

# The Discipline of Despair - 15

by Jack Hibbs

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*The discipline of despair is the process of learning to trust God in the midst of difficult circumstances and coming to Him with our faces down and our hands outstretched.*

**Duration:** 56:04

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:18

**Topics:** "Discipline", "Faith in Jesus", "Despair"

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## Description

Jack Hibbs addresses the theme of despair in his sermon, emphasizing how moments of desperation can lead us closer to Jesus. He illustrates this through Peter's experience of sinking while walking on water, highlighting that despair can drive us to cry out for help and ultimately strengthen our faith. Hibbs encourages believers to recognize that even in their darkest moments, Jesus is present and ready to rescue them, reminding them that despair can lead to spiritual growth and reliance on God's promises. He calls on both believers and non-believers to seek Jesus in their times of trouble, assuring them of His love and support.

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## Transcript

So true to our core of who we are and what we struggle with as we look tonight, Father, at despair and desperation, the things that take hold of our lives and lead us to a brink of losing control of the wonderful things that you've given us, the promises and the peace that's available to the believer. And Lord, tonight we pray also that for those who may not know you tonight, that your Holy Spirit would be speaking to them and Lord, that they would just absolutely run to you tonight and say, Lord, take away my despair. And Father, we pray that you would have your way with us as a people, as a church.

And for all those who are listening or viewing right now, Lord, just doing amazing work. We ask it in Jesus' name and all God's people said, amen. Well, church, grab your Bibles tonight and turn if you would to Matthew chapter 28, Matthew 28 verses 18 to 20.

That's the theme verse of our series, the disciplines of life. And tonight we're looking at despair, the discipline of despair, to despair. We'll talk about that more in a moment, but Matthew chapter 28, it's all about being a disciple.

And as a disciple, in fact, it's my opinion that if you take this series that we've been going through and use them as a foundation for discipleship, I think it's a pretty valuable thing. And tonight we look at the

discipline of despair, Matthew chapter 28, verse 18, Jesus came and spoke to them saying all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Jesus said, go therefore and make disciples followers of Christ of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I've commanded you and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.

Now turn a little bit to the left, Matthew chapter 14, verse 30, Matthew 14, verse 30. It's where we get our title for tonight, the discipline of despair, Matthew 14, verse 30. But when he, that is Peter saw that the wind was boisterous, Peter was afraid.

He was afraid and began to sink. And he cried out saying, Lord, save me. In fact, what we ought to do right now, just while you're there, let me give you the background to that.

It starts in verse 25, the sinking of Peter, Matthew 14, 25. Now in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went with them walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled saying it is a ghost.

And they cried out for fear, by the way, in the Hebrew mind, you and I kind of laugh and chuckle. Oh, it's a ghost. He thought it was a ghost.

Listen, in their thinking and the Hebrew superstitions of the day, when they thought they saw a ghost, it was because they were transferring from the place of the living to the place of the dead. These guys thought that they were dying. They thought that their lives were coming to an end.

So when they said, Oh, it's a ghost, their Hebrew mindset. And the tradition of the day was we are dying and we're going slipping into the other world. So they cried out for fear, verse 27, but immediately Jesus spoke to them saying, be of good cheer.

It is I be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it's you command me to come to you on the water. So he 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 saved me.

It's the shortest prayer in the Bible. And immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him and said to him, Oh, you a little faith. Why did you doubt? And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

Then there, then those who were in the boat came and worshiped him saying, truly, you are the son of God. The discipline of despair tonight. Note, first of all, the intensity of the moment.

Peter cries out, Lord, save me. It generated the shortest prayer on record. But listen, there's an amazing thing taking place.

This man steps out of a boat and he's walking on the water to Jesus Christ. What a radical moment. But we want to talk about the things that caused them to do that.

Why would he leave a perfectly good boat and walk out on the water? The temptation for us, and it may be true to some degree as man, what great faith Peter had. Well, Jesus said for a moment here, Oh, you have little faith. We said, well, Jack, that happened because he began to seek after he stepped out there.

Maybe what was going on in his mind? If they cried out for fear, if they were tormented by the situation that was around them, are you tormented by the situation around you? And the thought is it's better to get out of this boat and take a chance than to go down with this boat, go down with all these other guys whining and crying in the boat. Was Peter fed up with his company? I don't know. Was Peter more spiritual than the rest of them? I doubt it.

What was going on? Whatever was going on in his moment of despair. It was so radical that he said, Lord, if it's you bid me to come. And that's a beautiful thing because number one, Peter's thinking is if it's Jesus, I know the kind of things Jesus says.

He says things that are impossible. Can somebody say amen to that? Doesn't Jesus say impossible things to us and Jesus. So, uh, all these years of ministry, Peter's got it down now.

And he says, Lord, if it's you bid me to come, because only Jesus, he probably looked back at the guys in the boat. Only Jesus would say, come on out. If it's a ghost, maybe, uh, it's not going to happen.

But if it's Jesus, he'll say something crazy like, come on out on the water. The water's fine. Come on out.

I don't know, but Jesus said, come and Peter steps down out of the boat and he begins to walk on the water. The moment you and I think about somebody walking on the water, we automatically think of Jesus, but that's nothing for him to walk on the water, but it is something for Peter to walk on the water. And this is an encouraging thing because of the moment of despair, Peter's doing the impossible, but listen, mark it down.

And I'll repeat it several times tonight. You need to hear this. The reason why Jesus asked Peter to come down out of the boat and join him was not listen, was not for Peter to be a water Walker.

That's not the point. Do you think God's interested in people walking on water? Have you ever wanted to walk on water? We've all wanted to walk on water. Have you ever thought about it? I'd love to walk on water.

I think it's like walking on the cloud. I'd love to walk on a cloud. Wouldn't that be cool? I don't think God's interested in you and I walking around on a cloud or on the water.

That's not the point. What do you get out of walking on water bragging rights? I'm Peter water Walker. You know, he has a t-shirt.

I walked on water. Jesus isn't interested in walking on water and having us do it. Not at all.

Do you know what Jesus is into your moment of despair? It's all about you sinking that he's into. The whole lesson was not about walking on water. There wasn't a class.

Okay guys, Peter will be the first one. And then after Peter, Andrew, you're next. So I'll walk on water.

No, but the lesson to be learned is all about sinking and how to be rescued from the moment of despair. It's not about walking. It's about being rescued.

Jesus knew, listen, you don't want to hear this, but Jesus knew that Peter would sink before Peter ever got out of the water, got out of the boat under the water. He knew that the boy was going to sink in the moment of despair. Jesus would be there.

The Bible says he immediately stretched forth his hand and he rescued Peter right out of the sinking moment of the ocean of the sea. And what about you and your life and your life's turmoil and tribulation and peril? Oh Lord, it's not about you living a cush easy life. Anybody can do that.

The danger is living life, eventually sinking without Jesus Christ. And the world is sinking tonight, sinking in emotion, sinking in grief, sinking in pain, sinking in sorrow, disappointment, bitterness. There are many people you and I know, and they're sinking because of the perils of life.

They don't know Jesus, but to be able to say to them, you know what, my friend, I heard a message at church the other night about Jesus reaching into your life and rescuing from the situation you're in. Jesus rescues people in despair. He loves that.

It causes me to think that Jesus just waits ever so patiently when in the life of someone, difficulties and perils will come. And for some people, it's not the good news that leads somebody to Christ. Sometimes it's not the good news.

Sometimes it's the bad news that leads someone to Christ. They come to the end of themselves. What lesson was Peter learning in that moment? When we talk about despair, Webster's dictionary, Webster's 1828 dictionary says of the word despair, hopelessness, a destitution of hope, he says to have no expectation.

That's that is very, very threatening to me. That definition right there to have no expectation. Expectation is important to me.

The perception or the reality that all hope is lost. Despair is the abandonment of all hope, says Noah Webster. The Greek word for despair means this in the Bible in second Corinthians, mark it down.

Second Corinthians four, eight pulses for we are hard pressed on every side and yet not crushed. We are perplexed, he says, but not in despair. And that word not in despair, exasperia.

Recognize that word to exasperate? Exasperia, the word means to be at an utter loss, to be despondent, believing that one has become lost. The picture is someone lost at sea. They're they're swallowed with despair.

And you don't have to be lost at sea. And you don't have to be walking on this on the Sea of Galilee and be sinking to have Jesus rescue you from this tremendous discipline of despair. But you can be caught up in a world that for whatever reasons you think that God has abandoned you or somehow God's not real.

I can't think of anybody more helpless and hopeless than a person going through this life, believing that there is no God. What a tragedy that is. And so we look at this first point, the discipline of despair is this number one is that despair drives us closer to Jesus.

We write that down. The tendency for us is to run and not even talk about despair. I don't want to talk about it.

People say, I don't want to hear that word. But wait a minute, because God is real church. Listen, tonight, God is real.

He is alive. And all of a sudden, despair is not the giant that my emotions are telling me that it is. Tonight, no matter who you might be, you can realize this, that despair can drive you closer to Jesus.

And listen, Christians are not exempt from despair. When we get our eyes off of Christ, like Peter got his eyes off of Jesus, he began to sink. He saw how boisterous the waves were.

JC Ryle in his commentary says that it must have happened as Peter was walking on the water, that as the waves were driving the sea up and down, that Peter began to look at the size of the swells rather than the size of the Savior. And you and I can do that. We can look at all the things that scare us.

What scares you tonight? Is it some phobia? That's a great word for fear. The Bible says that when we meditate on the perfect love of God, that that perfect love cast out all fear. God's love begins.

Listen, God's love begins to permeate our lives. And it's the reality of his love. It doesn't mean that you're running around with little daisies and flowers and sunshine, happy hearts all over your shirt.

That's not what he's talking about. He's talking about the reality of God's love coming into your life and so taking you over that it pushes out all the stuff that's not from God. And fear goes out the window.

And you meditate on the love of God for you personally, God's love for you is awesome. I want you to put this picture in your mind. Storms are great things to watch as long as you're safe.

And this is a famous picture. You guys have all seen this before. Go ahead and leave it up.

I've always asked this question. Did that man know in the doorway that that wave was coming? What if the door was on the other side of that lighthouse? By the way, that lighthouse, I don't know where it is, but I've seen other pictures of it. It's pretty far out in the ocean.

I don't even know how they built the thing. There's a man standing there with the door open with the raging ocean around that lighthouse storms. Storms are awesome.

If you're in a safe place. I remember a couple of years ago, we were all out at the river with some friends here from this church. We're having a great time.

Our kids are with us. We're at where our dogs are out there. We're goofing off having a great time.

This big storm rolls across the desert. We're watching it. Wow.

And we're all acting tough. Yeah, it's a great story. Boy, that's going to be a big storm.

Whoa, look at that lightning. Whoa, look at that flash. Wow.

It's just rumbling and shaking and that storm. And you know, it's kind of freaky looking when it comes over your head and the clouds are going like this over your head. It's okay.

We're all right. You know, and all of a sudden, right over our heads, boom, flat, you know, the flash and the boom at the exact same time. And you, the hair, you can, the static electricity, the hair.

And the only smart one in the group was Jeff's golden retriever. She took off screaming and went right through the screen door into the house. We just stood out there and acted like, and actually, actually, we didn't act tough.

When that happened, we all screamed like little school girls and started running, but you're not supposed to know that part. But what compelled Peter to leave the safety of that boat in the midst of a storm to him?

It had become obvious that being with Jesus was better than being in the boat with the guys. I want to know why I may be wrong, but I don't think it was this moment of heroic faith filled action in Peter's life.

I think Peter realized, wait a minute. If that's you, Lord, call me out. They had already been primed by the storm.

The storm had tossed them up and down. They were already terrified. And maybe your storms are terrifying you.

And then they thought we saw a ghost and you think, you know what? This terrible thing in my life is bringing me into the brink of life. I'm almost done with it. Something's going on with Peter and it's a big deal.

So much so that in the blackness of the night, he's going to step out onto the open water. That's not normal. I believe that Peter thought, and Peter was thinking as the others, that they were lost, that this is our moment.

But Peter made a great, great move. He'd rather be near Jesus than just hanging around with a bunch of guys going down. And that's the key tonight.

In the midst of your despair, will you run to Jesus? I don't feel like running. Well then listen, you're not in despair enough. It's like my mama used to say, she'd say, it's time to eat.

I'm not hungry. Well, you got to, if you don't eat now, you're not going to eat at all. And then a few hours later, I'm hungry.

And my mom was such a tenderhearted thing. And I would abuse her terribly. She'd say, what do you want to eat? And she would make this offer.

Well, you can have this and you can have this. I don't want that. I don't want that.

You have, is it me? Or do you know kids like that? They do that too. Like, I don't want that. We want this.

I don't know. I don't want that. Then my dad would say, then you're not hungry.

Dad's are great is the voice of wisdom. You're not hungry. Why? Because if you're hungry, you'll eat snails.

If you're hungry. Oh, I need Jesus. Do you now? Because listen, there's a great, great danger of really, truly wanting Jesus in the midst of your storm versus having the kind of Jesus that you just add them onto the other routines of your life.

Jesus is not a module that you add onto your life. He's the eternal God that you come to with your face down on the ground. And you're, you're, you're laid out before him asking for forgiveness and for rescuing Lord, rescue me.

And the storms of our lives as Christians, as much as we wouldn't want to admit this, they are unavoidable storms. They're difficult and they're all necessary for the believer because none of us learn much about God on only sunshiny days and verse 29. It's amazing.

Look at verse 29. It says, Jesus said to him, come. And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.

Jesus is teaching right here that he knows exactly what's about to happen. Come on, Peter. And why would Peter do this? What would be the point of it? Walking on water.

I think he's going to Jesus at any cost. He goes to Jesus at any cost. But how does this translate into Peter's life? And I thought about some things regarding what about Peter? Well, understand this in Psalm 77, one, the Bible says, I cried out to God with my voice, Christian tonight, non-Christian tonight, atheist cult member in that group.

Listen, this is a universal answer to your soul. I cried out to God with my voice. Why don't you call out to the God of the Bible tonight with your voice to God with my voice? And he gave ear to me in the day of my trouble.

I sought the Lord. My hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing. My soul refused to be comforted.

Have you ever been there when nobody can comfort you? People can stroke your hair or pat you on the back or hold you. And it's not good enough. Have you ever been in that depth of grief or peril or hurts? When men, when I say men, I mean mankind, when your friends, family, when their comfort is it can't do it.

Is that you tonight? Are you in that situation? Eventually, everyone in life will come to that moment. Everyone, believer and non-believer. But for us who are Christians, we've got his ear to cry out to and we stretch out our hands all night long to him and we refuse to be comforted by anyone else or anything else.

Do you know what that's like? Listen to in the moment of difficulty, have you been fired or laid off or whatever the situation is? There comes a time when you're really serious that no one can do, that no one, no one, you got to get alone. You say, well, Jack, I got great friends. Fantastic.

Get away from them. There's a time where you can only learn what God is speaking to you when you're alone, walking on the water, when it's only Jesus who can reach out and touch you. And you're going to need to remember.

You say, I don't know what you're talking about. Just remember tonight and the discipline of despair when that hour comes, when no one's comfort will be enough, God will speak to you. The spirit of God will be upon you.

And it's amazing to me that Bible teaches us that his eyes wander to and fro throughout all of the earth to look for those that he might show himself mighty on their behalf. And you say, well, that's, that's a verse for the believer. Of course, it's a verse for the believer.

But I also believe because it's his nature that some woman tonight in Tibet, who's crying out saying, is there a God in heaven? You think he's going to skim over her? Do you think somebody in Indonesia tonight is saying, wait a minute, I think we've been sold alive. There's got to be a real eternal God in heaven. You think God will jump leap over that person? No way.

He's waiting. He's listening for that cry. And there are clouds and storms that surround us.

And I think most of us might be like the 11 who are in the boat, preferring the safety of the boat temporarily rather than the uncertainty of stepping out onto the sea. Think about it. Well, I'm just going to stay in the boats.

The dangerous part is that makes sense. Doesn't it make sense to stay in the boat? Boats are made for water. Peter, stay in the boat.

The counselors could have said, Peter, are you nuts? Look, we think we saw a ghost. We're not sure. You even said yourself, Peter, if it's you, Lord, you're not even sure.

Stay in the boat. There could have been 11 guys counseling him. Stay in the boat.

But there was something going on. And Peter thought it would be better to be with Jesus in the uncertainty of the water. And have you not realized that in the uncertainty of human life, it's best to be with Jesus? Nope.

Stay in the boat. Just stay in the house. Shut the curtains, lock the door, stay in the house.

No, you know what? Regarding our God, sometimes it's safer to get out into the battle or to go up on top of the roof than to stay in the house. Then I'm saying play it safe. That's a dangerous thing to play it safe.

As awesome as it was for Peter to walk in the water, there's no real lesson in that water walk of his. It was only found in the fact that he was sinking. And I want that to be encouragement to you tonight who have been swallowed up by despair.

Because listen, God is there. He's powerful. And that moment, I don't quite understand it.

But when you're depressed or despondent or down or in the pit of despair, I know you don't feel like God's listening. I know that you feel like he's abandoned you. And yet the exact opposite is true.

And you've got two thrones, as it were, alongside your head. You've got the throne of your emotions screaming at you. And you've got the throne of God whispering still small voices to you.

And we're going like this and we're thrashing. We're going crazy. We're going to go down.

And the Lord is saying, trust in me, trust in me. And then you just eventually I would think you get tired of screaming and yelling. And you hear him saying, just trust in me.

It's that still small voice. I love the fact that when I read the Old Testament, I read the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He's never yelling.

He's never screaming. Even on Mount Carmel with Elijah, there's no screaming going on. All of the lunatic prophets of Baal are cutting themselves, screaming, yelling, punching each other out, going nuts.

And there's Elijah. We're looking at his sundial. Man, when is this going? These guys, sheesh.

And they're all like, Elijah says, sit down. Hey, God, why don't you show them who's God? Well, or Yahweh fire comes down from heaven. Wow.

You don't have to yell when your God's real. I mean, I yell because I get all excited about the fact that my God's real, but I don't have to yell to prove that my God's real. In Psalm 61, I love this Psalm.

I think you do too. Psalm 61 once says, hear my cry, O God, attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth, I will cry to you.

When my heart is what? Overwhelmed. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For you have been a shelter for me, a strong tower. Think of that lighthouse we saw a moment ago from the enemy.

I will abide in your tabernacle forever. I will trust in the shelter of your wings. And that word overwhelmed in Hebrew is to be shrouded or ensconced.

It means to be wrapped up in what? In fear, in despair. When my heart's overwhelmed, what do I do? You cry out to God. Sometimes there's no other place to go in all the world, and yet it's the best place to go.

And that is to cry out to him. It's funny how people think, you know, people who have a relationship with the Lord says, well, let's pray. Let's just pray.

People who are religious and don't have a relationship with God. When they hear that you're praying, they say, oh, is it that bad? Oh, my goodness. It must be horrible.

They've called a prayer meeting at their house. Oh, my goodness. Isn't that funny? It's so bad.

They're praying. It's best to pray before you get overwhelmed. But if you're overwhelmed tonight, pray, call out to him.

Jack, I don't even know what to say. Cry. I'm wondering maybe if not some of my most effective prayers and yours perhaps have been when we cannot even form words and you just cry and your lip just babbles and you grieve and you groan and you just with inarticulate utterances, oh, God, in your grief, you're crying.

And the Lord says, I know. I hear that. I got you.

I understand. Even when you in that moment of grief or went over that moment of pain, you just oh. God, here's that he interprets that is that bizarre that he would interpret that he knows the grief of your soul to be overwhelmed is to be brought to the place that's translated also of being completely emptied out, emptiness, having nothing left.

When we pray, have we prayed this prayer, Lord, empty me out. Pour me out and fill me up with you. Christian, we're asking the Lord, bring me to that point where there's nothing of me left.

John the Baptist prayed that prayer. He said, I must decrease. That he might increase.

That's what the Christian wants to do. That's what we want to see happen in a totally different event, yet it's on the water. It's in Mark chapter four.

It's pretty cool event. You know it. Jesus was in the boat with them in that particular storm.

And this one is it's amazing to me that he didn't get up and just scold them. But in Mark four thirty six, this is now when it happened that he left the multitude. They took him along in the boat.

Look, they took him along like you have a raft. We're going to get in the boat, but this time we're taking Jesus. It's like they're going to let's tie Jesus around our neck so we don't sink.

They took him with them along in the boat as he was. And one listen to this and other little boat were also with him. I would not have wanted to have been in the other little boats.

I want to be in Jesus's boat and a great windstorm arose and the waves beat into the boat so that it was already filling. But he was in the stern asleep on a pillow and they awoke him and said to him, teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? Then he arose and rebuked the wind. By the way, the word in Greek is he rebuked it like he would rebuke a demon.

He said to it in Greek, be muzzled. Pretty bizarre, huh? And said to the sea, peace, be still. And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.

And Jesus said to them, why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith? He was in the boat and their word to him was, don't you care if we perish? I know none of us would have ever accused God to his face of not caring about our storm, but they did. Don't you care, God? And Jesus's word is peace to that storm. And he says, why are you so afraid? Listen, when we are fearful, when we are filled with phobia, we are not believing in him and we're not trusting him.

And you say, Jack, don't say that. Now you're scaring me. And I got bigger phobias.

No, listen, I want you to, I want you to realize that your phobias are like a house of cards. Listen, understand the nature of God. God, the son is in the boat.

He's sleeping. He's 100% human being, 100% God. But in what's called the kenosis, he poured out or set aside his divine attributes.

He could have picked them up at any moment. That's the power. That's, that's the word meekness.

Jesus could at any moment called up back up or, or change the scene like this, but he didn't kenosis. He's in the boat sleeping. He didn't, he didn't say father, uh, just have me go to sleep or I'm you guys sail the boat.

I'm going to go to sleep. I'm God. I'm not going to wake up because I know we're going to get to the side.

No, this was Jesus, the human sleeping, knowing that the end of his life had not yet come because his father had a plan. He was not going to drown in the ocean. He was going to die on the cross.

You see, well, he knew that. I don't know that this, you know, that the day that you die is the day God has appointed. If you're asleep or not, if you're in a boat or not, if you sit in your house with your curtains drawn afraid, you're just being robbed by the devil and fear.

And though you may be going to heaven, you are sterile and you don't need to have that. You're filled with despair. It doesn't need to happen.

Secondly, Mark, this despair opens us up to his ways. Only those who are sinking in their storms can feel his mighty hand. This is a strange paradox in the Christian's life.

When we cry out to God, listen, it's a strange thing. Peter says, Lord, save me. By the way, that's a great, listen, that's a great lesson.

Is that a powerful prayer? Is it articulate? Is it effective? Did God answer it? So make your prayers short. Anybody who prays long in public does not pray long in private. That's a fact.

Some people come to prayer meetings and they, I'll tell you what I interrupt them. I shut them down. If you're in a public prayer meeting and some guy's praying for 10 minutes, you know what he's doing? He's making up for lost time.

It means he doesn't pray at home. Lord, save me. The Bible says, when you come and speak to the Lord, let your words be few.

Not Peter. Lord, save me. Jesus said, okay.

Maybe God doesn't answer our prayer sometimes because we're still talking about it. The Lord's going, okay. Uh-huh.

Get to the point. Despair opens us up to his ways. You can't see him rescue unless you're in trouble.

Notice we're all going to be in trouble. The Bible says we were all experiencing and we shall experience tribulations and difficulties in this life. That's going to happen.

It's happened. It's happening, but he will deliver us his way, but you'll never know his mighty hand being stretched out to grab you unless you're in that pit of despair. And it's a strange thing in the Christian life.

When things are going too smooth, maybe I'm okay. Let me back up. This is my personal thinking.

Lord, things have been kind of smooth. Are we okay? I mean, come on, God, give me some hardship. Will you bring it down? I need some, I need to know that I'm yours.

He said, Jack, don't you don't mean that? Do you listen? If we just walked on water, we'd be light as a feather. We'd be so shallow. We had no character.

We'd have no character whatsoever. We would have no depth. There would be no stability to our lives because it's been so smooth.

But when you go through a storm and you're filled with despair and you cry out, Lord, save me. And his arm stretched out rescues you. Whoa.

Why did you doubt? Sorry. It's not in my notes tonight, but this is bonus bonus points. Years ago, you can read about it and I'll probably mess it up because it's about the 20, 30 year old study.

I think it was university of the Sequoias up in Northern California. Not sure. It doesn't matter.

A university psychology department took the San Francisco wharf rat and they did a study on them. They took the San Francisco wharf rat and they put them in an aquarium, a bunch of them. And they were swimming around, swimming around and they drowned.

They pulled them out and revived them, brought them back, recovered them, warmed them up, fed them, got them all happy. And two days later, put them back in the aquarium again and let them drown again, pulled them out after they drowned and revived them. And they did that over and over and over again.

You know why? Because the first time they put the wharf rat in the water, it swam for 15 minutes and then it drowned and they rescued it and revived it, put them back in the water. He swam for 30 minutes and then he drowned, pulled him out of the water, revived him, put him back in the water. He swam for an hour and a half, drowned, picked him up, put him up.

That stinking rat wound up learning how to tread water for three hours before he drowned. So what's the point? If a rat can be taught hope, can't a human being, can't we, the children of God believe? Oh Lord. Listen, you see, what's your point? What's your point? If a rat can learn that his mighty hand will come, his outstretched arm will deliver me from this.

Then what about us who can say tonight? Everything he's delivered us from thus up till now. Huh? Has he not delivered us? Will he not deliver us? Yes. Well, watch this.

If, if a rat can learn that, why can't we learn that? We're so funny because when the news comes, even though he's delivered us in the past, see, we don't, listen, listen, fine print. Even though he's delivered us in the past, will he deliver us now? Jesus says, why are you doubting? Why are you doubting? And then, because I know what's in the back of your head. I can feel it from here.

It's, oh yeah. Well, what if I'm going to die? Are you a Christian? Yes. So how do you think you're going to get to heaven? How do you, how do you go? I just started like live forever and never have to deal with that.

You're going to die, man. You're going to die before you do. You're going to pay taxes.

Apparently a lot of them. And then after you die, you're still to pay taxes now, but you'll be in heaven. So who cares? Think about it.

I saw a bumper sticker years ago. Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die. Why do we think like that? Because we fear that he's going to abandon us in the moment.

Yay. Though I walked through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. That's truth.

My friend for the believer, that's a reality. And it's a shadow. I walked through the shadow, the shadow.

It's death is a shadow. The valley is a shadow. The whole thing you're just passing through and you can't have shadows without a lot of big light.

Despair opens us up to his ways. Peter was the only one who heard those words. When Jesus said, I love it.

When Jesus said to him, why are you doubting or why are you afraid? Listen to this. Those are not the words of condemnation from Jesus. Don't think, don't think that Jesus rescued him and then spanked them and put them in the corner of the boat and said, you sit there.

Oh, no, no, no, no, no way. Those are awesome words. You know what Jesus is telling Peter? This is so cool.

He's telling Peter, look at this. Oh, you have a little faith. Why did you doubt? Jesus is telling Peter, you know what? Good move, dude.

That was awesome. Peter, you rock. Got your eyes off me.

Saw how big the waves were. Freaked you out. Okay.

Here's the cool thing, Peter. You learned a huge lesson tonight on the water. Your faith just grew big time.

Good job. Jesus is not rebuking him. Jesus is saying, Hey man, you see, you don't need to have a little faith.

Look at you. That's awesome. Believe it's going to be great.

You learned a big lesson in the midst of your despair right now. What is it? Think in your mind, write that thing that's despairing to you. It's your desperation.

Jesus is saying, Hey, you know what? This is the only thing in your life right now where you and I are, we're working on this and I'm going to bring you through this. And when we're done, you will never be tore up by that again. What are you afraid of tonight? Today, Lisa was, uh, tonight, right before I came down here, she was reaching over to something outside and she thought she got a spider on her.

It was hilarious. I wish I would've had a camera because she was, she was doing this freaky dance, man. It's like spider dance.

Get it off me. What are you afraid of? I hate snakes. What are you afraid of? God says, Hey, that thing, I'm going to work with that.

I'm going to work with that in your life. Lord, I have a tendency to be afraid of this or I'm scared of the other thing, or I bet this fear that someday someone's going to walk up and they're going to say, or someone's going to do. And the Lord says, I'm going to work on that.

Yes. Oh, you little faith. Listen, don't be afraid anymore.

Don't doubt. I'm going to work on that. Psalm one 30 verse one says out of the depths, imagine this, his emotion and his spiritual pressure.

He says out of the depths, I cried to you, Oh Lord, Oh Lord, hear my voice. The Psalmist cries, let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, Oh Lord, keep a record of sins.

Oh Lord, who could stand? Boy, is that not true? Imagine that pause right there. Keep it up on the screen. Imagine Peter steps out and you start sinking.

And if the Lord did not have mercy and only kept record of our sins, imagine that for a moment, Peter, are you sinking? It's because you're a center almost down, Peter, almost underwater. It's because you're a center. He didn't do that.

Who could stand, but with you, there is forgiveness. Therefore you are feared or the word is odd. You are, you put us in awe.

I wait for the Lord. My soul waits. And in his word, I put my hope.

There's your answer. Everybody. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen who wait for the morning, more than watchmen who wait for the morning.

There's nothing like the morning coming when you've been up all night, man. I remember I took the pastors out and we got together. I think we got, we got to the church at like, I don't know.

I don't remember like seven, eight o'clock in the evening. And, um, we drove around the town, the city all night, the city, like we live in a city. We drove around the town, drove around all the schools, parked out in front of the schools and prayed for them, prayed for the schools, prayed for the teachers, drove around our community, drove around, drove all over, walked around, drove around.

And when it's, when it was like about three and four in the morning, it's like, okay, somebody, somebody pray loud. And we got out of the cars and we walked up to the top of the hill and Chino hills were the big Oak trees at the Oak of memory, that gigantic Oak of Abraham's up there. And we got up there and was cold and we're sitting there in the morning began to come.

And you know, you're so tired and we're just talking about stuff. And I told the guys, I took my kids up here when we were just moved to Chinos, we stretched out our hands over this, these Hills in the Valley. And we said, Lord, deliver them into our hands for your glory in 1986 or 1886.

Well, I don't know. So we're talking about that. And we stood in the same exact spot.

We did the same thing as the sun began to rise. And as soon as the sun came up, everything changes. It's like, all right.

Yeah. Yeah. All right.

You know, on this, why hope new mercies, despair evaporates. When you set your eyes on the sun of his righteousness, he's amazing. And so also this it's very clear that as Peter began to sink, he cried out the word cry here is that he cried out for his life.

His life was coming to an end. And Jesus is why, why did you doubt? I love the confidence of Jesus. And I love the reality of the Bible.

You guys were almost done kind of, so listen, you need to grab onto this. I know this sounds nutty, but I spent a lot of time in airplanes, which I hate. Have you ever seen them when they say right before you take off, they point to the exits, you follow the lights and they'd still this stuff.

And then they'll say stuff like this in the event of a water landing. Oh boy. Sounds great.

Doesn't it? In the event of a water landing, they'll tell you your life jacket will deploy automatically. And they'll tell you that upon entering the water, the strobe light will automatically illuminate on your shoulder. It's like, gosh, that sounds great.

Can we do that Upon entering the water, your life jacket will automatically inflate and there'll be a light that goes off sharks here. I'm sure it means to a shark. Hey, eat at Joe's.

There's a, Hey, look, Bob, there's another guy in the water. Anyway, I hope you don't have a flight tomorrow morning to Hawaii or something, but I'm leaving for Honolulu, you know, but imagine in the event of life's difficulty, when you enter the water, Jesus, the lifesaver will appear immediately. And the light of the world will illuminate and rescue you.

But I always get a kick out of how those flight attendants are so confident in the event of a water landing. You put your seatbelt on and you just ducked your head. When we impact, it's going to be great.

And they're just so. And the Christian should be like that in this world. Hey, you know what, when the moment of death comes and you're going to die, OK, all you need to do is call out to the Lord and remember all the things that he's promised you.

And and he'll show up for you. You know, I'm saying, man, we trust in the craziest thing. Oh, man, I feel better.

I got my life jacket on. You're going down, man. And then the Bible says, I will be with you.

Yeah, I will uphold you. I will put you in upon a firm rock and I'll see you through neither death nor life, nor any created thing will be able to separate you from the love of God. And we're like, oh, no, can we believe that? I don't know.

What do you think? But we have our life jacket on in the airplane. It's unbelievable. Finally, this despair settles us in for life.

Well, you say, well, yeah, it's a positive thing. Despair settles us in for life. No, it means this.

That despair causes you to make a decision. The darker, the more dangerous, the greater the sink rate of you and your dilemma, the greater God comes through. When our daughter was eight months old, the pediatric hematologist told us she's got 50 percent chance of life, 50 percent chance she's going to live or die.

Only God knows. And we waited, waited for that night. What do you do when those moments hit? Man, Lisa and I prayed, prayed, prayed and then realized, you know what? She belongs to him anyway.

Have you ever come to that point? Your house belongs to God. Your husband belongs to God. Your wife belongs to God.

Your kids belong to God. Everything you have belongs to God. And when we wake up to that reality, it's like, you know what? It it all belongs to him.

She belongs to him. If she lives or dies, he gave her to us for eight months. Think about that.

When you decide to be with Jesus rather than go down in the sinking boat. And we tend not to venture out of things, we find ourselves glued to the seat because of fear or because of the unknown or doesn't make sense to get out of a good boat, as we talked about before. And in the end, listen to this.

You know, it's embarrassing. In the end, everybody was saved. They all got to the shore in the end.

But Peter's the only guy who could say, hey, James, want to touch these feet? They walked on water. Only Peter could say that. How was it, Peter? How was it? It was awesome.

It was so cool. Only Peter can say that. Do you understand that you guys? Only Peter could tell you what it's like to walk on water.

He listened to Jesus and stepped out of the boat. For the rest of his life, people could have said to Peter, what? I want to ask you something about that. How was it? Think about it.

He he got the chance to boast in the Lord. And when God calls you to step out in something, you have to step out. In the end, they all get there and then they all made it to the shore, but only Peter could tell the story.

Your moment of despair, you're going to get out of it, you're going to make it and you're going to be able to tell the story. It settles us in for life. I got a picture today emailed.

I want you to see it. It's about security. This is the cutest picture.

You know what that is? That's a porcupine. That's a baby porcupine. Now, watch, watch this.

He has no idea. Apparently, he thinks that his little his quiver, his quills are painful, but they're not. They're like hair right now.

He he doesn't have to defend himself. He's got a big mama to take care of him. But he doesn't know that.

So he's cute little guy. Now watch as he gets a little bit more. He's saying, I'm going to be protected.

I'm going to protect myself. Next slide. Look at this.

I'm kind of okay. What's he doing? He's going inside. He's a porcupine.

Any cute little hot sauce on him. He's so cute. Next slide.

Next slide. There he is. What's he thinking? I'm safe in here.

Ain't going to get me now. I'm all right. People hiding out like that in fear.

I'm okay. I'm just hiding out. I'll live like this.

You can't live like that. He can't walk anywhere. He can't eat anything.

He can't, he can't do it. He can't go anywhere. He can't do anything.

He can't walk. He can't nothing. He can roll, but who's going to push him? Huh? Look, people, listen, get out of your despair.

Call upon the name of the Lord. Watch what happens. Call upon him.

Despair settles us in for life. And that is, it causes us to come to the reality of grabbing God's word and saying, you know what? I am going to stand upon the rock. God's promises will never fail.

And I'm going to choose now to believe that. And I'm going to tell my soul soul, get up and stand upon this truth. My friend, you grab a Bible verse tonight that ministers to your heart and your despair, and you stand on it and you watch what happens.

Father, we thank you for your truth and for your word. And right now, while we're here now, every one of us have got a need to. And despair sometimes walks down our street.

Sometimes it stands out in front of our house. Sometimes it starts to make its way up the driveway and that would be terror enough. And sometimes it knocks on the door.

Sometimes it creeps through the window all because we have let it Lord be so powerful. We've allowed it to be that big. We've allowed the waves to become so big and the shadow so dark that we've gotten our eyes off of you.

And we're asking you, Father, in Jesus name as a church, as a people and as a person, as an individual tonight, that in the name of Jesus, we pray now for the filling of your baptism, power of your spirit in our lives. Lord, come upon us with your great wisdom, your great power and your outstretched arm. And Lord, that you'd pick us up from the miry pit.

And Lord, that you'd set us firm upon the rock. And tonight we would leave this place saying, I will follow the Lord. I will believe his word.

I will be strong in our Lord. Most high. Father, we thank you now, while our heads are bowed and our eyes are closed tonight.

If you're not a Christian and you're going through it, you're in the pit of despair and you are going through it in life. You need to right now pray right where you're at. You need to say, Lord, I'm asking you now to take control of my life, to take control of my despair.

I'm asking you, Jesus, to save me from my sins and from my decisions and from my life. And I'm asking you, Lord, to come in and be the great victor, the king of my life. Jesus, I believe tonight that you died on the cross and rose again from the grave, just as the Bible says.

And I give you my life. And you tell them that right now, right where you're at. You make a decision for Jesus.

Nobody needs to hold your hand and nobody needs to burp you or somehow coddle you right now. You know what you need and you know you need him. And at the end of this song, you come up and you get a Bible and you start your brand new walk with Jesus today.

If you're listening right now, if you're watching right now and you don't have a Bible, you contact us and we'll get a Bible to you. But you call upon the name of the Lord right now and you open your heart to Jesus and he will come and stretch his arm out and rescue you from your moment of despair. Father, we thank you for your truth.

We thank you for the amazing God that you are. In Jesus name we pray and all God's people said, Amen. Church, let's stand and let's praise him for his goodness.

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Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/21/SID21851.mp3>

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