

PETER - whose ardour was somewhat damped
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(Matthew 14:25-33)

Simon Peter did many praiseworthy things during the course of his lifetime, but this episode of walking upon the water must rank as one of the greatest. When fear had frayed his nervous energies, and when a seeming apparition had startled the entire crew, the realisation that the Saviour had drawn near was a little too much for Peter's self-control. In the excitement and relief of the moment he cried, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And Jesus said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus."

A Triumphant Response

We must never under-estimate the greatness of Peter's achievement. Surrounded by obvious dangers, and faced with utter impossibilities, Peter found strength in his Lord's command; and forgetting all else, he stepped into the midst of a noisy tempest. And he did not sink. It seems fitting that this should have happened to Peter, for in later days he was destined to be the evangelist of the Church. Few pictures could so aptly reveal the beginning of a Christian journey. When Christ draws near to the tempest-tossed souls of men and women, the sound of His voice brings life's greatest challenge. Eventually the soul is confronted by the call to leave a comparatively safe boat in order to step into the unknown. Reason and doubt would shrink from this; but a burning heart, an eager soul, and a waiting Christ are very hard to deny.

A Terrible Reality

The story presents no difficulties to the man who has responded to a similar invitation. The facts of Christian experience prove that no man was ever engulfed by temptation while he steadfastly looked at his Saviour. Through His enabling grace, it is possible to trample under foot the very waves that would bury us. Yet even the greatest saint is endangered when he loses sight of his Lord. "But when Peter saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink . . ." Frantic despair gripped the sinking man as he cried, "Lord, save me. Possibly he thought he had been unwise to leave the boat; but in later years, saner judgment admitted that the mistake lay in losing sight of his Lord. When he ceased listening to and looking at his Master, dangers overcame him.

A Trembling Request

Peter's prayer is one of the best on record. There are no superfluous words, and no unnecessary finesse of phraseology. It is the quickest, easiest, and most desperate way of reaching the heart of God. "Lord, save me." His sudden cry reveals three vital things. (i) His predicament. He was sinking, and every moment counted if he were to be saved from drowning. (ii) His perception. Christ was near, and was able to save. The ability of the Master more than equalled the demands of the moment. If only He would, He could meet Peter's need. (iii) His Prayer. There was no time to elaborate any details, and no time to observe any ceremonial law. One thing mattered, and that was to be saved. It banished all else from Peter's mind, and he cried, "Lord, save me." This modern world

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would be well advised to emulate Peter's example.

A Timely Reply

"And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? " The surging waves gave up their victim, and as Peter instinctively wiped the water from his eyes, he realized that once again he was standing on the sea. The boat was some distance away, but fear had now disappeared. A new calm had settled upon his mind, for he was conscious that Christ still held his hand. His clothing was saturated with water, but every moment, increasing elation drove the chill from his spirits. Yes, he could walk on the water that would have drowned him. Maybe in after years Paul gave to Peter a text to fit the occasion. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). The secret of every Christian triumph seems to be expressed in the two words: "through Christ."

Hold thou my hand: so weak I am and helpless;
I dare not go one step without Thy aid.
Hold Thou my hand: for then, O loving Saviour,
No dread of ill shall make my soul afraid.

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