

Mark 6:45-56

“The unfavorable winds of obedience”

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I. **Introduction**

This would be a night of miracles when we take into account the other gospel records. Matthew records for us that not only did Jesus walk on water but Peter witnessing this asked Jesus to “*command me to come to You on the water*”. Jesus’ response was “*Come*” and Peter was doing well until he noticed that the wind picked up and he became afraid and was forced to cry out, “*Lord, save me!*” The other miracle associated with this is found in John’s account in 6:21 where we read that not only did the wind cease immediately when Jesus got into their boat they also immediately arrived at their destination.

The difficulty in these stories is not only the event but what the event was intended to communicate to those at hand. It is one thing to attempt to examine a miracle from the distance of better that 2000 years and quite another to do so through the eyes and words of those who witnessed at that time. All we have been given us in our attempt at this feat is two essential tools: **The word of God and the Spirit of God**. First, we need to place the story in its context as it took place immediately following the miracle of the feeding of the 5000 which we noted was not based upon Jesus meeting a physical necessity of the multitudes.

II. Vs. 45-48 Trouble with a capital T

Vs. 45-46 There appears to be two primary reasons for the immediacy of Jesus' actions in getting the disciples into the boat to depart from the feeding of the 5000.

1. First, what predicated Jesus response is not found in Mark's account but it is in John's where we are told that there was a popular uprising underfoot to force Jesus to become king and the disciples were not ready for such a test as their ideas concerning the Messiah and His kingdom were still too political and national.
2. Second, they needed to learn a lesson with regards to success that they still had not grasped, (***We are told this in verse 52***). They had come from a very successful mission, where they taught and many had been healed and demons had been dislodged. They had very little time to enjoy that when the 5000 had come and in their very hands bread kept on coming forth feeding the close to 10,000 people. To say they were on a spiritual high is an understatement but as wonderful as it is to walk on mountain peaks we are only one step away from a cliff.

Only a few weeks earlier Jesus had a mid term exam for the disciples on this very lake.

The parallels of these two stories are very similar: **In the first exam** Jesus had informed them that they were "**going over**" to the the other side of the lake. While he was asleep in the boat the wind and the waves overcame them to the point that they were forced to awake Jesus and then they proceeded to accuse Him of not caring about them. His response was to calm the wind and the waves and cause them to wonder as to who He was. The primary difference in this 2nd exam is that Jesus was not in the boat with them at all. The point of decision of faith or fear for them is essentially the same questions as prior: "***Has Jesus placed us in this situation and are we convinced that He loves us and will never leave us or forsake us?***" I submit to you that those are always the questions that we need to answer if we are to choose faith instead of fear!

Vs. 47-48 The Jews had adopted the Roman time keeping methods and night time ran from 6 pm – 6 am and was divided into four watches: 6 pm – 9 pm, 9 pm – midnight,

midnight – 3 am, and 3 am – 6 am. So it was around 3 am that Jesus looked out from the shore seeing the disciples straining at the oars. I must admit I'm very impressed at these disciples as by my estimation they had been rowing against the wind for close to 9 hours and had only been able to make it ½ way across the lake but nonetheless were still committed to the task. You wonder if there had been any debates as to turning around and going to shore as clearly they were getting no where. I could hear some of them shouting back at the suggestion saying, "*Hey fellows remember the last time when we wanted to give up on His word? You all can drop your oars if you want to but Peter and I are going to keep paddling.*" As impressed as I am at their determination to fulfill their Masters command I'm even more impressed at Jesus who had been overlooking the trial He had placed them in, praying over them for the entire 9 hours. As such **we gain an invaluable perspective that ought to change us when ever we are in similar situations. Jesus was never unaware:**

- *Of their effort while straining at the task*
- *He was never ignorant of the impossible situation as they were contrary to the wind*
- *He was not uncaring about how long they had been at it*

All of that information was clearly at His constant disposal but it is what we "boat rowers" often accuse Him of being ignorant of. Looking at this situation in this light causes us to realize that this was clearly part of Jesus plan so that they could learn what was in them and could again see that they lack faith in Him. Mark tells us that at "*the 4th watch of the night Jesus came to them, walking of the sea, and would have passed them by.*" Here they witnessed the very person who had placed them in the boat facing the:

- *Same wind and waves that caused them to go nowhere*
- *With less time, they had 9 hours and Jesus was passing them by in an hour*

- *And less equipment as they were in a boat with oars and He was walking on water*

*This story presents of very perplexing situation theologically as we are faced with the facts that these disciples were tormented on the very path of obedience. We often think mistakenly that we will only experience calm seas and favorable winds if we take sail in obedience to our Lord but we find here that such is not the case. **Instead what we find is that obedience is not the path of least resistance, NO it is the path of the certainty of His presence and power!***

III. Vs. 49-52 Be of good cheer it is I

Vs. 49-52 The Greek word for “on” here signifies that Jesus’ sandals made contact with the water like a person would on solid ground. Saints remember, ***the waves that made it impossible for the disciples to arrive at their destination were but steps that guaranteed Jesus arrival to them.*** The Greek phrase “*would have passed them by*” is not as it appears as the phrase means to come near as His point was not to leave them in their situation but to come close to them to help them. Jesus had to wait till their situation had become impossible before he began His journey. Oh much like you and I that they found it easier to believe in a superstition than a Savior and cried out in terror instead of rejoicing in Jesus. All of this changed when He spoke to them as a friend to encourage them. He said to them “*It is I and nobody else! So stop being afraid!*”

It is here that Matthew includes the story about Peter walking on water until the wind arose and he began to sink. It is easy to criticize Peter for getting his eyes off Jesus but least we forget there were 11 others in the boat that never were willing to take the chance in the first place.

Vs. 50-52 The Greek has it that it was the wind that grew “*tired and weak*” where they had been the very circumstances that had caused the disciples the same effect. Ah but with Jesus walking upon upon them it was the elements that grew weak and tired.

The miracle that they had just witnessed in their own hands hadn’t sunk in. If Jesus could take a little and feed a lot than He could surely take care of them in their time of need. Jesus had the power to take five dinner rolls and two fish and feed over 5000 with 12 basketful of fragments left over; then surly Jesus could take care of wind and waves walking upon them.

By way of application you will often find that blessings and burdens usually follow each other. The storm that the disciples had experienced only a short time earlier followed an exciting day of teaching and healing, now here again we see the same thing. In the book of Acts, the adding of the 5000 to the church was followed by the storm of persecution. ***It appears that the disciples needed learn not to become to excited at blessings and not to distraught during burdens as neither is an indication of a greater or lessening presence of the Lord.*** Oh that we could learn from our brothers in the boat, that the same One that has placed us in the storms of our situation is the same One that walks of water and has been up all night fully aware of our situation and is interceding on our behalf. Jesus is on our side, He wants us to succeed, He longs to calm our fears: “*Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.*” I find it interesting that the wind ceased when He came into the boat which suggests to me that they hadn’t realized that He had always been there with them! The calm is found not in the ceasing of wind but rather in the realization of Jesus in our boat!

IV. Vs. 53-56 A touch of Him

Vs. 53-56 These verses best fit into the context of the seventh chapter as they appear to be part of the reason for the continual examination and harassment from the religious leadership. The contrast Mark presents is the wonderful scene of Jesus passing through the Gennesaret region of Galilee and people in human desperation carried by loved ones on their beds, longing to touch as the women who had the issue of blood had, the hem of His garment and Jesus consenting to this practice. In stark contrast is the Pharisees who allow traditional religion to harden their compassion for human suffering. How horrible it is that many a person so called “faith” is the catalyst for the atrocities and indifferences towards others.

Saints our situation is never the determining factor to gage the presence of Christ! Jesus is not more present in the breaking and blessing of His provisions than He is when we are in the midst of terrible storms thrust at us in this world. He is praying for us even when we think He is absent and in the dark over our circumstances. And we can be certain that He will come to us in that hour and we will reach the shore as planned.