

The Authority of Christ Over Trials – Matthew 14:22-33
September 1, 2020

When we consider trials in life, we must first understand that a trial is **an adverse circumstance that God either allows or brings into the lives of His children in order to deepen their faith and commitment to Him**. The trials of life are designed to grow us, even though they cause us to groan. Trials can come from a number of sources and even our sins and their consequences can become God-ordained trials that He uses to grow us if we will repent and learn from them. The problem we encounter quite often is that we focus all of our energy on where the trial is coming from instead of what to do when the trial shows up. Remember, everything that happens to you is under the sovereign, total authority of Jesus Christ and there is no trial that He does not firmly in His grip!

Backdrop:

- 1) This is the first instance in Mathew's Gospel here the disciple are sent out by Jesus all by themselves and the absence of Jesus represents the absence of "God with us", as described by the name Emmanuel.
- 2) Jesus' portrait of prayer represents His time in Communion with God and would reveal the Church's mission and involvement with struggle while He is "absent" in communion with God. Matthew continues in his use of mountain settings as places of revelation (4:8; 5:1; 15:29; 17:1; 28:16) and the suggestion here is that Jesus prays in preparation for the mighty work of revelation and redemption He is about to perform on behalf of His disciples.
- 3) The sea itself holds biblical significance as a place where chaos is both present and active. To be at sea evokes images of death, which is the active power that threatens the goodness of life and to be alone in the boat/church, absence the presence of Jesus paints the picture of demise.
- 4) Jesus' coming to them on the water evokes images not of defying gravity, but rather of overcoming the power of chaos. In biblical thought, only God walks on water and here Matthew is making the claim that the divine presence and assurance of God is mediated through Jesus Christ. Matthew presents Jesus' appearance as an act of both revelation and rescue.
- 5) By telling Peter to walk on the water, Jesus shares with the disciples the same authority He spoke with (Chaps 5-7); acted with (Chaps 8-9) and conferred upon them in Chap 10. Peter's request to walk on the water was problematic first because he took his eyes off Jesus, but secondly, he needed proof of Jesus' presence, which is why he asked to come out of the boat in the first place.
- 6) Peter's walking on water is a representation of Matthew's theology of discipleship in that by giving the disciples a share in the redemptive mission of God, they too had been given the ability to express divine power over chaos and threat.
- 7) The act of worship by the disciples in the boat reflects the gratitude that every believer/church should have when they experience the impossible presence of Jesus with it in its mission.

His Authority Over Trials:

- 1) **The arrival of trials are controlled by Jesus** (vs.22-24) – the trial showed up at the time it was supposed to show up to accomplish the purpose they were designed to accomplish. They were forced to go on the sea as an indication that God had this particular storm in mind for them. The storm's arrival reminds us that obedience to God will sometimes put your right in harm's way because obedience doesn't necessarily remove obstacles.

- 2) **There is encouragement in our trials** (vs. 25-27) – by moving toward them in the storm, Jesus reminds us that we are never absent His view, even when circumstances seem to be swallowing us up. Their fears over what they perceived in the midst of their situation was calmed by His declaration of divinity to the spirit of fear that they were overcome by declaring “*It is I*”, the Greek form of God’s great statement of His deity to Moses in Exodus 3:14.
- 3) **God’s sovereignty is present in our trials** (vs. 32-33) – Jesus showed up on His own timetable, not at the despair of the disciples. By showing up when He did, we are reminded that God works His plans from the perspective of eternity, not our momentary emergency. The sovereignty of Jesus guarantees you that your destination will be reached, regardless of the obstacles that come against you. The presence and experience of God’s delivering power in our lives demands absolute worship because His presence reminds us that despite what we encounter, God’s sovereignty supersedes all adversity.

Summation: The community that experiences weakness and fear in the face of threat is reminded of Jesus’ divine power and the appropriate response is to cry out in sincere, heartfelt prayer.