

Held on the waves

Matthew 14:22–33

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Lead verses: Matthew 14:22-33

Let us recall a wonderful story told in the Gospels. It was night and the disciples of our Lord were afloat upon the Sea of Galilee. He had remained upon the quiet mountain-side in prayer to His Father, and we are sure that His disciples had a place in His prayer, but He looked through the darkness and beheld them toiling uselessly, for the waves rolled high. His heart was moved with compassion as He saw how the storm baffled them, and from His peaceful retreat He stepped out upon the sea to go to them. His appearance, as he strode from wave to wave, affrighted them, but His voice quickly calmed them. How sweet must have been the peace that filled them when they heard Him say, "BE OF GOOD CHEER; IT IS I; BE NOT AFRAID"! Aye, it is good to hear the voice of the Lord above the night-storms, and to know in the days of stress that He is nigh.

But Peter, impulsive and full of admiration for his Master, and ready to dare much to be near Him, left the boat to join Him where He walked. Then he found himself in circumstances that were new and strange to him – circumstances in which the creature could only sink and perish. But here comes in the loveliest bit of the wonderful story. He felt his desperate need, and cried out to His Lord, and "immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him," and held him up. And together with the Master of every storm, Peter walked on the very crest of the waves. The gale still raged fiercely and the sea surged and swished about his feet, but he was held up by almighty power, and he walked by the side of his Lord, erect, fearless, and comforted.

Now let us understand the story. The Lord who sits above the water floods, and rules the waves from His throne of eternal calm, does not send succour to His saints as a sympathetic onlooker who knows nothing experimentally of the sorrows they endure. No. He came down upon the waves; He came from the eternal peace of heaven into the storms where His loved ones laboured; the winds blew and the waves tossed about Him. When His disciples saw Him, they were affrighted and supposed that He was a spirit. But He was not a spirit. HE WAS A MAN, AND HE IS A MAN. This is the amazing thing: because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He, the Lord of glory, likewise took part of the same, that He might know in His own experience the fierceness of the storms that beset our weak humanity in their endeavour to overthrow our faith; and He was tempted in all points as we are, apart from sin, and so He can succour us with a sympathy that is perfectly human though divine. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

It was the hand of a Man, in which was the very power of God, that held Peter on that memorable night. It is the hand of a Man – of Jesus, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, that is stretched out to us, and that holds us up upon the very waves that have leaped to our destruction. He is the Son of God, eternal in His being, and omnipotent in power, yet a Man who loved us enough to die for us that He might take from our souls the very fear of death and make us triumph evermore. And He lives again a Man at God's right hand and for evermore makes intercession for us.

We want our readers to lay hold of this great truth, not as a theory, but as a fact to be known first to faith and then blessedly in their experience. Peter's was an individual experience, he

had it for himself, but it is an experience that every Christian may have when seas of trouble roll around. Yes, when sorrows like sea-billows roll, each for himself, may be supported by that hand of gracious power, and be made more than a conqueror in the very circumstances that threaten to swallow him up. What encouragement there is for us in the story – Peter’s need and distress stretched out and reached the Saviour’s heart, and the Saviour’s hand stretched out and reached His sinking saint, and with his need met, his fears calmed and his faith strengthened, Peter walked hand in hand with his Master until the storm ceased.

Is our Lord less able today than He was then? No. Is He less sympathetic? No. He is “the Same yesterday, today and for ever.” We do not see Him as Peter saw Him, but “blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” His hand still upholds His saints, and faith may take hold of Him with a stronger grip than even Peter’s.

[“Held up on the Waves”](#) in *Emmanuel*, part 2: “His All-sufficiency for Our Needs”