

## When Faith Fails

Matthew 14:22-33

### Introduction

1. Jesus taught Peter an important lesson on faith; this incident also reveals lessons on aspects of faith that I want us to note as we look more closely at the account.

### Main Body

#### I. The Setting

- A. The events described follow immediately after the miraculous feeding of five thousand men (cp. MK. 6:7-12).
  1. This was in the region of the city of Bethsaida on the opposite side of the Sea of Galilee to the city of Capernaum, where the apostles were now heading (cp. Jn.6:16).
    - a. This was where Peter lived with his mother and which had become the base of Jesus' Galilean ministry – Mark 1:29-31; 2:1
  2. The apostles were instructed to sail across the sea while Jesus sent the crowds that had wanted to make Him king away (cp. Jn.6:14-15).
    - a. One source commented Jesus didn't want His disciples to be influenced by this action.
    - b. They too had much to learn about the nature of the kingdom Jesus came to establish – Acts 1:6

#### II. The Event

- A. After dismissing the multitude Jesus did not immediately go and join His disciples; but retired to a nearby mountain where He prayed long into the evening.
  1. The gospel writers are at pains to show Jesus was in control of all that was about to take place.
  2. Mark says that "He saw them straining at the oars" (6:48) – when they were a long distance from land.
    - a. Jesus viewed the spiritual and the physical safety of His apostles as paramount (Jn. 17:12 cp. 18:8-9)
    - b. Both the storm and they were in His hands, and He knew exactly what He would do with them both.
  3. When Jesus comes out on to the water it was the fourth watch; the apostles were 3-4 miles out in the sea.
    - a. The Jews divided the night into 3 watches, consisting of 4 hours each. The first began at 6 –9, the second, 9 – 12; the third, 12 – 3 (the next morning) and the fourth 3 – 6.
    - b. Jesus made His appearance to His disciples between the hours of 3 and 6 in the morning (8hrs elapsed)
    - c. The fact that they had only traveled the specified distance is evidence of the strength of the storm.
  4. The length of time between their leaving Jesus and His joining them (approx. 8hrs), with the storm and the darkness, the apostles were at their 'wits end' when they saw Jesus walking on the water – frightened / terrified / fearful.

#### B. The Power of Faith – vs. 28-29

1. The apostles had been with Jesus and seen the power at work, so it was proof enough of Jesus and His power for Him to grant Peter his wish (cp. Lk. 24:36-43).
2. Peter's stepping out of the boat and walking on the water was a testament to His faith and its power.
  - a. The Hebrew writer describes personal faith as constituting conviction and evidence (Heb.11:1-2)
  - b. When Peter stepped out onto the water in a storm, this was no blind faith, though he was acting out of impulse or from bravado.
  - c. The apostles, including Peter, had just witnessed a miracle of Jesus (5000), along with all the other miracles performed over the years.
3. The apostle Peter was literally "*walking by faith and not by sight*" (2 Cor. 5:7); Paul describing actions that grow out of confidence in God's ability and willingness to overcome the circumstances.
  - a. True faith will take us out of our comfort zone and give us the boldness to overcome difficulties of whatever prevents us from fulfilling the Lord's will.
  - b. The power of faith will be reflected in what we do, not what we say, as in the case of Peter (cp. 1 Pt.1:16; Titus 2:11-12).

#### C. The Requirement of Faith – vs. 28-29

1. But Peter didn't just leap from the boat on impulse, thinking the Lord would surely want him to come to him. He asked permission, "**Lord. . .command me to come to you on the water**".

- a. He did not presume to know what Jesus desired, not what Jesus would empower him to do.
- b. Many in religion believe that God is “obligated” to sanction anything that they conclude is good to do. They do not look for God’s word on the matter.
- c. For there faith to be personal and true God must first have spoken – Rom. 1:16; 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; Colossians 3:17
- d. True faith is not saying that Jesus will authorize whatever I chose to do. But that I must chose only to do the things Jesus has authorized.

#### D. The Vulnerability of Faith – vs. 29-30

1. Though faith can protect us and is described as a shield it can, and will, be tested and found wanting (1 Pt. 1:1:5; Jas. 1:2).
  - a. Peter actually got out the boat, walked on the water, and was coming toward Jesus, exhibiting a total trust in Jesus’ word and power.
  - b. But his faith failed, when he saw the wind and his initial fear resurfaced, causing him to sink.
2. The faith that Jesus required of Peter was a constant faith that was evidenced in his willingness to keep his eyes on Jesus (Heb.12:1-3)
  - a. ‘Saving’ faith is not a once in moment conviction or obedience; spiritual blessings are conditioned upon a constant faith.
  - b. The bible teaches the security of Christians, but only as long as we walk by faith (1Jn.1:7).
  - c. When we begin to focus on our problems – temptations, worldly influences, ungodliness, and daily battles – it isn’t hard to lose heart and to give way to our fears.

#### E. The Solution to a Failed Faith – vs. 30

1. Sinking into the water and fearing for his life, Peter’s attention turned back to the Lord, as he cried out to the Jesus to save him.
  - a. When our faith fails – when we find ourselves sinking into disobedience, despair and discouragement, the only solution is to turn back to the Lord for help.
  - b. Whatever the concern we have that threatens to overwhelm us, whether spiritual or emotionally, Jesus is at hand for the help we desperately need (Phil.4:4-9 cp. Ps. 46:1-3; 1 Jn. 1:9).
  - c. The humility to seek God’s help is at the heart of saving faith. One that does not is lost (Ps. 50:14-15).

#### F. The Lord’s Rebuke – vs. 31

1. This was a serious rebuke for Peter, and will be for us, if we truly desire faith and to please the Lord.
2. Peter’s faith was little when he doubted seeing the ferocity of the wind and the billowing of the waves, not the Lord, the creator of all things.
3. Our faith in God is little when we doubt His power and His promises – Matt.6:30; 8:26; 16:8; Jas. 1:6-8

#### G. Jesus and Peter are in the boat, the wind stops; the disciples worship Jesus as truly being the Son of God.

1. The miracle had produced its intended result; the faith of the apostles is strengthened and increased even from what they had just witnessed.
2. The apostles’ faith in Jesus as God in the flesh had not yet been complete – cp. Mark 6:51-52

### **Conclusion**

1. Power of Faith; it will enable us to do whatever the Lord commands. Requirement of faith; that we act according to the Lord’s instructions – obedient faith Vulnerability of faith; we must avoid fear and doubt. Solution a failed Faith; when we fail the test we are to seek God’s help in restoring our faith and commitment.