

Keep Your Eyes on the Prize

Greetings

As we consider today's passage, I want you to remember the significance of **'Faith.'** Listen carefully – Faith is a human act that everyone encompasses. For instance, if I asked you, 'Do you believe Jesus Christ Walked on Water?' 'You may say no, I was not there.' Or What if I asked you, 'Do you check your pharmacist's thoroughness before you purchase your medicine?' 'You may say, of course, I do, but I did not see the Pharmacist prepare the medication.' However, we agree that having Faith means trusting that each result is valid in each question.

If someone stated, 'For me to have faith, I must see proof of what I am basing my faith upon.' However, many people's assertions about faith are fallacious. But we all will agree that Faith is directed to an object, whether it is the Pharmacist filling our meds or Jesus walking on water. You get my Point.

We find that the Bible talks about Faith. For instance, Hebrews 10:38 tells us that **"the just shall live by faith."**

I hope you are as excited as I am this morning because we will investigate the Faith of Saint Peter.

The Bible talks about Faith, and in Peter's defense, even though he failed Jesus many times, Jesus still blessed him because of his great Faith.

The Main Idea of the Text

When Peter affixed his eyes upon Jesus, he, without fear, performed a supernatural act of walking upon water toward Jesus, but the turbulent

winds and huge waves caused him to fear, and his Faith vanished, and he sank.

The Main Idea of the Sermon

We will face fierce winds and waves in our lives; however, if we keep our eyes on Jesus, he will strengthen our Faith to overcome fear because he is our Protector, Preserver, and All-Powerful Prince of Peace.

So please turn with me in your copy of God's Word.

To Matthew 14. Let us look together at vv. 22 –33. Read along with me as I read aloud (The Holy Bible will be read in the Pulpit)

As we consider today's passage, I want you to remember the significance of **'Faith and why its object must be Jesus Christ to receive the Prize. So, Keep Your Eyes on the Prize.**

Considering Saint Peter's predicament this morning, we will find **three facts:** even though his faith waned to fear and sank, he returned to safety. The three facts we find are:

- 1. Your Faith is strengthened when you know you are Protected (v. 30)**
- 2. Your Faith is strengthened when you know you are Preserved (v.31)**
- 3. Your Faith is strengthened when you know you have an all-powerful Prince – the Prince of Peace (v.33) who will never desert you**

Let us Pray

As we begin our study of Matthew this morning, 14:22-33 30-33, Let us first find out what transpired as the first dilemma when Peter's eyes

were affixed on the Prize, Protector, Preserver, and Prince.

1. **Your Faith is strengthened when you know you are Protected** (v. 30)

Again, everyone has Faith, whether a little or a lot. Furthermore, we all direct our Faith toward an object. Indeed, Peter's Faith was strengthened when he saw Jesus walking above the water. Peter must have felt great excitement and possibly fear like the others, but he certainly felt Protected when He saw Jesus walking above the waves - **Protection**.

How about in Acts 12, when St. Peter and the church praying to God for his release displayed great **Faith** when imprisoned by King Herod, who had already killed James, the brother of John, right as the Christian Church was developing? Peter slept between two soldiers awaiting trial and execution the next day but remained steadfast and **Faithful** that indeed the Lord Jesus who rescued him from the water and who rose from the dead and walked among him and the other disciples, Jesus' followers, and the 5000 brethren who witnessed Jesus' ascension into heaven would certainly **Protect** him from Herod's planned execution.

And what about Steven, the first martyred Christian we read about in Acts 6? In Acts 6:5, Luke states that Steven was also a man **full of Faith**. Did he lack Faith in his **Protector**? Did his Protector abandon him? Peter always had escaped death until he, too, was murdered for following Christ Jesus. Jesus never abandoned nor forsook Steven. Steven had tremendous Faith even at his last breath and his prayer -in the act of being executed - Luke writes in Acts 7 Steven was stoned to death. He saw Jesus waiting on him, and he exclaimed before taking his last breath, '**Lord, Receive My Spirit.**'

I cannot tell you why horrendous things happen to good people and why some people seem to have all remarkable things happen to them.

Regardless of what happens in our lives, if Christ is your Lord, you have the greatest **Protector** known. Your life is a moment on earth, whether you live a minute or 100 years. However, eternity is eternal, and that is what we must focus on - eternity with Jesus Christ and other saints who are already with the Lord in Spirit.

How many of you depend on that seatbelt inside the plane when flying? It is funny because we sit in the seat of a big 737 and strap our seatbelts on, which gives us great comfort. In a sense, we put **Faith** in it for protection, but 30,000 feet (about the cruising altitude of a commercial jet) up in the sky, that seat belt would not **protect** from death if the plane were to go down. I do not know about you, but I do not put a lot of Faith in the pilots unless it is someone like Sully Sullenberger. However, you get the Point. **Our Faith increases as we deem the Protector of our well-being to have Power. Jesus is that all-powerful Protector.**

And so, we have found that when Peter stepped off that boat into the water, he demonstrated great **Faith**, but when his eyes turned away from Jesus, he sank. Beloved, do not take your eyes off Jesus no matter what ensues, including the blessings and heartbreaks, joys, and tragedies. He will never forsake or abandon you. That is what He tells us in His word. Keep your eyes on the Prize. **The Prize is to abide with Christ as we fellowship with Him and all the saints in heaven forever.**

As we continue our study of Matthew 14 vv. 22-33 Let us now find out what transpired as the **second dilemma** when Peter **kept** his eyes on the Prize.

2. Your Faith is strengthened when you know you are Preserved (v.31)

Peter's dilemma was not that he had little faith in himself but that his faith in Jesus could **not** stand up to the storm. His Faith got him out of

the boat – but the dilemma or truth demonstrated that his Faith in Christ was insufficient, and he sank. But what did Peter do? **He cried out save me!** When he sank. And, of course, the all-powerful Protector that Jesus is, He will do just that when you call upon Him - **Save You. He is going to offer you Preservation for eternity.**

When Peter called out ‘Save Me!’ Did Jesus let Peter sink? Of course not; Jesus Reached out, Peter reached out, and Jesus brought him to safety, thus **Preserving** His life not just for the moment but eternally. Jesus does not guarantee Preservation in this world, but He does for the future in His Kingdom. Jesus, along with all His attributes, is omniscient

John 3:16 Jesus notes that HE was sent so that **none** should perish but have everlasting life. John 3:36 Jesus also states about **Preservation**, ‘Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son **shall not** see life...’

To have preservation, you must be like Peter and ask Jesus to **“Save Me!”** When your faith is momentarily challenged and weak, do the same as Peter and ask Jesus to **“Save Me! Save me from this doubt and fear.”**

When Peter called out Save me! Jesus reached out, did He not? to Peter in v.31 and took hold of Peter, preserving him from death. In this passage, Jesus is the **Protector** and **Preserver** of Peter’s very being, and Jesus will be that for you today. Step out in Faith like Peter did amongst the storm, **but Keep Your Eyes on Jesus – the Prize.** He, and only He, will, in time, Wipe away all tears, pain, illness, death, insecurity, poverty, and so forth. The Bible says evil will be eradicated.

How many of you know anything about canning food? I do not know how, but my mom does, and my grandparents knew how. But Canning is a method of **preserving** food. Many folks in the past, when people had to prepare for harsh winter weather or a season out of the growing

garden season, would cann their food because if they did not, they would starve of hunger. So, they preserved their harvested food for winter to Preserve their lives during famine. For homesteaders, their **Faith** is strengthened when they understand **by preserving** their food, they will survive the long winter days.

I have found that **preservation is everyone's desire**. At least people that I know. There is nothing more in our lives than the human will to survive. We take vitamins, exercise, and see our health providers. We put great Faith in many things, but I ask you today - **do you want Preservation for eternity?** Faith must be the vital ingredient of believing in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. But there are many reasons to believe Jesus is resurrected and lives. And I will be sharing those soon. But it takes Faith. **It is not blind faith** because the accounts of Jesus's death and resurrection and the events that took place give us many reasons to believe and consider them credible, but the faith I am talking about is **an inner faith being revealed to you this very hour**. Jesus says to Peter in Matthew 16:17 KJV: And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. **And it will be by the act of God if He is revealing this to you today to increase your Faith.**

As we conclude our study of Matthew 14 vv. 22-33 Let us finally find out what transpired as the third dilemma when he kept his eyes on the Prize.

3. Your Faith is strengthened when you know you have an all-powerful Prince – the Prince of Peace (v.33) who will never desert you

I think Peter knew in his heart that Jesus was the Son of God – Israel's

awaited Messiah – you know, the one who would liberate the Jews from the oppression of all their enemies. Still, many of the Jews at the time could not grasp the thought that Jesus could be the ‘**One**’ because He did not come as a Warrior King. But make no mistake, when He comes again, it will be the most jaw-dropping experience ever witnessed. I believe Peter knew Jesus was the Son of God, but his head was wrapped around the Jewish Theocracy. We already witnessed in Matthew before this event of stepping out in Faith on the water -

A leper is cleansed in Capernaum (Matthew 8:2 – 4)

Peter’s mother-in-law is healed of a high fever (Matthew 8:14 – 15)

A paralytic man is healed on the Sabbath (Matthew 9:2 - 8,

A man, on the Sabbath day, has his withered hand healed (Matthew 12:9 – 13)

A man who is blind and cannot speak, who also is demon-possessed, has the demon cast out of him and is healed (Matthew 12:22).

Just before Passover (John 6:4), which fell on Saturday, April 16, Jesus preaches in an area on the outskirts of Bethsaida. When he finishes teaching the crowd, he miraculously feeds five thousand men and an unknown number of women and children from just five loaves of bread and two fishes (Matthew 14:13 - 21, Mark 6:30 - 42, Luke 9:10 - 17, John 6:1 - 13).

The point is that Peter’s Faith was not blind; he had enough Faith to know that Jesus could **protect** and **preserve** him, and that was enough at the time for Jesus to grant him the ability to walk on the water. **But Jesus wanted more from Peter**, and the others got it right when they exclaimed out of v.33, ‘**Truly you are the Son of God.**’ And Jesus did not rebuke them for their exclamation, but this is the Truth. Jesus is God,

and He can do anything, but most of **All, the love He has for us to lay His life down is unexplainable, especially when we do not deserve it.**

I hope you can say the same thing about Jesus this morning. **‘Truly you are the Son of God.’** I hope you know you can feel the same Protection and sense of Preservation as Peter did because, again, I believe in Peter’s heart, he did believe Jesus was the All-Powerful Prince of Peace, and while he kept his eyes upon Jesus and made Jesus the focus of his life Peter’s Faith was increased beyond human explanation. Christ granted Peter to Walk on water, which is humanly unexplainable.

Sermonic Word: As we considered Saint Peter’s predicament this morning, we found criteria concerning his faith, fear, protection, preservation, and Christ’s Lordship.

(Talk about the only one immediate miracle that you witnessed).

If we keep our eyes upon Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, He will increase our Faith and grant us the ability to do the supernatural. Furthermore, He will be our Protector, Preserver, and Prince of Peace.

We have found in Peter’s case, and it will be your case too if you so choose, that your faith will be strengthened when you make Jesus your all-powerful prince of peace, your protector and preserver.

Conclusion

Global Closing Illustration:

Sermonic Word: As we have considered this morning’s text and Saint Peter’s predicament, we found that even though Peter’s Faith waned to fear, and he sank in the Galilean Sea, he returned to safety in the Presence of Jesus.

This morning, we have considered St. Peter’s predicament and the three

reasons **his faith was strengthened**. And why his Faith was weakened.

Point of Illustration

If you are at sea and have fallen into the harsh waters of Galilee, Jesus wants you to call on Him to Save You, rescue You, and become your Prince of Peace. And once you have made Him Lord and Savior

Keep Your Eyes on the Prize – He is the Prize greater than anything that can be obtained.

MIT: When Peter affixed his eyes upon Jesus, he, without fear, performed a supernatural act of walking upon water toward Jesus, but the turbulent winds and huge waves caused him to fear, and his Faith vanished, and he sank.

MIS: And from this, we learn that all of us will face fierce winds and waves in our life; however, if we keep our eyes upon Jesus, he will strengthen our Faith to overcome fear because he is our Protector, Preserver, and All-Powerful Prince of Peace

Will you consider making Jesus Your Lord and Savior today? All you have to do is repent of your sins, ask Jesus to forgive you, and ask Him, ‘Save Me,’ as Peter did. If you commit today, you will discover, just like the disciples in the boat, that Jesus is the Son of the living God.

Will you, brothers and sisters, allow your Faith to be strengthened by keeping your eyes and your focus on Him first while He gives you discernment and direction to battle life’s winds and storms?

How many of you this morning will say by the lifting of your hand, “Preacher – will you remember me?” How many of you this morning will say by the lifting of your hand, “Preacher - I am going through storms, and I need prayer?” Who of you this morning feels the Holy

Spirit tugging on your heart, and you want to make Jesus Lord and Savior, and you feel Jesus calling you out of that boat to step out in Faith and trust in Him?” How many of you want me to remember you this morning - lift up your hand.”

If you need desire counsel and prayer please fill out the prayer request on the website at thefellowshipcabarrus.com