

Fear and Faith

'A great storm arose...' Matthew 8:24

Matthew records, 'Jesus got into a boat, and His followers [disciples] went with Him. A great storm arose...' (vv. 23-24 NCV).

In the Greek language the words 'a great storm' are one word - seismos. A seismologist studies earthquakes and a seismograph measures them. So the storm the disciples were in must have shaken them to the core.

There's an important lesson here. Getting on board with Jesus doesn't mean you will never go through a storm. Jesus said, '...In the world you will have tribulation...' (John 16:33 NKJV). In spite of God's promise to protect and prosper us, you'll still have to deal with things like disease, lack, and fear. The difference is: the unbeliever faces the storm without Christ, but as a believer you go through the storm confident that all will be well because Jesus is on board.

Does that mean you will never experience panic? If only it were so! But it isn't. Looking at the swelling waves and the sleeping Saviour, the disciples asked, '...do You not care that we are perishing?' (Mark 4:38 NKJV). This is why fear is so deadly. It corrodes your confidence in God's goodness. It unleashes a swarm of doubts. It deadens your recall. By this time the disciples had witnessed Jesus '...healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people' (Matthew 4:23 NKJV).

Fear creates a form of spiritual amnesia. It dulls your miracle memory. It makes you forget what Jesus has done and how good God is. That's why you must starve your doubts and feed your faith on God's Word, for faith is what will take you through the storm.

Matthew records: 'Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith"? Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

So the men marvelled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (vv. 25-27 NKJV).

You'll never really know Jesus, or what He can do for you, until you go through a storm with Him. That's why He plans your storms as part of the journey. Jesus asked, 'Why are you fearful?' He was teaching us that fear will suck the life out of you and drain you dry of joy. When fear rules your life, safety becomes your God. And when safety becomes your God, you seek a risk-free life.

But those who are fear-filled cannot love deeply, because love is risky. They cannot give to the poor, because humanly speaking, benevolence is no guarantee of return. And the

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fear-filled cannot dream. What if their dreams shatter and fall from the sky? No wonder Jesus wages such a war against fear.

The Gospels list some 125 Christ-issued imperatives. Of these, twenty-one are to 'not be afraid'. The second most common command, to love God and your neighbour, appears only eight times. If quantity is any indicator, Jesus sees fear as one of our biggest issues. That's why the one statement He makes more than any other, and the one He is making to you today, is: 'Don't be afraid.'

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