evening on the Sea of Galilee, it may be easy for us to see that Jesus had done many things to show His disciples that He was the Messiah who had come from God; He had abilities to do miracles; and He had emphasized the need to trust in Him. The key element of trust is faith. Faith is and has always been the quality that God looks for in those who want to come near to Him. In Hebrews we are told **without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6 NASB)**

In this passage, we see the disciples got into the boat with Jesus and a storm threatens to overwhelm the boat. We know this because we are told the **waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up.**

These are the same people who have seen Jesus in action. They know that He has power. Yet, they, like many of us, get distracted by the noise of the storms around us. The situation in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Mark is a classic example of the teacher demonstrating ability, talking about faith, and then comes the test. Most of us fully understand that principles of living by faith. However, when the test comes, we find ourselves in panic mode.

For us, we may never find ourselves in a boat during a storm. However, as we live Christian lives, we will find that we will be in troubling situations. Paul wrote to Timothy telling him of his own personal experiences. Paul sums it up with the assurance that persecutions will be a part of Christian living. We read this in 2 Timothy the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter.

**Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3:10-12 NASB)**

Paul told Timothy that during all of the persecutions he endured, Jesus rescued him. The inference must be that as we face the persecutions and storms for having Jesus in our metaphorical boat, then He will rescue us. The disciples on that stormy night called out to Jesus for deliverance and they were rescued. This should enhance our faith in Jesus to rescue us when we face troubling times. Have we not seen His power as revealed in scripture? Have we failed to see His power in our life? Throughout the Bible, we find case after case of people living by faith and being blessed by God. The 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hebrews is a list of several of those whose faith brought them deliverance from the evil one. In some cases, their deliverance was their heavenly home. Do we believe these? When we read about the life of Jesus, do we see His power to save both from physical harm as well as spiritual death?

Perhaps we, like the disciples that night, are filled with fear when we are in the middle of life's storms. Is this how we should live? Should our lives be governed by fear? Not according to Paul who wrote: **For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV)**

The love of Jesus drives out fear. It will drive out fear during the storms and it will drive out fear when we face our final judgement.

**By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. (1 John 4:17-18 NASB)**

Without a doubt, the disciples were frightened that night as the storm raged. They knew that Jesus would spare them from destruction. They turned to Him for deliverance. Later, Jesus was preparing to leave them to return to heaven. He gave them the assurance that He gives them peace and not fear.

**Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. (John 14:27 NASB)**

When we face our storms, will we hear Jesus asking us about our faith or will we find His peace to be our shelter during the storm?