

**Matthew 14:22-33** <sup>22</sup> Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. <sup>23</sup> And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. <sup>24</sup> But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. <sup>25</sup> Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. <sup>26</sup> And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. <sup>27</sup> But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." <sup>28</sup> And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." <sup>29</sup> So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he saw that the wind *was* boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" <sup>31</sup> And immediately Jesus stretched out *His* hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" <sup>32</sup> And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. <sup>33</sup> Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

## Call Upon Me In The Day of Trouble, I Will Deliver You

A catholic priest and a Lutheran pastor go fishing every week, one week the Lutheran pastor invites his Baptist friend along with. They are out in the boat in the middle of the lake and the priest needs to relieve himself. He stands up in the boat and tells the other two he'll be right back. He walks across the water into the woods and in a minute walks back. The Baptist is shocked but the Lutheran doesn't react so he doesn't say anything. After a little while the Lutheran stands up walks across the water, goes into the woods, comes back. Well the Baptist decides if the Catholic and the Lutheran can do it so can he. He steps out of the boat and sinks. The Lutheran looks over the boat then turns to the Catholic and says, "We should have told him where the rocks are."

## A miracle that cannot be anything else

So is that what is happening here? I suppose you could find a way to explain it, but you would end up with such a convolute tale. You might hallucinate seeing a man walking on the water, but you certainly can't hallucinate walking on the water yourself. Maybe the boat was simply close to the shore? Really you think Peter doesn't know the difference between walking on water and walking on sand or rocks? Besides how then did he start to sink?

Peter is either lying or this really happened as he says. And the only real conclusion one can come to is the same as the apostles, "Truly this is the Son of God."

## An object lesson in Faith

The real question here is not how Jesus did this or whether it really happened but why Peter started sinking.

I suppose the faith healers and the Pentecostals must love this account. They assume that faith is power or that Jesus works through our faith, and if we just believe hard enough we can do things like this. At

first glance this account seems to confirm their narrative as long as Peter has faith he walks on the water, but when he doubts he begins to sink.

But to think of this account in this way is to completely misunderstand what faith is, what scripture says about faith and miracles, and even to completely miss the whole point of the account.

Faith is not a mystical power that we can tap into and direct for magical events. Faith is not a bridge that must be in place before Jesus can do miracles. The Power is of Jesus and Jesus does what He wishes. He doesn't need Peter to believe in order to let him walk on the water.

It is true that Jesus often cites faith as the reason or the basis for certain miracles, "your faith has made you well." But the role of faith is not in the miracle or in the power but simply in the asking. In faith the leper asks, and because he asks he is healed. In faith Peter asks and because he asks Jesus says, "Come." This is the whole theme of the hymn we are about to sing. "O what peace we often forfeit . . . all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer." Our lack of faith leads us not to ask, and because we do not ask we do not receive.

So if it isn't the lack of faith than why does Peter begin to sink? The only reasonable answer is because Jesus lets him. When Peter started doubting Jesus let him start to sink as an object lesson.

I'm a little jealous of Jesus here, it would be a lot easier to get you guys to listen and learn if I could teach you in this manner. We could try it out at our church camp out next week. Maybe we could try a tank of snakes?

Jesus is trying to teach his disciples to stay focused on him, to have faith even when it looks dangerous all around. There are plenty of other situations in which our lack of faith does prevent us from receiving the full blessings of the Lord. A good example is marriage, Jesus says wait for marriage. If we refuse to believe His word and don't wait for marriage, it is not God's fault that we do not receive the full blessings of that union. If we sin in this manner we can go on to have a wonderful happy marriage later, but it will never be completely what Jesus wants for us. That sin will always be there, it will come back to cause problems later, etc.

Peter is object lesson for us, not to teach us how to walk on water, but to teach us spiritual truths through an earthly story.

Having said that, that is not the real focus of the story. The real focus is not on Peter's faith or lack of faith, but when Peter cried out Jesus was there.

### **A Savior who answers the desperate call**

There are lots of lessons we could use this story to make. Don't let the waves of this world distract you, keep the faith, if you just have faith you can do anything, etc. But there is no doubt that the real focus the real important lessons, is that Jesus doesn't leave Peter sinking. When in his desperation Peter calls out to the Lord, the Lord answers.

And so the far more important lesson here is that when we fail, when we are sinking, in sin, in doubt, in danger, cry to the Lord and He will answer.

**Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you**

Too often we don't call to the Lord. When things are going good, we don't think we need him, when things are bad we don't believe He is going to help.

The disciples are in the middle of the sea fighting the wind and Jesus is there to help them.

They are afraid, and He reassures them.

Peter asks in faith to come out, and Jesus says come.

Peter is about to drown and calls out and Jesus is there and picks him.

In every situation, in every need Jesus is at their side to help, to comfort, to answer prayers.

So many people want to make of this story a lesson on how we can have powers like Jesus, how we can get Jesus to do what we want, if we have strong enough faith, if we pray in the right way, if we keep our eyes focused on Jesus. But the real lesson is so much simpler.

Just ask, in the day of trouble, in day of plenty, when you are drowning in sin, when you are surrounded by worries, in every situation, in every need . . . Pray to the Lord, he is there, He will hear, He will listen.

Amen

The Peace of God that surpasses all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.