

## **O YOU OF LITTLE FAITH**

Those truly repentant are ultimately those who go into the kingdom and the fruits of true repentance are described in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, which has been called “***The Greatest Sermon Ever Given***”.

This is then followed up by the chapter on AUTHORITY as found in Matthew 8. Matthew 8 provides further evidence in Christ’s earthly ministry showing that He indeed is the promised Messiah King. He is presented as having Lordship AUTHORITY indicative of the divine-human Messiah.

He cleanses a leper with a touch; He heals the centurion’s servant from a distance with just a word; He heals Peter’s mother-in-law; and He demands first-place allegiance from would-be disciples.

Matthew 8:23 picks up the interrupted narrative started back in verse 18, where Christ gave the command to depart to the other side. Keep this in mind – Christ has commanded that they go to the other side, not the bottom of the lake.

### **Matthew 8:23 (NKJV)**

**23 Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him.**

The parallel texts dealing with this event are found in Mark 4:35-41 and Luke 8:22-25. Mark 4:35 indicates it was now evening, following an extremely busy day of teaching and ministering to the crowds.

### **Matthew 8:24 (NKJV)**

**24 And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep.**

Sudden storms that come with little or no warning are not uncommon on the Sea of Galilee. At 680 feet below sea level it is the lowest freshwater lake on earth. It is 13 miles long, 7 miles wide and about 150 feet deep.

The Sea of Galilee is rimmed about by hills and valleys. Mount Hermon to the north rises up to 9,200 feet and when sudden northerly winds blow down through valley with great force meeting with warmer air over the Galilean basin the result is high winds causing violent waves of 20 feet and whitecaps.

The word translated here as “tempest” is the Greek word “***seismos***” from which we get our English word seismic. This word usually denotes a violent shaking “***earthquake***” but here it denotes a ferocious storm connoting the

tremendous turbulence of the water. Note it says this was “**a great tempest**”.

Verse 24 says that “the boat was covered with the waves.” Now that is scary when 20-foot waves are coming over the boat. I don’t care how seasoned a fisherman you are, that is terrifying when you are out on a lake that is 150 feet deep. Mark 4:37 and Luke 8:23 say that the boat was filling with water and in jeopardy.

And where was Jesus but fast asleep! It had been an exhausting day and He was tired. Here we see the humanity of Jesus.

But there is a context to Jesus sleeping. This was no normal nap. Jesus was asleep in the midst of a horrendous life-threatening storm.

### **Matthew 8:25 (NKJV)**

**25 Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!”**

Give the disciples a little credit – they knew who to go to. They weren’t looking to Peter. They didn’t say to Peter, “**You are a fisherman, you are experienced with this lake, please do something.**” No, they knew this was way beyond Peter and so they went to Jesus.

Matthew and Luke are more gracious simply saying they awoke Jesus saying, “we are perishing”. However, Mark 4:38 says the disciples said to Jesus, “**Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?**” Do you not care? Now that had to hurt! If anyone ever cared, it is Jesus!

But don’t we also often respond that way in a life-crisis in effect saying, “Lord don’t you care what is happening to me?” This is a good lesson right here. Of course He cares and He is sovereign. He is in control.

The prayer here was good, “Lord save us!” He is in the saving business! He is mighty to save!

### **Matthew 8:26 (NKJV)**

**26 But He said to them, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.**

Jesus rebuked their fear saying, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” Now note, He didn’t say that they had NO faith – just “little faith”. They did after all come to Jesus saying, “**Lord, save us!**” That showed a little faith.

This phrase a “**little faith**” (Gk. oligopistos) is found 5 times in the NT – always in reference to the disciples (cf. Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; and Luke 12:28 – also cf. Mt. 17:20). Lack of faith among those who have faith is sorely disappointing. It speaks of faith that is ineffective, deficient, or defective. The goal is to have “**great faith**” not “**little faith**”.

Their being so afraid showed little faith in Christ’s Lordship authority. After all, He had commanded that they go to the other side! Fear is here contrasted with faith. Fear in this sense is a contradiction of faith. Faith triumphs over fear or fear triumphs over faith! What is going to govern – is it going to be fear or faith? That is the question.

Faith in the Bible is always based on God’s Word. Faith takes God at His Word and rests in it.

### **Romans 10:17 (NKJV)**

**17** So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

These disciples had heard Jesus command to go to the other side. They had heard the Word. But in the midst of the sudden crisis they lost sight of it. That is so easy to do!

Note the contrast between this and the **GREAT faith** of the centurion earlier in the chapter where He believed in the Word of Jesus - saying if Jesus just said the word his servant would be healed (Mt. 8:8).

Jesus called that “**great faith**”. That is in contrast to this “**little faith**” that in the same breath called on Jesus as Lord to save them while at the same time saying, “**We are perishing!**” Which is it? Is He Lord who can bring us to the other side as He said, or are we going to perish? (cf. Mk. 4:35).

Then to prove that indeed He is LORD the text says, “**Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.**” Now that is a call to WORSHIP! That is awesome! That is LORDSHIP on display!

No one except God Almighty can do this! The apostles were empowered by God to do various miracles, but this category of miracle over NATURE was reserved for Jesus ALONE. Jesus alone did miracles over nature. And that is significant – for this is the realm uniquely belonging to God. Only God ultimately controls the weather. This is the uniform testimony of Scripture.

### **Psalm 107:23–29 (NKJV)**

**23** Those who go down to the sea in ships, Who do business on great waters,

**24** They see the works of the **Lord**, And **His wonders** in the deep.

**25** For **He** commands and raises the stormy wind, Which lifts up the waves of the sea.

**26** They mount up to the heavens, They go down again to the depths; Their soul melts because of trouble.

**27** They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, And are at their wits' end.

**28** Then they cry out to the **Lord** in their trouble, And He brings them out of their distresses.

**29** **He calms the storm, So that its waves are still.**

Who does this according to Psalm 107? The LORD – that is YHWH! This is the most sacred Name for God in the Bible. The one true sovereign God of Israel – the covenant God of Israel – He is the one Who “calms the storm” and stills the waves (cf. 2 Sam. 22:16; Job. 38:8-11; Ps. 18:15; 29:3-4, 10-11; 65:5-7; 89:9). JESUS DID THAT! No one else ever did that! This is a God-thing!

We need to realize that when a ferocious storm like this hits the Sea of Galilee it can take anywhere from 24-48 hours for the Sea to quiet completely down. So when Jesus rebuked the winds and sea and instantly there was not just “calm” but “a great calm” that is mind blowing.

Suddenly the winds came to a screeching halt and there was perfect calm. Suddenly the waters instantly became like glassy still. That never happens. The winds gradually subside. The sea slowly calms down. It happens after a long period of time. But not this time. At the command of Jesus there instantly was “a great calm”.

Now that will get your attention like none other! Matthew 8:26 says the disciples were fearful in the storm crying out “We are perishing” (v. 25). But when Jesus calmed the storm Mark 4:41 said that then, “they feared exceedingly”.

Do you know what is more terrifying than the life-threatening storm outside your boat - it is coming to the realization that the SOVEREIGN POWER Who controls the storm is in your boat? Now that is terrifying! Just being in the intimate presence of one with ALL POWER made them fear exceedingly!

Note the language here....

v. 24 ...a GREAT tempest...

v. 26 ...a GREAT calm.

No matter how GREAT the storm Jesus is greater. Faith recognizes Jesus' AUTHORITY over all other forces. He is greater than all.

“All disciples encounter storms sooner or later. At times it seems we are going to be swamped by the waves. What a comfort to know that Jesus is in the boat with us.” – ***William MacDonald***