

# Finding God in the Storms of Life

## Mark 4:35-41

Online Sermon: [http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567)

When one walks by the still waters, admiring the delicate flowers and their sweet aromatic perfumes, listening to the wind ever gently rustling through a tall carpet of green grass and watch the autumn leaves tumble and float ever so gently to the ground; one can't help but feel an overwhelming sense of peace and joy. This sense of well being tends to grow when met with the normalcy of routines that have already proven to conquer the most difficult of our daily challenges. And yet standing on the mountaintops of the greatest blessings one can't help but feel a tinge of terror knowing that living in a fallen world means that chance can arrive like a thief in the night, reek havoc and steal one's serenity. Circumstances beyond one's control can happen at a moment's notice that are so heinous that they threaten to fracture hope in one's very own existence! When we cannot find someone to help change our bleak circumstances fear grips our hearts and the once peaceful waters become turbulent and life-threatening. The following sermon is going to review the story of Jesus calming the storm to help accentuate the truth that no matter how violent the storm we are facing our hope lies Jesus who is in control and promises to rescue those whom cry out to Him!

### The Calm Before the Storm (verses 35-36)



**<sup>35</sup> That day when evening came, He said to His disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.”  
<sup>36</sup> Leaving the crowd behind, they took Him along, just as He was, in the boat. There were also other boats with Him**

After having spent a full and exhausting day preaching about His kingdom in the parables of the sower (4:3-9, 13-20), a lamp on a stand (4:13-20), the growing (4:26-29) and the

mustard seed (4:30-32)<sup>1</sup> to hardened hearts,<sup>2</sup> Jesus decided to go over to the other side of the lake.<sup>3</sup> While it is possible that Jesus wanted a break from the “pressure of too much popularity

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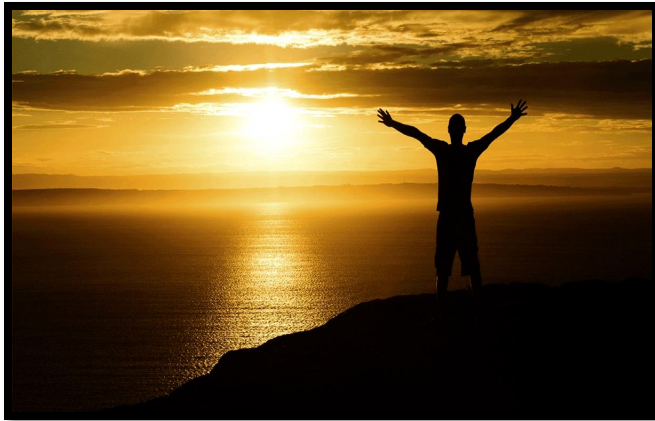
<sup>1</sup> Craig A. Evans, *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew–Luke*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2003), 177.

<sup>2</sup> David E. Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 191.

<sup>3</sup> Walter W. Wessel, “*Mark.*” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 654–655.

in lakeside Galilee,”<sup>4</sup> or wanted to expand His ministry to a new location,<sup>5</sup> His primary reason for going onto the lake that day was most likely to demonstrate His authority over nature.<sup>6</sup> The disciples, many of which used to be professional fishermen, got Jesus to enter the boat<sup>7</sup> which would have been about 26.5 feet long, 7.5 feet wide and 4.5 feet high and had the capacity to hold about 15 people.<sup>8</sup> The mention of other disciples entering other boats is not trivial information but is given to suggest that the miracle Jesus was about to perform would have many eyewitnesses!<sup>9</sup> When Jesus entered the boat it is reasonable to assume that the weather was fine and the lake calm.

Like the disciples in this story one must decide how to handle the calm seas and mountain tops of blessings that come our way. When one reads the book of Judges, is it not



apparent that “blessings” when not handled properly can be an enemy of spiritual purity? It seems like the more we receive the more we reduce blessings to nothing more than our “brilliant” navigation through life’s perils! Whom amongst us with good health, a wonderful family, lots of friends and a secure financial future can truly say that we are on our knees thanking God for what we have received? And when “our apparent success bubble” is busted and the hot air of pride in self is released who can

honestly say that our “little” faith will move the mighty mountain of tribulation (Matthew 17:20) that is threatening to consume our peace and tranquility? We are more than conquerors (Romans 8:31-37) only when we stand firm in both good and bad times (Job 1:21) on the Rock of our Salvation (Psalms 62:6). David E. Garland sums up the connection of faith and our reliance on Jesus as follows:

“Those most open to receiving Jesus’ power in their lives are those who recognize their own desperate need of it. Those who are not open to his power are no less desperate but have convinced themselves that they do not need it.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2002), 222.

<sup>5</sup> James A. Brooks, *Mark*, vol. 23, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 87.

<sup>6</sup> R. Alan Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 156.

<sup>7</sup> David E. Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 191.

<sup>8</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 148.

<sup>9</sup> Walter W. Wessel, “*Mark*,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 655.

<sup>10</sup> David E. Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 190.

## The Panic and Pleas of the Storm (verses 37-38)

**A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.<sup>38</sup> Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”**

Once upon the lake there arose a “fierce gale of wind”<sup>11</sup> that was so intense that it is best described as a hurricane.<sup>12</sup> Even though the disciples knew that the Sea of Galilee with its deep



basins and mountains surrounding it meant that treacherous wind patterns could cause sudden violent squalls,<sup>13</sup> they were far from prepared to experience a storm of such magnitude that it quickly filled and threatened to sink their boats! Ironically it was these professional fishermen that were terrified while the carpenter, Jesus was serenely asleep in the stern of the boat.<sup>14</sup> While the disciples most likely saw Jesus’ sleeping as “indifference to their safety in their hour of danger,”<sup>15</sup> it truly demonstrated His trust in God (Job 11:18–19; Palms

3:5; 4:8; 121:3–4; Prov. 3:23–26) and contrasts with the terror of the disciples.”<sup>16</sup> In fear the disciples woke Jesus and rudely asked Him<sup>17</sup> “Teacher, don’t You care if we drown?” They must have wondered: was this their reward for having left everything to follow Jesus (Luke 18:28)?

Rarely do we meet the storms of life with confidence that God will fulfill His promise to do good for those who love Him (Romans 8:28)! We would like to say that we have the kind of confidence that sees God’s love as unchangeable and stronger than death<sup>18</sup> but truthfully it does not take a hurricane to squash the speck of faith that we tout as being at least as big as a tiny

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<sup>11</sup> Craig A. Evans, *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew–Luke*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2003), 177.

<sup>12</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 149.

<sup>13</sup> Larry W. Hurtado, *Mark*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 85.

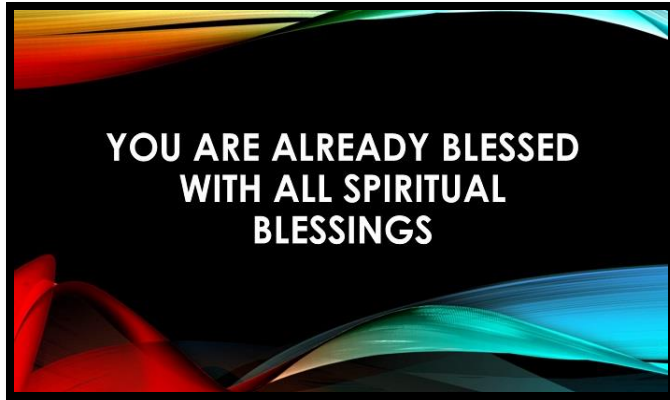
<sup>14</sup> David E. Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 191.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 149.

<sup>18</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, “A Painful and Puzzling Question,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 122.

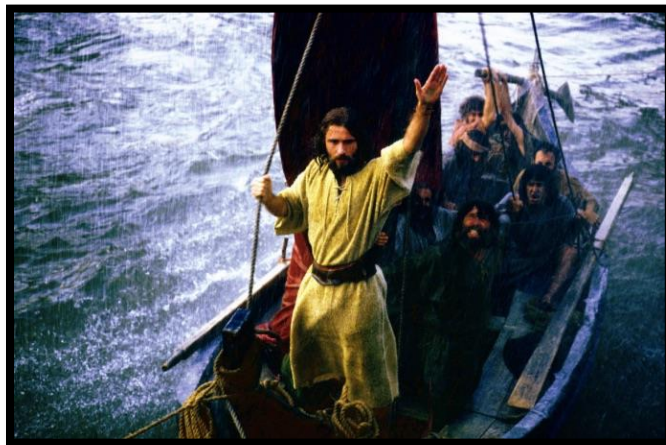


those who have been offered every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3) know that the good Father will not respond to our cries for help with greater yokes (Matthew 11:28-30) to bear and stones to eat (Matthew 7:9) but with loving arms?

### Realizing Christ's Authority (verse 39)

***39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.***

After the disciples woke up Jesus, He got up and rebuked the wind and the waves with a single



command: "quiet, be still." Jesus addressed the wind and waves as if they were personal<sup>19</sup> chaotic forces<sup>20</sup> or demonic beings.<sup>21</sup> With a single command their unruly heckling<sup>22</sup> would be muzzled,<sup>23</sup> unable to their wreak havoc any longer! This great calming of the storm was not initiated by prayer but through the authoritative word of Christ!<sup>24</sup> This miracle invited the disciples to "recognize in Jesus the presence of God!"<sup>25</sup> "Jesus used the same language to rebuke the wind as God did when He rebuked the waters at

<sup>19</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 150.

<sup>20</sup> Craig A. Evans, *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew-Luke*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Buebeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2003), 178.

<sup>21</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2002), 224.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

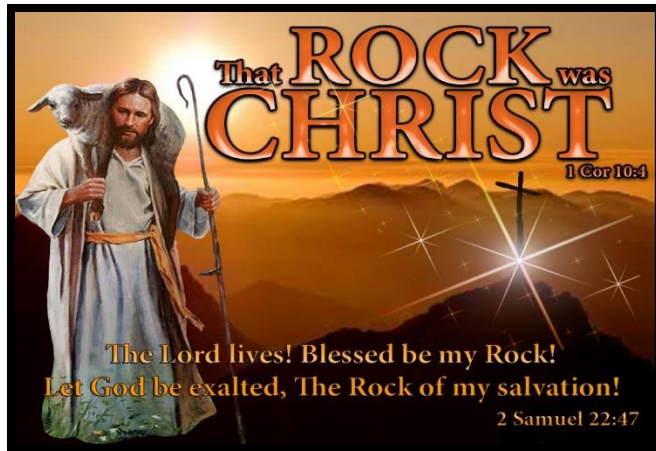
<sup>23</sup> Larry W. Hurtado, *Mark*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 85.

<sup>24</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 149.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 151.

creation (Job 26:10–12) and later the Red Sea (Ps 106:9)!<sup>26</sup> Jesus' extraordinary power over nature,<sup>27</sup> that God alone possessed,<sup>28</sup> was proof that He truly was more than their Prophet, Teacher and Master, Jesus was the only begotten Son of God whom existed before the beginning of time (John 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:9)! If only the disciples knew that the one who was asleep in their boat created the universe (Colossians 1:16), they would have known their fears were groundless!<sup>29</sup>

There will always be ferocious squalls in life that must be weathered. You know the kind of storm that appears unannounced, unwelcomed and unstoppable! When the winds and waves of tribulations threaten to drown the glimmer of a better day to whom will your turn to stabilize



your turbulent life? Do you honestly believe you or a friend have the strength to alter where, when and how the winds of change blow across the plains of this vast universe? When we are powerless in the face of affliction then does this mean that the best that we can hope for is to stay in the eye of the storm and watch our hopes and dreams swirl around, forever out of control and beyond our grasp? NO! Praise be to God that our sympathetic high priest Jesus (Hebrews 4:14-16) is with us in the storm and provides what we need to either endure or

escape our circumstances! He is the Rock of our salvation (Psalms 89:26) in both the good and bad times. No matter what happens to us on this earth we must not forget that no matter how intense our suffering becomes it does not compare to the love of Christ we are about to receive in heaven (Romans 8:18)!

### Fear of Faith? (verses 40-41)

**40 He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” 41 They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!”**

This leads us to one final question to answer: when one faces a storm that is unstoppable and threatens to replace one's joyful dreams with intense pain, what will one's response be? The disciples fear and subsequent accusation that Jesus had forsaken them<sup>30</sup> was proof that even

<sup>26</sup> D. A. Carson, [“The Gospels and Acts,”](#) in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2018.

<sup>27</sup> James R. Edwards, [The Gospel according to Mark](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 150.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> David E. Garland, [Mark](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 192–193.

<sup>30</sup> James R. Edwards, [The Gospel according to Mark](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 151.



though they had left everything to follow Jesus they still lacked faith!<sup>31</sup> Jesus rebuked the disciples not for their lack of knowledge of His authority over creation<sup>32</sup> but for their fear. The key to happiness in life is not contingent on whether one's circumstances are good or bad but knowing and trusting that God is indivisibly present and will always do good to those who love Him! Fear and faith are mutually exclusive<sup>33</sup> for fear says, "I can't fix or run from my situation" while faith says, "I will fear no evil for Thou are with me"! Even though we have the Holy Spirit living inside of us

faith is not inborn<sup>34</sup> but must be practiced in order to grow! This means that when our hearts become "like a troubled sea which cannot rest" (Isaiah 57:20),<sup>35</sup> finding God and peace that surpasses all understanding is only attainable by replacing our fear with an absolute trust in the Rock of our salvation, Jesus Christ!

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<sup>31</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, "[A Painful and Puzzling Question.](#)" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 57 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1911), 121.

<sup>32</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 152.

<sup>33</sup> R. Alan Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 157.

<sup>34</sup> David E. Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 193.

<sup>35</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1786.