

Asleep in the Boat!

In Christ's parable of the 10 Virgins in Matthew 25, all the young women are described as being asleep at what would seem to be a crucial time. A few days later, when the Messiah went into the Garden of Gethsemane on the final night of His life, He returned in disappointment only to find His chosen disciples fast asleep. Throughout the Scriptures there are admonitions to be awake, vigilant, on guard. That being the case, what do we make of the famous episode when, at the height of a fearful storm when the apostles were fighting for their lives, their Lord and Master lay asleep in the boat?

by Jim Rector

There are certain oft-used phrases that indicate someone's lack of care, concern, involvement, or drive. We say that such people are *asleep* on the job, or perhaps *asleep* at the wheel. Everyone is quite familiar with such terms. It is interesting that in the Bible there is a certain story about someone who was asleep, and that someone was none other than the Savior, Jesus Christ! The situation was rather critical. A mighty storm has arisen on the Sea of Galilee, and the disciples, many of whom were professional sailors, were literally fighting for their lives. It was during this most untoward set of

circumstances that we find Jesus Christ, lying on floor *asleep in the boat!*

THE SETTING

This particular event in Christ's life might seem rather inconsequential or secondary, but with respect to the subject of this message, it is distinctly relevant and telling. Here's the straightforward account from the gospel of Mark:

"And the same day, when the

evening was come, He said unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, ASLEEP on a pillow; and they awoke Him, and said unto Him, Master, do you care that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, PEACE, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a

great CALM. And He said unto them, Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him” (Mark 4:35-41).

As you may noted, there are several key parts in this passage that are pertinent to our discussion. First of all, this episode did not occur in the daytime, but at night. Christ waited until it was dark before telling the disciples to set sail for the other side of the sea. Now this fact might seem almost too trivial to even consider, but I would to focus on such aspects of this incident, because I think that they can tell us a lot about ourselves, about our calling, and about our Savior. So, the event occurred at night.

The night or darkness is symbolic at times of danger, difficulty, trial, and trouble. The Bible speaks of the world lying in darkness. It is said of those who have awakened to the reality of God and His truth that they have seen a great light shine out of the darkness. It is therefore significant that the blackness of night is involved in this story, and that the Messiah specifically waited until it was dark before beginning the journey.

It is also interesting that this event took place on water. In fact, water plays an important role in much of the Bible, not just in regard to fulfilling obvious physical needs, but as a type or

symbol of something in the spiritual realm. When one is walking on dry ground, there is a certain familiarity and security that is comforting and reassuring. This is true even if the road is hard and the way difficult. Shoving out onto the water, however, and especially in the darkness of night, is quite another matter.

The scene, as it develops, begins to take on the shape of something important. There is a message embedded in this simple set of circumstances that we must come to see, because we can rest assured that this story has not been placed in the Word of God just as interesting historical or biographical record, but rather for our learning and for our benefit. Virtually all of the life episodes recorded in the Bible have a significance to them that far supercedes and overshadows the mere physical people, places, things, and occurrences of the events themselves. And this seems almost surely correct with respect to this case.

So we have Christ waiting until after dark and then telling the disciples to sail to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Just as an aside, it is noteworthy that the very endeavor of taking a potentially dangerous journey at night over water, with an objective of reaching a destination on the other side of the sea, and being assailed on the way by hostile forces that literally put one’s life on the line, carries with it all the aspects and even high drama of a spiritual life journey. Just consider these few simple elements for a moment, and

the significance is virtually inescapable and is without need of much interpretation or explanation.

In other particular situations that affected the Messiah and His disciples, they were found to be asleep at a crucial time (in the Garden of Gethsemane, for instance). In this instance it is He who goes into the back of the ship, lies down and falls asleep on a pillow. Who could fault Christ for wanting to rest? He was, after all, a human being, and He obviously got tired, probably very tired at times--so He needed to sleep. But the implication of this whole story cannot but cause one to sense that more is at stake here than the Savior merely falling asleep.

In a manner of speaking, perhaps Christ’s sleeping in the back of the boat is a type. In this story, we find that He is away from His disciples, and they are on their own, as it were. At first, it surely must have seemed as normal as possible. After all, some of these men were seasoned mariners. They had fished for a living all their lives. It wouldn’t be at all surprising if, as they set sail that night, they were completely unaware that something bigger than themselves was going to strike.

And, indeed, strike it did, in the form of a storm that was so terrible that even these experienced seamen were unable to withstand it. The wind was slamming into the ship, and waves were breaking over the sides. Mark’s account relates that the ship actually filled up with water, so there can be no

doubt that it would either break up or be submerged in only a matter of perhaps just a few minutes.

When I ponder this episode, I am often reminded of a painting by the Flemish artist Rembrandt, in which he portrays the ferocity of the storm, and includes even minute details that very likely transpired that awful night--details such as the apostle Peter hanging his head over the side of the ship and literally vomiting! Granted, we don't know for an absolute certainty that such a thing occurred, but it is almost a given that it or something similar did, and it is interesting to think about the various possibilities that might well have transpired under those trying circumstances.

This storm doesn't seem as though it was just a normal occurrence. It was a horrifying experience and truly life-threatening. It was far more than the disciples, even those highly trained in sea duty, could successfully handle. What had started out as a peaceful, almost surely uneventful, merely routine trip had now suddenly turned into the nightmare of a lifetime! And to top it all off, here was Jesus, of all people, asleep in the back of the boat in the midst of all this trouble! How dare He act this way!!

Let me ask you a couple of questions. Have you ever been faced with darkness in your life? Have you ever felt the call of God to leave the shelter of land (the comfortable, dependable, secure, protected, easy status quo) and shove off into the deep (the

uncharted, the unfamiliar, the unknown, the untested, the unpopular, the path less trodden, the strait and narrow gate, the potentially dangerous, the risky, the challenging, the daunting, the place, in fact, where you would never want to go!!)?

If your answer is affirmative, how did you respond? Did you leave that safe place in your life and set sail on dark sea, unable to even see where you really going? Or, if you were really honest, did you withdraw from that pricking of your heart, that tugging in your mind, that sense that God was speaking to you and seeking to move you? Did the challenge seem to big, the consequences too dire? Did fear or doubt creep in, leading you to excuse yourself from moving on? Did you feel that if you actually followed what you sensed was God Spirit that it might disrupt your safe and calm life, or that it might prove to be just too embarrassing or perhaps too extreme?

Let's say that you did push off from shore, leaving behind the bright lights and familiar sounds of normal life. Let's say that you looked out into the darkness ahead, gritted your teeth, and said to yourself, *I'm going to do this!!* And let's further agree that your journey actually began in a rather placid state. Let's say that you had also received some instruction in the techniques of sailing, and thus when the journey began in such a pleasant fashion, you soon began to think that you could handle the situation with no problem. So sure were you of yourself that you soon

forgot that the captain of the ship wasn't on deck with you, that, for all practical purposes, he could just as well have not even been on board.

The peaceful sea, the breeze in your face, the sense of power as you steered the ship, all served to bolster your confidence and assurance in your own abilities. In fact, being out there on the open sea, though it was admittedly a different kind of place than being on land, and true enough, perhaps only a few would have had the courage to even venture out as did you, still it wasn't really that hard. And, even though you were not necessarily anticipating the captain's not being there, all in all, you seemed to have everything under control. So much so that his absence didn't even register in your mind.

Now it is obvious that I have been outlining a possible scenario, taking the elements of this story into account, and seeking to bring to our minds how this episode in Christ's ministry might be applied to our spiritual lives. I hope that you are still with me.

I will continue by saying that your nocturnal sea journey is well under way, and it must be admitted that things seemed to be going great, maybe even better than you had originally expected. In fact, things were running so smoothly that, without your even realizing it, your mind slipped over to cruise control.

When a person's life gets to this stage, he or she is really a

walking spiritual time bomb, subject to crashing and burning at any moment. I recall king Nebuchadnezzar and the time when he assumed that he had it made--and just as he reached the zenith of that point--you guessed it--the bottom fell out!

In fact, this kind of cause and effect situation has occurred time and time again in human life. The Bible is full of such circumstances. When Job was on top of his game, he was struck down by God! When Joseph assumed that because of his *favorite son* status, he had it made, his whole world crashed in on him! When Moses reached the point that he felt superior to the people of Israel, rebuking them and disobeying God in the process, what happened? You know the story--Moses committed the most crucial mistake of his life and paid for it dearly. When Hezekiah was at the pinnacle of his unparalleled success, wealth, and power, the Scriptures tell us that God hid from him and watched to see what was in his heart, and king Hezekiah fell into the deepest pit of his life!

We could go on and on, but the point is substantially made. In this life and calling, there is not a one of us, no matter who he is, where he's been, who he knows, or what he's accomplished, that can ever afford to think that he has it made! As soon as anyone reaches that state, rest assured that the walls will come tumbling down upon his head! It just never seems to fail!

The disciples were not at all prepared for the storm that overtook them that fateful night. Even their training failed them, and they were unable to keep the wind and water from endangering their very lives. Up until the storm struck, they weren't concerned. It wasn't until they were helplessly overwhelmed, in fact, that it suddenly dawned on them that Jesus was asleep in the back of the boat! And it wasn't until their lives were in dire peril that they grasped the crushing reality that they desperately needed the Master for their very survival!!

I have to wonder, brethren, if this doesn't speak to us today! Does this story not convey a picture of our own spiritual journey. God first calls us and begins dealing with us in a very careful and gentle manner. He is ever so patient, and even at times surprises us with things for which our fledgling faith couldn't even believe. We all have experienced such treatment at His hands.

God, however, is a Father, and that means that He has a father's interest in seeing that His little children grow up to be successful adults. In order to accomplish that objective, He beckon us to begin making harder and harder choices, to begin taking steps forward that at first seem frighteningly precarious. He even sometimes withdraws Himself for a short space and actually lets us think and feel and even believe that He simply isn't there for us anymore. Yet all of these things are simply a part of His program, His method of helping and

achieving the proper growth and maturity of His children.

Then there comes the time, often when we least expect it or seem hardly prepared for it, that He tells us to leave the peaceful and calm and secure haven of our lives, and venture out on the water with Him. Some of these situations will occur, just like in the Biblical story, when it is dark! And while on such a journey in our spiritual lives, a great storm arises, and suddenly and unexpectedly we are thrown into total chaos, upheaval, confusion, doubt, pain, struggle, and perhaps even dismay, depression, and resignation!

We thought we had reached a great milestone in our spiritual lives when we seemed to muster up the courage to set sail on that dark night. It was challenging, but we did it. Then we assumed we had it made on the journey itself, because for the initial portion of our excursion seemed to be going so smoothly--so smoothly in fact, that we didn't really perceive that we were slowly beginning to take things for granted.

Where was God during this seeming uneventful journey that was going so well? Why we knew that He was still there somewhere, but His powerful presence were not really called for, since we seemed to have everything under control. And then it happened! The bottom fell out! The walls came tumbling down! The waves broke over the bow, and almost before we knew it, our ship that was sailing along

so proficiently, was tossed and turned, and rapidly filled with water--so much so that the boat was about to capsize and sink, and with it our hopes, our dreams, our very lives!

Then, and only then, under the most dire of unexpected circumstances, we remember something--God--Jesus Christ. Where are they now? Why, just when we are in the most horrible of all trials, they are suddenly nowhere to be found! Although we keep trying by our own efforts to affect our deliverance, we sense that it is futile and hopeless. We know in our hearts that unless God intervenes, we are doomed! Then, after all of this has transpired, do we frantically run and try to find out where God is when we need Him the most.

Once again, I belabor the point for the sake of effect. This rather simple little story, only about 5-6 verses long in the Bible, conveys so much that is important for believers today. Who would have thought that this obscure episode contained so much in so little space.

When the disciples came to their wits' end, they came to their sense and finally initiated a search for Christ and found Him, of all things, fast asleep--**ASLEEP**, mind you, in the back of the boat in the middle of a savage, life-threatening storm!

I would like us, for a moment, to take a look at this scene from the perspective of the Messiah. Here was the Son of God

asleep in the back of a sinking ship. What do we see and what can be deduced? Well, first of all, it is clearly a given that Christ was not very **WORRIED** about the situation. On the other hand, the disciples, even in spite of their sea-going experience, were extremely anxious, fearing for their very lives! This presents us with a striking contrast.

Brethren, what is your normal reaction in dire situations? If you have been there, then you know the answer to the question. I can guarantee you that we almost surely would find ourselves right alongside those very worried disciples.

Ponder, if you will, the remarkable difference in the way Christ acted. How, as a human being, could He not be worried under such extreme conditions? The fact is, however, that He was not. It seems that He was so disconnected from the possibility or even the probability of physical danger that He was able to rest and even sleep in the middle of such a violent onslaught. This simply is not something we can see ourselves doing. No, on the contrary, at the first sign of real trouble, we would be running to and fro to get away from the danger and save our lives.

Of course, in saying all of this, I am not advocating that anyone literally act in a foolish manner. In reality, even though Jesus might seem to have been doing so in this instance, He most emphatically was not. In fact, this special man of God was so

perfectly grounded and centered in His heavenly Father, that physical danger, while it should perhaps at times appropriately be avoided if possible, still had little or no effect upon His demeanor. In other words, when the applecart of His own world got overturned, when even the most unexpected difficulties arose, when He was completely taken away by dire circumstances, He never, ever lost His cool!! He never became flustered, as is always the case with the rest of us. His vision was never blurred, His mind never disturbed, nothing ever sent Him reeling or got the best of Him!

This man was our Savior. He is our knight in shining armor! He is our example. And what does He do--He falls asleep in the back of the boat, while His hapless disciples are scrambling for their lives!

The differences between Christ and the others is so powerfully stark! His equilibrium was always steady and on balance. Retaining one's presence of mind and sound thinking in a time of trial is one of the hardest, yet most important, things any of us must strive to do. Here, in Christ, we have a perfect picture of that very thing in action!

But there is more--much more in store for us if we pursue it. Once the struggling disciples found the Savior asleep, they were both astonished and perhaps even a little upset at Him. Didn't He care about their safety? Wasn't He concerned with their welfare? Why was He not there taking an

active part in things when they needed Him the most?

Have you ever experienced a situation in which you found yourself with your back to the wall, facing something that was clearly bigger than you, something that instilled fear or confusion or doubt or hopelessness or was in other ways overwhelming to you? In such times, do you ever remember thinking at first that you could probably handle things, only to find out that you were virtually helpless? And then did you pray, perhaps even fervently? And then did you wait and wait and wait without any seeming change in the circumstances? Did you ever have the feeling the disciples had in the midst of their peril--*Where was God when they needed Him the most?*

If you haven't, then rest assured that you someday will! Most of us have had this precise scenario happen to us at one time or another. It is one of the patterns of human behavior, even that of true believers.

What does this story then teach us? First of all, when God speaks to your heart to pull away from the comfort and security of land and shove out to sea, we had better be ready to respond. The lesson here is that even if God tells us to do this at night, plunging out into the darkness, we should always be ready to say **YES SIR!**

Next, the story helps us to learn that the things to which God may one day call us could very well not appear as they really are?

What started out as a peaceful voyage lulled the disciples into assuming that they would make their trip without event.

We do not ever have the luxury of assuming when it comes to God and His call upon our lives. Granted, this is so much a part of human nature that it would seem impossible not to fall prey to, still it must be recognized and resisted. Do not, therefore, ever think that you know it all, that you have it made, that you are in the driver's seat.

In addition, the disciples not only assumed that their voyage would be completed in the peaceful way it had started, but that, even if a problem arose, they could, after all, take care of it. God, on the other hand, didn't think that at all, and sent a horrible storm to drive the point home! All of these assumptions caused the men to let down their guard, but most of all, it caused them to forget and not even take notice of the absence of Christ. This is the most telling thing of all, and the one from which we are compelled to draw a mighty lesson.

One of the greatest temptations human beings ever face as believers is allowing someone or something to distract them just enough so that God and His Son move out of their level of awareness. In the case at hand, Christ wasn't really very far removed; but, for all the lack of the disciples' awareness, He could just as easily have been a million light years away! Do not, therefore, ever allow people or circumstances

lull you into a state of mind where you cannot discern whether God is present with you. This is a crucial point for all of us to remember.

In this regard, I am always reminded of Samson, the famous strong man of the ancient world, and a judge of Israel as well. Without getting into the various episodes of his life very deeply, suffice it to say that there came a day when, as you will recall, his wife Delilah attempted to deceive him into telling her the secret of his great strength. At first, he wouldn't do it, and each time the enemies would come upon him during the night, he would rise to the occasion and defeat them. Finally, he succumbed to Delilah's seduction and told her the secret. She hired a man to come stealthily during the night and cut off Samson's long hair, for he was a Nazarite to God from birth. Now notice how Samson's mind worked when he was confronted with what appeared to be the identical situation that he had faced many times before:

“And she made Samson SLEEP upon her knees; and she called a man, and caused him to shave off the seven braids of his head. Then she began to torment Samson, and his strength went from him. She said, The Philistines are upon you, Samson! And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as I HAVE TIME AFTER TIME, and shake myself free. For Samson DID NOT KNOW that the LORD HAD DEPARTED FROM HIM” (Judges 16:19-20).

Every time I read this passage, I get goose bumps. I really do. Here was a mighty man of God, whose spiritual condition had over time slowly deteriorated until he had reached such a state of unawareness, that he not only told the secret he was sworn by God not to divulge, but he didn't even sense that his great strength had left him, and that even God had departed from him!

What an incredible state of affairs! Do you think that it is possible for any of God's people today to allow their spiritual lives to drift to the point that they might not even sense whether the presence of God was with them or had indeed departed? I tell you, brethren, it is not only possible, it is entirely likely, and even more than that, it is almost a certainty that it has occurred in the past and that is happening right now!

Can you imagine this man Samson, so self-deluded, so self-assured, and so utterly unaware, **ASSUMING** that everything was okay, that it was *business as usual*, that he could take care of whatever came his way! He literally reeks of it, and, all the while, God has left Him, and He doesn't he know it or sense it!!

There is probably little doubt that when the disciples began their oversea voyage, there was no real concern. There almost surely would not have seemed any reason to think that this trip would be any different than many others. They, like Samson, probably figured that they were okay with God, that He had done things for

them in the past, and that this pattern would just continue forever. I mean, after all Samson was a judge of Israel, the most important person in the land and a doer of mighty deeds! And the disciples? Why they were companions and eyewitnesses of the true Messiah Himself. If anyone would seem to have had it made, it would surely be someone like Samson or the 12 apostles. And yet they all fell victim to the very same temptation and spiritual state of mind.

When Christ was awakened in the midst of the tempest, the men in the boat virtually rebuked Him, saying:

“Master, don't you even care that we are perishing?” (Mark 4:38).

Now we know that God indeed does care when His people suffer, but we must be disabused of the notion that coming to our aid at the first sign of trouble on the horizon of our lives is the first thing on His priority list! This just is not the case. Read the Bible through, and what do we discover? Time and after time after time, and person after person after person, we see that God allowed them, good and bad, to fall into every form of trouble and distress.

Obviously, God could have stopped the storm or made it less severe. I mean, He could have just not sent the storm in the first place. So there is no question of His sovereignty and His power in this or in all situations. But immediate deliverance, no matter

how much we wish it would always be there, simply is not in the cards for us if we expect to be taught and used by God.

We all have faced those times that we hate the most--the times and circumstances when we are in deep trouble and God doesn't seem to be anywhere in sight or even care for our plight. This is absolutely nothing new at all. These disciples, so blissfully unaware one moment, so much so that they didn't even miss Christ's absence, only to find themselves suddenly on the brink of utter annihilation, thought that maybe Christ had forsaken them or, at the least, had forgotten them. He wondered if He even care at all for their plight.

Why weren't they concerned before the incident occurred? Why were they unable to handle things once the bottom fell out? The very question they put to Jesus when they awoke Him from sleep speaks volumes about the state of their spiritual lives!

When things were going smoothly, they gave no thought as to their desperate need for Christ. When the scene drastically changed for the worse, they wondered why He wasn't there for them, and even if He cared for them at all! How typically human! And it is precisely the way we tend to be as well, whether or not we choose to admit it.

Now, once the Savior was awakened, there is not even the slightest hint that He was suddenly overcome with a sense of

helplessness or futility. He shows absolutely no worry or fretting or anxiety at the dangerous state of affairs. Neither do we see Him jumping up and grabbing lines or running to bail out water from the nearly sunken ship! No, quite the contrary. We see Him **CALM, PEACEFUL, SECURE, CENTERED, UNRUFFLED, UNDISTURBED, UNSHAKEN**, virtually even **UNCONCERNED** with all the physical calamity swirling around Him!

Notice the difference between the **REACTIONS** of the disciples and the **RESPONSE** of Jesus Christ to the very same trying situation! The distinction couldn't more dramatic. What is this saying to you and me? Where do we usually find ourselves when we are suddenly confronted with major problems--reacting, worrying, doubting, fearing, thinking the worst, embarrassed, wondering how we're ever going to escape this dilemma and whether or not God is even concerned? Or, on the other hand, do we tend to do as Christ--responding to the problem with calm assurance?

Jesus Christ was like an anchor in that ship that night. The wind and water were battering the boat and crew to death, and He was the only thing that wasn't **SHAKEN AND MOVING!** Folks, that's just the way He is. That is His nature. It was then, and it is now, and forever will be. No human being has ever gone through life facing every battle with the kind of stable, calm, centered, assured, unruffled, and

unworried manner as did our Savior. His life performance was absolute remarkable--and it is the precise pattern that He wants to forge in each believer's life today.

When Christ was awakened, His disciples were beside themselves. Certain death was imminent. So we are told that He arose and **SPOKE** to the storm, and immediately there was peace and calm.

Jesus tells us that He is the one who has the power and quality of true peace. He once said:

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives do I give unto you. Let not your hearts be TROUBLED, neither let them be AFRAID” (John 14:27).

Paul later called it the *peace that passes all understanding*. What is that peace, brethren? Is it merely having a careless attitude with respect to this evil world or to the troubles around us or to sin itself in our own lives? Hardly! It is, however, the result of **LETTING GO!!** Yes, I know, you've heard that phrase a thousand times. Well, here's a thousand and one!!

The kind of peace and calm and stability and centeredness, displayed by our Savior, no matter who or what He ever faced, simply is impossible to achieve without our first coming to that critical point in our lives when we are able to give up everything to God! I tell you, brethren, this is such a crucial juncture in a

believer's spiritual life. It is the real and true turning point. It is under these circumstances that God is able to accomplish His greatest work in and through His children. He is, in fact, diligently aiming toward that very moment in time. He is desiring it. He is working in that direction. His plan calls for each of us to reach that place where total surrender genuinely takes place. And when it does--I tell you that the greatest peace any of us has ever known will be the result. We absolutely cannot have the peace of Christ at work in our lives until we arrive at that place where we finally break and give it all up to God.

This state is of such significance that I am compelled to make a plea to us all. Do not allow this day to pass without you taking this matter into your most serious consideration and bringing it before the presence of God in prayer. Obviously, I can't make you do this, and I don't mean to lecture anyone. I just want to see God's people beginning to pick up on the vital importance connected with being rightly broken by God, and the subsequent full submission of all things in our lives unto Him and His greater and more perfect will for us. So, I simply urge each of us to think on these things. I know that they are not easy to contemplate, because letting go doesn't feel right or good. I mean, after all, if we let go of everything, we will be bereft, we will be standing naked, we will be without our comfort, our security, our pride, our works. If we allow ourselves to be broken, it will be painful and traumatic, and we will

be helpless and small and vulnerable. These are admittedly not pleasant thoughts or feelings, but we simply must to that breakthrough point, where we begin to see and sense things as God does.

No one should try and tell a brother or sister that what I have described is easy or simple, that there is nothing to it. If anyone conveys that to you, rest assured that person doesn't know the first thing he's talking about. It is none of those things, and thank God that this is so! Why? Because once we are called, we must ultimately subject ourselves to the anvil of God! The Scriptures are plain that God's way is not easy, nor is it intended to be. We, like our Father in heaven, must always be looking toward the final and eternal objective in all that we face and experience in this temporary physical life.

If we desire to walk as Christ walked, to confront every person and every issue and every question and every event, no matter how awful or difficult or sorrowful or threatening they might be, with the same kind of peace and calm, with the identical kind of stability and assurance, then we decidedly must seek to reach that breaking point when we turn loose of everything that we are or have been or ever could be in this life!

This state is not some impossible, fanciful, unreachable dream. God has not set before us something that cannot be achieved. We cannot, and indeed must not,

assume that this condition is beyond us as mere human beings. Why? Because there is a almighty God on the scene, that's why! **HE** is the One who can perform it. **HE** is the One who knows how to make it work. **HE** is the One that can affect the kind of powerful changes so vital to our spiritual life and walk--not at some distant future time, not when we are in the Kingdom, but now, **RIGHT NOW!!** And please, don't ever let anyone dissuade you from believing that God either cannot or will not work in your life in the most profound and powerful way possible. Nothing is outside His ability, and if you can read it in His Word, then you can rest assured that He is fully capable of and willing to produce in you the character, the nature, the wisdom, the knowledge, the understanding, the discernment, the confidence, the stability, the peace, the calm, the centeredness, the opportunity, and the power walk humbly, faithfully, courageously, and victoriously with Him and His Son!

After He rebuked the storm, and caused a peaceful calm to come over the waters and wind, Christ turned His attention to the disciples, ravaged and beaten by the violent tempest. It is interesting that not only did He not jump up from his sleep alarmed at their peril, but He also did not apologize for having left them alone or for not having been there to help them out at they battled the severe wind and waves. No, He was focused on one thing--the important thing. Instead of trying to deal with there frustrations, He

asked them all a couple of questions. He said:

“Why are you so timid and fearful? How is it that you have no faith? And they were filled with great awe and feared exceedingly, and said one to another, Who is this man, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” (Mark 4:40-41).

Who indeed? And if we truly believe that He is who He says He is, then it is incumbent upon us to ask ourselves the very same two questions posed to the disciples on the Sea of Galilee that auspicious night.

David was a character who knew first hand how difficult life could be. He knew what it was like to be in despair. Notice what he wrote in Psalms 43:

“As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before Him? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, WHERE IS YOUR GOD? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me...Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted in Me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan...Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterspouts; all Your WAVES and your

billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me...As with a sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me, while they say daily to me, WHERE IS YOUR GOD? Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God!” (Psa. 42).

Clearly David had reached a breaking point. Clearly he was where many of us have been--in the clutches of trial and tribulation, and with God seeming to be nowhere in sight. He even relates that his enemies taunted him, saying, *Where is your God?* But David hung in there, in spite of how ferocious the storm might have been! David committed himself to seeking God in the midst of all his troubles. Remember how that psalm begins? David tells God how much he longs after Him. I tell you, brethren, when you have a **DESIRE** not just to know more about God, but a desire to **KNOW HIM**, you can and will have staying power, even when life's storms are blowing down your door! If you will pursue God the way David did, then even your worst nightmare can't touch you, no more than the lions touched Daniel as he lay soundly asleep in their den!

To wrap this message up, let's focus for a moment on Christ's response to His disciples fearful and unbelieving state. He,

more or less, told them that they really should have had no need for worry or undue concern. And I would submit to you that He is telling us today the very identical thing. You and I, as true believers and children of God, have no need of worry, anxiety, or undue concern. Jesus once said:

“Take therefore no anxious worry for your life, what you shall eat, neither for the body, what you shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. How much more are you better than the fowls. And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If you then not be able to do that things which is least, why take you thought for the rest?...If the God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?...FEAR NOT, little flock: for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that you which you have and give alms; provide for yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 22-34).

I would also like to suggest one more thing with respect to this very short, but most potent story of Christ and His disciples on the stormy sea. When

He asked them why they were fearful and where was their faith, what could He have been suggesting to them? What I mean is: could Christ have been saying to them, *Not only should you have been fearless and full of faith and assurance, you also could have spoken to the inclement weather, even as I did, and it would have obeyed you!*

The Scriptural narrative states that the disciples were taken aback by what Christ said and did on that occasion. They said to themselves, *What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?* I want you to remember that at another time, the Messiah told His followers:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me, the WORKS that I do shall he DO ALSO; and GREATER WORKS than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father. And WHATSOEVER you shall ask in My name, that WILL I DO, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask ANYTHING in My name, I WILL DO IT” (John 14:12-14).

It is impossible for any of us to know how many of God's people really believe those statements of promise given by Christ. I can tell you this, I have met many who do not. I have known minister after minister who would not preach and teach this very passage of Scripture, because it was simply just out of their realm of experience, and, if they had done so, they knew they would have lost control of their

congregation! And that, my friends, is something that few, if any, church leaders today would even dream of allowing to happen.

Brethren, I am here to tell you that those words of Jesus Christ were absolutely true when He spoke them to the disciples of His day, and they are absolutely just as true today as they were then! And you can take that to the bank! Does that mean that every time a thunder storm strikes, that all you have to do is rebuke it, thus putting you in perfect control of the weather all the time? No, it does not--any more than God expects you literally move every physical mountain that you might happen to see on any given landscape. As someone I know is fond of saying, *It ain't the right question!*

And truly it is not the right question. The issue isn't that God's Spirit makes you into some kind of superhuman, all-American hero, swooping in to save the day! It does not mean that you will go into every hospital in the world and heal each patient. It does not mean that every time you come to a body of water, you simply walk across it to the other side and continue on as if nothing happened! It doesn't mean that you will actually engage in literal races with horses, or sprout wings and fly like eagles! Is it really necessary to belabor the point any further?

God's Spirit is a power for righteousness, for goodness, for love, for giving, for serving. Every true believer has the seed of

such great power within them right now. It is not in need of change. We are the ones who must be transformed. It is not deficient. It is we who are lacking and in desperate need of what only it can provide.

As we enter into this fall holyday season, brethren, let us commit ourselves to God's examination of our lives. This is a time for serious reflection upon who we are and where we are in Christ. We are approaching that time of the year when the subject of repentance especially needs to be emphasized. The Day of Trumpets speaks of the day of God's judgment upon this world. Indeed, like a trumpet, God is calling out for men everywhere to repent and turn to Him in utter and total submission. I urge each and every one of us not to allow this time to pass and this clarion call go unheeded in our lives.

If you want to be awakened from spiritual sleep, and become alive and active in the service of God, this is your once-in-a-lifetime, solid gold opportunity. And if you want be so centered and stable in Christ that you can fall asleep in the boat while the storm threatens certain doom, now is your chance! Don't let any more time pass by before you begin to deal with your life before God. Come to know where you truly stand with Him. Allow Him to bring you into His very presence and to the table that He has set in array, even in the midst of your worst catastrophe. Ask Him to show you what you are unknowingly holding on to that

absolutely must go. Begin, even if it is only a small step forward, to consciously let go, let go, let go, as God gives you the insight and grace to do so.

Remember that God is a Father, indeed our heavenly Father. He loves His children. Therefore, do not ever despise His chastening, His instruction, His correction, His desire for your life, and His loving interest as He seeks to involve Himself more and more deeply in your mind and heart. May each of us come to that powerful point of total surrender, and may the living Christ be formed within the lives of true believers all over this earth, sparking a spiritual revival the likes of which this world has never experienced!