

Have you ever wished that you could have participated in one of the miracles of Christ? I think sometimes that it would have been quite a kick to be like Peter when he was able to walk on water. For a moment or so, the law of gravity would not apply, and I could stay on top of the surface without skiing at a high velocity or making use of unseen stumps below the surface. The kid in me would holler, "Not it!", and I would watch everyone else react to me.

Peter showed a great deal of faith and courage in his supernatural walk, which is described as follows:

*Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.*

*During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.*

*But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."*

*"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."*

*"Come," he said.*

*Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"*

*Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"*

*And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."*

*When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret.*

*Matthew 14:22-34*

The account in Mark indicates that Christ came up casually as though he was about to stroll past them. Peter showed himself to be a great follower here; he wanted to be like Christ in everything, even if it did not look possible. But when Peter began to realize where he actually was, he began to waver. Have you ever stood up in front of a group of people to speak and had your brain go numb because of the sudden awareness of what you were doing and all the people that were looking at you? I think Peter must have felt a little bit like that.

When Peter saw the stormy weather he began to lose faith and sink. As a fisherman, he was used to swimming, probably even in bad weather, but he still called out for Christ to save him. Christ helped him and calmed the wind in the same instant.

Peter's fear was a very real thing. But I think that this event can be applied in a much broader sense. Consider a person who receives the gospel into their heart. They are touched deeply and are filled with a great desire to respond and serve. They launch out into the deep waters of life and do well for a while, but when life becomes more complicated they begin to waver and doubt. Before long, they begin to sink into confusion and despair.

The physical Christ is not there to grab them by the hand and save them. Christ is there in a much more powerful sense, if they could only recognize Him. But even though they perhaps cannot see that Christ is there to help them, they can certainly see their fellow Christians. If we don't reach for them, they soon must begin to try to swim to shore in the storm; eventually they may sink beneath the surface forever.

This is not just an interesting lesson drawn from a Bible text. It is the echo of an event that happens very frequently as new disciples (and even old) slip away from the embrace of the church. It is our responsibility to save those who are beginning to doubt and to sink. We are not perfect like Christ, but in our faith we can still ride the top of the waves and help those around us. But we must remember that we can waver and sink as well if we do not keep looking to Jesus, for He is truly the Son of God.

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