

Release Holy Spirit's Power With This Simple Choice

Note: This is the first of a two-part series.

The most repeated command in Scripture is, "Fear not!" Why? To refuse fear is to permit faith to flourish. Confident faith is free of fear and full of God's peace during the storms of life.

We all have trials and hardships, but those who overcome are secure in Christ and rest in His finished work. They understand that their union with Jesus in His death, Resurrection and ascension glory imparts His authority over the chaos of this world. They realize that they are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, affording them the favor, resources and power of God's kingdom in this life presently.

Last week, I had a strong impression that many in the body of Christ were struggling with fear. As I prayed more, I sensed that some may be struggling with a stronghold of fear—perhaps caused by trauma from past or present events.

Have you noticed that there is no shortage of "bad news" in our world? Negative news breeds fear unless one's heart is grounded in Jesus. I want to look at a well-known passage of Scripture from Mark's Gospel and discuss faith versus fear.

Jesus Calms the Stormy Sea

This story begins as Jesus and the disciples are leaving the western shore of Galilee immediately following the conclusion of the seed parables in Mark 4:1-34.

"Let us go cross to the other side ... a great wind storm arose, and the waves splashed into the boat, so that it was now filling the boat" (Mark 4:35b-37).

It's God's will and His initiative for Jesus and the disciples to get to the other side to free the oppressed and heal the sick. The storm is filling the boat with water—the situation looks dire, and the disciples, many of whom are fishermen, know the danger of the sea of Galilee. The storm arises and the men seem powerless to do anything about it. The storm represents a hopeless situation.

In first-century Jewish culture, control of nature was attributed exclusively to God. Remember the story of Elijah and his confrontation with the prophets of Baal? Baal worshippers believed that Baal controlled the weather. Elijah's prophetic proclamation that God was sending rain to end the three-year drought got the attention of the people—as the rain fell, they knew Jehovah was God (see 1 Kings 17-18).

At one time, signs on the western shore of the sea of Galilee warned drivers of what happens in high winds. This large lake can become very rough, producing big waves that can swamp cars parked on what looks like a safe beach. Boats on the lake can get “suddenly tossed” around like toy boats—the lake can become ferocious like an ocean in a storm. The disciples were in a “great wind storm.”

The storm is filling the boat with water—this is fact. Faith doesn't deny facts, but it declares the power of God in the face of problems. The storm is a reality, but there is a greater reality to live from—Christ in you! Circumstances, resistance and spiritual warfare happen in this life. You must learn to live from His victory—your enthroning with Christ. Jesus gave Himself for you, for His church that He loves.

Paul declared, “Christ loved the church and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25b).

You are completely accepted, adopted, forgiven, valued and honored by God. You must receive God's love, love yourself as He loves you and then love others with His love. The Father

sees you as you really are, a new creation in Christ. The blood of Christ removes the sin and cleanses you from unrighteousness, and the Spirit transforms you. Consider what the writer of Hebrews stated:

“Their sins and lawless deeds will I remember no more” (Heb. 10:17b, from Jer. 31:34b).

Our ability to rest in the finished work of Christ (rest in what He has accomplished) and remain in the Father’s love affects how victoriously we live our lives. Paul explains how steadfast God’s love is:

“Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13, NLT).

Love transforms us, and faith and hope sustain us. It’s been said that “faith is the anchor to our souls.” True. So, what does the enemy attack? Primarily our faith, hope and love.

He attempts to rob you of steadfast faith and trust in God by getting you to doubt the goodness of God and the power of His promises. He attempts to rob you of a future filled with hope and joy, and he tries to rob you of true love through counterfeit affections and emotions.

Without fail, when you act on what God has directed you to do, the enemy will bring circumstances to try and stop you. Remember, Jesus has defeated all power and authority of the enemy—He is the ruling king now!

Satan only has power over us to the degree that we agree with his lies.

When we agree with poverty, sickness or defeat, we live there. But God’s faith says, “No, you’re an heir of God and joint heir with Christ! You have a heavenly inheritance available now—make a withdrawal from heaven’s account!”

When you refuse fear, you cause the enemy to tremble!

Faith is a revelation to the heart of the revealed will of God. God's revealed will creates faith and empowers us to take risks. Walking on the water is risky, but faith is willing to risk as God leads. It's often during the storms that His grace is the strongest in our lives!

Keep in mind that Jesus is with you always. This is not a cliché point—it's an accomplished fact. You are completely united with Christ, even on your worst day!

A glorious, advancing church takes her directives from heaven. She isn't focused on circumstances or world events; she listens to the master's voice. Our destiny is to progressively enter the glory of God prepared for us before the foundation of the world. You are a vessel of mercy and power—it's your high calling.

Too many people are hindered by their past. *Your past is not a prophecy of your future.* God has good things for you if you dare to believe His word. The path of the righteous is like the dawn—your path is brighter each day!

Jesus Is at Rest

Mark records the "rest of Jesus" during this fearful situation:

"He was in the stern asleep on a pillow. They woke Him and said, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?' He rose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still!' Then the wind ceased and there was a great calm" (Mark 4:38-39, MEV).

In the presence of chaos, Jesus is at rest, confident in the Father's presence and power. The story contrasts the panic of the disciples—He is at rest, while they are in distress. The disciples saw the situation, and fear seized them. In their minds, God was distant, and it appeared He didn't care. Have you ever had a moment like this, where the fear of a situation

caused you to panic and fear the worst? Most of us have at some point in our lives.

But Jesus arose and “rebuked the wind.” “Rebuked” is from the same word used to describe casting out unclean spirits in Mark 1:25 and 3:12, suggesting demonic powers caused the storm.

Remember Jonah in Jonah 1:5-6, who slept while the pagan sailors fought for survival on board the ship? The first-century reader would have remembered the story of Jonah. But Jesus *isn't* fleeing—He is at rest!

The sea for the Jews came to symbolize the dark power of evil. Daniel 7 records that the sea is where monsters came from! But Jesus destroys evil (1 John 3:8).

At the end of Mark 5, we read of the raising of Jarius' daughter. Jesus states about the little girl, “The child is not dead, but sleeping,” and proceeds to raise her back to life (v. 39). Therefore, in the presence of Jesus, things may not be as they appear naturally.

You see, with Jesus, hopelessness is an opportunity for a miracle!

Jesus is asleep, secure in the Father. It doesn't mean He is unconcerned about their situation—He is operating in peace. But the disciples awaken Jesus, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” They assume God doesn't care about their storm. They forget, or are blind to, the times when Jesus stopped the evil that came against them or others. We often do the same. {eoa}

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