

“Be of Good Cheer; it is I; be not afraid”

“Be comforted. I AM. Do not fear.” (LTV)

"And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. 23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. 24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. 25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. 26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. 27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. 28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. 29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. 31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? 32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. 33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matt. 14:22-33).

I've entitled this message, “**Be of good cheer. It is I. Be not afraid!**”

Let's consider the details of this account recorded here in scripture.

v22) Jesus **constrained** His disciples to get into the **ship**.

- Jesus Christ is all of our salvation. As Noah and his family in the ark escaped the flood of God's wrath upon the world, as God passed over the Israelites who were in the house where the blood of the Passover lamb was sprinkled, and as the manslayer escaped the avenger of blood in the city of refuge, so we can only be saved in Christ. There is salvation in no other (Acts 4:12). By Christ constraining His disciples to get into the ship, we see

His constraining call to His people in the Gospel to believe Him. And believing Christ, we behold all of our salvation from sin and the wrath of God. Believing Christ, we enter into the peace and joy and rest of salvation that is ours in Christ. As the disciples must get into the ship to arrive at the destination Jesus determined for them beforehand, so every believer will receive the eternal life that God determined for them before the world began in looking to Christ. We must be found in Him. When Adam sinned, God came looking for him. On the Day of Judgment, God will search out every man, woman, boy and girl. When God comes looking for me, I have but one place I want to be found: **in Christ**. I want to be found in Him, not having a righteousness based on my obedience, but the very righteousness of God that is based on the obedience of Christ **alone!** (2 Cor. 5:21; Php. 2:6-8; 3:9). Against all the enemies of my soul, I have but one place of safety: in Christ.

- It is God who puts His people in Christ. “*Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus*” (1 Cor. 1:30). Faith is God’s gift of grace to sinners to know that their only ground of acceptance before God is Jesus Christ crucified. Christ is our complete provision. Every blessing from God to His people is in Christ. Our triumph over every enemy is in Christ’s victory. Eternal life and eternal glory are in Christ alone. And, **it is God-given faith** that enables me to receive all that God has for sinners in Christ. Jesus constrained His disciples to get into the ship. I must be convinced that my salvation is in Christ alone! The Son of God, as my Mediator, by His substitutionary death and endless life, is all of my salvation (Matt. 1:21). He stood in the place of His people. He acted and continues to act on their behalf. He has accomplished their salvation (Matt. 1:21; Dan. 9:24; Heb. 1:3; 9:12,15,26; 10:10,14,17-18). God has received His obedience and His offering for them. Their sins have been purged. God’s wrath has been removed from them. Forgiveness of all their sins has been granted. They stand justified, without blame, faultless, perfected forever by the one offering Christ made for them. And all spiritual blessings are known and received and enjoyed by faith alone.
- **The word “constrained” here is a very strong word.** Jesus placed a necessity upon His disciples to get into the ship. By compelling words He made them get into the ship. He would not allow them to do otherwise. And

they obeyed Him in this. In this interaction between Christ and His disciples, we see our salvation. Christ constrains: I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life! His people obey in faith. *“He that hath received His testimony, has set to his seal that God is true”* (John 3:33). He constrains us by convincing us that Christ and Him crucified is the whole truth about the way things are between me and God. The truth we come to know and are convinced of is how God can be just and justify an ungodly, sinful man like me. **Obedience to the Gospel is coming to God on the sole ground of the blood and righteousness of Christ.** This coming is not done once only. Looking to Christ is a continual thing. Faith continually comes to Jesus. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2). When you first believed, you had no strength, no evidences, no experiences. You had but one plea: *“I am a great sinner and nothing at all. Lord! Save me for Christ’s sake alone!”* Saving faith comes to God with no more than it had when we first believed. *“As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him”* (Col. 2:6).

- **As Jesus constrained His disciples, the operation of God is a powerful operation of His grace.** In Ephesians 1:19-20 Paul prays that we might know... *“19 the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places”* (Eph. 1:19-20). Before we are saved, we are dead in sins (Eph. 2:1-3). When we were dead in sins, God, who is rich mercy, because of His great love toward us, made us alive with Christ: by grace you are saved! (Eph. 2:3-5). He raised us from spiritual death to spiritual life. This is God’s almighty power (2 Cor. 4:6)! His power irresistibly draws us and convinces us that we are saved by Christ for no merit in ourselves and for no reason ever to be sought or found in ourselves. **God saved us for reasons found only in Himself.** He saved us by merit found in Christ alone. In the simplest terms, God receives us for Christ’s sake alone (Eph. 4:32; Rom. 4:25; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:21-22). **Ever since God gave His people to Christ by eternal election, He only regards them as He regards His Son** (Eph. 1:3-7). God made Christ the representative Head of His people. He bore their sins (1 Pet. 2:24). He endured their punishment.

He fulfilled their righteousness. In all of this, God looked to Him for all He requires of them. In myself, I am a great sinner. I have no ground to believe this is true of me. But Christ died for the ungodly. God does not consider what I have done or what I will do someday. God justifies the ungodly (Rom. 5:6,8). Therefore, in justification, God finds nothing in His people, but He finds all in Christ for them. He accepts His people because Christ acted in their place and on their behalf.

v23) **Jesus went up into a mountain to pray.**

- After Jesus rose from the dead, He sent His disciples to preach the Gospel throughout the world. He ascended to heaven. He sat down on the right hand of God. On His throne, Jesus Christ rules heaven and earth on behalf of His people. Throughout the NT age, They strive to fulfill His will against all of the opposition of this unbelieving world and hell itself. He determined that it should be this way. He designed it to be so. But He intercedes for us on His throne (Rom. 8:27,34). He does not take us out of the world or out of trouble, but He brings us through it, giving us faith to overcome by seeing He has conquered as our Savior, our Lord and our Mediator.

v24) **The ship was in the midst of the sea, tossed with the waves and the wind was contrary.**

- In scripture, the floods and waves often signify wicked men in their opposition to Christ and His people. “*The wicked are like the troubled sea...*” (Isa. 57:20). “*The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid” (Ps. 18:4). “*2 If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: 3 Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us” (Ps. 124:2-3). Therefore, the sea signifies the flood of ungodly men who oppose Christ and His people.**
- And the sea also signifies the judgment of God. In Jonah chapter 1, God sent a great wind and a mighty tempest in the sea. The ship would have been broken up and the men drowned. But Jonah told the mariners to cast him overboard. When they did, the sea became quiet and they were saved. By nature, we were the children of wrath, even as others. Because Christ bore

our sins and endured the wrath of God, we are saved from our sin and God's (1 Thess. 1:10; Rom. 5:9).

- Jesus sent His disciples into the night on the storm-tossed sea. He sent them to preach the Gospel throughout the world against the opposition of ungodly men. Hell and the world would oppose. A flood of deception would pour out of the mouths of false prophets. *"the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman (Church), that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood"* (Rev. 12:15). Every enemy of God's people opposes them. Yet, the LORD *"...preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked"* (Ps. 97:9-10).
- Sin is our greatest enemy! There's nothing I can do about my sin. *"Iniquities prevail against me! As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away"* (Ps. 65:3). I can't change my inward corruptions! *"Who shall deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord"* (Rom. 7:24-25). Sin condemns me and would overcome me. But Christ has overcome sin for His people. He has subdued our iniquities. He has cast them into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). He has prevailed over our iniquities.

v25) **In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went to His disciples, walking on the sea.**

- Christ comes to His people in their darkest hour, when things seem their worst. At the end of the world, all enemies will openly appear conquered as they now are in truth *"He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet"* (1 Cor. 15:25).
- Jesus came walking on the sea. Walking on the sea signifies His complete rule over His and our enemies. Even the ordinances of God's law that were against us have been nailed to His cross. Our sins, the world and the devil have been conquered. Nothing can condemn one for whom Christ died. *"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and **their righteousness is of me**, saith the LORD"* (Isa. 54:17). Nothing can condemn one for whom Christ died, because Christ is their righteousness.

v26) **When the disciples saw Him, they were afraid**, thinking He was a spirit, and they cried out for fear.

- Only our sin and unbelief make us afraid. The enemies of our soul instill fear in our hearts. We fear the guilt and condemnation of our sin. We fear our sin will overcome us. We fear the world will drown us in its deception and philosophies. What are we to do? Look again to Christ! *“As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him”* (Col. 2:6). When we first believe or when we are in any fear, the answer is always the same. Look to Christ! (Heb. 12:2). We pray, *“Deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen”* (Matt. 6:13)! *“Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us”* (Ps. 62:8). Our great God and Savior walks on the sea of all that would drown our souls. He has purged our sins and endured the wrath of God in our place.

v27) **When the disciples cried out in fear, Immediately, Jesus spoke to them saying, “Be of good cheer. It is I. Be not afraid.”**

- These words can also be translated, *“Be comforted. I AM. Do not fear”* (LTV). Our Lord Jesus says we have no reason to fear because He is the eternal I AM, the God of glory, and He is for His people. *“If God be for us, who can be against us”* (Rom. 8:31)?!
- Three other times in the NT, Jesus said, *“Be of good cheer.”*
 - In the first, a paralyzed man was brought to Jesus by his four friends (Matt. 9:1-ff). Jesus spoke to him, *“Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee”* (Matt. 9:2). My sin is the cause for all my inward trouble. It is ever before me. I can do nothing about it. But in the Gospel the Lord Christ says, *“Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.”* If Christ forgives my sins, if He says be of good cheer, I have reason to be of good cheer!
 - In the second, a woman with an issue of blood came to Jesus. The law pronounced her “unclean.” She was plagued (Mark 5:29). But she touched Jesus’ garment, and she was immediately healed of her plague. Jesus said to her, *“Be of good comfort (cheer); thy faith hath made thee whole”* (Matt. 9:22). My sinful nature is my plague. In the

face of all my inward corruptions, if the Lord Jesus Christ says to me, “Be of good cheer” it is because His grace reigns through His righteousness where once sin reigned to my death (Rom. 5:21). He has overcome my sin. I am under His grace. My sin shall not have dominion over me (Rom. 6:14). I will be enabled to believe Him, to go to Him. Hearing Him say, “*Be of good cheer. I AM. Be comforted,*” I will love Him.

- The third place Jesus used these words occurs in John 16:33. He said, “*These things I have spoken unto you that in me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation, but **be of good cheer, I have overcome the world**” (Jn. 16:33). I have no peace but what I have in Christ. In His wisdom I am able to stand before God. My peace is knowing that Christ has fulfilled the obedience required for God to accept me. And I have peace in His blood. God has accepted the sacrifice of my Savior as my sin offering. He raised Christ from the dead! I have peace in His sovereign rule. Nothing in heaven or earth can prevent Him from His purpose of love. Nothing can separate me from His love. If Christ died for me, nothing can condemn me. If Christ intercedes for me, I will be saved to the uttermost (Rom. 5:10; Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34). If He has overcome my sin, my sin cannot overcome me. If He has overcome the world, the world cannot overcome me. If He has overcome the devil, the devil cannot overcome me. Therefore, I have the peace that hell itself cannot shake (Heb. 12:27; Matt. 16:18).*

v28) Upon hearing “Be of good cheer, I AM,” **Peter asked Jesus to command him to come to Him on the water.**

- I don’t want to presume. Christ must command me to come. I must wait on Him to do for me what I cannot do. Yet, it is always His way to promise and then stir up His people to ask Him to fulfill His promise to them. “*I will yet be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them*” (Ezek. 36:37). That is what faith does. Faith asks God to do what He has promised. David said, “*Lord, do as thou hast said*” (2 Sam. 7:25). The Psalmist prayed, “**Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation**” (Ps. 35:3)! God has written this prayer in His

word for you and me: *“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else”* (Isa. 45:22)!

v29) **Jesus commanded Peter to “Come!” And Peter walked on the water to Jesus!**

- *“...thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress”* (Ps. 71:3).
- Lord, if you give what you command, then command what you will.
- This is Christ’s irresistible command to His people: *“Come!”* (Isa. 55:1-3; Rev. 22:17; John 6:37; 10:27).
- So hearing Jesus, Peter walked on the water. As long as Peter looked to Christ, all the enemies of his soul were as nothing. He walked on the floods that would have otherwise drowned him!

v30) **But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me!**

- When Peter considered his success in walking, when he saw the wind and the waves, he was afraid and began to sink. Never be self-satisfied in your performance as a believer. As soon as you begin to look at yourself, your feet have already slipped (Ps. 94:18); you are not looking at Christ!
- With all of our faith, there is always much unbelief. Yet, even in this we are saved. Our fears arise. We call upon the LORD in our trouble (Ps. 107). When we do, He delivers us out of them all. *“O, that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, for His wonderful works to the children of men!”*
- Peter’s prayer is every believer’s prayer: *“Lord! Save me!”* Have you ever prayed this prayer? Sin in all of its forms is as natural to us as drinking water. The world would swallow us up. We are no match for the devil. But we overcome all by looking to Christ alone (Rev. 12:11; 1 John 5:4). If you know this, call upon Him! ***“Lord, save me!”***

v31) **Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?**

- The Lord’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save. Christ immediately stretches out His hand whenever we call. If you cry, “Lord, save me!” He will save you. He delights in mercy (Micah 7:18)! He is more ready to show mercy than we are to receive it.

- The Holy Spirit of God has given sinners this prayer to pray: “*For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great*” (Ps. 25:11)! If you are a great sinner, and you have no power over your sin, then call on Christ to save you from your great sin. He has promised to do so. “*Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out*” (John 6:37). His promise comes from His heart. He cannot lie (Titus 1:2). He cannot fail (Isa. 42:4).

v32) **When they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.**

- Jesus could have stilled the sea and calmed the wind long before He entered the ship. But He had a greater purpose. Faith always grows out of trouble. Until we see our guilt and condemnation and helplessness before God, we will not understand the glory of God in the Gospel: that God has made known His righteousness in Christ when we were utterly unrighteous. He has destroyed His and our enemies. He has fulfilled and honored His law. He has satisfied His justice. He has magnified His perfections and His name. But none of this means anything without the trouble of soul that arises from the conviction of sin and my helplessness to overcome it. This is painful. But it is necessary.
- As soon as Christ was with them, the wind ceased. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were cast into the fiery furnace. The Son of God appeared with them there. Therefore, they were not hurt by those flames. The smell of smoke did not even linger on their clothes. If Christ is with me, I can face all enemies without fear. He conquered sin. He has dominion over my flesh. He overcame the world. He destroyed the works of the devil. In all these, we triumph in Him. He is with every believer even now (John 14:8). “*5 He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee! 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me*” (Heb. 13:5-6). When He comes to gather His saints, then all sin and trouble and labor and fears will cease. Sin and all of its consequences will have been more than overcome. “*We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us*” (Rom. 8:37).

John 6:21) “*They willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.*”

- When we believe the Lord Jesus, we then possess all that we hope for. *“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* Christ has justified His people. He has made them holy. He has given them His own Spirit. They are now the sons of God. But none of these things appear to us in our experience (1 John 3:2). How then do we know we have them? Because we believe God’s word. **9** *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, bodily.* **10** *And ye are complete in him”* (Col. 2:9-10). Seeing Christ as all, we receive grace in every trouble, in every fear and in every doubt. We possess by faith what we now hope for. When Christ is with us, we have all things (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 2:21-23; Col. 2:9-10).

v33) **They came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.**

- When by faith we see Jesus Christ in the Gospel. We know that He is the great I AM! We see that He overcame all of our enemies. And we hear His voice, *“Be of good cheer. I AM. Do not afraid.”* Hearing and seeing Him thus, we worship Him. He is the Son of God. His people will be brought to the destination He determined for them beforehand. He has devised both the end and the means of our salvation. The end is eternal glory with Christ. The means is being in Christ. The means is looking to Christ. We overcome all enemies of our souls by looking to Him. We live and walk by faith in Christ alone.

In light of these things, may this prayer be our cry

“Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. 2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. 3 Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation” (Ps. 35:1-3).