

# *Finishing Well*

Lesson #29

When Life Gets Stormy: Matt. 8:23-27 Mark 4:35-41

July 26, 2023

Jesus spent time developing His disciples' faith because He knew it would be essential for the tasks ahead of them. For over three years, the 12 men attended "classes" where Christ was their instructor in both word and action. Many of the lessons were taught through demonstrations: healing the sick, casting out demons, feeding thousands, and calming the sea. At times the disciples' understanding was slow or faltering, but Christ never gave up on them. He reproved them when they exhibited a lack of trust but also commended progress. His objective was to establish their faith so He could accomplish His work in and through them. Faith building is a necessity for every Christian. God has two primary means of building our faith. His Word tells us what to believe about Him. Tests place us in difficult situations that stretch us to believe and rely on God instead of our own understanding. Each time we believe Him, our faith grows.

Constable: Matthew described Jesus' ministry as consisting of teaching, preaching, and healing. Chapters 5-7 record what He taught His disciples. In Matt. 8:1-9:34 we see His healing ministry. He demonstrated authority over disease, demons, and nature.

Matthew showed that Jesus' ability proves that He is the divine Messiah.

The King authenticated His claims by performing messianic signs.

In view of this the Jews should have acknowledged Him as the Messiah.

J Vernon McGee: The King went to the mountain, enunciated His manifesto, the law of the Kingdom. Now He comes down from the mount, and performs twelve miracles.

Context: 1. Jesus came down the mountain after finishing the Sermon on the Mount.

2. Jesus miraculously heals a leper.

3. Jesus miraculously heals a Roman centurion's servant and is astounded by this man's faith.

4. Jesus arrives in Capernaum for the first time.

5. Jesus miraculously heals Peter's mother-in-law.

6. Jesus delivered many demon-possessed people, rebuked the spirits & commanded them to leave. [Matt. 8:16]

7. Jesus miraculously healed all the sick people brought to him.

8. A large crowd gathered. Jesus got into the boat to cross over to the other side of the lake.

## *The Cost of Discipleship Matt. 8:18-22*

Two instances of would-be followers of Jesus are mentioned, typical of the multitude, attracted by the miracles, who wanted to be disciples.

Jesus warns: Following Him is a costly affair.

- The greatest cost is not what you pay, but what Jesus first paid for you and me.

When Jesus saw the crowd around Him, He gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake.

- A scribe came to him: "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest."

Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

Following Jesus would be difficult. Be prepared for hardship and sacrifice.

A life of ministry would be one of poverty; the scribe walked away.

➤ Another disciple said to him, "Lord, let me go and bury my father."

But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

Jesus replied by showing the priority of His claims. Christ must have preeminence.

Matt. 8:23 And when He was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him. [8:18 command]

➤ "Follow" connects this passage with the one that just preceded it.

McGee: Two men sought to follow Jesus; but they were made to stop first and count the cost of following. There are difficult challenges that accompany following Jesus.

To be a "disciple" of Jesus means to be a "follower" of Him.

It means to go where He says to go, do what He says to do, and believe as He says to believe.

Not everyone, after they count the cost, is willing to accept the challenge of following Jesus.

But the men who entered the boat with Jesus apparently did.

McGee: The crowds didn't follow him. But these ragged disciples had counted the cost, had made up their minds and had decided to follow Jesus. That identified them as disciples.

Jesus Directs His Disciples to Go to the Other Side of the Lake.

Mark 4:35 And the same day, when the evening was come, He saith unto them,

Let us pass over unto the other side.

On this side of the lake Jesus had performed miracles, confronted the Pharisees, taught about the Kingdom of God, the crowds are growing and everything is looking good. The disciples' faith and trust in Jesus has been easy. The disciples had a front row seat to the teachings about God's kingdom and to the miracles Jesus had performed.

Jesus had been teaching the disciples by what He said and what He did, but now Jesus would give them a practical test to see how much they had really learned. The hearing of God's Word is intended to produce faith [Rom. 10:17] and faith must always be tested.

Key: Storms are the tests and opportunities to demonstrate your faith and trust in God.

Storms catch us when we least expect it. They surround us on all sides.

They blow all our hopes away. They frighten us down to the very core of our faith.

Storm theology is what you believe about God when storms come into your life.

When a crisis comes into your life is God a good God or a bad God for allowing it to happen?

*Storm theology is what you believe about God when things seem to be going horribly wrong.*

*Storms in life have the ability to bring to the surface what's really inside of you.*

Storms will reveal whether you live by fear or by faith?

Storms will reveal to you if your heart is full of trust or doubt. *The way we react to God during a storm reveals the truth about ourselves, whether we want it to or not.* [Jeff Stott]

Command: Let's cross to the other side of the lake. Crossing over will bring testing.

All it takes is one storm to show us we can't control life.

## 1. Unexpected Storms Can Happen Suddenly

Matt. 8:24a And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves:

- The Sea of Galilee is about 13 miles long, 8 miles wide and 150 feet deep.
- It was not unusual for violent storms to suddenly sweep across the water.
- The storm is called a seismos [G4578] = the word for an earthquake.
- The waves were so high that the boat was hidden [kaluplesthai, G2572] in the trough as the crest of the waves towered over them.

One moment you are doing fine and the next the bottom falls out.

One phone call and you find yourself in the middle of a storm.

Consider: This unexpected storm came when they were simply following Jesus!

They were doing the right thing. They were obeying the Son of God!

Yet, this violent and life-threatening storm fell upon them anyway.

Key: Many times, the most severe times of testing have come right after you have taken a new step of obedience.

Key: Jesus has greater things in mind for His disciples who are in training and need to discover a new truth [His power; His love] about Him in an experiential way.

Storms happen suddenly and will test you, reveal your faith and spiritual maturity.

Note: There is nothing more out-of-human-control than a storm at sea. There is nothing more helpless than a boat being tossed by the waves in a storm. It's a vivid picture of being completely subject to grave circumstances that are utterly outside our control. It is a perfect illustration of being suddenly caught at the mercy of trying, or difficult, or even dangerous circumstances - circumstances in which we are helpless to do anything but cry out to God.

All the usual elements are there: the sudden and unexpected storm; the boat helplessly being tossed; and the passengers who were terrified and who feared for their lives.

James 1:2-4 *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

## 2. Storms Can Cause Me To Doubt God: He May Not Appear to Care In Storms

Matt. 8:24b-25 but He was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

- Master, carest thou not that we perish?

Incredible picture of the Incarnation of God: Humanity of Jesus and the Deity of Jesus.

The humanity of Jesus is seen in the exhaustion of Jesus. Beginning that morning Jesus has dealt with the Pharisees, taught numerous parables, dealt with the crowds, dealt with the disciples, dealt with the heat of sun all day and when he had a chance to sleep, he took it.

He was sleeping so hard this storm didn't even wake him up. He was totally exhausted!

The deity of Jesus will be seen in His power over the storm.

He is about to display His omnipotence and power over nature as the creator of it.

Jesus wasn't in a panic over the circumstances. He was at perfect peace in the midst of the storm; because He knew that the storm was under His control at all times. He was in His Father's will. He knew that no matter what else happened around Him, His Father's will would still be fulfilled in Him.

Their concern about drowning was completely normal and reasonable. They were professional fishermen who knew how to handle a boat during a storm, but this storm was fierce and violent. Jesus will use this storm to teach them some incredible things about Himself and about themselves. This storm had become the real classroom for their spiritual education. It's one thing to learn something about God or yourself sitting in a church service. It's another thing to learn something about God and yourself when you lose a loved one, you are let go at work, when you can't afford your bills anymore, when your health begins to leave you or when your marriage falls apart. Some lessons can only be learned in the middle of the storm.

The question is not whether we face trials and difficulties, the question is: "How do we react or respond when we face such moments?" Being human, the most reasonable thing to do when faced with such situations is to become afraid or to expect the worst. "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." Do you notice the contradiction in this prayer? They acknowledged that Jesus is Lord but within that same breath, they talked about perishing. Soaking wet and shivering cold, they clung on to Jesus as their fragile vessel rocked violently. He was their only hope—their last lifesaver—as they faced certain death. It's during these crucial moments when our faith, anchored in the presence of Christ, fears, falters and fails at the first sight of danger when death is close at hand.

Copied: You allowed yourself to lose control of your emotions and you gave in to sheer panic. Why? You weren't trusting me as you should have been. You don't really think I'm in control of all these things, do you? You think the waves are stronger than I am, don't you? The disciples had already seen what Jesus can do. In faith, they should have been bold and confident toward Him. They should have turned to Him - as they did; but very calmly and very confidently, they should have awakened Him and said, "Lord, we perish. Please save us. We really look forward to seeing how You'll do it too; and we'll give You the glory well in advance! Thanks."

Unfortunately, when Jesus leads us into storms, we may not find Him as responsive as we like. They did not see that His power applied to their very own situation. We, like the disciples, underestimate His power to handle crises in our lives. The disciples did not yet know enough about Jesus.

### *Trusting Our Sovereign Lord During The Storms Of Life.*

As long as He was in the boat, the disciples had no reason to be afraid. He never sleeps on us; and if it appears that He does, it's only meant to test our faith in Him. Psalm 121:3 He who keeps you will not slumber.

Psalm 50:15 Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me. Jesus is in the midst of the storm with you. He will never leave or forsake you. His apparent "silence" is to see if you will trust Him and have confidence in Him.

Heb. 10:35-36 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. <sup>36</sup> For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: "The fact that God permits storms and trials and that He often appears to be quite unconcerned about it all really constitutes what is described as the Trial Of Faith. Those are the conditions in which our faith is tried and tested. God allows it all, God permits it all." [I Pet. 1:7]

### 3. *Jesus Rebukes Their Lack of Faith: Large Fear; Little Faith*

Matt. 8:26a And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?  
[how is it you have no faith]

Spurgeon: Jesus "spoke to the men first, for they were the most difficult to deal with: wind and sea could be rebuked afterwards."

Key: The greater storm was not on the seas but in the souls of the disciples.

This is why Jesus, when He was awakened, rebuked the disciples with the question: Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?"

G. Campbell Morgan "The storm couldn't disturb Him, but the unbelief of His disciples did!" Notice Jesus' association of fear and faith. At the heart of fear is unbelief. Faith in God and His sovereign control of the situation would have been the "antidote" for the disciples, but that was not to be!

Jesus says they're "fearful". The Greek word used is not the normal word for "fear," phobos. This particular word, deilos, means "timid" or "cowardly".

➤ It suggests a kind of fearfulness that is unbecoming and inappropriate - even sinful.

All they had seen of Him had not yet sunk down into heart-level.

They didn't yet really understand who He was.

The fact that He, the Son of God, was with them, they had absolutely no reason to be afraid. He deliberately set up the entire sequence of events to teach the disciples to trust him, to strengthen and grow their faith.

The Lord's rebuke is not about their reaction to the storm, but their reaction to Jesus in the storm. They questioned His love and concern for them.

Fear blinded them to who Jesus really was.

When we are afraid because of the storms in our lives, we see God as less than He is and we doubt His love and care for us. Our little faith may demand a bigger boat in the crisis, but our Lord requires a bigger faith in him.

Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, was talking to a young missionary who was about to start work in China. "Look at this," he said. He pounded his fist on the table. The teacups jumped, and the tea spilled. Taylor said, "When you begin your work, you will be buffeted in numerous ways. The trials will be like blows. Remember, these blows will bring out only what is in you." So the time to develop resources to face the sudden storms that inevitably will strike is before they hit. If you don't spend time with the Lord in the calm of life, you won't know how to trust Him in the storms.

Key: To realize the worth of the anchor, we need to feel the stress of the storm.

Key: Partnering with fear can make us forget all He's done in the past. By choosing FAITH, courage gets pulled into the boat. Fear doesn't calm the storm. Faith does.

I wonder if, in the storms of life, the Lord doesn't often wish to rebuke us for our terrible lack of faith in Him before He rebukes the storm. I wonder if He doesn't often have to ask us, "Don't you think I know there's a storm? Why in the world are you being so cowardly?"

Jesus is always in control of our circumstances. When we trust Him, He will calm the raging inside our souls. When we find ourselves raging and tossing and turning on the inside,

Phil. 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

While it is great to see the storm around us calm down, it is even more important that our souls are calm in the midst of the storm. God has not promised to bring peace to every storm, but He has promised to give us peace through any storm if we will trust Him to take care of us.

John 16:33 He says, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace.

In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you;

not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

It's significant that Jesus' sleep was deep and sound, even through the storm, which was "already filling" the boat. The Bible says the sleep of a believer will be sweet and peaceful because he knows the Lord is with him.

Proverbs 3:24 When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid:

Yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.

Psalms 4:8 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep:

For thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

Ps. 56:3 What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

Ps. 34:4 I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

Warren Wiersbe: Faith must be tested before it can be trusted. It is one thing to learn a new spiritual truth, but quite something else to practice that truth in the everyday experiences of life...

## The Disciple's Eyes Were On The Storm & Not On Jesus Or His Word.

Luke 8:22 Now it came to pass on a certain day, that He went into a ship with His disciples: and He said unto them, *Let Us Go Over Unto The Other Side Of The Lake.* And they launched forth.

Wiersbe: The disciples failed this test of faith because they did not lay hold of His Word that *He was going to the other side.*

- The disciples looked around and saw danger.
- They looked within and saw fear.
- They failed to look up by faith and see God.

Jesus did not say, 'Let us go down to the sea and be drowned.'

- They had His promise they were going to the other side!
- His commandments are His enablements!
- He didn't promise an easy trip, but He did guarantee arrival at their destination.

Wiersbe: Faith is not believing in spite of circumstances;  
it is obeying in spite of feelings and consequences.

Key Point: Faith and fear cannot dwell together in the same heart.

God has told us, through His Word, that He will safely get us to the other side (of difficulties, circumstances, and even our earthly lives), yet we sometimes take our eyes off Him and start to feel ourselves sinking. We aren't looking at the Lord, we are looking at our storm!

No danger can come so near the Christian that God is not nearer.

## Jesus Can Change A 'Great Storm' Into 'Great Calm' With Just A Word

Matt. 8:26b Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

- He said unto the sea: *Peace, be still.*

D. J. DeHaan In calming the Sea of Galilee, Jesus taught the disciples not only about His power over nature but also about external and internal peace. The lesson about external peace was the easier of the two; He stopped the storm. Dealing with the storm inside the disciples was more difficult; fear had replaced the disciples' faith. Trust and tranquility are twins in the spiritual life. Perfect peace comes from complete trust [Isa. 26:3].

Key: The storms of life prove the strength of our anchor.

When Jesus Rises To Our Rescue In The Storm, The Result Should Be That We Worship Him

Matt. 8:27 But the men marveled [feared exceedingly], saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him! [What sort of man is He?]

He is the sovereign God - who is able to command even wind and sea. They obey Him!

- Different Greek word for fear than in v. 26. [cowardly; timid]
- Fear = phobos = express deep and heart-felt reverence

Consider: There was something of a "holy dread" that fell upon the disciples as they realized who had ridden through the storm with them.

Wiersbe: Outside the boat, at the command of Jesus, a great tempest had been replaced by a great calm. Inside the disciples, "cowardliness" had been replaced by "reverent fear". If we truly learn what He seeks to teach us through the storms of life - we come away more in love with Him, and more in awe of Him, and more surrendered to Him.

One reason for our doubt and distress is our incomplete knowledge of the person of Christ, along with His great authoritative power at work in our lives.

He desires to move us to the next level of our faith in Him.

Jesus allows our faith to grapple with the crisis for a season to experience the impact of His amazing presence and grasp the answer to an all-important question:

- Who is Jesus Christ?

John Chrysotom: Bishop of Constantinople: I do not think of Christ as God alone, or man alone, but both together. For I know He was hungry, and I know that with five loaves He fed 5000. I know he was carried in a ship, and I know that He walked on the sea. I know that He died, and I know that He raised the dead. I know that He was set before Pilate, and I know that He sits with the Father on His throne. I know that He was worshipped by angels, and I know that He was stoned by the Jews. Truly some of these I ascribe to the human, and others to the divine nature. For by reason of this He is said to have been both God and man.

Phillips Brooks [1835-1893], American Episcopal minister:

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty. Then for three years he was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a house. He never went to college. He never traveled 200 miles from the place where he was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He was only 33 when the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race, and the leader of the column of progress. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man on earth as has that One Solitary Life.

When you come out of the storm you won't be the same person that walked in. That's what the storm is all about. You will see Jesus differently and you will see yourself differently.