

Master, don't you care that we are perishing?

It was probably a frequent occurrence, Jesus taking a boat across the Sea of Galilee with his disciples. A storm came up unexpectedly. Soon the disciples were rowing hard, the wind was increasing, the waves were rising, and the water was filling the boat. And Jesus? He was asleep on a cushion in the rear of the boat.

I can't imagine Him being asleep in such a situation, but then, there are a lot of things about the Lord that surprise me. The disciples were shocked -- He was dozing while they were drowning! Finally they could take it no more. They cried out, "Master, don't You care that we are perishing?!"

Their desperate cry awakened Jesus. He soon rebuked the wind and the sea and it became calm. How was it that Jesus didn't awaken until they cried out?

This incident makes me think of Israel in their bondage in Egypt. After 400 years they cried out to God in their bondage. It is written that the Lord THEN "remembered His covenant with Abraham; He heard them groaning and took notice of them." Why does it seem that God had forgotten them until they cried out to Him?

Here's another sea story, this time with Jesus walking on the water. He had sent the disciples ahead in the boat while He stayed behind to pray. In the middle of the night, the winds blew hard and the disciples were in trouble again.

Jesus came walking on the water, right in the middle of the night in the middle of the storm. The strange thing (not that walking on water isn't strange) was that the account says "He intended to pass them by"! Isn't it incredible that Jesus, knowing they were in trouble, came close to their boat in miracle power and yet actually intended to walk right by them?

But the disciples cried out... and Jesus said, "Don't be afraid, It's Me!" It seemed that He had planned to get their attention, and wanted them to respond in some way -- even though He intended to pass them by.

The story gets more amazing. Peter blurted out a request: "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to you on the water!" So Jesus did. Then Peter did. As he walked on the water he saw the wind, got afraid, and began sinking. Did Jesus help him? Yes, but not until Peter cried out, "Lord, save me!"

How is it that the Lord did not intervene for Peter until he cried out? How is it that Jesus might have passed by unless the disciples had noticed Him and cried out?

God normally does His good will only at the beckoning of man. He shows His saving power, not to anyone in any situation of need, but to "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord".

Psalms 18 records this way of the Lord, this way of responding to a cry from the heart of a man.

*"In my distress I called upon the Lord,
And cried to my God for help;
He heard my voice out of His temple,
And my cry for help came into His ears.
THEN the earth shook and quaked... "*

The next ten verses record the Lord "bowing the heavens and coming down", "speeding on the wings of the wind" ... blasting away all obstacles to save the one who has cried out for help!

Sometimes God moves in our lives by setting up a blessing that can only be received if we first take a step. In such a case God provides, but wants a man to make a move to receive the blessing. This may be why Jesus said to the man with the withered arm, "Stretch out your hand". To the blind man on whose eyes He had placed mud He said, "Go wash in the pool of Siloam."

We may not need a special word from the Lord to step into His blessing. We may need only to be so sick of our situation that we rise out of passivity, face our fears and walk through them -- to find out that God has already provided the blessing. We then discover that we would never have found the blessing unless we had taken a step of faith -- or of desperation!

So reads the story of four lepers sitting at the gate of Samaria, a city under seige. One morning they said to each other, "Why do we sit here until we die?" They knew that if they went into the starving city they would die, and that if they stayed where they were they would die -- so why not go to the enemy's camp? Off they went, and fell into God's miracle. God had scared off the whole army, who had left tons of food and wealth behind. Suddenly they were fed and wealthy, and soon the whole city had the blessing!

God had provided a miracle, but somebody had to make a move to find it. Only four leprous men were ready to move, four men who had nothing to lose. They faced their greatest fear and walked into God's miracle.

Did God care that the people of that city were perishing? Yes, but in His way with men He had provided a salvation, then wanted men to step out to find it.

God wants people to become active in seeking for His blessings. This may be like the blind man by the road crying out "Have mercy on me!" It may be like the sick woman pushing through the crowd saying "If I just touch the hem of His garment I'll be healed!" It may be like the boy giving his five loaves and two fish, like Moses laying down his stick on the water, or like the priests putting their toes into the flooded Jordan. Somebody needs to make a move.

GOD SETS UP BLESSINGS AND MIRACLES, BUT USUALLY REQUIRES A PERSON TO REACH OUT FOR IT -- WALK OUT FOR IT, SPEAK OUT FOR IT, STRETCH OUT FOR IT, OR CRY OUT FOR IT.

It is His way of saving us. It is the way of active faith, fervent prayer, and desperate obedience.

Lord, help us to walk in your way.

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