

## Understanding and Dealing Properly with the “Storms” of Life, Matthew 8:1-27

The “storms of life” take many forms and consequences. Some:

- Are *personal, physical, and isolating*, vv.1-4;
- Are *peripheral, paralyzing, and painful*, vv.5-13;
- Are *Familial and disrupting* (at best), vv.14-15;
- Affect entire communities, vv.16-17;
- Involve *physical hardships* that are *life-altering*, vv.18-20;
- Force us to make *difficult spiritual choices* (over *physical ones*), vv.21-22;
- Come through *no fault of our own*, vv.23-24;
- *Frighten us* to the core, v.25; and,
- *Test our faith*, v.26.

With this *backdrop* and *context*, let’s consider the “storm” of vv.23-27. Please note some pertinent points of the story:

- The disciples’ *initial faith* led them to *follow and obey*, despite their knowledge of the potential for danger, cf.4:18-22 → 8:18,24.

The Sea of Galilee lies some 700 ft. *below* sea level, and is surrounded by mountains. Cool dry air rushes down these steep slopes (cf. Luke 8:23a, “*descended*”) and clashes with warm moist air rising from the sea producing quick and violent storms (“*great*,” v.24; also, the word for *storm/tempest* is *seimos* {*shaking*}, which is translated as “*earthquake*” in 24:7). Having formerly made their living as *fishermen* on this specific body of water, the disciples were surely aware of the potential danger involved with Jesus’ command, but they obeyed regardless.

- Once the full force of the storm hit, and the boat was being “*covered with waves*,” v.24b (or “*swamped*,” Luke 8:23b), they had enough *faith* and *understanding* to appeal to the *right source*, Jesus, for salvation, v.25.
- Their *extreme fear* and *pleas for help* were met with the same calm and spiritual resoluteness as had been given previously....

Jesus cautioned to the *exuberant* but *naïve* scribe that *following Him* would involve *personal* and *physical sacrifices*- the “comforts of home” being one of them, vv.19-20.

And He, surely shockingly, denied permission of another would-be follower to “*first go and bury my father*” by instead stating that he should “*let the dead bury their own dead*,” vv.21-22. We usually *agree in principle* with Lk.14:26, but often *balk in practice* regarding Matt.8:22! Why, Matt.10:34-36; 4:18-22.

Now, the pleas of His terrified disciples/followers were met with accusations of **timidity** (*deilos* is the same word translated as “cowardly” in Rev.21:8) and **little/weak faith** (cp. 14:31, Peter failing at walking on the water; and, of the disciples worrying about a lack of bread instead of the *leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees*, 16:8). How could He be so insensitive to their fears? Why would He be so harsh in such dire circumstances? Let’s ask and answer a few related (and better) questions to help us understand:

- What was Jesus’ initial command to His disciples? Was it, “Let us go out into the middle of the lake so a storm can drown us all?” Look closely at v.18b, “...**depart to the other side.**” Rom.10:17.
- Did His disciples *yet* understand exactly *who* He was or *why* He had come? No, they didn’t, v.27! It would take another episode involving a stormy night on the Sea of Galilee for them to “get it,” cp.14:22-32,33!
- Now, if their faith had sufficiently matured for them to: 1) know *who* Jesus was; 2) comprehend His *power*; 3) and understand *why* He was here on earth (*what* He came to accomplish); then, **4) they would not have been so unafraid of the storm!**

### **Overcoming your own personal storms of life?**

1. They, too, may be *personal, physical, isolating* like those of the leper; or *paralyzing*, and *painful* like the centurion’s servant. They may involve our *work* and its *relationships* (centurion again), *families* (Peter’s mother-in-law), and *entire communities* (like Capernaum). They may include *physical hardships* that *alter our lives irrevocably* (like the scribe who wanted to follow Jesus) and *force us to make difficult choices* of whether *physical* or *spiritual* things/relationships are more important to us (like the man who ask to bury his father before following Jesus). They may come *through no fault of our own* and *shake and frighten us* to the very core, as the storm did the disciples. All of these are *possible*, and many are *likely* to occur. But know this for certain: Every *storm of life* we face will **test our faith**- and that’s a good thing, for each is an opportunity for growth, endurance, and the perfection of our faith, cf. Jas.1:2-8!
2. But remember Jesus’s words to His disciples as they were terrified by their storm, and be:
  - a. Courageous rather than cowardly; and,
  - b. Faithful rather than faithless, 8:26; 17:20!
3. How?
  - a. Know *who* you’re following, cf. 14:33;
  - b. Understand *His* power over *any* “storm” you face, 8:27; Rom.8:31-39; and,
  - c. Keep your eyes on Him and His command rather than *wind* and *water* of the storm, cf. 14:29-30!