

“Master and Commander” (Matthew 8:23-27)

1. Following Christ will not deliver us from the storms of life (v. 23-24)

What did disciples *really* expect it would be like to follow Jesus? Perhaps they were prepared for difficulty—theoretically. But practically, when the storm came, we find them in a fearful panic. You must likewise expect your share of “sickness and pain, of sorrow and tears, of losses and crosses, of deaths and bereavements, of partings and separations ... so long as you are in the body. Christ never undertakes that you shall get to heaven without these” (J. C. Ryle, “Ruler of the Waves”). They came to the place they were convinced he didn’t care if they perished (compare Job 13:24, Luke 10:40). But here the author of the trial is revealed. He brought them into it. The wind and the waves *obey him*.

2. “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” (v. 25-26)

“He spoke to the men first, for they were the most difficult to deal with: wind and sea could be rebuked afterwards” (C. H. Spurgeon, *Gospel of the Kingdom*). Faith credits God to be true and sovereign no matter what storms the eye sees.

God uses storms for our spiritual good, in order that we would grow in grace and discipleship—to make us feel our weakness, and reveal our need. You don’t know the weakness of your faith until you’re placed in “the furnace of trial and anxiety” (Ryle, *Expository Thoughts*). Compare 2 Chr 32:31, Matt 26:33, Luke 22:32). As John Wesley wrote in his journal, “I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well; nay, and I believe myself, when no danger is near. But let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, ‘to die is gain.’”

I asked the Lord, that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace;
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek more earnestly His face. ...

These inward trials I employ
From self and pride to set thee free;
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou mayst seek thy all in Me. (John Newton)

3. Learn “Who can this be? ... The wind and the sea obey him” (v. 27)

This night, the Lord brought them to the utter end of their own ability and resources. He made nothing of the pride and confidence of these sailors. Rather, they were brought to cast themselves on Jesus as their only hope. They realized they needed a savior. And Jesus is still in this line of work, bringing people into storms so that they might cry out to him and learn who he really is.

Application: Confidence in the storms of life

“Children ... God can save us if he will. To him nothing is impossible; but if he thinks it good to call us to him, let us not murmur; we shall not be separated” (Rev. J. D. Wyss, *Swiss Family Robinson*). The disciples never forgot the lesson of that night, the few hours of terror followed by a gentle rebuke and perfect calm. They kept in their hearts that Christ was with them in the prison, when confronted by mobs, when facing death. “Why are you so afraid?” Remembering that night on the Sea of Galilee, with their master and commander, their hearts would find peace and courage again. “The Lord has brought me here. This is the Lord’s storm. And what should I fear if he is with me?”