

This week, we will study the miracle of Jesus' walking on the water *and the very important prayers for them which made Him leave them alone at sea*. May we see in our own lives the very same *timely prayers* which Jesus offers for us "so that our faith won't fail."

### Mon/Tues: Read Matthew 14:22-33

### Interceding for All Good

It is at first perplexing to see Jesus leave His disciples alone to face a new storm in their boat, but the mind of faith will eventually realize that it was His *prayers* which filled His absence. Christ's intercession (Matthew 14:23) is the most effective and spiritually supportive activity which He could use on His disciples' behalf during that stormy night. After all, it is clearly not Jesus' physical presence which is essential to either the Twelve's salvation or ours. Otherwise, we would be most dangerously exposed as His church on earth – given His departure from earth and ascension to God's right hand. No! It is "for our good" (John 16:7) that Jesus removed His physical presence, in order to intercede in Heaven for us. His access to the Father on our behalf is the *key* to our safety and endurance – just as the disciples were absolutely safe on the storm-tossed Sea of Galilee, as Jesus prayed for them on the mountain and then on the beach.

**Meditate and Pray:** Let us consider these great statements which victoriously proclaim how powerful Christ's intercessions are on our behalf, sending us all that we need – beginning with His Holy Spirit:

- 1) Jesus intercedes for us by asking the Father to send the **Holy Spirit** in all His blessed effects on believers: "He lives forever to send the Holy Spirit unto his disciples. Without this constant effect of the present mediatory life of Christ the being of the church would fail, it could not subsist one moment. For hereon depends, 1. All saving light to understand the word of God; 2. All habitual grace, whereby the souls of the elect are quickened and regenerated; 3. All supplies of actual grace; which the whole church hath from him every moment, and without which it could yield no obedience unto God; 4. All spiritual gifts...; 5. All comfort and consolation..."

John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, vol. V, p. 536.

- 2) Jesus intercedes for us in our **sufferings**: "The Father always hears him; and we have not a deliverance from trouble, a recovering of health, ease of pain, freedom from any evil that ever laid hold upon us, but it is given us on the intercession of Jesus Christ"

John Owen, *Works*, Vol. 2 p. 145.

- 3) In respect of our continual need for **access** that we can never merit or maintain in our own strength: "Are not the saints on earth, being sinful, unfit to come into the presence of the King? Yes; but the glorious Advocate introduces them, procuring them access by His interest in the court; 'For through him we have an access, by one Spirit, unto the Father' (Ephesians 2:18)."

Fisher's commentary on the Westminster Shorter Cat. *Q & A* 59.

**Wednesday: Read Matthew 14:24-25****The Dawn of His Coming**

Jesus does not only intercede for us; at just the right time, He comes to us. We may be exhausted in our efforts of self-preservation, like the disciples rowing all night long, but Christ's appearance is always timed for the moment when our faith will most benefit from His arrival. Matthew 14:25 tells us that Jesus appeared at "the fourth watch of the night," which means the dawn watch (3 am – 6 am) – the same time at which the Lord came down in redeeming power to deliver Israel in the Red Sea from the chariots of the Egyptians (Exodus 14:24-25). Jesus is never haphazard in His redemptive work in our lives! Every step of our salvation is timed by His fulfillment of the Old Testament story!

**Meditate and Pray:** Lord, when the powers of sin, Satan and this hostile world threaten to catch up with us and run us over, please look down upon us in our plight and cause our enemies to be confused before your glorious face. May the face of the Lamb look down to care for us at the very same time that His face confuses our foes. Please come to us when circumstances are at their darkest, to teach us that the dawn of your coming **is always nigh** when things are at their darkest. Amen.

**Thursday: Read Matthew 14:25-27****Learning to Expect Grace**

The Twelve are so easily panicked, as if Jesus would have forsaken and forgotten them. They assume that His appearance is actually only a ghost coming to them on the water! Pastor William Harrell writes insightfully about this trait of cynicism towards Jesus which we share with the Disciples:

But why are we so quick to expect evil rather than good in our lives? The Son of God draws near in the storm, demonstrating that nothing can separate us from Him and His loving power. But we are prone to misunderstand His coming, expecting something worse than the storms we are battling. As Mt. 14:26 puts it: "They thought in their terror that Jesus was a ghost." However, though His ways can and do frighten us, Jesus does not capitulate to our fears by staying away from us. He continues to draw near, revealing Himself to us and vanquishing our fears. Grace teaches us to expect His coming to us with such loving power, to replace our fears with His peace.

William Harrell, Bible Notes on Matthew

**Friday: Read Matthew 14:28-31****Be of Good Cheer**

From one extreme to the other, we see the disciples, represented by their leader, Peter, go from panic at the "ghost" to an impetuous request to walk on the water! Notice the way Peter expresses his desire to walk on the water, and notice how wisely Jesus responds to his rash request:

Peter says: "Lord, IF is it You, Tell ME to come TO you." But Jesus refuses to answer Peter on his own terms. Jesus' words are of a bare permission: "Come" is all that He says. Jesus does not promise Peter the success on the water which Peter craves. Why is this important? Because through Peter's failure, Jesus shows that He *alone* can walk on the waters. Peter's experience on the water is a demonstration that mere humans cannot walk on water! By Jesus' command, Peter began. But only with Jesus' support did he continue safely.

We are so disabled and weak, and the Christian's life is an impossible, supernatural life. Even in our sinking failures, we can call out to the Savior to lift us out of this world's gravity into a spiritual walk, once again. "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3). No! "If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). Man can only do the impossible holding on to Jesus alone!

Memorize the Savior's promise in Matthew 14:27: *"Be of good cheer! It is I! Do not be afraid!"*

**Meditate and Pray:** Thank God that the Gospel is about Jesus coming *to us* in the storms of life – not about our self-efforts to reach Him! He comes to us when we *can't* reach Him! He never allows us to drift out of arm's reach!