"OUR LIFE-PRESERVER"

Matthew 14:22-36
4/22/2018

INTRODUCTION: Verses 22 - 23

***Jesus, our Life-Preserver, is worthy of your trust!**

5 Reasons:

I. He <u>RESPONDS</u> to Our Needs (v. 24-25)

II. He <u>RELIEVES</u> Our Fears (v. 26-29)

III. He <u>RESCUES</u> Our Souls (v. 30-31)

IV. He <u>RESTRAINS</u> Our Storms (v. 32-33)

V. He <u>REMOVES</u> Our Afflictions (v. 34-36)

CONCLUSION:

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Illus: The importance of wearing a life-preserver while boating or swimming (for small children or inexperienced swimmers).

V. 22

"Constrained" = to compel; to strongly urge or to make someone do something.

Why did Jesus make the disciples board ship and set sail for the other side of the Sea of Galilee? Why now? Why at night?

Reason: Jesus knew a storm was coming, and He wanted His disciples to be right in the midst of it.

He set them up for a dramatic lesson they would never forget.

"To go before Him"- Jesus purposely did not go with them. He intentionally stayed back. The disciples would soon learn that He didn't need a boat! He could walk across the body of water.

V. 23

"When the evening was come" - the second evening (sundown). (cp. v. 15 - the first evening from 3:00 - 6:00)

Although Jesus had constant fellowship with the Father, He also set apart specific blocks of time to do nothing but commune with God the Father. While on earth, Jesus did everything and went everywhere under the direction of the Father (Jn. 8:28-29; Heb. 10:7).

If it was important for the Son of God to communicate with the Father, how much more vital is it that we (sinners) do so.

No doubt Jesus was praying (interceding) on behalf of His disciples (cp. Rom. 8:34; Heb. 4:14-16). He had been with them for 2 years, and yet they did not yet recognize Him for who He was - *"the Son of God"* (v. 33).

After this episode, they will see Him for who He is.

Mark 6:52 - *"For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened."*

Because the disciples did not catch the impact of Christ's feeding the 5,000 men, because it didn't yet dawn on them that Christ was God in the flesh, because they were spiritually insensitive as to who Jesus was -- He sends them into a storm, not to destroy them, but to enlighten them.

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5 Reasons:

I. He <u>RESPONDS</u> to Our Needs (v. 24-25)

V. 24

The Sea of Galilee, though a small body of water, has storms arise suddenly, with winds and waves like that of ocean storms. (a *"great wind blew"* - John 6:18).

Illus: When in 1991, Pop and I were caught in a storm on Lake Herrington in Maine.

The little boat the disciples were in was in the middle of the lake and was helpless.

"Tossed with the waves" - to be battered and buffeted by the waves. With the boat far from land and the waters relentlessly beating into it, in the darkness of night, no doubt the thought of impending death went through the disciples' minds.

V. 25

"The fourth watch" = 3 - 6 a.m.

the first watch = 6 - 9 p.m.
the second watch = 9 - 12 p.m.
the third watch = 12 - 3 a.m.

Now it is the ***"fourth watch"*** - just before dawn. A trip that should have taken just a couple of hours, has now extended to 10 or 11 hours of agony, desperation, and *"straining at the oars"* (Mk. 6:48) for their very lives.

Jesus did not go to them immediately. Why the delay?

--To teach the disciples to trust the Lord's love and care for them

--To heighten the effect of Christ's rescue. Once their own strength and skill had been exhausted, the praise for deliverance would go to Christ and not themselves.

--The delay gave the miracle more impact (EX: Lazarus' death for 4 days)

Mark's Gospel reveals an interesting fact. In pitch darkness (somewhere between 3 - 6 a.m.), while Jesus was alone on the land (some 3 miles away from them), *"He saw them toiling in towing"*. He, whose "eye is on the sparrow," has His eye on His people. You are never out of His sight!

David often felt that God seemed far away or that God had abandoned him.

"Jesus went unto them" - As He did, He gave the appearance that He was going to <u>on by</u> (Lk. 6:48).

Sometimes it seems that God has by-passed us, that He is disinterested in helping us, but this is not true.

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you" (Is. 43:2).

II. He RELIEVES Our Fears (v. 26-29)

V. 26

Why did Jesus walk on the water? "To show His disciples that the very thing they feared (the sea) was only a staircase for Him to come to them" (Wiersbe, p. 52).

"Troubled" - terrified, frightened severely.

"It is a spirit" - lit. It is a phantom or a ghost!

"They cried out for fear" - These are grown men, some are tough and rugged fishermen. Yet they are screaming hysterically at what they see!

V. 27

"Be of good cheer" - Be encouraged, take courage (relax, don't worry).

How often we are afraid of divinely ordained situations and circumstances. Traumatic events that are actually for our well being.

"It is I" - Other than by the sound of the Voice, how would the disciples know who it was, with the wind blowing.

"It is I" might not mean much, unless Jesus had been more specific - "It is Me, Jesus."

The Greek text, however, reveals that what Jesus said was a phrase which was a title Himself, a title which identified Him as Jehovah God (cp. Jn. 8:58, 18:6 with Exod. 3:13-14).

He said literally: ***"I AM"*** *(ego eimi)*

Illus: the song "Anywhere With Jesus"

For an obedient child of God, the safest place in the universe is in the presence of Jesus.

"When believers are in the place of obedience, they are in the place of safety, no matter what the circumstances" (MacArthur, p. 442). The safest place is in the will of God.

EX: the 3 Hebrew youths in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3)
EX: Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:9-10)
EX: John, who thought he would die, was comforted by the Son of God (Rev. 1:17-

When life seems hopeless, the believer is never alone and forsaken.

> Joshua 1:5 -*"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."*
>
> Heb. 13:5-6*"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."*

V. 28

"Bid me come unto thee" - It is uncertain as to why Peter made such a request.

--Perhaps he was so thrilled to know it was Jesus, he wanted to get closer to the One who could keep him safe.

--Perhaps He wanted to experience the thrill of defying gravity and walking on water for himself.

V. 29

"He said, Come" - When Jesus says "Come" we need not fear (Illus: small children put faith in their parents as they leap into a pool deeper than they are tall).

Whatever the Lord says to do, though Satan may intimidate and incite apprehension in our hearts, we need not fear if Jesus is near!

Mt. 28:20 - He promises His presence with us as we witness, until the end of the age.

Note: If you get tempted to walk on water or test God by doing something He didn't tell you to do, don't expect God to bail you out. Unless Jesus says "Come," you had better not do it! And He only speaks by His Word, the Bible.

III. He RESCUES Our Souls (v. 30-31)

V. 30

"From the relative safety of the boat, the feat did not seem so terrifying; but once Peter got out of the boat. . . the situation appeared radically different" (MacArthur, p. 443).

The real test of faith comes not when life is smooth, calm, and pleasant, but when we are in the thick of the storm. When we by faith "step out on a limb" to do something for God we have never done before!

'But when he saw the wind" - Too often we let what we "see" intimidate us.

Circumstances can look impossible when we take our eyes off of the One with whom *"nothing is impossible"* (Mt. 19:26; Lk. 1:37; Lk. 18:27). Don't take your eyes off of Jesus and put them on your circumstances or yourself or some man!

It's amazing how quickly faith can turn to doubt and fear. Just a few seconds earlier, Peter recognized that Christ had power over the elements, now the elements seize his attention and focus.

At this moment, Peter's environment or circumstances seemed bigger than Jesus Christ.

"He was afraid" - Fear is always due to a lack of faith.

What is fear? Fear (worry, anxiety, etc.) is simply taking your eyes off of God and putting them either on yourself, others, or (as in Peter's case) your circumstances.

"Beginning to sink" - With the loss of faith came the loss of Peter's ability to stand on the water.

We sink when we doubt God. The bottom of our lives falls out from underneath us when we get our focus off of Christ.

"Lord, save me" - Rescue me, Lord!

"And immediately (without delay, promptly, right on the spot) ***Jesus stretched forth His hand" -*** Whenever anyone in sincerity recognizes that they are sinking deep in sin, and headed for Hell, and says "Lord, save me," Jesus immediately saves them! (Rom. 10:13).

V. 31

"O thou of little faith" **-** Could Jesus say this of you?

Why ***"didst thou doubt"***?

People doubt when they:

1) Question God's <u>trustworthiness</u> (Is He reliable?)

2) Question God's <u>ability</u> (Can He do it?)

3) Question God's <u>promises</u> (His Word) (Is He believable?)

4) Focus on the circumstances rather than on His faithfulness

IV. He RESTRAINS Our Storms (v. 32-33)

V. 32

As soon as they stepped on board, the wind stopped. Why so soon? It was not neededanymore. Thepurposeforthatstormwasaccomplished. Jesususedittoglorify Himself.

Not only did Jesus calm the storm and silence the *"great wind that blew"* (Jn. 6:18), but when this took place, *"immediately the ship was at the land whither they went"* (Jn. 6:21). One minute they are *"int he midst of the sea"* - the next, they were at land!

V. 33

"Worshipped Him" - Since only God is to be worshipped (Ex. 34:14; Mt. 4:10), and since Jesus accepted worship (Mt. 2:11, 8:2, 9:18, 15:25, 28:9, 17), He must be God!

"Thou art the Son of God" = a confession of deity. The title "Son of God" was a title recognizing that He was God. The phrase "Son of God" identified Him with God in Heaven, just as "Son of Man" (mt. 9:6) identified Him with man while on earth. He was the God-man.

"When Jesus calmed the first storm (Mt. 8:23-27), the disciples said, *"What manner of man is this?"* But now their clear testimony was, *"Thou art the Son of God"* (Wiersbe, p. 52).

V. He <u>REMOVES</u> Our Afflictions (v. 34-36)

V. 35

"<u>All</u> that were diseased" - No problem was too big for Jesus!

V. 36

They begged Jesus to simply touch the lower portion or fringe of His garment. It was not the garment that healed them, it was the One wearing it.

"As many as" - all. Everyone who touched His garment were healed. No one was rejected. No one was turned away. (cp. John 1:12 - *"But <u>as many as</u> received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name"*; cp. John 6:37)

"Perfectly whole" - Completely healed. All who Jesus healed got completely healed, no persisting after effects remained. Jesus does nothing half way!

CONCLUSION: The Need to Look UP

THE BUZZARD:

If you put a buzzard in a pen that is 6 feet by 8 feet and is entirely open at the top, the bird, in spite of its ability to fly, will be an absolute prisoner. The reason is that a buzzard always begins a flight from the ground with a run of 10 to 12 feet. Without space to run, as is its habit, it will not even attempt to fly, but will remain a prisoner for life in a small jail with no top.

THE BAT:

The ordinary bat that flies around at night, a remarkable nimble creature in the air, cannot take off from a level place. If it is placed on the floor or flat ground, all it can do is shuffle about helplessly and, no doubt, painfully, until it reaches some slight elevation from which it can throw itself into the air. Then, at once, it takes off like a flash.

THE BUMBLEBEE:

A bumblebee, if dropped into an open tumbler, will be there until it dies, unless it is taken out. It never sees the means of escape at the top, but persists in trying to find some way out through the sides near the bottom. It will seek a way where none exists, until it completely destroys itself.

PEOPLE:

In many ways, we are like the buzzard, the bat, and the bumblebee. We struggle about with all our problems and frustrations, never realizing that all we have to do is look up!

Sorrow looks back, Worry looks around, but faith looks up!