

Weathering the Storm

by Greg Laurie

In 'Weathering the Storm', Greg Laurie emphasizes the importance of faith and reliance on Jesus during life's inevitable challenges.

Duration: 43:53

Scripture: Psalm 32:8, Proverbs 4:25-27, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 8:23-27, Matthew 14:22-32, John 11:1-44, Hebrews 13:5

Topics: "Faith And Doubt", "Gods Guidance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of God's guidance and protection in our lives. He uses the example of a parent guiding their child to illustrate how God guides and warns us. The preacher also highlights the story of Jesus walking on water to demonstrate how Jesus intentionally delayed his arrival to the disciples, allowing them to face the storm and learn a lesson in faith. The sermon concludes with Jesus rebuking the disciples for their lack of faith and doubt.

Transcript

Matthew 14. You're a little more alive than the first service was, there's no doubt. I had to periodically go down to the front row and slap people to get them to... Matthew chapter 14.

The title of our message this morning is Getting Through the Storms of Life. And our text is Matthew 14 verses 22 through 32. A familiar story with so much to say to us.

Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain by himself to pray. And when evening had come, he was alone there.

But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now on the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went to them walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they cried out because they were troubled, saying, It is a ghost, crying out for fear.

And immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I. Do not be afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water. And so Jesus said, Come.

And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid. And beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me.

And immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him and said, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. This is a story that shows, no matter how bleak the circumstances, no matter how dark the storm, that Jesus is there with us. And we also see the importance of not being overwhelmed by circumstances, but instead keeping our eyes on the Lord.

Many Christians have the mistaken idea that once we make a commitment to Christ, it's going to be smooth sailing. No more troubles, no more problems. And in a sense, that's true.

And in another sense, it's not true. The way it is not true is that when you accept Christ, you encounter a whole new set of problems. You don't have an enemy, the adversary, the devil, who is a roaring lion, is walking about seeking whom he may devour.

He has set the crosshairs of his sights upon you, and he wants to try to bring you down. So those are some of the problems you encounter. And God will allow you to go through trials and difficulties to mature you and to help you to grow up.

But the storms you avoid are the storms of sin, the turmoil that came from your personal war you were having with God. You know, I've peaced with him. Your sin is forgiven, and you're going to heaven.

You have a plan and a purpose and a direction to follow. But yes, we are going to encounter difficulties. One promise I rarely heard claimed by Christians is the one given by Jesus, where he said, In this world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer.

I will overcome the world. This is the story of the disciples out on the Sea of Galilee facing a storm. And I think in a figurative sense, all of us will face storms in life.

It seems to me like there are two kinds of storms that we can encounter. Number one, storms we bring upon ourselves by disobedience to God and his Word, causing him to correct us, because as the Scripture says, whom the Lord loves, he chastens. A classic example of this would be Jonah, who is in that dilemma that he got in, in the whale's belly, as Chico Holliday talked about this last Thursday, because he was disobedient to God.

He brought those problems upon himself. And there are storms that we will face in life that are the direct result of our disobedience to the Lord. We're reaping what we sow.

We've sowed to the wind, and we reap the whirlwinds. But then there are the storms that God will bring into our lives, and storms that he will actually send us through to teach us the futility of trusting in ourselves and our own resources, and the need to trust in and look to him instead. These storms are designed to mature us and to deepen our faith.

Maybe you're going through a storm like this right now. Well, hopefully you can learn some lessons from the story we are about to read. And so we find that as our text opens and we see the disciples out in this horrible storm, it seemed like they were abandoned and all alone.

You know, this is not the first storm that they hit on this little body of water, the Sea of Galilee in Israel. We read over in Matthew chapter 8 that there was another time there was a storm. But this time Jesus was with them in the lower part of the boat, and they were panicking.

It was getting worse. There was no end in sight. So they went downstairs of the boat, and they woke up the Lord saying, Master, don't you care that we perish? Get up here and worry with us.

We're having a pity party, and we want you to participate. Jesus comes up on deck, probably rubbing the sleep out of his eyes, and he said, All right. He looks out at the storm and says, Peace, be still.

Or a literal rendering, Peace, be muzzled, as though he were talking to a wild animal. And immediately a calm spread. The disciples looked at one another and said, What manner of man is this that even the wind and the sea obey him? Luke, California, paraphrase.

What kind of guy is this? How can he do that? They learned a lesson. But then he rebuked them, and he said, Oh, you of little faith, why did you doubt? Why were you afraid? I think the lesson they learned there was better to weather the storm and have the Master's approval than be taken out of the storm and face the Master's rebuke. Now this storm was different.

The other storm, Jesus was with them in the boat. They could see him. He was tangible.

He was touchable. In this storm, he was nowhere to be seen. So it seemed like they were all alone, but they did not realize that Jesus always had his eye on them, and he was praying for them.

There will be storms that you and I will go through, trials, hardships, difficulties, where it will seem like God has abandoned us. And that is when we need to remember that he has promised he would never leave us or forsake us, in Hebrews 13. And by the way, in the original language, Jesus said, I will never, no, never, no, never leave you or forsake you.

Get the point? He was actually emphasizing the same point three times to reassure us. He told us that, lo, he would be with us even at the end of the age. In Isaiah, God says, when you go through the waters, I will be with you.

They won't overflow you. I'll be with you when you're in the fire. We must remember that he is there even when we can't see him, even when we can't feel him.

And it is in those times that our faith is growing, and we are learning to indeed walk by faith. If you or I try to live the Christian life on emotions, we will have a short-lived Christian experience. But it is through these storms and these difficulties that our faith begins to grow.

And so this is one of those storms that God sent them through. Notice in verse 22, it says that Jesus strongly urged them to go to the other side, or made them to go. It was something he emphasized to them.

He wanted them to go away because a scenario was developing that was very unhelpful for them spiritually. You see, the background of this miracle was Jesus had just done, undoubtedly, his most popular of the miracles he performed, the multiplying of the loaves and fishes. He fed at least 5,000, not to mention women and children.

Boy, his reputation spread like wildfire. People were coming from far and near to hear the man that could materialize lunch. This is the kind of guy you wanted to be close to.

He would just make food come out of nowhere. And people gathered, thousands and thousands of people wanted to hear Jesus. In fact, it was so popular, this miracle, that we read over in the Gospel of John that the multitude wanted to make him the king.

They said, of a truth we think this is the prophet who has come into the world, and they were intending to come and take him by force and make him king. They didn't want to wait any longer. You see, there was a false perception on the part of the people as to the real role of Jesus in his earthly ministry.

It was believed by the multitudes and even the disciples, till after his resurrection, that he was coming to establish his earthly kingdom. They didn't understand this part about crucifixion, dying and rising again. Even Simon Peter, when Jesus spoke of this at Caesarea Philippi, rebuked the Lord, saying, Lord, be it far from you.

Get that idea out of your head. What are you talking about being betrayed and murdered in Jerusalem? We want you to be our king, and we want to rule with you. But they did not see that Jesus always intended to go to the cross.

It was always in his sights from the very beginning. It was not a mistake. It was part of the divine plan for he who was crucified before the foundation of the world.

But these people wanted to make him king right then and there. And I think the disciples were kind of excited about this. Because, you see, finally they were being vindicated.

Finally their day had come. The crowd was at a fever pitch, and they were finally going to get their just dessert. You see, they had taken a lot of harassment.

They had suffered indifference and indignities with the Lord for some two years, living hand-to-mouth, no one appreciating him or them. But now the people finally saw he was the king, and no doubt they would have some position of prominence in his new kingdom. It sounded pretty good.

We know they argued about it on occasion. Who would be greatest in the kingdom? Their day in the sun had come. This is it.

All right, let's go. The Lord said, boys, cross over. I want you out of here right now.

Who knows how many things God has taken us out of, because he saw the potential spiritual danger. My little son Jonathan, who is three years old, doesn't understand why I don't let him do certain things. Now I have another son who's 14 years old.

He understands a little better. Not that much, but a little. But Jonathan doesn't understand at all why he can't go running into the street to chase a ball.

He doesn't understand why he cannot live on a diet of sugar. Why? It tastes so good. He doesn't understand why I put restraints on him, why I tell him he can't do certain things.

But that is because he does not see things the way I see them. I am his father, and I look out for his welfare. God is your father, and he looks out for your welfare.

Maybe he's pulled you out of a relationship, pulled you out of a job, pulled you out of a situation, and you don't know why. But maybe he knew that the ultimate result of that would be spiritual destruction, and he was looking up for your own good. So remember that next time when things don't make sense, and you wonder why God did that.

But God is in control. Whatever he does, it's always out of the motive of love, and it's always with the overall goal of molding you into the image of Jesus Christ, and taking care of you for your eternal needs. Sometimes our temporary desires and our eternal needs don't coincide.

Sometimes what is good for me temporarily is not good for me eternally, and often what is good for me eternally is not good for me temporarily. So God will use his executive privilege, so to speak, and do these things for you, because he loves you. He sent them over into a storm.

He knew a storm would be waiting. It is interesting, he did not tell them the storm was waiting. I'm glad God does not tell me what is always lying in my future, because if he did, I wouldn't always go the right direction.

If I knew a storm was coming on the Sea of Galilee, and he said go to the other side, I would reason to myself, well he didn't say how to get to the other side, let's walk. I wouldn't go out there in that water with a storm, knowing it was coming. God doesn't tell you what's always coming, but he knows what's in store, and he intentionally sent them into a storm that he had designed to teach them a very important lesson.

But look what it says in verse 23. It says that as they were headed out toward this storm, that Jesus sent the multitudes away, but he went up into a mountain to pray, and knowing their needs, and knowing the problems they were about to face, he was praying for them. You know the Bible says that Jesus Christ is seated on the right hand of God in heaven, interceding for you.

I am happy when people say I've been praying for you, Craig, because the best thing a person could do for me is pray for me. But I'm really happy to know that the Lord himself is praying for me, standing in the gap on my behalf. Jesus said to Simon Peter, Peter, the devil has been asking for you by name.

That's a frightening thought. Peter's knees might have started knocking together. How's that Lord? By name? Yes, Peter, by name.

You mean he actually wants me? Me, Peter? He wants you, Peter. And he has been asking that you be taken out of the care and protection of God. He's been asking this excessively, Peter.

But don't worry about it. I prayed for you. Well, that's the answer.

I think that the devil may have asked for me by name. He may have set his sights on you, but we're under divine protection as long as we stay close to Jesus Christ. Psalm 91.1, he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge, my fortress, my God, and him will I trust. As long as I stay close to him, I have nothing to fear. If God be for me, who can be against me? Greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world.

So you hear a knock on your door. Who is it? The devil. Lord, would you mind getting that? Hey, I'm not going to face him.

The Lord rebuke you, I'd say. I'd stand in God's strength, knowing that I would be secure there. Jesus was praying for his disciples as they went through their storm, and he's praying for you and watching out for you when you're going through your storm.

Though you can't see him, he can see you. And that's all that really matters anyway, as long as he has got his eye on me. You know, it says in the Old Testament, God speaking, I will guide you with my eye.

You know, a parent learns the art of expression to their child. You know, children are smart. You take them to restaurants, and they know they can create chaos and get away with a lot more than they'd get away with at home.

So you'd learn to give them the look. You say, sweetheart, be quiet. They keep backing up, and you just lift the one eyebrow.

It's the warning. Look at me. You say, look at me.

They look at you. Don't do that again. It's the look.

You're guiding them with your eye. You're warning them. God says, I'll guide you.

Keep looking to me. Be observant of me. I have my eye on you.

Verse 25, in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went to them walking on the sea. Now the fourth watch, for you that are sailors, you'd know this, was the time just before dawn. That means that the disciples had been at sea for at least nine hours, and most of that time they spent battling the storm.

In other words, Jesus intentionally delayed his arrival to them, just as he did with Lazarus. You remember that story. Lazarus was sick.

He was a friend of Jesus. Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus that he whom you love is sick. Jesus intentionally took his time, and by the time he got there, not only was Lazarus dead, but in the immortal words of his sister Martha, Lord, it's been three days, and by now he's stinking.

He's really dead. Jesus said, your brother will rise again. Martha said, I know that.

The resurrection, the last day. Martha, I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

And whosoever lives in me shall never die. Do you believe this? Oh yes, I believe, Lord. She didn't understand what Jesus was saying.

He's going to live again. You see, Martha wanted a healing, and Jesus wanted a miracle. It may have seemed like he was late, but he was not late.

She was early. God is never late. We are only early.

His timing is perfect, and I have long since found out that God does not work according to my time schedule. Lord, you got to come through in the next five minutes. The Lord says, no, I don't.

I have my own timing and my own way of doing things. Some of us think, why hasn't the Lord come back? Jesus, don't you know I've gone through 15 Jesus is coming bumper stickers on my car? Do you know what an embarrassment it is to peel off an old Jesus is coming bumper sticker? It's an admission of defeat. His timing is perfect.

God is not late, as some men count lateness, but he is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, we're told in Scripture. God knows when the timing is right, and he has not changed it or altered it. Oh, there are those that will come along and say they know when the Lord is coming back, like this fellow said back in 1988, and now I've just seen he's written another book predicting another date when Jesus is coming back.

What amazes me are people line up and believe this sort of foolishness when Jesus specifically said, no man knows the day or the hour. And I found it interesting back when this other book hit. I don't know if you heard about it, but a man wrote a book predicting the exact date of the return of Jesus for his church.

And I was watching the evening news, and here is this news reporter telling about how a group of Christians, having got hold of this book, decided they should go down to their church and have a rapture waiting service. And they all quit their jobs, and they were waiting for the Lord to come back that evening or that week or whenever this date was that came and passed. And I thought, now let's just stop here for a moment.

Let's just say for a moment this man was right. Let's say we knew the exact date of the return of the Lord. Did Jesus tell us to go have rapture waiting services? He said, occupy till I come.

Be active serving me till I'm returning. So if we believe he could come at any moment, and I believe that, then I should be actively in his service, walking in the center of his will, occupying, investing the time and the resources that he has given to me as his child. And you should do the same.

He's not late. He will come. The disciples may have thought he was late, but he got there when the time was right, because he in his wisdom was waiting for them to reach the extremity of their need before he intervened.

It often takes a long time for us to exhaust our resources and trust completely to him. He wanted them to stop rowing. He wanted them to give up and say, Lord help, and there he would be.

So they would not take the credit for themselves. When you get to the end of yourself, you get to the beginning of God. A lot of us trust in our own abilities.

Yeah, I did it myself. The reason I'm a success in business is because I worked hard, and I applied myself, and I've brought the success about. I don't doubt that you've worked hard, but just don't forget this, that the ability to even get up in the morning and draw a breath is a gift from God.

Your life is a gift from God. Your ability to think and reason is a gift from God. Everything that you have is a gift from God, and should you begin to think you've got it for yourself and take credit for yourself, you're gambling, and you're taking the glory that belongs only to the Lord.

We need to realize each day that it is He that gives us the life that we have, and certainly the Bible says we are not our own. We've been bought with a price, and to trust in Him. But these disciples were still using their own abilities and resources.

Jesus waited until they had completely spent themselves, and then He came to them walking on the sea. They might have remembered the promise of David given in Psalm 139, where He said, of the Lord, if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, you are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there your hand will lead me, and your right hand will hide me, or take hold of me.

And here they were in the remotest part of the sea. Or the promise of Isaiah 43, God speaking, when you pass through the waters, I will be with you. I don't know if they remembered those verses or not, but Jesus comes walking to them at the fourth watch.

Verse 25, they see Him coming toward them on the water to show His disciples that the very thing they feared, which in this case was the sea, was only a staircase for Him to come to them. Often God will use the difficult experiences of life to show us that these experiences can bring Jesus Christ closer to us. Some people say God heals everyone.

And if you're not healed, you're out of the will of God. And that brings us to another point. In fact, Chico Holliday in the back room mentioned this to me.

He said, you know, there might have been those on the shore watching the disciples fighting the storm, saying they should have never gone. They're outside of the will of God. God would have never allowed that to happen to them, His children.

But yet they were in perfect obedience to the will of God. God had sent them into the storm. There are those that say, if you're sick, if you have a disability, you're outside of the will of God.

Why, just claim it, brother. Take it by faith. Hold on.

Why then did God allow the Apostle Paul himself to have a thorn in the flesh? Because he lacked faith. For this he besought the Lord. Three times he might be delivered.

Paul had the gift of healing for others. But yet God did not choose to heal him. They say, oh, you should only pray for something once.

Well, Paul prayed three times. And more importantly, Jesus Himself prayed for the same thing three times in the Garden of Gethsemane. And God's answer to Paul was, no, Paul, I'm not going to take this thorn in the flesh away.

What that thorn was, we don't know. It might have been a physical disability. Probably was.

Because Paul had experienced many beatings. And he was stoned more than once. And possibly even his eyesight was the very thorn he was speaking of, many Bible commentators believe.

But three times he asked the Lord to take it away. And God's response to him was, my grace is sufficient for you. So Paul said, therefore I glory in my afflictions, and in my distress, and in my affliction and persecution.

For when I am weak, then I am strong. I glory in it that the power of Christ may rest in its fullest upon me. And often when we have hit rock bottom, when we're going through the hardest times, God's strength will be stronger, not because he's gotten stronger, but because we've recognized our weakness.

And we've begun to take hold of him. Like Jacob wrestling with God, it's not us fighting God anymore. But toward the end we read that Jacob was clinging.

And when you go from wrestling to clinging, you're on the right track. Don't wrestle, just nestle. Just hang on.

And so that's what the disciples were learning. Now these guys, they didn't know it was Jesus. And they were frightened.

They didn't think they were going to live. In verse 26, to add insult to injury, they think a ghost is coming to them. It's a ghost, they cry out.

If things aren't bad enough, now a ghost is coming to haunt us. Now why didn't they recognize it was Jesus? I think because they weren't looking for Jesus. All they could see were their problems.

All they could see was a storm. I think there are times when Jesus has something to say to us, and we don't hear him because we're not listening. We don't see him because we're not looking.

We're overcome by our problems. Like the two disciples on the Emmaus Road who were discouraged because, in their estimation, Jesus had failed in his mission. He had gone and gotten himself crucified, forgetting that every time he mentioned his crucifixion, he also spoke of his resurrection.

And they were walking along on the Emmaus Road, and guess who joined them? Jesus. But they did not know it was him because they weren't looking for him. And they began to talk with him, and he began to talk to them, and at the end they recognized who he was.

But they were so overcome by their problems, they failed to see what the Lord was trying to say. Sometimes we're not paying attention, and we miss what he has to say to us. And then Peter, seeing it as the Lord, got very excited, and he wanted to go to the Lord.

And in verse 28, he says to Jesus, Lord, if it is you, command me to come, and I will come to you on the water. Now, some people fault Peter for this. What was he doing that for? Showing off? What a foolish thing to do.

Actually, I admire him for it. Nobody else offered. In what faith? Command me, and I'll come to you walking on the water.

This word that he used for command is an interesting word. It's a word that would be used to describe the decree of a king. So what Peter was saying is, give me the decree of the king, and I will walk to you, because I believe that you have mastery over the elements.

And if you say the word, I can walk on the water to you. Jesus thought, I like that. That's good.

All right, Peter, come. You see, if this was a wrong thing to do, Jesus would have corrected him. Peter, stay on the boat.

I'll be there in a moment. Quit showing off. Quit being so boastful.

No, come, Peter. I admire that. That's a good quality.

Come on. And also, there was a lesson to be taught. Jesus thought as an opportunity to instruct the disciples that throughout their ministry, they would be confronted by every kind of problem.

But if they kept their eyes focused on Him, they would never be overwhelmed by difficult circumstances. Yet, if they lost sight of Him, they would surely sink. But even in those circumstances, He would respond as soon as they cried out for help.

Peter stepped down, and sure enough, he walked on the water. Unbelievable. A miracle.

Had his eyes on Jesus. He thought, this is wonderful. This is great.

This is impossible. What am I doing? And he started to sink. Now, we know the reason Peter sank was because he took his eyes off the Lord.

But what did he put his eyes on? Well, no doubt the storm. But sometimes I wonder if he didn't just sneak a quick glance over the shoulder to see if the others were watching. James, John, he didn't call you.

He called me. Who knows? But the problem was, he took his eyes off the Lord, and he started to sink. And if we take our eyes off the Lord, we will do the same.

What does it mean to have your eyes on Jesus? It means to always keep Him in the forefront of your life. It's seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. It's wanting God's will above your own.

Obedying Him. Being His disciple. Consulting His Word on a regular basis.

Looking to the Lord in all things. And this is one of the most important things we must never lose sight of in the Christian life, if we want to succeed. Hebrews 12 says, Seeing you are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, lay aside the weight and the sin that so easily besets you, and run with endurance the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of your faith.

That's the key. Looking unto Jesus. And in the original language, that phrase, looking, means set your focus on Him so as to blur everything else.

That's why I like the words of that old song that says, Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. I've found this to be true.

When I have my eyes on the Lord, and I'm following Him, everything else is a blur. But when I take my eyes off Him, it's amazing how overwhelming even this, how even, how overwhelming even the smallest problem can become. But you can just start worrying.

Oh, what if this happens? Oh, what if that happens? And your stomach is tied in knots. Worry is the most unproductive emotion I've ever seen. What good is worry? It's like a rocking chair.

You're always moving, but never getting anywhere. That's why we're told in Philippians, Don't worry about anything, but instead take that same energy and put it into prayer. Don't worry about anything but in everything by prayer, by supplication and thanksgiving.

Let your requests be made known unto God, and God's peace will guard your heart and mind through Jesus Christ. But here were the disciples now, taking their eyes off the Lord, specifically Peter, and we must always keep our eyes on Him, otherwise we too are doomed to failure. Jesus asks Peter an interesting question in verse 31.

Peter, why did you doubt you of little faith? Peter, you were doing great. It was wonderful what you were doing. Why did you doubt? The word doubt literally means, Why did you stand with uncertainty at two ways? Meaning that Peter started out with great faith, but ended up with little, because he saw two ways instead of one.

Or he took his eyes off the Lord. James says a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. We're told that by Jesus Himself in the Sermon on the Mount, if your eye is single, your whole body will be filled with light.

But if your eye is evil or double-visioned, your whole body will be full of darkness. There are those that try to live in two worlds. They try to have it all.

They have too much of Christ to be happy in the world, and too much of the world to be happy in Christ. And they're miserable. You can't have it both ways.

And it would be well to follow the advice of Elijah up on Mount Carmel, where he said to the people, Why do you jump back and forth between two opinions? If the Lord is God, then follow Him. Choose you this day whom you will serve. You see, there are those that say, Well, church is church, you know, and there we'll listen to the Word of God, and we'll pray, and we'll sing.

But business is business. And you can't take your Christian principles out in the business world and succeed. Certainly you'll be doomed to failure.

Honesty? I'm a used car dealer. I'm sure to offend someone by saying that. But there are those that I have seen that will go out into the business world and use dishonesty, and yet they are Christians, and they justify it by saying, Well, business is business.

Well, call it what you like, but Jesus is either Lord of all, or He's not Lord at all. If He doesn't go with you to your workplace, and if He doesn't go with you wherever you go, then I question your real commitment. He's not just Lord in the church service.

He wants to be Lord over every aspect of your life, and it's for us to surrender the reins of our life over to Him. Another story of Peter. He was out in the Sea of Galilee fishing, and he caught nothing.

Jesus then came on board and said, Go out into the deep, and you'll catch a great load of fish. Peter said, Lord, I mean, I don't want to be disrespectful, but I am a fisherman by trade, and as I remember, you're a carpenter and a teacher, so why don't you teach, and I'll fish, okay? He didn't say that, but it's implied in the statement where he said, Lord, we toiled all night and caught nothing. We've already tried.

Go on out there, Peter. Throw out your net. When Peter did it God's way, he had more than he could handle, because he let Jesus be the Lord of his little boat.

He thought he knew all about running that little boat, but he had failed, and when he let Jesus be the Lord of it, he had success. You may think you know all about life and everything you need to know about business and marriage and everything else, but until you let Jesus be the Lord, you'll never find the success that you can really have, spiritual success. And then the great thing is, not only can you do well in what you do, but it can be a witness and a testimony to God.

How weary I am of Christians being poor witnesses in the workplace, because they wear their Christianity on their sleeve to get sales. You know, honest Joe Christian tires, or Maranatha this or Maranatha that, and I'm not critical of any business that is a Christian business that sells a product, as long as they deliver the goods. So, I'll give you an honest confession.

You may disagree with me. I go for the best deal. If it's Maranatha or Joe Sinner, I want the best deal.

And sometimes, people will use the Christian name to get you in, but all I can say is, if you do it, be honest, be a person of integrity, and do good work. Because I've had people do things for me that I hired them because they were Christians, and they didn't do good work. And I say, well, can you fix it? And they go, oh brother, please don't give me this, oh brother, fix it.

You of all people should be the hardest worker, the man of the greatest integrity. I remember I was in a restaurant once, and there was a check posted up on the wall. It was written by a Christian, and his check bounced, because there was a little Christian fish on it.

And the policy of that restaurant is, put his name up there. Well, I saw it two or three times. Finally, I paid it, because I was tired of seeing the Lord's name degraded like that, and the testimony of a Christian.

We should be shining examples of what we do, working harder than others, giving glory to God. And then, when people ask us the secret of our success, we can give God the praise for it, and you can succeed. And so, this is the lesson that we see here.

Why did you doubt? Do it my way. And now, Peter was learning how important it was to keep his eyes focused on the Lord. Because no matter how long you've known the Lord, how mature you've become, how much Bible knowledge you've accumulated, if you take your eyes off of Jesus, it will only be a matter of time before you sink.

Peter was learning to obey, no matter what the circumstances may be, because it's safer and better to be with Jesus on the water than without Him on the boat. Do it God's way. You'll never regret it.

And now we'll close with verse 30. It was a simple prayer of Peter after he started to sink, and it was, Lord, save me. I think that's one of the greatest prayers in the Bible.

I love it for its simplicity. Lord, save me. No religiosity here.

It was honest, straightforward, and effective. He saw his predicament and recognized time was of the essence, and he took action. And the Bible says, if you call on the Lord, you will be saved.

Now maybe you're going through a storm right now. Maybe a storm that you've brought on yourself, and in essence, you've been reaping what you're sowing. Then call on the Lord, and He'll save you.

Perhaps if you have brought this predicament about, and you're reaping the consequences of your own sin, God will reach out and help you in this moment of need. Perhaps you're in a storm that God has designed, and you're sinking. Perhaps you've taken your eyes off of Jesus.

Call on Him. He's there for you. Whatever storm you're in, if you will call upon Him, He will help you, because He is more ready to help you and to save you than a mother would be to save her child from a burning building.

All you have to do is call upon Him, and the answer will come. But some of us are reluctant to do that, because we don't want to admit we failed. We don't want to admit we haven't done it as well as we thought we should have.

I talked to a lifeguard the other day at the beach, and I asked him how he saved people, and what the mechanics of it were, and the pluses and minuses of being a lifeguard. And he said, you know the best people to save? I said, no, who's that? He said, children. I said, really, why? He said, because when you

save a child's life from the surf, they thank you, and they tell everyone what you did.

Mommy, the lifeguard just saved my life! He says, it makes you feel so good. Climb back up, and your lifeguard stands upstairs. I am the lifeguard.

He said, but you know who the hardest are to save? I said, who? He said, adults. I said, why? He said, because when an adult is drowning, they're reluctant to admit it at first. But when they finally are, and you go up there and save them, and you bring them in, they're mad at you, because they're embarrassed, and they don't want to admit they were saved.

They want to get away from you as quickly as they can. I would have made it. I was only three miles out to sea.

What's the problem? That's how a lot of us are. God gets us out of a jam, and we attribute it to luck. I don't see any place for the word luck in our vocabulary.

Boy, I was lucky today. What are you talking about lucky? If you're a child of God, and things went well, give Him praise for that. Don't thank luck or circumstances.

It was the Lord. I heard about a man who was up on a roof of a three-story house, nailing down a shingle, and he lost his footing. He began to slip down the side of that roof, and he knew once he went over the side, it was over with.

And he cried out to God, God, God, help me, he said. God, save me. Don't let me die.

God, listen, help. And just as he got to the edge of that roof, his belt loop caught on a nail, and it stopped him. He said, it's okay, God.

I got caught on a nail. Oh, he was just lucky. Well, who's to say that God did not answer his prayer? God can use supernatural means and natural means to get the job done.

But often we don't want to give God praise for what He's done. We want to say we did it ourselves. And then there are those whose lifeguards told me that you go out to save, and they'll drown you if you're not careful.

He says, that's why I threw out my little buoy, and they grabbed hold of it. And he's got a harness across his chest that's a long rope to it. And he swims in, and they hang on the buoy, so he can live to do it again.

People are resistant. I wonder if you're resistant, or if I'm resistant. It's far better to cling to the Lord than fight with the Lord.

Far better to run to Him than from Him. And Peter learned this lesson, a very important lesson, of always keeping your eyes on Jesus, and never taking them off, and of remembering that no matter how dark the storm, how difficult the circumstances, that God will see you through. David said, Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, because you are with me.

Now in closing, I wonder if you need to be saved from a storm today. Maybe you've never asked Jesus Christ to become your personal Lord and Savior. You're not certain right now that if you died, you'd go to heaven.

You don't know that you know that you're a child of God. You know, I don't even ask people anymore if they're a Christian. Because I think the term Christian has largely lost its meaning in our American culture.

I like to ask people, Are you having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? But you have to pause and think about that. Because you say, I'm a Christian, I'm an American, of course! Personal relationship with Jesus Christ? I don't know about that. Are you? Are you having one today? Are you ready to go to heaven? Is Christ living inside of you? If not, He'll save you today.

Save me from what? From your sin. Well, what's the penalty of sin? The wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die, the Bible says.

You don't want to face that penalty. Only God can forgive you of your sin. But the only sin that God cannot forgive you of, is a sin you're not willing to confess.

But the Bible says, if you'll confess your sin, He's faithful and just to forgive you, and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. If you'll come to God and admit honestly that you need His help, and call out to Him, He'll save you, forgive you, and give you the hope of heaven and the forgiveness of sin. You're not too young to make a commitment like that today.

And you're not too old. You're not too immoral, and you're not too moral. Every one of us needs to come by faith to Jesus Christ, and receive Him into our lives.

And He will come in. He has promised, He that would come to me, I would in no way cast out. Why don't you call upon Him right now? You just say, Lord, help.

Or in the words of Peter, Lord, save me. And He will. It's up to you.

And if you have not yet made that decision, why don't you make it today? I'm going to give you an opportunity to do that right now. Let's bow our heads for a word of prayer. Father, we pray for those that have joined us today, who perhaps have never made a commitment to You, to be their Lord and Savior.

They've never asked You to come into their life. And I pray You'll help them to see their need for You, and call on You this day. While our heads are bowed and our eyes are closed, how many of you would say this morning, Greg, pray for me.

I want to have my sin forgiven by God. I want to know that when I die, I'll go to heaven. I want to have this personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

I want to have peace with God. Pray for me today. I'm ready to call on Him, to reach out to Him.

If that's your desire, wherever you're sitting, if you would like your sin forgiven, if you would like Jesus Christ to come in your life, if you would like to have this hope of heaven, lift up your hand wherever you're sitting.

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