

Beginning To Sink

Matthew 14:22-32 -- *"And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away." "And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone." "But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary." "And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." "And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear." "But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." "And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." "And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus." "But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me." "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" "And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased."*

I. THE AREA OF THE TEXT

-Some have stated that on this day that the storm occurred in the life of Jesus was perhaps the most difficult day that Jesus had to live through, excluding Calvary.

-It was on this day that Jesus:

- Had to deal with the death of John the Baptist, his own cousin.
- He had hoped to go to the desert place for a time of solitude but the people appeared and began to clamor for his attention.
- He had to meet the demands of their hunger and multiplied the fish and the loaves.
- He had to contend with the doubt of his closest friends, the disciples.

-Yet, I do not want to focus on the actions of Jesus but rather the steps that Peter took toward the Savior. For one will see in the steps that Peter took the great rewards of reaching for a Savior.

II. PETER'S WALK TOWARD THE SAVIOR IN THE STORM

-Great acts of faith are seldom born out of calm calculation. Generally, faith is the child of fear.

-From the Gospel of John (6:19), we realize that the disciples were several miles out into the Sea of Galilee. The normal trip across the northern end of the Sea of Galilee would not have been more than a mile or two from shore at any point. The storm had obviously carried the boat several miles south, out into the middle of the lake. The disciples and their little craft were being battered by the waves and the wind was pushing them further and further away from their destination and closer and closer to disaster. Whether or not the boat had a sail, it does not matter, as it would have been useless in the high winds and waves. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Matthew 8-15)

-The storm has surrounded Peter, the waves have the boat rolling from side-to-side, a number of the disciples are bailing water. The sails are whipping in the wind and the mast is groaning with the pressure of the storm. The rudder has lost its ability to guide the fishing craft. It seems as if all hope is gone.

-In the interval of the storm there is an apparent delay in deliverance. The delays of God come with a purpose:

- To try our faith for it is by trying of faith that patience is invested in us.
- To bring humility to us. Humility is never more embraced than during suffering.
- To intensify the desire in our hearts toward God.
- To enhance the joy that comes once the answer arrives.

-The delays of God always turn out right. No matter how long that He waits, no matter how grim the situation looks, God is always right on time.

- Consider the love of Jarius, whose daughter was dying, as he tried to get the Lord to his house.
- Consider the cries of Mary and Martha as the Lord waited two days before ever starting for Bethany.

- Consider the three days that Jonah spent in the belly of the fish before God let him out.
- Consider the Apostle Paul who spent a night and a day in the deep.
- Consider Peter in the jail cell having slept much of the night before being released by the angel.
- Consider the Syrophonecian woman who reasoned with the Christ before finally gaining healing for her daughter.
- Consider Abraham's twenty-five years before Isaac was born.

-We must be content to live in the confines of God's timing and not our own.

-Then the disciples momentarily lose their focus on the storm and it looks as if a ghost has come to visit them in the wee hours of the morning. Instead it turns out to be Jesus, the One who has the power to calm the darkest storm of your life.

***Psalm 65:7** -- "Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people."*

***Psalm 89:7-9** -- "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." "O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?" "Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them."*

***Psalm 107:28-32** -- "Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses." "He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still." "Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven." "Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" "Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders."*

-No matter what your storm is, God is well able to deliver you and set your feet on a rock to stay.

-In looking fully at the storm situation, one may see the steps of Peter as he walked on toward victory and the place of renewal in the storm.

A. Peter's Request Placed Him In Danger

Matthew 14:28 -- "And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water."

-There are both Privileges and Perils of serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Spiritual relationships are often born out of some deep wound, they are born out of the painfulness of heart, but we never hear of that. The backs of Paul and Silas were exposed to the cat of nine-tails before they experienced the earthquake in a jail cell in Philippi.

-There are unsearchable riches (Ephesians 3:8) to be gained from the Kingdom of God, high privileges that every person may partake of. However, more often than not, to gain the privileges of the Kingdom, you must walk through the perils. Peter wanted to reach Jesus but he had to navigate the stormy seas to get to Him.

-Peter was not working to create a spectacular or sensational show for the disciples who stayed behind. It was his love for Jesus that caused him to venture out of the boat.

-The quest for revival is not to make men superstars or spiritual giants who hold the attention of men. . . . the quest for spiritual things is motivated out of a love for the Savior.

One of the greatest stories ever written was when Paul and Silas were in Philippi, with swollen ankles, bleeding backs, beaten with rods, in a rat infested inner prison. Apparently that is a good platform for revival. Apparently that is a good time to write history.

Do you hear them grumbling?

Do you hear them criticizing everybody else?

Do you hear them running everybody else down?

Do you hear them talking or complaining?

-Paul said, "We will not look at our difficulties. We will not measure the height of these walls, neither will we look at any of this." The inner prison was

indescribable, but Paul said, "I will remember the Lord God who split the Red Sea and He is the God of the cloud and the fire."

-"I know that I cannot curse the darkness, there is only one thing that can take care of the darkness. I will light a little torch. Let's sing. I know that it is midnight, but I am going to use everything I have. My hands are in stocks. My feet are in bonds. I'm beaten but I can wiggle my fingers and toes. I have a mouth. I am not going to wait for big things. I am not going to wait for the moment."

-They turned a place of torture into a cathedral of triumph and set the city and continent ablaze. The man responsible was a handcuffed man, a chained man, but he pushed back the horizon. Write history even if it is not time to write history. Bound, contemptible, weak physically, yet he shook the Roman Empire. It was this little man who said, "None of these things move me!" (Comments about Paul in the Philippian Jail from Desire, Vesta Mangun, p. 15-16)

-Could it be that the very desires of our heart may place us in less than prospective circumstances?

-It was at the very bidding of Jesus Christ that Peter moved out of the fishing vessel, only to take a few steps and began to sink.

B. Peter Began To Sink In Familiar Waters

-Whenever Peter began to look around at the frightening waves around him it was then that he began to slip beneath the waves of the sea.

-Later in the life of Peter, he would sink. He would warm himself at a strange fire near the palace of the High Priest and deny that he had anything to do with the Christ.

-Here on the Sea of Galilee it was different. His failure was practically in his backyard. This sea belonged to Peter. It was here that he learned how to fish,

where he learned how to repair his boat, to repair his nets. This was the place that he had fished with Andrew and James and John.

1. Uncertainty In Certainty

The California coast was shrouded in fog the morning of July 4, 1952. Twenty-one miles to the west, on Catalina Island, a thirty-four year old woman waded into the water and began swimming toward California. She was determined to be the first woman to ever swim the twenty-one mile strait. Her name was Florence Chadwick. She had already finished an accomplished swim in the English Channel in both directions.

The water was numbing cold that morning and the fog was so thick that Chadwick could hardly see the boats in her own party. . . .there to scare away the sharks. As the hours ticked off, she swam on. Fatigue had never been a serious problem; it was only the bone chilling cold of the water that was threatening. More than fifteen hours later, numbed with the cold, the swimmer asked to be taken out. She couldn't go on any longer. Her mother and her trainer, in a boat alongside her, urged Florence to go on, as they were getting closer to the shore. Yet all she could see was the dense fog. A few minutes later, the swimmer was taken out of the water, and later, realizing she had been within a half-mile of the shore, she blurted out, "I'm not excusing myself, but if I could have seen the shore, I might have made it."

Florence Chadwick had been licked, not by the cold or even by the fatigue, but by the fog!

*The fog had obscured her goal, it had blinded her reason and her eyes. (**Illustrations for Biblical Preaching**, Michael P. Green, p. 165-166).*

-Consider with me, the cost of giving up too early. Every vision is preceded by a burden. Crown wearers are usually cross-bearers. Victory comes after a battle. Accomplishment is marked by long, arduous hours of work. Nothing comes easy, materially or spiritually. Too many have given up at the most crucial moment when they were but just a half-mile from the treasured goal.

-The Bible is full of men who quit too early. Whether their life was in the midst of the storm or whether it was a bright sunny day and all was well seemingly, it always is troubling to see men with potential quit too early.

-Familiar waters. Friendly waters. Now it has become frightening waters and Peter has lost his hope. We must understand that God will have to save us in familiar waters.

-Some of the Church's greatest saints are being made in this Sea of Galilee at this very moment. Stop looking for greener grass, just start becoming what God wants you to be.

-Yet there are some who will drown in a sea of pride before they will ever admit they are going to perish. They sink in the familiar waters. Oftentimes, our greatest failures do not come when we are hundreds of miles from home, it is at home, in the hometown that our failures plague us.

-Our failure comes as did David's, just with a look over the backyard fence at some forbidden vice that Satan has waiting to cater to the base nature of the flesh. Stop, Stop, Stop, Reach for the Hand of the Savior.

C. Peter Began To Sink After Loyal Discipleship

-Mere association with Christ can be of greater detriment than of good. Understand that Peter felt the waves working to pull the life from him after he had answered the call to discipleship by the Lord.

- It was after Peter had followed Him about Palestine.
- It was after he had witnessed the miracle of the fishes and loaves.
- It was after he had watched the miracles, that he almost drowned.

-It is sad to watch men, both biblical and in modern times, who have developed such a magnificent relationship with God and then faltered and failed after great service to Him. But every man who is serving in the Kingdom of God must stand the test of time. It is not so much how today is lived as to how tomorrow holds up.

-Men often sink after years of discipleship and devotion to God. There is the weariness in well-doing to contend with. There is the erosion of spiritual life into the lower channels of those secret desires that only God has the knowledge of.

-Through the years of faithfulness a certain waxing and waning of emotion may exhibit itself, yet there is the commitment that must be embraced which fuels us as we race toward the rapture. Faithful man, reach out to God. Allow Him to pull you from the waters of despair, the Church is moving toward her greatest victory.

D. Peter Began To Sink In A Permitted Path

-Often enough, ardent souls that long to do great things for God will expose themselves to great perils. Peter was on the perilous path toward revival, when he started going down, he was not an intruder or trespasser, he was going where Jesus Christ had allowed him to go.

-Peter never disobeyed God in this matter. Jesus had not forced him to remain in the boat, Peter came at an invitation.

-Peter began to sink at the invitation of Jesus.

1. The Sunshine In the Shadow

The life of Andrew Urshan is remarkable to say the least. There is a biography of him available from the Pentecostal Publishing House that every one ought to read. He wrote that his own disappointments had turned into being God's appointments. There came a song from his own hand that was written during a time of great duress and struggle. His wife left him and he had to care for five young children. Turning her back on this Pentecostal way, Bro. Urshan found his days unbearable, but out of that came this song:

Verse 1 – When my life is burdened with sorrow, And it seems all help is gone,
Jesus whispers, "Do not falter; I will leave thee not alone." Then somehow amidst
my trials, How it is I cannot see; Still I hear a voice from heaven; Gently saying
"Follow me."

Verse 2 – Sometimes my friends do forsake me, and I'm tempted to despair; Then I think of my dear Jesus—To lay His head He had nowhere. O, it pays to follow Jesus, just to learn of Him each day; And I guarantee, my brother, You'll have sunshine all the way.

Verse 3 – Let me recommend Him to you; I have found no friend like Him. He is One who'll ne'er deceive you, But stay with you to the end. If you would have peace and comfort, Let His banner be unfurled. He was lifted upon Calvary, And His name can save the world.

Chorus – There is sunshine in the shadow; There is sunshine in the rain; There is sunshine in our sorrow, When our hearts are filled with pain. There is sunshine when we're burdened; There is sunshine when we pray; There is sunshine, Heav'nly sunshine, Blessed sunshine all the way.

-It is often times that the greatest of difficulties assert themselves when we are in the permitted path. Not a path of sin or lukewarmness and waywardness but a path where we have asked to be placed.

E. Peter Began to Sink, Alone.

-In the journey to victory, Peter went alone, his request was the only one, Peter walked alone, therefore, he sunk alone.

-In the wild confusion of the storm, the disciples probably either were focused on the storm or on the Lord. No one was really watching the actions of Peter. If they thought that the Lord had been a ghost, then their vision of Peter was probably obscured also.

-When a man seeks to pursue revival or deeper spiritual things, he often will make the trip alone. There are not many who are willing to pay nor pray the price that God demands for apostolic revival.

-There are some who sit on these pews who are sinking, alone. No one is aware of their own personal burdens and reasons for revival. No one else is aware of the prayer meetings that occur

when no one is watching, or the private fastings, or the private meditations that occur.

-Great spiritual strength is gleaned from private moments with God. When the world has no idea where you are or what you are doing, alone with God.

The Table – Calvin Miller

*In this secluded place I meet a King.
He comes alone to drink reality. . . with me.
Sometimes we talk, sometimes we sit,
And sip a life that passes by the crowd,
As inwardness is born--a felted thing,
Of power--a commonality,
A union where unmended hopes are knit,
Where silence roars as quiet sings aloud.
Oh Christ, I love it here! It is our place.
Speak Lord or not. Show then Your Will,
Or bid me wait in patience grace.
Fill all my hungry need with joy again.
With simple loaves of bread and fruit of the vine,
Heaven, earth and all of God are mine.*

-It was at the place that others were not aware of that Peter was venturing toward revival.

F. Peter Was Not Far From The Christ

-But when Peter began to sink, Jesus Christ was near. How far was Peter from Jesus? Was he fifty yards, a hundred yards, two hundred yards? It really does not matter the distance, God is not bound with space and time. He can reach down to the lowest point and pull us to our feet.

-The increased faith comes by the discoveries that only revival can bring. There are some who sit here who can bear out the fact that when you started requesting a new and fresh relationship with God that the storm set in. It was when you began to move toward a place of God's destiny that it began to cost

you. There is a high cost involved in relationship with God but it will be worth it all.

III. CONCLUSION -- IT WILL BE WORTH IT ALL

Revelation 21:1-4 *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

Revelation 22:3 *And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:*

Revelation 22:5-6 *And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign forever and ever. 6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.*

It Will Be Worth It All -- Tim Pedigo

*Every step of every mile,
Every pain and every trial,
Every heartache that you've ever known,
Will seem so small, when to face to face,
Standing in that Holy Place,
When at last, we know we've made it home.*

*It will be worth it all,
When we see Jesus,
Every mountain, every storm,
Every tear we've cried,*

*It will be worth it all,
When we see Jesus,
Just to hear Him say, "Well done,"
Will be worth any price.*

*Every doubt and every fear,
Every sorrow and every tear,
Every battle that we've had to fight,
They'll all become a victory won,
When we hear Him say, "Well done,"
And at last our faith has been made sight.
We'll unite with loved ones there
And all of Heaven's glory share,
Then God Himself will wipe away our tears.
He'll wipe our tears*

*It will be worth it all,
When we see Jesus,
Every mountain, every storm,
Every tear we've cried,
It will be worth it all,
When we see Jesus,
Just to hear Him say, "Well done,"
Will be worth any price.*

-Your not far from the shore. It will be worth it all. There is a Savior standing nearby.

