

LEST YE FAINT

by

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CHAPTER ONE THE COMPLETE BREAKDOWN OF FAITH

“Carest thou not that we perish?” (Mark 4:38).

THE WEIRD CRIES of the coyote in the prairie wilds are rivaled only by the mingled moans of despairing hearts in the darkness of adversity. Down, down—down the declivities of a chasm of grief, disappointment or pain goes the sinking soul which has, at least for the time, lost its grip upon the anchorage of faith.

If the question were asked, **“Why art thou cast down, O my soul?”** (Psalm 42:11) the plunge of our spirits downward would at once be broken. There is no legitimate reason for the disintegration of inward fortitude when our blessed Lord is a present help in trouble, and when His sustaining grace is amply sufficient for our every requirement.

“Hope thou in God!” will prove for us, as well as for David of old, a profitable prescription. The practical point of importance in the hour of adversity is to turn our eyes from the tempest to the One who is mighty to deliver.

The varied experiences of the disciples are rich in information and encouragement for us.

We follow them to mountain heights, across the plains and over the waters in the company of their Lord and ours. The discerning eye of the student of Scripture must be alert to observe how at points, as the mother eagle is said to push her young birds from the nest to exercise their wings, the Master sought to strengthen their pinions of faith.

The fearful storms, sudden and unexpected, the hungry throngs and no bread, the long hours of toil and no catch—these and many like experiences were designed to strengthen the sinews of faith and to produce stalwarts for conquests in after years.

But now, let us witness how the Master met a maritime menace, and how the fever of fear was overcome by the Great Physician.

The Sudden Storm

It was evening, and the lengthening shadows were being retarded by the delaying action of the fading rays in the afterglow of the setting sun.

“Let us pass over unto the other side” (Mark 4:35), advised the Master, following a day of instruction and counsel.

Obedient to His Word, the disciples launched out on what was to prove a most eventful voyage, so symbolical of life as you and I meet it with its inevitable vicissitudes. And we must not overlook a delightful suggestion found in the words, **“and they took Him even as He was”** (Mark 4:36).

How ill-content are so many in our day to take Him as He is. So many will not take Him as the divine Son of God, others will not take Him as the One who alone is able to save. Still others will not take Him as the One at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore (Psalm 16:11).

Oh, do take Him as the satisfying, sustaining, all-supplying Saviour and Lord, in Whom ye are complete (Colossians 2:10).

THE CONTRARY WIND

“There arose a great storm of wind” (Mark 4:37).

The very terminology of the Inspired Record leads us to the conclusion that this was not an ordinary tempest. But how subtle is the wind, **“Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth”** (John 3:8).

They felt the gentle stir of an animated atmosphere against their weather-beaten cheeks. They saw the slight ripple of the erstwhile still waters in the lessening light of a fading day. Then the white caps began to appear and to multiply, as myriads of miniature fairies, dancing upon the watery surface.

As though not content with child-play, the wind, in a sterner display, whipped the white caps into frenzied, dashing waves, growing by the moment in size and turbulence, attacking and tossing the boat of the disciples, even as a professional wrestler tries to overpower his opponent. It was a **“great storm.”**

The reader will call to mind that **“contrary winds”** is a term, aptly chosen by the Holy Spirit, to symbolize false doctrine, the dissemination of which is just as subtle as the wind which blows. It causes a little ripple in the peaceful confidence of the soul without too much notice or concern at first. Then the “white caps” of a growing instability begin to manifest themselves.

They are warning signals of a dangerous course in the life. If not corrected, they will inevitably eventuate in the waves of a restless attitude toward the clear and concise precepts of divine revelation.

Then the testimony capsizes in the waves of evident dissatisfaction with the way of the Lord, and one’s faith suffers shipwreck. Of course, winds will blow, but the Christian sailor’s ever-faithful Pilot says, **“Let us pass over unto the other side.”**

He knew the storm would rage, but it is clear that He intended them to reach the haven safely.

THE CONFRONTING WAVES

This was a real experience. It has all the elements of vivid drama, but it was real. They were well out from the point of embarkation but still not in sight of the port of entry—and they were in the midst of a “**Great Storm**”. The wind, though strong enough to blow them off their course, was not the chief concern. It was the waves which filled them with terror —high, horrible, hard-striking waves which beat relentlessly against their little craft. Defensive measures were the only move of which these experienced sailors were capable, and even their collective effort was hopelessly weak in the midst of such powerful billows.

As the contrary winds are symbolic of false doctrine, so the waves are indicative of troubles. “**All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me,**” the Psalmist lamented. His may have been high waves and rough billows, but they had not ALL gone over him. This is just a common illusion in the soul of the one going through deep waters of sickness, sorrow or disappointment. We become so occupied with our own case that we are prone to forget that others are in desperate straits as well.

What caused the boisterous waves? The wind, of course. And it is the contrary wind of false doctrine which accounts for the rough sailing for so many. One who is built up in that most holy faith through the pure truth of God’s Word will meet turbulent waters from time to time, but such an one has the comfort and confidence of the Captain within his barque Who furnishes grace and strength for the trials being met.

Nor are life’s most grievous problems those of sickness or affliction. The hottest tears shed and the most distressful emotions experienced have been displayed by those who had erred from the way of righteousness and had fallen into shame and reproach. Their crafts were blown off the charted course by the contrary winds of doctrine, and the waves of bitterness, grief and remorse were but the disillusioning results. To reach the “**other side**” with the Lord necessitates a sweet and willing concurrence of our hearts with His holy desires.

The Saddened Sailors

The abnormalcy of reactions on the part of the disciples must not eclipse for us the spiritual import of the record. The Holy Spirit reported this experience of the long ago, not merely for interesting reading, but for profitable consideration; and the logical sequence of matters makes for an integrated message of no mean proportions. The context gives us three points of simple development. First, the filling boat; second, the fearful minds; and, third, the faithless hearts:

THE FILLING BOAT

It was a small craft in which the disciples were sailing, hardly sturdy enough to cope with such roughness, even as the individual, of which it so aptly speaks, is utterly defenseless in himself to meet the storms of life. And the waters will overflow.

In the violence of the storm, the waves dashed with telling force against the tossing boat, and then began to leap over the sides as the intrusion of a most unwelcome guest.

The strenuous efforts of the sailors in bailing out the water was rapidly becoming a losing battle. The little vessel was beginning to fill.

THE FEARFUL MINDS

It was evident to every sane individual that this present condition could not exist without disaster becoming inevitable. As we know human life, fear in such moments is the most logical reaction.

Fear is an accompaniment of sin, as was evidenced by the hiding of Adam and Eve following their expulsion from the Garden of Eden; and, since all have sinned, all are susceptible to fear.

Everywhere people fear trials and troubles. Few fear the consequences of sin, even when the portents of danger become increasingly evident in the handwriting on the walls of conscience. And fewer still fear God sufficiently to faithfully keep His commandments even though this is the whole duty of man. These sailors were terrified, as was proved by the first question which Jesus put to them, **“Why are ye so fearful?”** (Mark 4:40).

Perhaps the same inquiry comes to us in the varied storms of life which tend to distress our minds and disturb our souls.

THE FAITHLESS HEARTS

That fear paralyzes energy is a fact which no one would seriously question, but do we realize that fear destroys faith? Such was the case with the disciples.

We might be disposed to feel that they had ample reason to become completely undone, but the Master would not agree with us. He demanded, and that pointedly, **“Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?”** Fear and faith do not co-exist in the heart. Isaiah said, **“I will trust and not be afraid”** (Isaiah 12:2).

The Psalmist advanced similar testimony. The disciples were afraid but did not trust, and in this respect we bear a resemblance to them. As we travel life's seas it is eminently essential that we become spiritually equipped to face any eventuality which may arise. His promise is that the waters shall not overflow. We must believe him.

Someone has said, “If I could see as He sees, I would not be afraid. I cannot see as He sees, but I can hear what He says. And He says, **‘Be not afraid’**.”

The Sleeping Saviour

“And he (Jesus) was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow” (Mark. 4:38).

Can the reader conceive of a ship sinking when the Mighty Maker of land and sea was on board?

It was He who had said, **“Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed”** (Job 38:11).

Yet, the reader can imagine how the disciples, in adversity, can sadly overlook the fact that the Saviour is near at hand. We so readily turn to bailing out the water instead of believing in His power to stay the waves.

HE HEARD THEIR CALL

“He that keepeth thee will not slumber” (Psalm 121:3).

But the Saviour was sleeping. The text so declares. Is this a contradiction? No, we are assured that the Holy Spirit does not contradict Himself in the Inspired Record. Here is one of the mysteries of His deity. The fact remains, asleep or not asleep, He always hears the supplications of His people.

He heard them when they called. And what an outburst it was! Characterized by desperation and disbelief, they cried aloud, **“Master, carest thou not that we perish?”**

“Does Jesus care when our heart is pained
Too deeply for mirth and song,
And the burdens press and the cares distress
And the day grows weary and long?
Oh, yes, He cares, I know He cares
His heart is touched with my grief.”

The question which naturally arises is, Why did they not call Him sooner?

Why do we delay our heart supplications until we have exhausted every human scheme to effect relief of our problems? Of course He cared. Has not the Holy Spirit said, **“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you”** (I Peter 5:7).

It seems to become us to go to great ends to prove our own helpless inability, and then, with faithless hearts, blame the Lord for not doing something about our case. But we should never for a moment entertain the thought that He does not care. One look at Calvary should forever cure this subtle weakness. One look at Calvary and hearts become atune with the melody, “No one ever cared for me like Jesus.”

Our blessed Lord left the ivory palaces for a world of sin, sorrow and shame because He cared for us.

- He Who was rich became poor because He cared for us.
- He turned from heavenly praise of the seraphim to hear the jeers and taunts of blasphemous men because He cared for us.
- He trekked the shore of Galilee with no place to lay his head because He cared for us.
- He voluntarily endured not one but a thousand deaths on the old rugged cross with its unspeakable shame and reproach because He cared for us.
- He graciously and freely supplies us with celestial resources for every daily need because He cares for us.

He tenderly invites us to come unto His throne, there to place our supplications for dispensing grace to help in the nick of time, because He cares for us. He is now, through love, interceding unceasingly at the throne of heaven in our behalf because He cares. In due course He will come with triumphant glory to evacuate His bride from this place of sin, sorrow, death and impending wrath, all because He loves us with an everlasting love.

HE HURRIED TO THEIR AID

No, they would not perish. Quickly he was at their side. He took over their case. The tide always turns when the Lord enters the picture. How wonderful that we may in any day cast all our care upon Him. How weird must have been the thought of perishing, and the angry waves gave prominence to the probability.

But what does it mean to perish?

Has anyone been able to lead us into a clear and full comprehension of what it involves? To be plunged into the watery deep is not, necessarily, to perish without hope. But even at that the thought was grim, and the disciples were terror stricken. Their resources had been pathetically depleted and desperation paints scenes only in drab colors. In rapid succession there flashed on the screen of their consciousness such impressions as home, loved ones, uncompleted tasks, pressing responsibilities, cherished ambitions . . . But now the Master stands by them.

There is something solemn, sobering and stabilizing about the fact of the Saviour's presence. **"Go . . . and, lo, I am with you . . ."** Is this not what He said in substance to the disciples as they launched forth? Had they forgotten? Not exactly, but, as is true with us, the tremendous import of the fact failed to grip them.

What they did in their panic they might have done in the peace of an asserting assurance — acknowledge His presence. When circumstances at last drove them to do what faith would have earlier prompted, their cry was a pathetic display of distrust, suspicion and irreverence. But how gracious is our Lord. We may blunder in the expression of our lips, but if it transmits the crying needs of our hearts, He so interprets the plea and rushes reinforcements when most needed. The Master came to their aid.

The Surprising Surcease

The storm was still raging. It would seem that the small craft could stand no more of such fierce battering. Nor were the sailors equal to more of such severe strain. This was the point of bitter extremity.

JESUS WHISPERED "PEACE"

TWO operations were performed by the Lord, one upon the sorrowing souls and the other upon the surface of the sea. **"Who by his strength . . . stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, AND the tumult of the people."** What did it really matter about the waves if the disciples' turbulent hearts were calmed?

An elderly Christian man of our acquaintance was rushed to the hospital for an emergency operation. The son, arriving just as the father was being wheeled to the operating room, inquired, "How are you, Dad?"

The father replied with quiet confidence, "Even though the storm is raging without, Son, there is always calmness when the Prince of Peace is in the vessel."

This is what the disciples needed to know. This is what we, too, must learn. **“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”** (John 14:27).

The peace which our Saviour gives;

- Is exclusive in its origin, for it is a peace which the world cannot give.
- Is exceptional in its character for it is not what the world speaks about, fights and dies for—an uncertain, unstable, unsatisfying something to grasp at but never to be sure the grip is firm and lasting.

No, it is something real, something restful, something refreshing. It is excellent in its exhilarating force for it is the assurance of forgiven sins, the confidence of a present salvation and the certainty of future glory. It is the joy of a bestowed victory, the knowledge of a new relationship and the satisfaction of a new life. It is second only to love in sweetness, in sound and in significance.

“When Jesus spoke peace to my soul,
He whispered ‘Thy faith makes thee whole’;
Full pardon I give, and now thou shalt live
With this wonderful peace in thy soul.”

JESUS SAID, “BE STILL”

He rebuked the wind and commanded the angry waves. There was an immediate response to the authority and power of His word. The marked contrast between the sudden stillness and the erstwhile confusion filled the disciples with great wonderment. In fact, **“they feared exceedingly.”**

A miracle had been performed before their eyes. Now, they would not perish. Their master had proved that He cared. If we may read their minds, it was their plan that He should help them bail out the water in their frantic effort to offset the vicious thrusts of the heaving waves.

How true it is that **“His ways are not our ways.”**

Just what became of the **“other little ships”** (Mark 4:36), we are not told.

Our hearts should go out in pity to those who do not have the Saviour with them when called upon to go through the deep waters.

Experience has proved, and Scripture corroborates the fact, that our blessed Lord may speak peace to needy hearts without smoothing out the waves.

In the city of London, Ontario, the author was called upon to visit a Christian woman who, some twenty years previously, had become incurably crippled in an automobile accident. A description of her condition had been given but we found it to be much worse than we had anticipated. She was unable to move an arm, a limb or her head. Her mouth could be opened wide enough only to admit a small particle of food. Added to this was a violent, palsied tremor throughout her body. For twenty years she had been so afflicted.

An earnest attempt on our part to sympathize with her brought this immediate comment:

“It’s all right; its all right. He has given me peace within.”

The Lord had spoken peace to her heart, but, for reasons to become clear when we know all things, He had not commanded the waves to be still. They continue to this writing to lash relentlessly against her little barque.

The Sunny Shore

It is so common that it cannot be surprising how the Lord’s disciples allow the sudden squalls of life’s varying vicissitudes to obscure the goal on which He has commanded them to fix their eyes. For the time, these followers in the long ago had lost sight of the other shore toward which they had started. They were consumed with their confronting problem and unconscious of His contravening power.

But now the prow of the ship is cutting its course through the still waters. Progress is resumed. The value of the lesson learned cannot be comprehended fully.

THEY CROSSED THE SEA

HOW simply the narrative continues in the next chapter.

“And they came over unto the other side” (Mark 5:1).

His beginning word assured them of their destination. If our faith were but more simple we should take Him at His word.

Regardless of the storms which we may meet, we must be assured that we shall reach the other side. Satan would gleefully stir up a storm any time if he could thereby turn our eyes from heaven—the Homeland of the Christian. He would destroy our hope and disturb our course.

Amid the illuminating facts of the Sacred Page, this diabolical stratagem must never become effective against us. The day will come, as come it must, when the last stroke is made, the oars put in place and our little barque will dock at the port of glory before the radiant beauty of our blessed Lord.

JESUS WAS WITH THEM ALL THE WAY

“Earthly friends may prove untrue,
Doubts and fears assail.
One still loves and cares for you.
Jesus never fails!”

Those weary and forlorn sailors found this to be gloriously true.

- He might have disowned them for questioning His concern for them, but He didn’t.

- He might have refused to help because they had delayed so long to acknowledge His presence, but He didn't.
- He might have said, "I will step to the other shore. You cope with the storm as best as you can," but He didn't.

Nor will He forsake us in the way. He is a present help in trouble and a constant joy in prosperity.

When the children of Israel were so miraculously delivered to the other side of the Red Sea, Moses and his people sang, "**Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed; thou hast guided them IN THY STRENGTH unto thy holy habitation**" (Exodus 15:13).

This is precisely what He is doing for all the redeemed. "**I go to prepare a place for you . . . I will receive you unto Myself.**" This is "**the other side**" for the believer and this is His guarantee of a safe and certain arrival at his holy destination.

The meaning of "**preparation**" is *to get or make ready, to appoint, to be fixed, to direct or establish, to fit or qualify.*

This is our Saviour's present undertaking. The motive, manner and method are respectively, His love, labour and loyalty. And what shall we say about the magnitude and the magnificence of His preparations? Simply this, never let a storm in life, regardless of its proportions, eclipse the inexplicable grandeur of that sunlit shore which awaits every justified soul, radiantly illuminated by the Lamb Who is the light thereof.

"And they came over unto the other side"

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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