

FEAR OR FAITH?

What are you afraid of? Most women are afraid of something happening to their children or home. Most men fear losing their ability to provide for their family. Most children are afraid of the dark. In Luke 8:22-25, Jesus' disciples were afraid they were perishing on the sea.

UPS & DOWNS - Jesus teaches through everyday examples in Luke 8. He models responding to His truth, not just with intellectual assent, but with the whole person - heart, mind, and will. That's the active response of faith, regardless of circumstances. Expect tribulation to come.

Everyday life is like a boat ride, with ups and downs. Will you respond with fear or faith? God gives opportunities to trust and obey Him. Believers are promised in Romans 8:28, "*we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.*" God works the ups and downs of life to accomplish His purposes.

THE SITUATION - Luke records how Jesus gave an invitation to His disciples to cross the lake in a boat. Most of His disciples lived and worked around the Sea of Galilee, the jewel of Israel. It was the scene of much of Jesus' ministry. It measures sixty-four square miles, about three times the size of the Iowa Great Lakes. But this harp-shaped lake is unique.

Galilee is seven hundred feet below sea level, the lowest freshwater lake on the planet. Picture the beautiful scene: after much ministry... Jesus gathers some friends to cross the lake... into the boat they go... in the golden light... with the lilted waves... up and down... .

TROUBLES WILL COME - Luke says that as they sailed, Jesus fell asleep. Then a windstorm came down on the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. The terrain around the lake has few plains and high steep slopes, so winds often cause sudden storms.

Waves five to six feet high were very dangerous for low-slung boats of the day. Measuring eight by twenty-seven feet, they could hold about fifteen people. They rode low in the water, perfect for fishing cargo, but easily swamped by raging wind and waves.

Perhaps a storm has come into your life today? Psalm 139 says, "*Lord, You know my ways. Where could I go from your presence? Even in the uttermost parts of the sea, Your hand shall hide me*" and "*in Your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me when as yet there none of them.*" God already knows your every situation, moment by moment.

TRYING TRIBULATION - After Jesus' invitation, they now have a situation in this dangerous windstorm. But Jesus is, of all things, asleep. Was it the placid tranquility of His inner peace? Or was Jesus so exhausted He could sleep through a storm. "Jesus was the God-man, but was often living on the edge of exhaustion," notes RC Sproul, as power went out from Him in ministry.

Life's ups and downs had been going along swimmingly. But the rhythm of the waves was broken, and suddenly they were in danger of going overboard, having to swim in a stormy sea.

WE ARE PERISHING - Because of the danger, verse 24 says, they went and woke Him, saying "*Master, Master, we are perishing!*" Luke says, "*Jesus awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.*"

Their situation turned into tribulation, and they wisely cried out to the Lord. "Jesus has personal experience of all infirmities of the body, hunger, thirst, suffering pain, and knows all of our weaknesses, but without sin," relates JC Ryle. That's why we pour out our hearts to Him.

"*Let us with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to find help in time of need*" (Hebrews 4:16). Jesus knows exactly what we go through.

FEAR OR FAITH? - Had the disciples forgotten Luke 6:49, building their house on the rock so it will stand when wind and waves arise? We must judge our experiences by the Bible, not the other way round. "The disciples forgot that with the Master they must be safe," observes Ryle. "To forget everything but the sight and sense of present danger makes very poor theologians."

But at least they turned to the Lord, and so should we. Mark 4 notes that Jesus rebuked the wind and waves, saying "*peace, be still*" and the roaring wind and raging waves ceased and there was a great calm. In answer to their tribulation, Jesus proclaimed a prohibition, and immediately their situation returned to peace in the presence of the Savior. Put all your trust in Him! ☐