The Storm and the Walk on the Water

Bible Stories Anthology — Mark 4:35-41; Matthew 14:22-33

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> **Romans 15:4** *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

Why These Stories Were Written — Romans 15:4

Paul had just quoted a thousand-year-old psalm and applied it to Christ (Romans 15:3, quoting Psalm 69:9), and then he explained why he could: *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*. **Written aforetime** — the scriptures that already stood before this present age of grace opened at Pentecost: the record God gave through Moses, the prophets and the writings, along with the Gospel accounts of Christ's earthly ministry, which belong to that same time before Pentecost. (When Paul wrote these words, the scriptures he had in hand were the Hebrew scriptures; the Gospels had not yet been written down.) **Written for our learning** — "learning" is the Greek word for *teaching*, the very word rendered "doctrine" in 2 Timothy 3:16. These are not quaint tales; they are doctrine in narrative form. Adam, Ruth and David never knew us, but God did, and He had their lives recorded with us in mind — written *for* us, though not all of it written *to* us, which is why we read Israel's history as our instruction and not as our marching orders. **Through patience and comfort of the scriptures** — "patience" is literally *remaining under*, the staying power we gain from watching men and women stay under a load; "comfort" is a *calling alongside*, the strength God brings when He meets them there, which is why Paul calls Him "the God of patience and consolation" in the very next verse. **That we might have hope** — not a wish, but confident expectation: the return of Jesus Christ and everlasting life with Him. That is why these accounts exist, and it is how they should be read.

Two Nights on the Sea

The disciples were fishermen. They had grown up on the Sea of Galilee. They knew its moods, its winds, its sudden storms. If anyone could handle a boat in rough water, they could.

Twice, on that sea, at night, they met a storm they could not handle.

The first time, Jesus was in the boat with them — asleep on a cushion in the stern while the waves broke over the sides and the boat filled with water. They woke him in terror: *Master, carest thou not that we perish?* He stood up, spoke to the wind and the sea, and in a moment there was a great calm.

The second time, he was not in the boat. He had sent them on ahead and gone up a mountain alone to pray. In the dark hours before dawn, as they strained at the oars against a wind that would not let them make headway, they saw a figure coming toward them across the waves. They screamed, *It is a spirit!* And a voice came over the water: *Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.*

Then one of them climbed out of the boat.

These are the stories of the storm on the sea and the walk on the water — two nights when the disciples learned that the one in whom they had trusted their lives had been given authority even over the wind and the waves.

The Setting

When. Both events took place during Jesus' ministry in Galilee, about A.D. 28–29 by the reckoning this series uses. The **storm** came at the end of the day on which Jesus taught the crowds by the sea in parables — the sower, the seed growing secretly, the mustard seed (Mark 4:1-34). **"And the same day,**

when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side" (4:35). The **walk on the water** came some months later, on the night after Jesus fed the five thousand (Matthew 14:13-21; story 46). John tells us that Passover was near (John 6:4), so it was spring.

Where. The **Sea of Galilee**, also called the Lake of Gennesaret and the Sea of Tiberias. It is not a sea but a freshwater lake, about thirteen miles long and seven miles wide at its widest. Its surface lies nearly seven hundred feet below sea level, in a deep basin. To the east rise the steep slopes of the Golan heights; to the north stands snow-capped Mount Hermon. When cool air from the heights pours down through the gorges and valleys onto the warm air over the lake, violent winds can arise in minutes and churn the water into dangerous waves. Fishermen on the lake still speak of these sudden storms.

The boat. In 1986, during a drought, the water level of the Sea of Galilee dropped, and two brothers from a kibbutz found the remains of an ancient wooden fishing boat in the mud near Ginosar, on the north-west shore. It has been dated to about the time of Jesus. It is about twenty-seven feet long and seven and a half feet wide, with a rounded stern, and it was built for both sailing and rowing. A boat like it could carry about fifteen men. We cannot know whether it was ever used by Jesus or his disciples, and no one should claim so. But it shows the kind of boat they used: open, low in the water, with a small raised deck at the stern where the helmsman sat — and where a man might lie down to sleep.

The accounts. The storm is told in **Mark 4:35-41**, **Matthew 8:23-27** and **Luke 8:22-25**. The walk on the water is told in **Matthew 14:22-33**, **Mark 6:45-52** and **John 6:15-21**. Only Matthew tells of Peter walking on the water.

Who.

- **Jesus**, the Son of God.
- **The twelve disciples**, several of them fishermen: Peter and Andrew, James and John.
- **Peter**, who stepped out of the boat.

The administration. The **Christ administration**, under the Law of Moses.

The Story, Told Faithfully

Part One: The Storm

"Let Us Pass Over unto the Other Side"

> **Mark 4:35** *And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.*
>
> **Mark 4:36** *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.*

"The same day, when the even was come." It had been a long day. Jesus had taught from a boat, pushed out a little from the shore, with the whole crowd standing on the beach (Mark 4:1). Now evening had come.

"Let us pass over unto the other side." The other side was the eastern shore, the country of the Gadarenes, a Gentile region. Jesus had said, *We are going to the other side.* He did not say, *We are going into the middle of the lake to drown.* His word was that they would get across. Remember that, because they did not.

“They took him even as he was in the ship.” *Just as he was* — tired, without going ashore to rest or eat. They set out at once, in the same boat he had been teaching from.

“And there were also with him other little ships.” Other boats followed, perhaps carrying people who wanted to stay near him. They too would be caught in the storm, and they too would be saved when it was calmed.

A Great Storm of Wind

> **Mark 4:37** *And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.*
>
> **Mark 4:38** *And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?*

“There arose a great storm of wind.” The Greek word *lailaps* means a violent squall, a whirlwind, a sudden furious gust. Matthew uses a stronger word still: **“there arose a great tempest in the sea”** (Matthew 8:24) — *seismos*, the word for an *earthquake*, a great shaking. The whole sea was heaving.

“And the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.” The waves were breaking over the sides. The boat was filling faster than they could bail. Luke says **“they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy”** (Luke 8:23). These were experienced fishermen, and they believed they were about to die.

“And he was in the hinder part of the ship.” The *hinder part* is the stern, the back of the boat, where there was a little raised deck and where the helmsman steered.

“Asleep on a pillow.” The Greek says *on the pillow* — *the* cushion, probably the leather or sheepskin cushion kept in the boat for the helmsman or a passenger to sit on. Jesus was asleep. He had taught all day and was exhausted. This is one of the few places in the Gospels where we are told Jesus slept. He was a real man, with a real body that needed rest, as surely as he was hungry in the wilderness (story 40) and weary at the well (story 43).

And he was at peace. The storm that terrified the fishermen did not wake him. The psalmist wrote, **“I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety”** (Psalm 4:8).

“And they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?” *Teacher, don’t you care that we are going to die?* Matthew records their cry as **“Lord, save us: we perish”** (Matthew 8:25), and Luke as **“Master, master, we perish”** (Luke 8:24). In their fear they said all of these things, as frightened men do. Mark keeps the hardest words: *Don’t you care?* They thought his sleep meant he did not care. They were wrong. They thought they were about to perish. They were wrong about that too. He had said they were going to the other side.

“Peace, Be Still”

> **Mark 4:39** *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 arose, and rebuked the wind.” Jesus stood up in the pitching boat and *rebuked* the wind. “Rebuked” (*epitimaō*) is the word Jesus used when he spoke sharply to demons: **“And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him”** (Mark 1:25). He spoke to the wind as one would speak to an enemy.

Was there more behind this storm than weather? The Scriptures show that the adversary can stir up the forces of nature to destroy: when Satan was given leave against Job, **"there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead"** (Job 1:19; story 37). Jesus was crossing to the very region where, as soon as he landed, he would meet a man possessed by a legion of devils (Mark 5:1-13). This series notes the possibility that the storm was an attack meant to stop him; the text does not say so, but the word *rebuked* fits it.

"And said unto the sea, Peace, be still." Two words in Greek: *Siōpa*, *pephimōso*. *Siōpa* means *Be silent!* — be quiet. *Pephimōso* means *Be muzzled!* — be silenced and stay silenced. It is the same word Jesus used to the unclean spirit: **"Hold thy peace"** (*phimōthēti*, Mark 1:25). He spoke to the raging sea the way a man speaks to a wild beast: *Quiet! Be muzzled!*

"And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." When a storm wind stops naturally, the waves keep running for hours afterward. Here the wind stopped *and* the sea went flat — at once. **"A great storm"** became **"a great calm."**

"What Manner of Man Is This?"

> **Mark 4:40** *And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?*
> **Mark 4:41** *And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?*

"Why are ye so fearful?" The word is *deiloi*, *cowardly*, *timid*. **"How is it that ye have no faith?"** Matthew records it as **"O ye of little faith"** (Matthew 8:26). They had heard him say, *Let us pass over unto the other side*. They had seen him heal the sick and cast out devils. Yet when the storm came, they forgot it all. Faith would have rested on his word.

"And they feared exceedingly." In Greek, *they feared a great fear*. Mark uses the word *great* three times: a **great** storm (4:37), a **great** calm (4:39), and now a **great** fear. They had been afraid of the storm. Now they were afraid in a different way — filled with awe at what they had seen.

"What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" This is the question the whole story asks. They had never seen anything like it. Who could command the wind and the sea?

The Scriptures they knew gave the answer: God.

> **Psalm 107:28** *Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.*
> **Psalm 107:29** *He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.*
> **Psalm 107:30** *Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.*

"Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them" (Psalm 89:9). **"Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves"** (Psalm 65:7).

Jesus did what the psalms say God does. That does not make him God; it shows that God was with him, working through him. The psalm itself says the men in the storm **"cry unto the LORD ... and he maketh the storm a calm."** In the boat they cried to Jesus, and God made the storm a calm through him. Jesus said, **"The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do"** (John 5:19). The answer to the disciples' question is the one Peter would give later: **"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"** (Matthew 16:16) — the man to whom God had given all authority.

Part Two: The Walk on the Water

He Sent Them Away and Went Up to Pray

> **Matthew 14:22** *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.*
>
> **Matthew 14:23** *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.*

"And straightway." Immediately after the feeding of the five thousand. That afternoon Jesus had fed a crowd of five thousand men, besides women and children, with five loaves and two fish (story 46).

"Jesus constrained his disciples." *Constrained* means *compelled*, *made them*. Why the urgency? John tells us: **"When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone"** (John 6:15). The crowd had seen the miracle and wanted to make him king — a king who would feed them and drive out the Romans. The disciples may well have liked the idea. Jesus sent them away at once, before they could be swept up in it. The kingdom would not come that way.

"To go before him unto the other side." Again he gave them a word: *Go to the other side*. Mark adds, **"unto Bethsaida"** (Mark 6:45).

"He went up into a mountain apart to pray." After the greatest crowd and the greatest popularity of his ministry, Jesus went off alone to pray. He often did. **"And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed"** (Luke 5:16). Here was the Son of God, who did nothing of himself, seeking his Father's will in prayer.

"And when the evening was come, he was there alone." The disciples were on the lake. Jesus was on the mountain. They were apart.

Toiling in Rowing

> **Matthew 14:24** *But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.*
>
> **Matthew 14:25** *And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.*

"Tossed with waves." The word is *basanizomenon*, literally *tormented*, *tortured*. Mark uses it of the men themselves: **"he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them"** (Mark 6:48) — *tormented in rowing*. This time it was not a sudden squall that threatened to sink them, but a long, hard, exhausting night of rowing against a headwind and getting nowhere.

"For the wind was contrary." The wind was against them. They had been rowing for hours. John says that by the time Jesus came, **"they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs"** (John 6:19) — three or three and a half miles. For a lake seven miles wide, that is barely halfway, after most of a night at the oars.

"In the fourth watch of the night." The Romans divided the night into four watches of three hours each, from six in the evening to six in the morning. The fourth watch was from three to six — the darkest, coldest hours before dawn. They had been rowing for perhaps nine hours.

Mark adds that Jesus *saw* them: **"And he saw them toiling in rowing"** (Mark 6:48). From the mountain, in the night, he saw them struggling. They did not know he was watching. He was.

"Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." He came to them the only way there was: across the water.

Job had written of God, **"Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea"** (Job 9:8). Only God has power over the sea. That power God now put at the disposal of His Son. And as we will see, Jesus was not the only man who walked on the water that night.

Mark adds a puzzling detail: **"and would have passed by them"** (Mark 6:48). He was not abandoning them. When God showed His glory to Moses, He said, **"I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by"** (Exodus 33:22), and to Elijah, **"behold, the LORD passed by"** (1 Kings 19:11). Some readers see Jesus' passing by as a showing of God's glory in the same way; others take it simply as walking alongside or going ahead of them, so that they could see him and take heart. The text does not explain it.

"It Is a Spirit"

> **Matthew 14:26** *And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.*
>
> **Matthew 14:27** *But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.*

"It is a spirit." The Greek word is *phantasma*, *an apparition*, *a ghost*. In the grey light before dawn they saw a figure walking toward them on the waves, and their first thought was that it was a ghost. Sailors in that world told stories of spirits on the water, and a figure walking on the sea at night could only be something unearthly. **"And they cried out for fear."** These grown men, hardened fishermen, screamed.

"But straightway Jesus spake unto them." At once. He did not leave them in their terror.

"Be of good cheer." *Take courage!* It is the same word he spoke to the paralysed man (Matthew 9:2; story 44), and that he would speak to his disciples on the night before the cross: **"be of good cheer; I have overcome the world"** (John 16:33).

"It is I." In Greek, *egō eimi — I am*, or *it is I*. They thought it was a ghost; he told them it was he. These are the same words he spoke to the woman at the well, **"I that speak unto thee am he"** (John 4:26; story 43), and the same words the healed blind man used of himself, **"I am he"** (John 9:9). Here they mean exactly what the King James Version says: *It's me — not a ghost.*

"Be not afraid." *Stop being afraid.*

"Lord, If It Be Thou"

> **Matthew 14:28** *And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.*
>
> **Matthew 14:29** *And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.*

"Lord, if it be thou." Peter was the first to speak, as he so often was. *If it really is you.* It was not doubt so much as a desire to be sure — and to be with him.

“Bid me come unto thee on the water.” Peter did not ask to walk on water for the sake of it. He asked to come *to Jesus*. And he did not simply jump out; he asked for a word. *Command me to come.*

“And he said, Come.” One word. That was all Peter had to stand on — but it was enough. Paul wrote, **“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”** (Romans 10:17). Peter heard a word from Jesus, and he acted on it.

“And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.” Here is something that is easy to read past: Peter walked on the water. A fisherman from Bethsaida, a man like any other, stepped over the side of a boat in the middle of a wind-swept lake, put his feet on the waves, and walked. Whatever power held Jesus up held Peter up too.

This matters for understanding the story. Walking on water was not something Jesus could do because he was God, and which no man could share. God made it possible for His Son — and for a man who believed his Son’s word. Jesus later said, **“He that believeth 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”** (John 14:12).

Beginning to Sink

> **Matthew 14:30** *But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.*
>
> **Matthew 14:31** *And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*

“But when he saw the wind boisterous.” *Boisterous* means *strong*, *violent*. The wind had not changed. The waves were no higher than when Peter climbed out of the boat. What changed was where Peter was looking. He took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the wind and the waves. **“He was afraid.”**

“And beginning to sink.” He did not drop like a stone. He *began* to sink — slowly, as his fear grew.

“He cried, saying, Lord, save me.” Three words in English, two in Greek — *Kyrie, sōson me*. It is one of the shortest prayers in the Bible, and it was answered at once.

“And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him.” Not after a lecture. Not after Peter had sunk and struggled. *Immediately*. Jesus was right there.

“O thou of little faith.” *Little-faith* — one word in Greek, *oligopiste*, as though it were a nickname. Not *no* faith: Peter had enough faith to get out of the boat, which none of the others did. But it was small, and it wavered.

“Wherefore didst thou doubt?” The word for “doubt” is *distazō*, from *dis*, *twice*, and means *to waver*, *to stand in two places*, *to be of two minds*. It is used only twice in the New Testament: here, and of some of the disciples when they saw the risen Christ (Matthew 28:17). Peter’s eyes and mind were pulled two ways — toward Jesus and toward the waves. James describes the man who prays this way: **“For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed”** (James 1:6). Peter, wavering, began to sink into the very waves James describes.

“Of a Truth Thou Art the Son of God”

> **Matthew 14:32** *And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.*

> **Matthew 14:33** *Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.*

"And when they were come into the ship." Jesus and Peter walked back to the boat together — Peter, it seems, walking on the water again with Jesus holding him.

"The wind ceased." As in the first storm, the wind stopped. John adds a further wonder: **"Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went"** (John 6:21). The boat that had struggled all night to cross the lake was suddenly at the shore.

"Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him." The word for "worshipped" is *proskyneō*, which means *to bow down*, *to kneel* or *to prostrate oneself* before someone in reverence or homage. It was used of honouring God, and also of honouring a king or a great person: in Jesus' own parable, the servant who owed his king ten thousand talents **"fell down, and worshipped him"** (Matthew 18:26). The disciples bowed before the one whom God had shown to be His Son.

"Of a truth thou art the Son of God." After the first storm they asked, **"What manner of man is this?"** (Mark 4:41). Now they answered their own question: *Truly you are the Son of God*. Not *Thou art God*, but *Thou art the Son of God* — the one God sent, the one God anointed, the one through whom God's power had calmed the sea. This is what John wrote his Gospel to make known: **"that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God"** (John 20:31).

Mark adds an honest note about the disciples' hearts: **"For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened"** (Mark 6:52). Only that afternoon they had seen him feed five thousand with five loaves. If they had understood what that meant, they would not have been so astonished that he could come to them on the sea. Their understanding was slow — like ours.

Where the Story Leads

To the Messiah

A greater than Jonah. Jonah also slept in a boat in a great storm while the sailors were terrified. The sailors woke him: **"What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God"** (Jonah 1:6; story 31). The storm stopped only when Jonah was thrown into the sea. In the boat on Galilee, Jesus was woken, and the storm stopped at his word. Jesus himself said, **"behold, a greater than Jonas is here"** (Matthew 12:41). Jonah was thrown into the sea to save the sailors; Jesus would give his own life to save the world, and would come up out of death as Jonah came up out of the fish.

The one to whom God gave all authority. In the storm the disciples saw that wind and sea obeyed him. After his resurrection Jesus said, **"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth"** (Matthew 28:18) — *given*. God exalted him to His own right hand, **"Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion"** (Ephesians 1:21). Every power that rises against God's people, natural or spiritual, is under the feet of the one God raised and seated in heaven.

The Son of God. The disciples confessed him as *the Son of God*, and that is exactly what he is. God's own voice had declared it at his baptism: **"This is my beloved Son"** (Matthew 3:17). Peter would confess it again: **"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"** (Matthew 16:16).

He prays for his own. On the mountain Jesus prayed while his disciples struggled on the lake, and he saw them toiling. Now, risen and ascended, **"he ever liveth to make intercession for them"** (Hebrews 7:25). He sees, and he intercedes, and in God's time he comes.

No more sea. The sea in Scripture often stands for chaos, danger and the restless nations. At the end of the book of Revelation John wrote of the new creation, **"and there was no more sea"** (Revelation 21:1). The one who calmed the sea on Galilee will one day reign over a world where no storm will ever threaten God's people again.

To the Grace Administration

Not a spirit of fear. Twice the disciples were overcome with fear. **"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind"** (2 Timothy 1:7). **"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"** (Philippians 4:6-7). The peace Jesus had asleep in the stern is the peace God gives.

Rest on the word. Jesus said, *Let us pass over unto the other side*, and *Come*. The disciples were safe the whole time because his word had been given. Under grace, God's promises are given in His Word, and they stand: **"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen"** (2 Corinthians 1:20). Abraham **"staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith ... being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform"** (Romans 4:20-21).

Keep your eyes on him. Peter walked while he looked at Jesus and sank when he looked at the waves. **"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith"** (Hebrews 12:2). **"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth"** (Colossians 3:2).

Do not waver. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed" (James 1:6). God gives believers **"the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked"** (Ephesians 6:16).

When you sink, call out. Peter's prayer was three words long, and the answer was immediate. **"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you"** (1 Peter 5:7). The disciples in the first storm asked, *Carest thou not?* The answer is: *He careth for you*.

He has not left you. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). God had promised Israel, **"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee"** (Isaiah 43:2).

To the Topic of Fear and Faith

- **Storms come** — even to those who are doing exactly what Jesus told them to do.
- **His word stands,** even when the storm says otherwise.
- **His sleep was not indifference;** he cared.
- **Fear forgets what faith remembers.**
- **Faith acts on a word** — "Come."
- **Faith looks at him, not at the wind.**
- **Little faith is still faith** — Peter walked.
- **When faith wavers, call out,** and he will catch you.

- **He sees you toiling,** even when you cannot see him.

The Main Takeaway

At the end of a long day of teaching, Jesus told his disciples, "Let us pass over unto the other side," and fell asleep on a cushion in the stern; a great storm arose and the boat began to fill, and the terrified fishermen woke him: "Master, carest thou not that we perish?"; he arose, rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace, be still," and there was a great calm, and they feared exceedingly, asking, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Months later, after he fed the five thousand, he sent them across the lake and went up a mountain alone to pray; all night they toiled at the oars against a contrary wind, and in the fourth watch he came to them walking on the sea; they cried out, "It is a spirit," but he said, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid"; Peter asked to come to him, and at the word "Come" he walked on the water, until he looked at the wind and began to sink, crying, "Lord, save me"; Jesus caught him at once, saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"; when they came into the boat the wind ceased, and the disciples bowed before him, saying, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God." God had given His Son authority even over the wind and the sea — and the same power held up a fisherman who believed his word.

- **His word holds** — "Let us pass over unto the other side."
- **He cares,** even when he seems to be asleep.
- **He sees you toiling** and comes to you.
- **Take courage** — "It is I; be not afraid."
- **Step out on his word.**
- **Keep your eyes on him.**
- **When you sink, cry out** — he catches you at once.

For Our Learning — The People

- **Jesus.** The Son of God; asleep in the storm, praying on the mountain, walking on the sea.
- **The twelve disciples.** Experienced fishermen, terrified twice; came to confess him as the Son of God.
- **Peter.** Asked for a word, walked on the water, began to sink, cried out and was caught.
- **The people in the "other little ships."** Caught in the first storm and saved by its calming.
- **The crowd.** Fed with five loaves and two fish, and wanting to make Jesus king by force (John 6:15).

For Our Learning — Customs and Orientalisms

- **The Sea of Galilee** — a freshwater lake about 13 miles by 7, some 700 feet below sea level.
- **Sudden storms** — cold winds pouring down from the heights onto the warm lake.
- **Galilean fishing boats** — open wooden boats, about 27 feet long, for sail and oar (the "Jesus boat" found in 1986).
- **The stern** — the raised deck at the back, where the helmsman sat.
- **"The pillow"** — the cushion kept in the boat for the helmsman or a passenger.

- **The four watches of the night** — the Roman division of the night into four three-hour watches; the fourth from 3 to 6 a.m.
- **The furlong (stadion)** — about 607 feet; 25 to 30 furlongs is about three miles.
- **Ghosts on the water** — the common fear of spirits seen at sea.
- **Bowing down (proskynesis)** — kneeling or prostrating oneself in homage, to God or to a king.

For Our Learning — Figures of Speech

A figure of speech is a deliberate departure from the plain, ordinary way of saying something, used by God to add emphasis and feeling. These are the ones in this story:

- **Prosopopoeia (personification)** — "rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still" (Mark 4:39); "the wind and the sea obey him" (4:41): the wind and sea addressed and spoken of as if they could hear and obey.
- **Repetition** — "great" three times: a great storm, a great calm, a great fear (Mark 4:37, 39, 41).
- **Erotesis (questions for effect)** — "carest thou not that we perish?" (4:38); "Why are ye so fearful?" (4:40); "What manner of man is this …?" (4:41); "wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:31).
- **Antithesis (setting opposites against each other)** — "a great storm" and "a great calm"; Jesus asleep in peace and the disciples in terror.
- **Ellipsis (words left out)** — "it is I" (Matthew 14:27), *egō eimi*, "I am [he]," with the rest understood.
- **Simile** — "like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed" (James 1:6), describing the doubter.
- **Idiom** — "they feared exceedingly" (Mark 4:41), literally "they feared a great fear."

What the Bible Actually Says

- **Jesus said, "Let us pass over unto the other side,"** before the storm.
- **He was asleep on a cushion in the stern.**
- **The disciples asked, "carest thou not that we perish?"**
- **He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace, be still."**
- **The wind ceased and there was a great calm.**
- **He asked why they had no faith.**
- **They asked, "What manner of man is this?"**
- **After the feeding of the five thousand, he sent the disciples away and prayed alone on a mountain.**
- **The crowd wanted to make him king by force** (John 6:15).
- **In the fourth watch he came to them walking on the sea.**
- **They thought he was a spirit; he said, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."**
- **Peter walked on the water at Jesus' word,** began to sink when he saw the wind, and was caught.
- **The disciples bowed and said, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God."**
- **The Bible does not say Jesus walked on water because he was God;** Peter walked on it too.

God’s Will and Intent

- **God gave His Son authority over the wind and the sea.**
- **God keeps His word** — what Jesus said, came to pass.
- **God cares for His people** in every storm.
- **God sees those who toil** and comes to help them.
- **God wants His people to trust His word** and not to fear.
- **God makes possible what is impossible** for those who believe His word.
- **God revealed Jesus as His Son** — and raised him, and seated him above every power.