

Save Us

The Prayer of the Disciples

Matthew 8:25

Sandy and Joe were sailing in the Gulf of Mexico when they were caught in an unexpected storm. The wind blew them far out to open sea. When the storm subsided, they drifted helplessly for two days, baking in the hot sun. Their water supply dwindled away. They knew their lives were in danger.

The couple prayed to God for help, but no help came. Then Sandy prayed one more time. "Oh, Lord, You are our only hope. Please save us."

As she finished, she looked up and saw in the distance what appeared to be a cross coming toward them. She thought she must be hallucinating and blinked to clear her vision, but there was indeed a cross on the horizon. She awakened her husband, Joe. He also could make out a cross moving in their direction.

As the cross drew closer, they could see that it was actually the masthead of a large yacht—and it was definitely coming their way! The couple stood up, waving their arms to attract attention.

When they were safely on deck, Sandy said, "It's incredible that you found us! We thought we'd never be rescued!" But what the yacht owner explained next convinced Joe and Sandy that their rescue was no coincidence. The yacht had been traveling on automatic pilot for several hours, but inexplicably the boat ended up traveling ten miles off its intended course.¹

"Save us." You can be sailing along through life, making progress and enjoying the trip, when out of nowhere a storm

arises. In seconds you are overwhelmed. Huge waves pound and then launch you mercilessly into the air. Water pours relentlessly into your boat faster than you can bail it out. Howling winds whip you around and drive you far off course. You lose your bearings and your hope. The gaping jaws of doom start to shut around you.

No one is immune to the storms of life. Even if you are doing all the right things and headed in the right direction, storms will find you. The question is not if you will face them, but how you will respond.

One of the most effective prayers in the Bible came from the disciples as they sailed across the Sea of Galilee. At the time, the ministry of Jesus was in high gear. The disciples were sailing away from the crowds to get a rest when a storm arose. Matthew recorded the event:

“Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, ‘Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!’” (Matthew 8:23–25)

When they realized that the storm was too big for them, they did not even try to deal with it on their own. It was already way beyond their ability to handle. So they went to Jesus.

Lord, save us!

When they came to Jesus they were able to say it all in three words: “Lord, save us!” There was no time for flowery speeches. This was not the occasion for sounding impressive by offering profound thoughts or multi-syllable words. This prayer had to be like an arrow, lean and pointed, directed to the heart of the matter.

They did not tell Jesus all the details about the storm. In fact, they did not even mention the storm. He already knew.

They did not tell Jesus how to save them. It was beyond them. They did not need Him to help them with their bailing or with lowering the sails. They needed Him to do something and do it now!

They just asked Him to save them.

“He replied, ‘You of little faith, why are you so afraid?’ Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, ‘What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!’” (Matthew 8:26–27)

Making It Personal

There are several simple lessons we can take away from this story.

1. Storms are inevitable. Storms aren't reserved for the wicked. These disciples were not men who were out on a whiskey-soaked gambling cruise. They were not out in the boat cheating on their wives. They had not just robbed a bank and were fleeing from the authorities. They were not pirates raiding hapless vessels. They were the disciples of Jesus Christ.

You will face storms. They may be storms of discipline or storms of development, but they will come. Even God's greatest people in the Bible faced storms. Adam and Eve had a rebellious son. Noah faced a global flood and later his own failure. Joseph was thrown into a pit, sold as a slave, and then unjustly cast into prison. Moses lost his temper and murdered a man. Later he had the responsibility of leading a horde of immature whiners. David was forced to run for his life when his father-in-law, the king, grew jealous of his success.

Nehemiah had a strong enemy. After his conversion, Paul

was repeatedly beaten, imprisoned, and persecuted.

2. Sometimes following Jesus leads us into storms. The men in the boat were not Jonahs out on the sea, trying vainly to sail away from God's plan for their lives. They were not even out on the water fishing for fun or profit. They were only in the boat because they had followed Jesus there. It was Jesus who got into the boat in the first place.

There is a mistaken notion that following Jesus leads to immediate prosperity and peace. Not necessarily. Certainly, the way of the cross leads to life eternal and the glories of heaven. There is a day coming when there will be no more sickness or sorrow. But in the meantime, we will experience some mean times.

3. Storms are tests of faith. Before calming the storm, Jesus made the point that the presence of fear was an indication of the absence of faith. Faith is the prime necessity for pleasing God (Hebrews 11:6). Faith overcomes the world (1 John 4:4). Faith is the fuel of righteous living (Habakkuk 2:4).

Sometimes when storms hit I wonder if God really loves me. My life is being tossed by several storms as I write these words. I am ashamed to confess that I have been overwhelmed by my grief and stupidly said, "God, I thought You loved me."

The thinking is that if God really loved me, He would protect me from storms. But that clearly is not the case.

Jesus loved these disciples, yet they found themselves in the midst of a deadly storm. God the Father loves God the Son, yet Jesus, the Son of God, was in a boat that was about to be swallowed by angry waves.

4. Jesus goes with us through the storms. Jesus was right there in the boat. On another occasion when the disciples encountered a storm at sea, Jesus came to them

walking on the water. If Jesus did not go with us through the storms, then we would have good reason to be afraid. But He goes.

5. Jesus can handle the storms. No storm is too big, no wind too fierce, no wave too high. Jesus can handle all of it. Jesus was so unafraid of this storm that He was sleeping through it. Yet, He had the power to calm the waves with just a word.

I don't know what storms you are facing. Maybe the loss of your job, a serious illness, or the death of a loved one is sending you reeling. One of your children is in trouble or was in an accident or is in jail. You could be in the throes of a divorce. Just as Jesus was there for the disciples, and for countless others, He will be there for you. The solution may not be quick or painless, but Jesus can work it all for good.

You know He can. Trust Him.

6. We need to ask. The disciples did not wait until the boat was capsized and they were hopelessly adrift in the dangers of the deep. They went to Jesus and asked Him to save them before waiting too long. Asking in prayer was often advocated by Jesus. Here are some of my favorite requests:

Matthew 7:7: "Ask and it will be given to you."

Matthew 7:11: "How much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"

John 14:14: "You may ask me for anything in my name."

John 15:7: "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."

John 15:16: "Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name."

John 16:24: "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."

James 1:5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask

God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”

James 4:2: “You do not have, because you do not ask God.”

If you find yourself in a storm right now, don't be afraid to ask God to save you.

Notes

1. Bob Russell and Rusty Russell, *When God Answers Prayer* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing Company, 2003), pp. 98–100.

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