

Faith that Rests in the Storm

Luke 8:22-25

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The Bible teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ is the author and perfecter of faith (Hebrews 12:2). Saving faith both originates *from* him and rests *in* him, alone. Throughout the ages, the people of God have lived on the basis of faith — Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and later Moses, Joshua, Rahab the harlot, David, and Samuel, and all those who pleased God. And they pleased God not because of inherent, personal piety, but because they walked by a faith which *originated outside themselves*, and which we now understand as the faith of Christ. This then is the biblical understanding of faith: it originates as the gift of God, and has Christ as its design and sole object. The Christian's faith is both *of*, and *in* Christ — the author and perfecter of faith — not “the faith” as in the founder of Christianity — but the author and perfecter of faith itself; the faith which is pleasing and acceptable to God.

The apostle Paul summarized the Christian life well when he said, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, King James Version).¹ The Christian life of faith is a participation in the faith *of* Christ. We have a Jesus kind of faith. It is his image to which we are being conformed (Romans 8:28-30). And, of course, the Christian life is also defined by faith *in* Christ as well. Therefore, Christ is both the author and perfecter of faith *and* the object of our personal faith.

This means there is no legitimate thing as faith in faith, or a faith that originates in the sinner. A pagan's faith is no faith at all. Only the faith of which Christ is author and perfecter is acceptable to God. For a first-century Jew, the life of faith within Judaism was a traditional faith. A faith in God's promise made to their ancestral father, Abraham. In other words, it was a natural faith in God tied to one's ethnic identity as a child of Abraham (see John 8:33-39). We understand natural faith linked to religious heritage in our day. For instance, one might say, “I am a Lutheran,” or Catholic, or Anglican, because that is the religion of one's particular nation,

¹ I realize modern translations read, “faith in the Son of God.” In Greek, “of” is the subjective genitive and “in” is the objective genitive. Depending on the context, “in” or “of” is an appropriate translation. However, in this passage, the “faith of Christ” is the literal translation of the Greek as followed by the KJV.

and family. Now, that is not to say there were not sincere Jews, just as there are sincere members of Protestant or Catholic churches today, but possessing sincerity is not the same as possessing saving faith.

Such was the case with the disciples within our text. They believed in God, and yes, they believed in Jesus, but their faith was still vested in what they could see and experience as derived from their ethnic upbringing. What faith they had remained somewhere other than in the power of Christ, as revealed by the storm event. When the boat was tossed by the wind and “filled with water” the weakness of the disciple’s faith was suddenly revealed.

Now, in fairness to the disciples, one would think that coming to Jesus when in danger would be an act of faith worthy of commendation. But Jesus did not commend their faith; rather, after rebuking the wind and surging waves, Jesus extended the rebuke to include the disciples, saying, “Where is your faith?” What was happening here? What was lacking in the disciple’s faith, or better yet, “where” was their faith?

This is the question Jesus asked, “Where is your faith?”

What the disciples needed was the faith of Jesus, for even while the boat filled with water, Jesus was sleeping. This may seem ludicrous to the natural mind, but clearly Jesus did not feel threatened as did the disciples. Where was Jesus’ faith? Completely resting in the sovereign protection and care of his heavenly Father. Indeed, David Garland notes, “Sleep is a symbol of divine rule in ancient Near Eastern literature (see Isaiah 51:9-10);” and Garland then adds, “In this context where Jesus demonstrates his power to command the sea, his sleeping is a sign of divine sovereignty.”²

What is more, Jesus was not subject to the creation, rather, the creation was subject to him. The rebuking of the storm was a miracle to be sure, but it was a miracle only in the natural realm. In the spiritual realm, it was simply God exercising his authority over his own created order, an authority he had also once assigned also to Adam, but which Adam abdicated in the fall. But Jesus, as the new Adam, was reversing the fallen status to reinstate the truth that as God’s representative over creation, man is not to be subject to creation, but God has placed creation as subject to man. However, as the writer to the Hebrews points out, we presently do not

² David E. Garland, “Luke” in *The Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), p. 356.

see all things placed under man, *but we see Jesus* (Hebrews 2:5-9). In this text, Jesus is acting both as incarnate God, and the new Adam to whom creation is once again placed in subjection.

The Christian therefore is to never be cringing in fear over a storm, for his or her faith is supremely in the Creator, as he revealed in Jesus Christ. To cry out, “Master, Master, we are perishing!” meant the faith of the disciples was placed elsewhere, or altogether insufficient to the event. Christians are to reign in life through Christ Jesus, not be cringing in fear over this or that event within creation.

Our text asks two questions: “Where is your faith?” and “Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?”

Where is your faith, today? If you were to take a faith inventory, what would you find? Would your faith reside in tradition alone, or in the power of God to protect and deliver?

The answer to the second question, “Who is this?” is for us all to proclaim:

Jesus is Lord over all creation.

We have been reminded here that Jesus is Lord, *even when our boat is filled with water.*

In the upcoming section of Luke’s Gospel, we will discover that Jesus is Lord over three cases of impossible human brokenness: a man possessed by a legion of devils (8:26-39); a sick little girl who dies before Jesus can reach her, and a woman with an incurable issue of blood (8:40-56). What we must note here is Luke is purposely using these impossible cases to demonstrate that Jesus specializes in that which is impossible within the natural realm. Jesus’ power is for us all, and especially for those outside the realm of human aid. If we are fearful, sick, tormented, or even dying (which we all are), Jesus remains Lord over whatever state we are in. It is his power that is needed, not merely comforting words or pleasant wishes.

What I am saying is that to believe Jesus is the Messiah means more than believing he came to take us to heaven (which he did), but to also believe he now brings heaven to those places wherein hell presently rules. It means Jesus has the power to break the strongholds of Satan, and bring deliverance to those languishing under the evil one. Salvation includes the forgiveness of sins, but it also includes restoring wholeness to the entire person, a process that will conclude with the return of our Lord when he will transform “the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of his glory” (Philippians 3:21).

Consider again what Jesus told the messengers from John the Baptist: “The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me” (Luke 7:22-23). What does Jesus offer the messengers as his primary Messianic credential? The power to deliver from Satan’s realm. And yet, many are offended by this even today. It is true not everyone is healed, today. It is true Jesus’ ministry was both present and eschatological, meaning he brought forward the fullness of God’s future redemption into this present day for some, but not all. But we who need healing and wholeness have this hope: Either he will grant us grace to endure or heal us. But the tragic reality of human brokenness cannot dismiss the power of Christ within the gospel witness.

So, what is the solution? We can begin by prayer. We can examine the nature and quality of our faith (not the quantity), and we can bring our cries unto the Lord, but in faith that he remains the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Do you believe Jesus is Lord over your situation? Can you trust him to act on your behalf? Perhaps you cannot. Perhaps you lack the necessary faith. If so, take heart. For while faith is the normal means by which God brings deliverance, such deliverance ought not be thought of as a reward to those with the best and most faith, as so many teach today.

Consider the case of the Gerasene demoniac (Luke 8:26-31). This poor man was so far gone that it was impossible for him to possess saving faith. Jesus acted on his behalf apart from the man’s faith. This is a reminder that it is not faith that holds the primacy in our deliverance, but the mercy and power of God. We all were once dead in trespasses and sins, without faith, and under the sway of the evil one, but God acted to do for us what we could not do for ourselves (Ephesians 2:1-8). He made us alive by an act of sovereign grace, and imparted saving faith so we could lay hold of Christ as our one and only supreme Lord.

So, faith is the means by which God brings salvation to all people, but salvation comes to us in accord with the mercy of God, and *not* as a reward of faith. Genuine faith lays hold of the merits and power of Christ, and not our own. Faith is not a personal virtue, nor does faith obligate God as the modern heretics teach. Instead, God acts prior to faith, and yet, faith when acquired through the grace of God, sees Christ alone as Lord over all things, and salvation is realized. May you lay hold of this great truth today and know the faith that rests in the storm.

AMEN.

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