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Jesus controls over nature

Matthew 8:23-27

Matthew 8:23-27, *Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. ²⁴And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. ²⁵Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" ²⁶But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. ²⁷So the men marvelled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"*

Have you ever noticed how the stories of God's great acts of mercy in the Bible often involved His people being in a boat that was caught in a storm at sea?

There is nothing more out-of-human-control than a storm at sea. Likewise, there is nothing more helpless than a boat being tossed by the waves in a storm. It's a vivid picture of being completely subject to grave circumstances that are utterly outside our control.

So, it's a perfect illustration of being suddenly caught at the mercy of trying, or difficult, or even dangerous circumstances in which we are helpless to do anything but cry out to God.

We read that God brought a sudden windstorm down on the boat in which Jonah was travelling. The tough and experienced sailors who were with him became so terrified that they cried out to their gods. Eventually, at the word of Jonah, they threw him overboard and when the storm suddenly ended.

Jonah 1:16, *"feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows"*

They were brought to the end of themselves and eventually to their knees before God - by being caught in a storm at sea.

Roman soldiers and sailors who were transporting Paul to Rome were also caught in a storm at sea. They wouldn't listen to Paul's warnings about not venturing out.

By the time the storm had had its way with them, even the Roman centurion was taking orders from the apostle Paul!

Paul prayed and the lives of all **276 persons** on board were spared. God had everyone's attention through the storm at sea.

Matthew 8:18, *“When Jesus saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to depart to the other side.”*

It was a command to be obeyed by His followers.

Matthew 8:23 we find that the disciples of Jesus did obey the order, for they followed Him into the boat and put out for the other side of the lake.

Sea of Galilee.



They were on the western shore of the **Sea of Galilee** or the Lake of Galilee.

It is also known as **Sea of Tiberius**.

It is also known as **Gennesaret lake**.

13 miles long,

8 miles wide.

64.4 square kilometres.

Maximum depth is 43 meter 141 feet.

This lake is 686 feet below the sea level.

The Mediterranean Sea is on the west.

Mount Hermon that rises to 9,200 feet.

Sea of Galilee down to 608 feet below sea level from 9200 feet mountain.

There are valleys and gullies. When the cold winds of the north come over from the Mediterranean and start down the slopes of Hermon and those mountains, they come careening through those valleys, and they meet the warm air that settled down in the little basin where the Lake of Galilee is, and they create incredible storms, and they can come very rapidly.



Sea of Galilee is covered with little boats in Jesus' time. That is a farming and fishing area. Even to this day they will feed you what they call St. Peter's fish, which is a little fish looks like a perch – freshwater fish and very tasty.

Fishing and agriculture were the way that area functioned.

The storm had suddenly struck the Sea of Galilee while Jesus and His disciples were traveling on it and it left just as quickly as it came.

The panicky disciples - some of whom were experienced fishermen, and who knew far more about storms at sea than

anyone else - apparently couldn't tell that the storm was just about to end.

But Jesus - a carpenter - could.

When they woke Him up, He apparently had the really fantastic timing to stand up and rebuke the wind and the waves just as the storm was ending.

When the great calm followed the storm, He was able to look at the astonished disciples, smile, and say, "I meant for that to happen!"

A pastor was telling about how he was at his church building late one night when a terrible rainstorm struck. This particular church had converted its old parsonage into the church office buildings - which were separated from the church building itself. This pastor was hurrying through the rain over to the nearby church office building; when to his surprise, he caught a burglar in the act of trying to break in through one of the windows.

Surprising a burglar is a very dangerous thing to do but this pastor was a bold. He shouted at the man, "Hey !!", just as the man was trying to work his way into the window. The burglar suddenly turned to face the pastor and right then, lightning struck, and the terrible rumbling of thunder occurred.

The burglar turned white as a sheet and his eyes became as wide as saucers!

He apparently didn't know pastors could do that!

Apparently, the pastor was as surprised as the burglar!

But the pastor had the presence of mind to point a finger right at the burglar and say, "And the next one's for YOU!!" and with that, the burglar ran, and the pastor never saw him again.

As we have already seen in our study of Matthew, a leper fell before Jesus saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean" and Jesus said, "I am willing; be cleansed," **(8:1-4)** at just the exact moment that the man's leprosy completely left him!

When the centurion asked Jesus to heal his paralyzed servant **(V 5-13)** Jesus was able to announce the servant 'healed' from a distance - and have the perfect timing to do so at the exact moment that the man's paralysis left him!

When He came up to Peter's mother-in-law, who was gravely sick with a fever **(V 14-15)** He took her by the hand just as her fever suddenly left, and she became suddenly well enough to get up and immediately serve Him! In fact, when evening came, multitudes of sick and demon-possessed people gathered all around Peter's house **(V 16-17)**.

The Man who ordered the wind and the waves to cease. Who brought about a great calm in its place is none other than the Son of God, and who therefore had them under His sovereign control?

Jesus has authority over everything on this earth - including the most unpredictable and uncontrollable things, such as storms at sea.

This same Jesus who exercised complete authority over that storm on the Sea of Galilee also has authority over the storms of life that strike us.

He may, in His wisdom and love, allow us to experience them but they are never outside of His control. With nothing more than a word, He can bring the storm to an end and replace it with a great calm.

As long as He is with us in the midst of the storms of life, we will never have a reason to fear.

Seven specific principles it teaches us about trusting our sovereign Lord during the storms of life.

1. Storms will come in our life.

Even when we follow our Lord Jesus Christ, unexpected storm will come.

V 23-24, *Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. ²⁴And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep.*

That word "follow" connects this passage with the one that just preceded it. In that previous passage, two men had sought to follow Jesus, but they were made to stop first and count the cost of following.

One man had said, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go" but Jesus let the man know that He didn't even have a place to lay His own head (**V 19-20**).

The other man offered to follow and asked to be excused first, saying, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." But Jesus let the man know that He demanded to have an even greater priority in the man's life than his own father (**V 21-22**).

Both men had to confront the difficult challenges that come with "following" Jesus.

To be a "disciple" of Jesus means to be a "follower" of Him. It means to go where He says to go, do what He says to do, and believe as He says to believe.

Not everyone, after they count the cost, is willing to accept the challenge of following Jesus.

But the men who entered the boat with Jesus apparently did. When He got into the boat to cross over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, they "followed" Him.

That is what identified them as "disciples". Disciples "follow" Jesus wherever He goes!

But then, look what happened to these men who followed Jesus. The storm strikes!

V 24, And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep.

This is a very remarkable storm. The Greek word that Matthew uses to describe it (*seismos*) is one that means "a shaking" or "a quaking". It's the word that's ordinarily used to describe an earthquake.

Luke tells us that this was a product of a great wind that suddenly came down upon the lake (**Luke 8:23**).

These experienced fishermen would ordinarily have been able to tell in advance that a windstorm was coming but this one was unexpected.

It came suddenly!
It was described as "great"
It was so threatening!

"The boat was covered by the waves".

When the Gospel writer Mark tells us about this same story, he says that the boat was "already filling" (**Mark 4:37**). The men in the boat were certain that they were about to die because they cried out to Jesus that they were "perishing".

This storm came when they were in the course of simply following Jesus!

They were doing the right thing. They were obeying the Son of God! Yet, this violent and life-threatening storm fell upon them anyway.

There's a great spiritual lesson for us in this.

We shouldn't ever think that, just because we are following Jesus, we have a right to expect to be exempt from the storms of life. Those storms may come - even though we are following Jesus very faithfully.

Jesus could have prevented the storm from coming at all if He had seen fit to do so. But His disciples were following Him, and He led them right into a storm!

Why would Jesus do this?

We need to keep in mind that Jesus has greater things in mind for His followers than they have for themselves.

We have it in our mind that we 'ought' to have a comfortable ride with Him. But He knows that, as His followers in training, we need to get caught in some storms now and then - all so that we can learn some new truth about Him in an experiential way.

He knows just the right time for us to enter into a storm; and He knows just what we need to learn from that storm in order to trust Him even more.

James 1:2-4, *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

Learn to expect, as you follow Jesus, that storms will come.

They come for a very good purpose so that we will learn something new about our great Saviour's love and power toward us!

2. Lord is present in our storm.

Though it seems as if our Lord is sleep yet He is still present.

Matthew makes Jesus stand out in stark contrast to all the panic that's going on around Him.

V 24, And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep.

Matthew even puts it in a way that gives it a certain emphasis. Literally, he writes, "But He - He was asleep."

What a picture that paints! Our God has a great sense of humour.

How can Jesus sleep at a time like that?

Obvious reason, it was because He was tired!

But for another, much more profound reason, it was because He wasn't in a panic over the circumstances like we so often are.

He was at perfect peace in the midst of the storm because He knew that the storm was under His control at all times.

He was in His Father's will, and He knew that no matter what else happened around Him, His Father's will would still be fulfilled in Him.

He had no reason to be afraid vividly illustrated by the fact that He was asleep in the midst of the storm. As long as He was in the boat, the disciples had no reason to be afraid either.

He is asleep because He is fully human. And let me say to you, Jesus Christ, He knows. He knows what you're facing. He knows what it is to be vulnerable. He knows what it is to die. He is completely human.

But at the same time, the storm is raging and He's sleeping! The boat is filling up with water and they're saying, "We are dead men!" and He's asleep. And it's because in the midst of death, He's going to stand up and say, "Be quiet, storm! Get back in your place!" You see, He can die, He's a human being, and He can tell creation to be quiet!

He is God! He's fully God!
He's fully human and He's fully God!

When we go through a storm, it may seem as if the Lord isn't aware of it. It may seem as if He was "asleep". But we can be sure that He isn't.

He never sleeps on us and if it appears that He does, it's only meant to test our faith in Him.

Psalm 121:3-4, *He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. ⁴Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep.*

When you are in the midst of the storm remember Jesus is there too.

His apparent "silence" is to see if you will trust Him and have confidence in Him.

Did you know that He offers us His own peace in the midst of that storm of life?

John 14:27, *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

John 16:33, *These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*

We can be confident that Jesus who experienced perfect peace in the midst of the storm is always with us in the storms of life that we encounter.

He offers us His own perfect peace in our storm if we will just accept it.

So, the storms will come but Jesus is with us in them.

3. Reach out to Lord.

The best what we can do during the storm is to reach out to God.

The disciples certainly did the best thing they could do. In fact, they did the only thing they could do.

They cried out to Jesus!

Woke Him from His sleep.

V 25, *Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!"*

The original Greek, that very crucial prayer is only three words in length? Literally, it translates this way: "Lord, save! We perish!"

That gets right to the point!

What a fantastic prayer?

Analyse it carefully.

"Lord"

We see that they knew who to go to.

In that manner of reverence, they should approach Him.

They recognized and admitted His authority and power.

To call Him "Lord", in this case, was to confess His deity.

"Save!"

They knew what they needed.

They needed Him to rescue them.

They laid out their need before Him.

"We perish!"

They rightly stated their situation.

They understood how helpless they were unless He did what they asked.

If He didn't help them, they were lost.

This is a great "sinner's prayer"

"Lord, save me! I perish!"

You can't be saved unless you admit your need, cry out to Him as "Lord", and plead with Him to save you.

It also happens to be the perfect prayer to pray in the midst of a storm!

When we are in the midst of the storms of life, the perfect thing to do is to cry out to Jesus. We must, as it were, "awaken" Him with our prayers.

Certainly, doesn't have to be a flowery or detailed prayer, either. It can be as simple as saying, "Lord, save! I perish!"

Jesus isn't interested in our creative 'speaking' skills. What He wants from us is our hearts.

And when He has our hearts expressed in our crying out to Him in prayer in a time of trial He responds.

Psalm 50:15, *Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."*

4. Rebukes the lack of faith

Matthew tells us that Jesus awoke in response to their cry. But he tells us that, before He rebuked the wind and the waves, He rebuked His disciples.

V 26, *But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.*

Jesus says that they are "fearful".

The Greek word for "fear" used normally is '**phobos**'.

The Greek word used here is '**deilos**' means "timid" or "cowardly".

It suggests a kind of fearfulness that is unbecoming and inappropriate even sinful.

The only other occasion this word is used in the New Testament, apart from this story, is in Revelation.

Revelation 21:8, *But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*

Look at what Jesus says about the cause of their sinful condition. He calls them, "O you of little faith".

Their real problem was being shown up by the storm and that real problem was their lack of faith in Him!

All that they had seen of Him hadn't sunk down into heart-level with them yet. They didn't yet really understand who He was!

Because of whom He was, and the fact that He was with them, they had absolutely no reason to be afraid.

The Man who was asleep in the boat with them was none other than the Son of God. No matter what else might have happened because of the storm, that boat was definitely not going to go down!

If the disciples had just relaxed, they could have enjoyed the ride of their lives!

A great way to describe each one of us in our walk-through life with Jesus!

We should just relax and enjoy the ride of our lives!

Now I would never want to be misunderstood as being flippant about the trials of life that we may go through. The storms that we go through are very real, and at times very terrible.

But each storm is allowed by our Lord to encourage us to place our trust in something about Himself that we have already been taught.

Jesus has already shown us what He can do.

The storms force us to go back to that thing we have learned about Him, and trust in Him a new way in the current circumstance.

The disciples had already seen what Jesus can do. And they were about to see more. In faith they should have been bold and confident toward Him.

They should have turned to Him as they did but very calmly and very confidently, they should have awakened Him and said, "*Lord, we perish. Please save us. We really look forward to seeing how You will do it too; and we will give You the glory well in advance! Thanks.*"

I wonder if, in the storms of life, the Lord doesn't often wish to rebuke us for our terrible lack of faith in Him before He rebukes the storm.

I wonder if He doesn't often have to ask us, "Don't you think I know there's a storm? Why in the world are you being so cowardly?"

Philippians 4:6-7, *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

5. Jesus' word is enough

A great storm can be brought to a great calm just by one word of Jesus!

V 26, *But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.*

Just imagine that!

He actually "scolded" the weather and the water!

Ordinarily, that would seem crazy to personalize wind and waves and talk to them!

But the results speak for themselves.

Luke tells us that the wind and the raging of the water "ceased".

There wasn't even a mere "lessening" of the wind, and a gradual "decline" in the waves. They ceased altogether.

It went from "great tempest" to "great calm", in a moment's time, at the word of Jesus!

Matthew 28:18, *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*

Colossians 1:15-17, *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."*

Jesus showed this when He was in the storm with His disciples. He is able to do the same for us in the midst of the storms we experience in life.

The storm is always under His control.

He is able, if He so commands, to turn it from a great tempest into a great calm.

The disciple's own interpretation should be enough for us.

The wind and the sea "obeyed" Him!

Even wind!
Even the sea!

6. Jesus' sovereign over everything

What it must have been like in that boat after the great calm fell upon them?

Picture Jesus on one side of the boat maybe with the boat slightly tipped, and Jesus sitting on the side that's slightly higher.

Because all the disciples are sitting on the other side staring at Him with their mouths hanging open.

V 27, *So the men marvelled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"*

Their question is What sort of man is He?

The affirmation behind their question is that He is no mere "man". He is the sovereign God, who is able to command even wind and sea, and they obey Him!

The implication for us is that He is able to command far lesser things than wind and sea and they too will obey Him. If He can command wind and waves, He can command everything else that may come into our lives.

His call to us, in the midst of the storm, is that we trust Him to have absolute control over all that comes our way, and to lean on Him as our strong and all-sufficient Help.

Psalm 107:23-30, *Those who go down to the sea in ships, Who do business on great waters, ²⁴They see the works of the Lord, And His wonders in the deep. ²⁵For He commands and raises the stormy wind, Which lifts up the waves of the sea. ²⁶They mount up to the heavens, They go down again to the depths; Their soul melts because of trouble. ²⁷They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, And are at their wits' end. ²⁸Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, And He brings them out of their distresses. ²⁹He calms the storm, So that its waves are still. ³⁰Then they are glad because they are quiet; So He guides them to their desired haven.*

When the psalmist writes all this, he then calls for the only proper response: worship!

Psalm 107:31-32, *Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men! ³²Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people, And praise Him in the company of the elders.*

7. Response worship Jesus!

V 27, *So the men marvelled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"*

Matthew writes that the disciples "marvelled" at what had just happened.

When we look at the other Gospels, we find that it's even more profound.

Mark 4:41, *And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"*

Luke 8:25, *But He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and marvelled, saying to one another, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!"*

There was something of a 'holy dread' that fell upon the disciples, as they realized who it was that had ridden through the storm with them. Outside the boat, at the command of Jesus, a great tempest had been replaced by a great calm and as a result, inside the disciples, "cowardliness" had been replaced by "reverent fear".

When we trust Jesus to see us through the storms of life, He takes us through to the other side and shows us more of who He really is.

As a result - if we truly learn what He seeks to teach us through the storms of life - we come away more in love with Him, and more in awe of Him, and more surrendered to Him.

"Worship" occurs when we see our great God for who He really is and respond to what we see in an appropriate and heart-felt way.

In the storms of life that we get to see who Jesus really is.

So, when we go through the storms with Jesus, we will come out of the other side worshiping Him!

Application:

Are you being thrown about in the midst of a storm right now - circumstances that are frightening and outside of your control? Then learn the lessons from this story. Put these seven principles into practice:

Don't be surprised by the fact that, even when you follow Jesus faithfully, you still suddenly find yourself in the midst of a storm. It's a part of His plan for your growth and development in Him.

Be confident that, even if it seems like He's asleep, Jesus is still there in the storm with you. He knows what is going on; and is able to do whatever is needed.

Remember to cry out to Him. It's the greatest thing you can do in the storm. Don't be silent and stuff it in; but pray! Tell Him what concerns you.

Be of good courage and of strong faith in the midst of the storm. Don't be timid or cowardly because of a lack of faith in Him. He loves you and will never abandon you; but don't give Him a reason to rebuke your sinful attitude before He rebukes the storm.

Rest assured in the knowledge that He can transform the storm from a great tempest into a great calm whenever He sees fit to do so.

Watch, and learn from Him, as He teaches you in the midst of the storm that He is sovereign over every area of your life; and that even the wind and the sea must obey the commands of the One who is your greatest Friend.

Most important: when it's over, and He proves Himself once again to you, worship Him!