

Delivered from Fear

A cartoon strip shows Dennis the Menace in bed between his mom and dad with the blanket pulled up to his chin. "A little thunder doesn't scare me," he says. "It's just a lot of thunder that makes me afraid." Like Dennis, it's not the little storms that cause us to panic, but the big storms that blindside and wallop us unexpectedly.

In life, in death, in life beyond death, Jesus is in the boat with us. He really does care when we're immobilized by some fear in our life. He does care because that fear is intruding upon His destiny for us; remember that it is perfect love that casts out fear (1 John 4:18). In the presence of Jesus we can lean back into the arms of an ever-loving and gracious Lord and echo the words of the old Civilla Martin hymn: "God will take care of you, through ev'ry day, o'er all the way; He will take care of you, God will take care of you."

A little girl was about to undergo a critical operation. Just before one of the doctors administered the anesthetic, the surgeon told her, "Before we can make you better, we have to put you to sleep." The little girl responded, "Well, if you're going to put me to sleep, then I should say my prayers first." She folded her hands, closed her eyes, and prayed, "Now I lay me down to sleep; I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. And this I ask for Jesus' sake. Amen." Inspired by that little girl's faith, the surgeon admitted that he had prayed that same prayer later that very night for the first time in 30 years.

- 1. Why do we panic when big storms come into our lives?**
- 2. What role does Jesus want to play when storms enter our lives?**
- 3. What should be our response when storms come into our lives?**

The Disciples' Panic

Matthew 8:23-25, KJV

23 And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

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

25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

Matthew 8:23-25, NIV

²³Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him.

²⁴Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

Three of the four Gospels recount this story, and they all indicate that it was at Jesus' initiative that He and His disciples crossed over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 8:18; Mark 4:35; Luke 8:22). Mark 4:36 adds that Jesus and the Twelve left a crowd of people behind and that other vessels set out with them.

The boat was surely of the common variety used for fishing. During a severe drought in 1986, an ancient boat was discovered in the lake's mud. Radiocarbon dating indicated that the boat, now referred to as the "Jesus Boat," would have been in service about the time that Jesus lived. Constructed mostly of cedar and oak, the boat measured about 27 feet long, 7 feet wide, and 4 feet deep. The vessel had a centrally located mast and sails, along with oars that could be used in the absence of any wind to propel and maneuver the boat. It could support about one ton of weight—either 15 passengers or five crew members and their catch of fish. Vessels such as these were also used to transit people between cities on the Sea of Galilee, as well as to conduct trade.

Luke 8:23 indicates that as Jesus and the Twelve sailed across the lake, the Savior fell asleep, perhaps due to exhaustion from ministering all day to crowds of people. Then, His disciples were caught off guard when "a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat" (Matt. 8:24).

According to Mark 4:37, the waves began splashing into the vessel. As it began to fill with water, the situation became

dire. The Greek noun appearing in Matthew 8:24 to refer to the “tempest” (KJV) is *seismos*. In some contexts, the term could be used to refer to an earthquake. Here the emphasis was on the savage and turbulent agitation of the sea (which was caused by the windstorm), somewhat like the rolling that one might encounter during an earthquake.

Mark 4:38 reveals that amid all the commotion, Jesus was in the stern of the boat and sound asleep on a cushion. Amazingly, not even the forceful jostling of the vessel could awaken Jesus from His slumber. After waking Jesus up, Matthew 8:25 records the Twelve’s plea for help: “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” Regretfully, as Mark 4:38 reveals, they questioned whether Jesus genuinely cared about their welfare and safety: “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

4. *What might have prompted Jesus’ disciples to get in the boat with Him?*

5. *What remarkable event is recounted in Matthew 8:24?*

6. *What emotions did Jesus’ disciples exhibit?*

The Savior’s Power

Matthew 8:26-27, KJV

26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

Matthew 8:26-27, NIV

²⁶He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

²⁷The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”

The Twelve succeeded in awakening Jesus from His sleep. Next, He countered their claim that He did not care about their wellbeing with two claims of His own. On the one hand, Jesus questioned why they were so “fearful” (Matt. 8:26, KJV). On the other hand, Jesus drew attention to His disciples’

“little faith.” The fact that the disciples cried out, “Lord, save us!” (Matt. 8:25), shows that they believed Jesus was powerful enough to turn to when they couldn’t control their circumstances.

“Faith” is a key theological term in the Gospels and can be understood as having four recognizable elements. First is cognition or an awareness of the facts. Second is comprehension or an understanding of the facts. Third is conviction or an acceptance of the facts. Fourth is commitment or trust in what is reliable and dependable.

From Hebrews 11, we learn the following about God-given faith: it is certain of His promises and confident in His power (vs. 1); faith perceives the divine design (vs. 3); faith acts on God’s promises (vss. 8-28); faith esteems the Savior above all (vs. 26); and faith overcomes tremendous odds (vss. 29-40).

Mark 4:40 suggests that none of the above were present in the current episode involving the Twelve. Indeed, the verse records Jesus bluntly asking them, “Do you still have no faith?” As this verse makes clear, genuine faith is evidenced by more than mere words. It leads to an unshakable confidence in the Savior, regardless of the nature of the circumstance one is facing.

Jesus, after making His point, got up and “rebuked” both the winds and the waves (Matt. 8:26). The Greek verb translated “rebuked” can also be rendered “commanded.” In fact, Mark 4:39 indicates that Jesus directed the waves both to be “quiet” and “still.” Immediately, the “storm subsided” (Luke 8:24) and the lake became “completely calm” (Matt. 8:26).

At this juncture in the relationship of the Twelve with Jesus, they had witnessed Him do amazing things, including the healing of many people. Yet, when they cried out to Him for help amid the raging windstorm, it seems that they did not anticipate how He would rescue them. Thus, they were not only “amazed” (vs. 27), but also “terrified” (Mark 4:41; see also Luke 8:25).

The disciples’ feelings of being overwhelmed prompted them to ask, “What kind of man is this?” (Matt. 8:27). They had just seen Jesus exercise supreme authority over creation

by commanding the elements into silence. That is why the Twelve exclaimed, “Even the winds and the waves obey him!”

Although Jesus’ disciples did not fully grasp His true identity as the divine-human Messiah, they still followed Him. Upcoming episodes in Jesus’ life and ministry would demonstrate to His disciples that Nathanael, one of the Twelve, was correct when, upon first meeting Jesus, he declared: “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel” (John 1:49). After all, only the Creator revealed in the Old Testament could exercise control over the earthly realm.

Consider, for example, Psalm 65:7, which states that the Lord silenced the “roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves.” Added to this is 89:9, which indicates that the Creator rules supreme over the “surging sea.” In Psalm 93:4, readers learn that the majesty of the “LORD on high” infinitely exceeds that of the world’s “great waters,” along with the “breakers of the sea.”

Moreover, the psalmist, in 107:28-30, recounted an incident involving some mariners who, amid a raging ocean, “cried out to the LORD in their trouble.” The Creator responded by calming the “storm to a whisper,” as well as hushing the “waves of the sea.”



Storm clouds gather over the Sea of Galilee.

7. *What was Jesus’ initial response to His disciples?*

8. *How did Jesus respond to the dire situation unfolding around Him?*

9. *In what way did Jesus’ disciples respond to Him?*

Panic or Prince of Peace

Fear and uncertainty overcame Charmaine and her husband as they heard the words “Stage 3 breast cancer” from the doctor. Her feelings of fatigue the past months had led her to suspect something was wrong in her body.

Throughout the next steps of chemo, surgery, and radiation, Charmaine tried to focus on God’s Word, but the pain and negative thoughts kept her from seeking Jesus’ presence. Instead of experiencing peace from the Prince of Peace, she experienced panic attacks before each chemo treatment. Anxiety told her she wouldn’t make it through her surgery.

On day 284, when she rang the bell at the hospital declaring that she was cancer free, she realized she had let panic, fear, and unbelief rob her of Jesus’ peace during the past 284 days. Charmaine had chosen panic and fear over the Prince of Peace.

Fear and confusion overwhelmed Jeanne when the doctor said she had stage 4 lung cancer. Jeanne hadn’t smoked in over 40 years. Yet, her body had given her the signs that it was true. She prayed for Jesus to surround her with His peace.

Throughout her chemo, amid the nausea and pain, Jeanne’s soul rested in Jesus’ loving arms. She acknowledged and thanked God for giving her two wonderful years of remission. Jeanne traveled to her favorite Caribbean islands, enjoyed time with her growing grandchildren, and gave thanks for each day she woke up healthy. Two years later, her body was invaded by the dreaded disease as it returned with vengeance. Jeanne fell to her knees and asked God to give her strength to go through to the end. Her last two weeks alive, Jeanne could feel Jesus’ presence with her. One night she peacefully laid in her bed to sleep and went to meet her Prince of Peace.

10. *How is it possible to have peace during a health crisis?*

11. *How can refocusing your eyes on Jesus keep you from panicking during any storm?*

12. *Does experiencing Jesus’ presence during a difficult experience mean that the outcome will be positive?*

Dwell in His Presence

The disciples panicked even though Jesus was in the boat with them. They even questioned if Jesus cared about their safety. As Christians, we often panic and wonder if Jesus cares for us when storms enter our lives. Just as Jesus was able to calm the storm with the disciples, He can calm all storms in our lives. As Psalm 91:1 says, “Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.”

► *What must you do to experience the Lord’s calmness in the midst of a crisis?*

KEY VERSE

And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. —Matthew 8:26, KJV

He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. —Matthew 8:26, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Week of June 14 through June 20

(See *The Quiet Hour* for devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Numbers 15:37-41—An Aid to Remember God’s Commandments.
- Tues.** Luke 8:40-42a, 49-56—Disciples and Family Witness Girl’s Healing.
- Wed.** Luke 8:42b-48—Woman Testifies to Jesus’ Healing Touch.
- Thurs.** Matthew 9:27-31—Jesus Opens Eyes of the Blind.
- Fri.** Matthew 9:32-34—Jesus Restores Speech to Mute Man.
- Sat.** Matthew 9:35–10:1—Join the Lord’s Harvest Today.
- Sun.** Matthew 9:18-26—Faith in God Heals Many Ills.