

Lord, Can I Get Just a Little Concern Here?

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Mark 4:35-41

Who is this guy that even the wind and wave obey him? I have often thought that faith and fear are connected—not fear of the wind-and-wave situations in life but fear of God. I think of Moses and a burning bush. Contact with the Holy is a tad disturbing at best. When Isaiah sees God on his throne, he feels he is undone, *"And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: 'Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts'"* (Isaiah 6:4-5)! I believe I understand the fear that the disciples are experiencing after seeing Jesus calm the storm. "What have I gotten myself into? Who is this guy?" This event evokes not only awe, wonder and faith but also sheer terror for they see how Christ can do anything he wants at any time. Being around such a person is quite disquieting to say the least.

Yet, even in this incident, Jesus does not address their initial request—"Lord, do you care about what happens to us," at least not in the manner we would like answered. When peril presents itself in life, we would like God's assurance that he will nip it in the bud. Instead, Jesus simply says, "I am with you. Why are you worried and distressed?" We see the wind, we see the peril, we feel the trouble and hurt. We wonder why God sleeps while we slave away in mortal terror? Jesus says, "Did you not see me with you? Why are you afraid?" We shout, "The waves are swamping the boat! We need help!" We cry out to God for him to do something. Then, when the miracle-deliverance comes, we are shocked perhaps frightened that God has chosen to act in our lives. We know God can act, but we are afraid he will not assist us in this instance. Our faith makes us dependent on his grace at any given moment. We want grace without the fear of hurt or want. Yes, God will provide, but cannot he do so without us undergoing any suffering?

Following God because of all the good he may do us is not following God, and it is not faith. Is my faith in what he does for me or in him? Do I believe, despite all of the hurt I may be going through, that he has my best interest at heart at all times? Am I willing to learn from suffering just as Jesus did (Hebrews 5:8)? Consider the words of Love M. Willis:

*Father, bear the prayer we offer:
Nor for ease that prayer shall be,
But for strength that we may ever
Live our lives courageously*

*Nor for ever by still waters
Would we idly, quiet stay;
But would smite the living fountains
Form the rocks along our way.*

*Be our strength in hours of weakness,
In our wand'rings be our guide;
Thro' endeavor, failure, danger,
Father, be Thou at our side.*

*Let our path be bright or dreary,
Storm or sunshine be our share;
May our souls in hope unwearied
Make Thy work our ceaseless prayer. Amen.*