

Trusting Jesus Through the Trial, Matthew 14:22-34 – December 26th, 2010

- While in Israel, I had the privilege of teaching on the storms of life there in the boat on the Sea of Galilee.
- Thankfully, there was not a storm while we were there, there were many going through trials who were there.

- It's for this reason that I sensed the Lord was directing me to title today's teaching: "Trusting Jesus through the Trial."
- While it was the second time teaching on the Sea of Galilee, I've never really completed this study because of the time restraints.
- So, with that in mind, I would like to invite you to turn to the Gospel of Mathew chapter 14, and we'll be in verses 22 through 34.

Matthew 14:22-34 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. (23) After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, (24) but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. (25) During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. (26) When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. (27) But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." (28) "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." (29) "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. (30) But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" (31) Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" (32) And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. (33) Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." (34) When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret.

- There are a number of, what I'll call, clues woven into the fabric of this passage as it relates to how we can get through the trials of life.
- The common denominator in all of them is that they point to a trust in the goodness of the Lord to see us through those storms of life.
- From this, we can arrive at certain conclusions when it comes to simply trusting the Lord in the trial. The first one is there in verse 22.

1. Jesus may send us into a trial (Verse 22)

- v22 We're told that "immediately" Jesus makes the disciples get into the boat and sends them on ahead of Him to the other side.
- Here's what I'm thinking; The Lord may not send the storm however, there are those times when He may send us into that storm.
 - Now, I am keenly aware that this may trouble some of you because it seems to imply that the Lord knowingly sends us into a trial.
 - At the conclusion of this study, I trust you're troubled heart will be put to rest when you see the why behind the what Jesus does.

2. Jesus will pray for us while in the trial (Verse 23)

- v23 Matthew tells us that after Jesus dismisses the multitudes, He goes up on a mountainside by Himself to pray, and He's there alone.
- This brings up a question? What was Jesus praying about, and perhaps more importantly who was Jesus actually praying for.
 - I believe, and I'm not alone in with this conclusion, that Jesus was praying for His disciples whom He knowingly sent into the storm.
 - In other words, Jesus is praying for us when we're in the trial. Perhaps, like for Peter, He's praying that our faith will not fail.

Luke 22:31-34 NIV "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. (32) But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." (33) But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." (34) Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."

3. We can still be in God's will in that trial (Verse 24)

- v24 The disciples are a considerable distance from land, pounded by the waves and blasted by the wind there in the middle of the sea.
- Though they're in the middle of the storm of their life hanging on for life, yet they're right in the middle of the Lord's will for their life.
 - We do err when we conclude that whenever adversity strikes, it must be that we're not in the Lord's will for our life.

4. His timing is always perfect (Verse 25)

- v25 We learn that it's at the fourth watch when Jesus finally comes to them, and when He does, He walks on water towards them.
- I find it interesting that Jesus waits until the "11th hour" as it were before He comes to their rescue. He's never late but He's never early.
 - The fourth watch of the night is between 3:00 and 6:00 am which are known to be the darkest hours of the night right before it gets light.

5. We may not recognize the Lord is there (Verse 26)

- v26 Matthew describes their utter terror when in fear they don't recognize Jesus thinking it's a ghost coming towards them on the water.
- I believe there are two reasons why they didn't recognize that it was the Lord, the first of which is that their fear blinded them to Him.
 - In other words, when we're in the midst of a trial, fear paralyzes us and blinds us to the reality that Jesus is there for us in that storm.
 - The second reason they didn't recognize that it was Jesus is because He did not come in the way, or at the time, they had expected.

6. The Word of the Lord brings comfort and courage (Verse 27)

- v27 Immediately Jesus speaks to them, telling them to take courage and not be afraid because it is He that is coming and not a ghost.
- It's only when they heard the Word of the Lord and from the Lord that they calmed down and were not afraid putting their trust in Jesus.
 - Fear is the antithesis of faith and faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Hearing His Word is where faith comes and our fear leaves.

7. Trials may require that I step out in faith (Verse 28)

- v28 Matthew tells us that Peter, in a display of cautious and calculated faith, asks; "Lord, if it's You, tell me to come to You on the water."
- The reason I believe Peter is being cautious is because he first asks "if" it's the Lord just to be sure before He steps out of the boat.
 - Here the lesson is quite clear; I need to step out in faith however I should make sure it's the Lord before leaving the security of the boat.

8. Trials can give way to God's miracles (Verse 29a)

- v29a Jesus responds to Peter and says; "Come," and Peter gets down out of the boat, walks on the water. This is called a miracle.
- I think that we often miss the miracle of what happens for Peter here in the midst of the storm, in how he miraculously walks on water.
 - One reason for this is that we think the storm has ceased before Peter walks on the water. That's not what the text says happened.
 - In the next verse Peter takes his eyes off the Lord and on the storm that's still raging. When Jesus is in the boat the storm finally ends.
 - Why is this detail so important? Because the greater the trial the greater the miracle, and the miracle will often come vis-a-vis the trial.

9. Trials can bring us closer to the Lord (Verse 29b)

- v29b The last part of verse 29 says that Peter came toward Jesus. Again, there's a reason for this detail that is given in Matthew's record.
- Sometimes the trials of life can bring us closer to the Lord, but often times those same trials bring a distance between us and the Lord.
 - It's been said that trials can make us better or bitter. The same sun can either soften or harden, depending on what it's made of.

10. I have to keep my eyes on the Lord (Verse 30a)

- v30a When Peter takes his eyes off the Lord and fixes his focus on the storm, he, once again becomes fearful and begins to sink.
- I am keenly aware that this lesson is familiar to most if not all, but we will sink into despair by focusing on the trial instead of the Lord.
 - If we focus on our circumstances instead of our God, the trial becomes big, but if we focus on God instead, then our God becomes big.

11. It's not the length but the strength of our prayer (Verse 30b)

- v30b The last part of verse 30 brings me great hope because Jesus answers Peter's three word prayer of; "Lord, save me!"
- It's not always the lengthy or eloquent prayer but the effectual fervent prayer of one who is right with God that accomplishes much.

12. All who call on the Lord will be saved (Verse 31)

- v31 Matthew tells us that "immediately" Jesus reaches out his hand and catches Peter saving him from drowning and perishing at sea.
- All Peter did was call upon the Lord, and he was saved, "immediately." Even though he was little in faith and huge in doubt he's saved.
 - This should bring us great hope especially in those seasons of doubt when we're in a crisis of faith. We only need a mustard seed.
 - The reason I know that Peter was little in faith in huge in doubt is because the Lord tells him "you of little faith, why did you doubt."

13. We'll have the peace of the Lord when close to the Lord (Verse 32)

- v32 Both Jesus and a very wet Peter climb into the boat, and when they do the wind dies down. Wow, that was a very close call.
- Suffice it to say, it's when the Lord is in the boat with us and us with Him that the winds of fear die down giving way to peace and calm.

14. The Lord will be glorified in and through the trial (Verse 33)

- v33 After the storm had ceased, Those in the boat all began to worship Him saying; "truly, You are the Son of God."
- They glorify God giving Him His due for them surviving this perilous storm in a way that only He could have knowing they wouldn't have.
 - Have you ever noticed how that God will orchestrate the circumstances of your trial in such a way that only He can receive all the glory.

15. We may not get out but we will get through the trial (Verse 34)

- v34 Matthew records how they crossed over the Sea of Galilee and landed safely on the other side at a place called Gennesaret.
- Maybe it goes without saying, but we will make it to the other side! The trials of life can't be compared with what awaits in eternal life.

- I want to close with something that we started with in the first word in the first verse of our text, the word "immediately."
- Perhaps this will put a beautiful bow on the package of the trial you may find yourself the recipient of in your life right now.
- Notice that Jesus immediately made the disciples get into the boat. It's as if He's rushed, and in a hurry to get them into this storm.
- Why would Jesus want to get them out of there and into the boat and into that storm and finally to the other side?

- I believe, as one has suggested that it was because Jesus wanted to protect them from a greater trial. What was that greater trial?
- They just participated in the miracle of the feeding of the multitudes and could've been tempted to stay and set up their kingdom there.