

²² Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. ²³ And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. ²⁴ But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. ²⁵ Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶ And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." ²⁸ And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." ²⁹ So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" ³¹ And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

Text: Matthew 14:22-33 A 11/24/24 1 Kings 19:9-18 1 Peter 5:11-15 9:1-5 Ps. 62 Resp. Ps.: 20
Hymns: 246, 785, 649, 54

KEEP LOOKING TO JESUS

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

A baby learning to walk by going from parent to parent gets a great deal of confidence by keeping his eyes on his parents. When he takes his eyes off of his parents and starts looking around, invariably he starts to teeter, and down he goes. We are God's children. When we by faith **KEEP LOOKING TO JESUS** and follow the way Jesus leads, we're all right. It's when we fail to keep our eyes on Jesus that we get into trouble.

Jesus had just fed the 5,000. Afterwards He sent them to their homes, and had His disciples get into a boat and head out across the Sea of Galilee. As our text begins, it was now night. Suddenly, there was a bad storm. Strong winds can come whipping down the mountain slopes which surround the Sea of Galilee, causing unexpected and terrible storms. As God, Jesus knew the trouble His disciples were in. He came walking out to them on the water! Walking on water?! We can't do that. Jesus can do that because Jesus is God. Jesus says, "*The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.*" (Lk. 18:27)

We're told that the disciples "*were troubled,*" from the original, they were "*filled with fear and dread.*" Through the darkness and the wind and the waves, they thought they were seeing a ghost. "*But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Be of good cheer!'*" (or, also from the original, "*Take courage!*") "*It is I; do not be afraid.*"

Peter said to Jesus, "*Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.*" "*Lord*" in the original is literally, "*He to whom a person belongs.*" We belong to Jesus. Each of us is very dear to Him. He will help us with whatever problem or need we have.

We don't know what motivated Peter to ask Jesus to let him come to Him on the water. But one thing is certain, Peter had faith in Jesus. Peter believed that Jesus could enable him to walk on water. And when Jesus said, "*Come,*" Peter stepped over the side of the boat and headed out to Jesus on the water.

Think what that must have been like for Peter to walk on water through the wind and the waves to Jesus! We probably won't get to do that. But we all have situations in life which can be just as impossible for us from our human perspective. The Lord tells us, "*Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid.... [I am] the one who goes before you. [I] will be with you, [I] will not leave you nor forsake you*" (Dt. 31:6, 8). Like Peter, the Lord tells us, "*Come.*" So we 'step over the side of the boat,' and head out through the wind and the waves with our eyes on Jesus.

We're told, "*But when [Peter] saw that the wind was boisterous*" (from the original, "*the wind was strong,*" "*the wind was mighty*"), "*[he began] to sink.*" Sound familiar? When we place our trust in Jesus, we're all right. But if we take our eyes off of Jesus and start dwelling on how impossible our problems seem, we start to sink.

How blessed you and I are to have a God who refuses to leave us, especially when we need Him most! "*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*" (Ps. 47:1). When Peter started to sink he cried out to Jesus, "*Lord, save me!*" Jesus didn't make Peter flounder around in the water for a while, or tell Peter that he was stupid, or tell Peter that he didn't deserve His help. Instead, "*Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him.*" Peter looked to Jesus, and Jesus rescued him. The Bible says, "*If we are faithless, [God] remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.*" (2 Tim. 2:13)

Jesus has done something even more amazing for us. The Bible says, "*God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)*" (Eph. 2:4-5). We weren't just starting to sink in our sins, and somehow able to keep ourselves afloat. We were drowned and dead in our sins. Jesus doesn't need our help to save us. We are saved completely by God's grace.

We all believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. We know that Jesus forgives us and loves us and will take us to heaven. Through the story of Jesus rescuing Peter from drowning, Jesus wants us to know that He is there for us also in this life, every day, to help us in any and every situation. Since Jesus gave His life on the cross for us, He certainly will help us with everything else that we need. As Scripture says, "*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*" (Ro. 8:32)

After Jesus rescued Peter, He told Peter, "*O you of little faith, why did you doubt?*" Again, sound familiar? We know we can trust Jesus to help us and take care of us. But when 'the winds are whipping' and 'the waves are crashing' around us and threatening to drive us under, our trust in Jesus can get really shaky. Notice, even though Jesus said to Peter, "*O you of little faith, why did you doubt?*" He still helped Peter. Thank God, our help does not depend on how strong our faith is. Our help depends on how strong our God is! Even when his faith was weak, Peter cried

out to Jesus to rescue him. And Jesus did. Jesus doesn't just help us when our faith feels stronger. Jesus helps us every time we ask Him to.

James says, *"Ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways"* (1:6-8). Those words convict every one of us. Who of us has never doubted? We say, "I just can't trust in the Lord enough. I want to let go of my worries and my fears, but I just can't get them out of my mind." When we feel this way, we need to repent of our sins of worry and failure to trust in Jesus. Jesus will forgive us. We need to ask Jesus to strengthen our faith and help us to trust in Him. Jesus will.

"When [Peter and Jesus] climbed into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God.'" Jesus immediately stopped the wind and the waves that had made Peter afraid for his life. And Peter and the other disciples praised Jesus as God. When you're in trouble and you cry out to Jesus and He helps you, don't forget to thank Him and praise Him. He tells us, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you, and you will glorify Me." (Ps. 50:15)

A baby learning to walk from Mom to Dad and back again takes a lot of falls in the process. It helps when the baby keeps looking to Mom and Dad. When he takes his eyes off of Mom or Dad, he's in trouble. It's much like that for us as God's children. Sometimes we have to go through what to us by ourselves would be impossible. As long as we keep our eyes on Jesus, we're all right. But if we take our eyes off Jesus and start dwelling on our problems, we'll start sinking. Dear Christian friends, **KEEP LOOKING TO JESUS.**

Jesus, Savior, pilot me over life's tempestuous sea;
Unknown waves before me roll, Hiding rock and treacherous shoal.
Chart and compass come from Thee: Jesus, Savior, pilot me.

As a mother stills her child, Thou canst hush the ocean wild;
Boisterous waves obey Thy will When Thou sayest to them, "Be still!"
Wondrous Sovereign of the sea, Jesus, Savior, pilot me.

When at last I near the shore And the fearful breakers roar
'Twixt me and the peaceful rest, Then, while leaning on Thy breast
May I hear Thee say to me, "Fear not, I will pilot Thee." Amen. (TLH #649)