

The Miracles Of Jesus Christ: Walking On Water (Part Two)

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The heart of Christ's miracle of walking on the water (Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:15-21) is that of Jesus' direct control over natural law. His paradoxical action against the known laws of gravity and of the properties of liquid water did not change, suspend, or cancel these universal laws themselves; instead, it was the exercise of a stronger power. By using an analogy, Herbert Lockyer sheds light on the principle at work:

The law of gravity is not set aside when the magnet collects iron filings; it is only that the superior force of magnetism has overcome gravitation. So what happened that stormy night was the exercise of Christ's omnipotence, as He, the Creator of seas and winds revealed His authority over them, and they being His, He could use them as He desired. It was His will which bore Him triumphantly above those waters. (*All the Miracles of the Bible*, p. 201.)

All things are possible with the Father and Jesus Christ. To doubt that they can accomplish such things is faithlessness. One who has learned to trust in God and believe in His Word does not wonder whether God can intervene on his behalf, although he may wonder at the method or the way it is carried out.

1. What do the contrary winds represent? Matthew 14:24; Mark 6:48; John 6:18.

Comment: The storm was a real trial for the disciples. In the same way, much in life is contrary to us; the wind is seldom at our backs, as it were. No one who spent time on the Sea of Galilee went long before experiencing contrary winds. Likewise, everyone on the sea of life eventually experiences circumstances that oppose them. Job says, "Yet man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. But as for me, I would seek God, and to God I would commit my cause" (Job 5:7-8). Even so, some things can only be improved by contrary winds, which are intended to strengthen our character and faith.

2. Why does Peter's faith fail? Matthew 14:31.

Comment: Peter asks for a sign that the "apparition" really is Jesus, and He replies, "Come!" His response contains an implicit pledge that Peter would not be engulfed in the raging waters. At first, Peter's confidence in Jesus' power sustains him as he walks on the water, but as doubt quickly creeps in, his enjoyment of the intensely spiritual experience soon fades. Peter's zealous, impulsive faith is not absolute, convicted faith but humanly reasoned, self-assured, and immature, though it allowed him to attempt the seemingly impossible feat of walking on water. Jesus is gentle in His rebuke, not saying, "Why did you bother to come?" but gently asking, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" as He held out a hand to reassure Peter.

Despite his initial faith, Peter soon found himself facing a dramatic test. In the clash between sight and faith, his impulsive faith vanished and fear took its place. Taking his eye off his Savior to focus on the raging waves, he sank but did not drown. Jesus saved

him because He never abandons His elect. Poor Peter must have felt humiliation that night as his fear and failure revealed his weakness and lack of true faith.

Once Jesus entered the ship with Peter, the winds immediately ceased. *Ceased* in Matthew 14:32 means "to grow weary." The rough elements had spent themselves, having been overcome by supernatural power. In that instant, the ship was supernaturally and immediately moved to the shore.

3. Why do the disciples not understand about the loaves? Mark 6:51-52.

Comment: Mark characteristically records details that the other writers do not, and here, he describes the disciples' astonishment: "They were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled. For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened." If they had truly believed, nothing should have amazed them. They knew He was the Messiah, but their faith was too weak to believe deeply that He was the powerful God of creation. Mark explains that His multiplying of the loaves and fish just hours earlier should have demonstrated Jesus' true identity to them (Mark 8:18-21), but neither that miracle nor the appearance of Jesus on the water could open their hearts to the reality of His divine nature.

4. What hardened the disciples' hearts? Mark 6:52.

Comment: When Jesus had calmed the storm earlier, the disciples had struggled with faith versus fear (Mark 4:40), and now, they struggled with faith versus fear *plus* hard-heartedness. Their hearts were hardened because their minds were slow to recognize the significance of Christ's miracle. This does not mean that they were conflicted about Jesus, but simply that they were slow to recognize His omnipotence. Once the excitement of the raging sea had settled down, the disciples gained a greater appreciation for the breadth of His power. From this they were able to admire and worship Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33). The disciples' hearts were beginning to soften.

The encouraging lesson of this miracle is that faith is tested by the stormy trials in life, but despite our being tossed about on the waves of a troublesome world, Jesus is always near. We may feel abandoned in times of stress, but Christ has not forgotten us. His intervention may sometimes come suddenly, at other times slowly, yet depending on the will of the Father, there is always the potential for a miraculous solution.