

Summary: A sermon that looks at the true nature of faith from the disciples panic during the storm and Jesus calming of the winds and waves. This is what faith looks like in real life.

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## The Nature of Faith

Luke 8:22-25

I'd like to start our time together this morning with the following proposition.

Many believers find themselves spiritually depressed because they haven't understood the nature of faith.

This doesn't mean they're not Christian. All who come into the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, accepting Him as Savior and Lord, have all been given the gift of faith, a measure of faith, if you would, but it doesn't mean they've understood what they've been given.

The story I'd like to share this morning brings out the distinction between this original gift of faith and our walk of faith, or the life of faith that we are to live.

The overall theme of this morning's message is that which Paul proclaimed.

“We walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Corinthians 5:7 NKJV)

With this in clear view let's take a look at or text and Jesus' remarkable question, “Where is your faith.”

“Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, ‘Let us cross over to the other side of the lake.’ And they launched out. But as they sailed He fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, ‘Master, Master, we are perishing!’ Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. But He said to them, ‘Where is your faith?’ And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, ‘Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!’” (Luke 8:22-25 NKJV)

In our text we have what might be called as a classic paradox, a contradiction if you would, as to who exactly is Jesus. And until we get this firmly settled, nothing I say will make sense and will have little effect.

First, we see him with an apparent lack of knowledge of the impending storm. He's tired, so tired that he fell asleep on the boat, and stayed asleep even during this hellish storm that came against them.

The fact that Jesus was tired and fatigued leaves no doubt as to His humanity. It had been a tough couple of days of healing and teaching. So, when He got into the boat, he fell asleep, and stayed asleep even in middle of a storm that threatened to sink their little boat.

Next Jesus gets up and rebukes the wind and the sea and they become still. Notice the disciple's question, "Who can this be?" "What manner of man is this?" (Matthew 8:27)

While Jesus had a body of flesh and blood like you and I, He was also the Lord of all creation commanding the elements.

Of Jesus, the Apostle John said,

"All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory." (John 1:3,)

This is the mystery. Jesus was both God and Man, two natures in One Person, two natures unmixed yet together.

If we're not clear about this, then everything else is in vain. Everything starts and stops with the unique personage and deity of Jesus. We're not just looking at a good man. Rather we're coming face to face with the Lord God Himself come down in human form to dwell among His creation, and to sacrifice His life, a sinless life, a life that only the Lord God Himself could live. In Jesus we come face to face with the marvel of the incarnation, God becoming flesh, and virgin birth.

What manner of man is this? More than a man, but the Lord God Himself, and unless you get this right, you'll not get right for eternity.

There is a truism that says,

"Wrong theories lead to wrong conclusions, which results in disastrous ends."

With this understanding we can look at the first point of our overall theme that we walk by faith and not by sight, and learn the lesson about the true nature of our faith.

## 1. Faith Refuses to Panic

Responding to the disciples' panic. Jesus said,

<sup>26</sup> And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. (Matthew 8:26 )

Jesus was marveling at their faith. He was rebuking them for being so afraid, especially seeing that He was in the boat.

Now, let's put ourselves in this situation.

Here we are in a relatively small boat, and there is a real threat.

A furious storm comes up, the waves are coming into the boat, and we're bailing for our lives only to realize that we are fighting a losing battle.

And to make matters worse, Jesus is asleep in the boat; in other words, he isn't bringing any relief to our apparent hopeless situation.

And when we come to Him about the situation, He rebukes us saying,

"Why are you panicking? As My followers you shouldn't panic no matter how bad the situation may be."

As believers in Jesus Christ we are unique.

We have something that nobody else possesses, the presence of Jesus Christ inside of us.

In other words, Jesus is in our boat.

Therefore, we should never be carried away by our feelings.

A Christian should always be in control, and being self-controlled is not only a fruit of the Spirit, but completes our faith.

One reason why believers are spiritually depressed is because they allow the situation to control them, rather than controlling the situation by the faith that resides within them.

The Apostle Paul said,

“I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content...I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:10b, 13)

As Christians we are never to be controlled by the situation, but rather we're to control the situation by the faith that resides within us.

Therefore, our first lesson about the nature of faith is a refusal to panic when the storms of life come, because Jesus is in the boat.

## 2. Faith Trusts

When we panic as the disciples did, this reveals a lack of trust and confidence in Jesus to see us through the storm.

This is why, Jesus reprimanded them so severely. In effect He was saying, “Don't you trust Me? Did I not say that we're going to the other side?”

Notice again what the disciple's said.

“<sup>24</sup> And they went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!” (Luke 8:24)

This is where we find ourselves in times of trouble and in the state of spiritual depression.

It's a lack of faith in Jesus' overall concern about us and in His care for us.

So, we take charge of the situation feeling like He doesn't care, or if He does care, He can't or won't do anything about it.

Now it's easy to look at this objectively in the disciple's lives, but what I've found is that this is exactly what we're doing, and that's why we hear such comments from others saying,

“Well I guess you really don't have all that much faith in this God you believe in and serve.”

It's such observations that keep our family and friends from examining the truth claims about Jesus Christ and eternal life in and through Him alone.

When we panic in times of distress it implies an overall lack of faith and trust in the Lord.

### 3. Faith Expects Trials

The question that always seems to come up, however, is why God allowed this storm in the first place? In this case it's clearly a trial of faith.

Now the Scriptures are filled with such times of trials.

Everyone listed in the Book of Hebrew's Hall of Faith were tried as well.

They had been given great and precious promises along with trials and tribulations.

God gives us this great and precious gift of faith, but it's a faith that is tried through the trials of life.

The Apostle Peter describes this faith as being tested by fire so that in the end we give God the glory.

"The genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:7)

We're all going to have our faith tried and tested, where God is going to allow storms to come against our little boats. But how are we to handle them?

Obviously not as the disciples did with panic and despair, but rather as the Apostle James tells us

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience." (James 1:2-3)

We rejoice because God is allowing these storms to produce what we need most, and that is the endurance to live in this world that's totally messed up.

These tests, these difficulties, are absolutely essential to the growth and maturity of our faith, so that when Jesus returns, He will find great faith amongst His people.

There's an old German legend of a small town who had been experiencing poor harvest over the past several years.

This year, however, it was going to be different.

The whole town prayed and asked God if they could plan out the year for themselves so they could have a better harvest.

And so God gave them the permission to run their own lives and the weather.

When they asked for rain, God sent rain, and when they asked for sunshine, God gave them sunshine.

At the time of harvest the corn and wheat were higher and thicker than it's ever been; however, there were no ears of corn on the stalks and no heads of grain on the wheat.

The people felt abandoned by God and cried out, "God you have failed us, there is no crop."

But the Lord replied, "You asked for everything that was needed, that is, everything except the harsh north winds.

The winds are absolutely necessary for pollination, and with no pollination there is never going to be crops."

Now maybe we can understand a little better when James says to count it all joy when these various trials come our way, or when Paul tells us that we must go through many trials to enter God's kingdom, Acts 14:22.

Yet, if we were to be honest about it, it really isn't the trial that has us so distressed, rather we're like the disciples who asked, "Don't you care?"

That is where the real trial of our faith comes in.

The winds and waves are bad enough, but what distressed them most was that Jesus was asleep, and seemingly didn't care about what they were facing.

Yet this is far from the truth.

Jesus was tired, yes, but beyond that He knew the storm was coming, but He also had the Father's assurance that they'd reach the other side.

And this is God's promise and assurance for us when we face life's storms.

<sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare<sup>[a]</sup> and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. (Jer 29:11 ESV)

So, let's stop asking "why" and know that whatever we're facing that God knows and will bring us into a greater future and hope.

And if that ending is death, then this is the greatest future and hope any of us could ever have because we'd be in heaven where there is no more suffering, sorrows, or tears of grief.

And if we're tempted to think that God has abandoned us, we need to remember that Jesus is in the boat with us, and His promise is that He will never leave or forsake us, and He will accomplish His plan and purpose for our lives.

#### 4. Faith Acts

At this juncture, I'd like to examine the nature of Jesus' rebuke, because it tells us a lot about the nature of faith.

Notice how Jesus phrases this question, "Where is your faith?"

It implies the disciples had the faith necessary to deal with the problem.

What Jesus wanted to know is where that faith was at this time.

They had it, where was it?

Faith is not a matter of feelings, because feelings are always changing.

Instead faith is about how we respond to truth.

Further faith isn't something that acts automatically.

This is thermostat faith.

We set our thermostats to the desired temperature so it never gets too hot or cold.

When the temperature exceeds what we have the thermostat set for then it automatically kicks in and brings the temperature back to normal.

This often how we think faith works.

When difficulties come and exceed the limits set, that's when we want our faith to automatically kick in and bring us back to normal.

But that's not biblical faith.

Biblical faith is an activity, something that needs to be exercised.

It doesn't operate by itself; we have to put it into operation.

Jesus said, "Where is your faith?" or to say it another way, "Why aren't you taking the faith you have been given and applying it to the situation."

The most logical question would be how do we put our faith into operation?

a. Don't be controlled by circumstances

That's what happened to the disciples.

They were in a small boat when a storm arose. Jesus was asleep and the water was coming in faster than they could bale it out. It looked like they were going to sink, and so they panicked.

The situation had control of them.

Faith is saying that I'm not going to be controlled by the circumstance; rather I'm giving control over to the Lord.

This is what faith is.

It holds onto the truth and then reasons from whatever we're facing from what it knows as truth. In other words, Jesus is in the boat.

## b. Speak God's truth to the circumstance

When all these things come against us attempting to drive us to despair, and while we may not know what's going on, faith speaks truth to the situation.

Here are some truths we can hold onto.

- God loves us so much that He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into this world so that we can have eternal life.
- That even while we were God's enemy, He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for us, and Jesus sacrificed His life to set us free from the bondage of sin and death.
- This sacrifice Jesus made has reconciled us to God where we are not only His children and inheritors of all that He has, but that all the promises of God in Jesus Christ are yes and true and ours.
- We can do all things through Christ who gives us the strength, and that in Christ we are no longer condemned.
- God desires to do exceedingly abundant things in our lives, things that are above and beyond what we may ask or even imagine through the power of the Holy Spirit that now resides within us.
- All things will work themselves out for good, and that what others have meant for evil, God will bring it about for our good.
- And in the midst of everything that is going on in our lives that God will never leave us nor forsake us. God is in our boat.

Faith then refuses to be controlled by circumstances and reminds itself of what it believes and knows as being true.

Therefore, refuse to be moved when the enemy attacks, when the water pours into the boat; instead stand upon the faith you have, believe in the truth and rest in the knowledge that God is the one who said it and will therefore bring it about.

## c. There's great value in weak faith

However poor or weak their faith was, the disciples had enough faith to go to Jesus.

“And they came to Him and awoke Him.” (Luke 8:24a)

And even though He rebuked them for not using the faith they had, He still heard their cries and calmed the storm.

Even though our faith may be weak, we need to use what faith we have and go to Jesus.

He will hear our cry and bring calm to the turbulent waters.

## Conclusion

When we find ourselves in this position of trials and testing, take it as a wonderful opportunity to show the faith God has given you to bring glory to His name.

And when you are besieged and attacked and find you don't have the strength, don't panic; rather fly into the arms of Jesus. He'll receive you, bless you, bring you deliverance, and calm the raging storm.

This is the nature of faith.