

“KEEP YOUR FOCUS IN THE STORM”

TEXT: Matt. 14:22-33

THESIS: To encourage believers going through trials to keep focused on the Savior, not on the storm.

INTRO: A. Storms are inevitable. They are also necessary. We may enjoy the sunshine, but we also need the storms. No one wants storms all the time but often the dark, stormy times in life help us to build character and test our trust in the Lord. When the winds are howling, the waves are raging and the rain is pelting us, it is easy to lose our focus and forget that we are His disciples. So the message today is designed to help you “KEEP YOUR FOCUS IN THE STORM.”

B. Jesus sends His disciples away (v.22), knowing the storm awaited them. He made them leave without Him. The sea was calm when they left Him. The storm didn't come till they were in the

midst of the sea. They are committed. They can't turn back. Things are beginning to look hopeless. (But they forgot Jesus was on the mountaintop, praying! And also that He would never forsake them! They had lost their focus!)

I. THE DISCIPLES LOST THEIR FOCUS:

A. They Focused On The Storm: v.24-26

1. All they could see was their trouble: the wind, waves, rain, clouds...
2. Even when Jesus showed up, they mistook him for more trouble. v.26b
3. They began to lose it; they cry and scream "for fear."
 - a. They couldn't go to Him, so He came to them!
 - b. His first words to them were "Be of good cheer" V.27
 - c. His next words should have comforted them: "It is I; be not afraid."

ILLUS: When Jesus appeared to Paul He had to identify Himself ("I am Jesus...") for Paul didn't yet know Him, but with the disciples He simply says "It is I." As His sheep they should have known His voice. (Of course it might have been a little difficult to hear Him in the storm...it always is!)

We too need to trust Him in our storm and know that He will "never leave us nor forsake us." We should hear His voice of comfort over the storm and let it calm our fears. (We won't know His voice then if we don't get used to it now – thru reading His Word!)

II. PETER GOT FOCUSED:

A. He Focused On Jesus: v.28

1. He didn't focus on the storm. (The source of his troubles)
2. He didn't focus on the ship. (The natural means of help)
3. He didn't focus on the sailors. (His weak brethren)
 - a. His focus brought separation from the above. ↑
 - b. His focus brought determination; now that his eyes were off the storm and on the Lord of the storm, he was determined to do the impossible.
 - 1) He didn't wait till Jesus calmed the storm.
 - 2) He didn't wait till Jesus got on board the boat.
 - 3) He didn't wait for encouragement from his friends.
 - 4) He did wait till he received instructions from the Lord. v.29a "Come"

QUOTE: "It is an instance of Peter's faith and resolution, that he ventured upon the water when Christ bid him. To quit the safety of the ship, and throw himself into the jaws of death, to despise the threatening waves he so lately dreaded, argued a very strong dependence upon the power and word of Christ. What difficulty or danger could stand before such a faith and such a zeal.

It was very kind and condescending in Christ, that he was pleased to own him in it, v. 29. He might have condemned the proposal as foolish and rash; nay, and as proud and assuming; "Shall Peter pretend to do as his Master does?" But Christ knew that it came from a sincere and zealous affection to him, and graciously accepted of it. Note, Christ is well pleased with the expressions of his people's love, though mixed with manifold infirmities, and makes the best of them." (from Matthew Henry's Commentary)

- c. His focus made him “go overboard!” but it enabled him to walk on water!
- d. His focus restored his faith! V.29b

ILLUS: Imagine Jesus’ pleasure at Peter’s faith and obedience! Imagine the disciples amazement at Peter’s boldness! Imagine Peter’s astonishment and excitement as he walked on the water! “Hey fellows, check it out! I’m water walking! Come on in, the waters fine!”

III. PETER LOST HIS FOCUS:

A. He Focuses On The Storm: v.30a

1. He was more focused at a distance!
2. The further he got from the boat the more fearful he got.
3. He began to focus on the natural instead of the supernatural.

ILLUS: The others are saying, “I’m glad I didn’t go there!” Peter’s faith looked like foolishness now to them. They said “It must not have been the Lord – Peter went down.” Peter is saying “I think this whole water-walking business was a mistake. I am a fisherman, I should have known better than to get out of the boat in a storm.”

Never second guess a decision made in faith, based upon God’s Word. “Never undo in doubt what you did in faith.” Never undo in a moment of weakness what you did in a moment of strength.

When you are sure God tells you to do something, trust Him, not your reasoning. If God leads you to give a large amount of money to His work, don’t undo that when you get your bank statement. If God leads you to step out on faith to serve Him, don’t quit because of circumstances. Believers lose their separation from the natural and fail to trust the supernatural; they lose their determination because they begin to look at the situation.

IV. PETER REGAINED HIS FOCUS:

A. He Refocuses On Jesus: v.30b “...he cried, Lord, save me!”

1. When faith is weak, prayer should be strong!
2. When in doubt, call for help!
3. When you are sinking, go back to the One you trusted in the 1st place!
4. When the circumstances overwhelm you, get your eyes back on Jesus!
 - a. Apparently Peter is back walking on the water back to the ship (or possibly Jesus carried Him back)! V.31
 - b. The doubting disciples saw Peter’s regained focus and then they knew (finally) that it was indeed Jesus on the water and now in the boat.

ILLUS: No doubt now they wished that they had tried “water-walking” like Peter! They no doubt wished that they had had a measure of Peter’s seemingly foolhardy faith. But their opportunity was gone.

You may only get one opportunity to act in faith, trusting the Lord in the storm. Don’t lose it. You will regret it again and again. I can envision the disciples talking among themselves: “Remember that time when Peter got out of the boat and walked on water? Wouldn’t it have been wonderful if we had joined him?”

V. THE DISCIPLES GOT REFOCUSED:

A. They Focused On Jesus Again: v.32-33

1. They begin to have a worship service!
2. Guess who led the service! Peter!

ILLUS: You are never wrong to walk by faith. When we do and God blesses us, others will notice! And God will get the glory!

CONCL: Focus is everything. We can either focus on our problems, our circumstances and storms or we can focus on the Lord and His omnipotence! Which will it be for YOU?