

Forgetting Leads to Doubting

Matthew 14:22-33

September 29, 2024

Greg L. Price

There is a real connection between our forgetting the Lord Jesus (in His love, power, holiness) and our falling into temptation to doubt that He will carry us through a great trial. When remembering His power and faithfulness are pushed back into the dark recesses of our memory, we are far more likely to be overwhelmed by some temptation. But on the other hand, when we remember our Jesus and are daily communing with Him, we will see Him coming to rescue us in the most difficult trials.

When we are forgetful hearers, we are not ready to do battle with the enemy of our soul. A forgetful hearer is like the soldier that has fallen asleep on the job—he's not ready for the surprise attack.

The disciples had just witnessed Jesus perform one of His greatest miracles of power in multiplying two fish and five small loaves of bread to feed the five thousand, and within a few hours they had forgotten Jesus—forgotten His power and love. This same sinful tendency of forgetfulness will also render us ill-prepared to face the trials in our life.

The main points from our text this Lord's Day are the following: (I) The Prayers of Christ Our Priest (Matthew 14:22-24); (II) The Power of Christ Our King (Matthew 14:25-33); (III) The Forgetfulness of the Disciples (Mark 6:52).

I. The Prayers of Christ Our Priest (Matthew 14:22-24).

A. After the miracle of feeding the five thousand, Jesus immediately compelled His disciples to sail to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, while He dispersed the crowd.

B. Why did Jesus not accompany His disciples by boat? Jesus sent them ahead of Himself that they might pass through a great trial of their faith while He went into a mountain overlooking the Sea of Galilee to pray for them.

1. This is the second time the disciples had been tried on the Sea of Galilee—the first time is found in Matthew 8:23-27. The first time, Jesus was in the boat with them, but not this time.

2. The Lord who calmed the sea and silenced the waves the first time could have prevented this second storm from happening, which the disciples were about to face. Why didn't He? Jesus is not only teaching them the right doctrine, but their need to practice it.

a. Intellectual knowledge of doctrine without practicing it in our lives means we have not yet learned that doctrine. What we understand may be accurate, but if we do not practice it in our lives, we have not yet learned that truth (e.g. God is holy—We are called to be peacemakers—we may know these truths, but unless we practice them, we have not yet learned them).

b. How do you know that your children have truly learned what you are teaching them? When they can simply recite the right answer or when they willingly practice what you have taught them?

C. Perhaps the disciples thought as the wind and the waves began to pick up in intensity, "Oh no, here we go again, and this time Jesus is not even with us. What will happen to us this time?" But though He was not physically with them, they were not out of His sight or removed from His care (Mark 6:47-48a). Here is the loving and effectual prayers of our precious Jesus who ever lives to make intercession for us (not saints).

1. Jesus does send us into great trials of faith, but He never sends us forth without effectually praying that our faith would not fail and that we would grow through it in the School of Christ (Luke 22:31-32). He knows our weaknesses/sins (better than we know them), and He prays that even those trials

that reveal our weaknesses and sins would be used to grow us in our faith. In fact, that is when we usually grow the most (not when everything is comfortable/pleasant).

2. As you face physical afflictions, conflicts in relationships, financial upheaval, the loss of loved ones, or your own death, do you truly know that Christ is in the heavenly mountain and that He sees you rowing against those contrary winds of adversity, and that He with infinite love and tenderness is praying for you by name that your faith in Him would persevere and that the trial would be used to grow you—not to destroy you? Never give up—you can't lose when Jesus (as your Priest) is not just praying for you but is effectually praying for you.

II. The Power of Christ Our King (Matthew 14:25-33).

A. Most of the disciples were experienced fishermen and knew how to handle the sea, but again Jesus puts them into a situation in which all confidence in their own abilities could not save them. Why? So that Jesus might be shown to be their almighty anchor during such a storm (that's a hard lesson for us to learn).

B. By the time the disciples were on the way to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, it was dark (John 6:17).

1. About the fourth watch of the night (3 a.m. to 6 a.m.), the Lord appeared to the disciples walking on the water (Matthew 14:25). The disciples had likely been rowing against this fierce storm for several long hours when the Lord finally appeared. For that entire time, Jesus saw their intense struggle and was praying for them (Mark 6:47-48a).

2. Why did Jesus wait so long to come to their aid? He waited so as to bring them to the point of a desperate faith as opposed to a mere convenient faith. It was in the fourth (or last) watch of the night in which their deliverance was realized—not the first watch of the night.

3. Likewise, Jesus often waits until the fourth watch to rescue us from those afflictions and trials that would overwhelm us. His timing is always perfect (even if we might have prayed and wished for His coming to deliver us after a few minutes of struggling or no struggles at all). He is never a second too early or a second too late in rescuing us.

4. Our trials teach us to cast ourselves upon the Lord and His infinite wisdom. We may feel battered. We may feel as if we have been deserted. He knows what He is doing even if we don't know what He is doing. We may feel as if there is no strength left to fight the battle any longer. We may want to know WHY. He wants us to know WHO. Here comes Jesus, not in the first watch of the night but in the fourth watch of the night. Here He comes walking victoriously as our King upon the stormy waves to show His power in delivering us or giving us renewed strength to persevere (1 Corinthians 10:13). Here is the reason we can never give up and quit as a Christian—Jesus will come to us, even if it is in the fourth watch of the night. Hope is always alive in Jesus.

C. The disciples were even more terrified when they saw what appeared to be a spirit coming toward them.

1. The word "troubled" (Matthew 14:26) has the idea of being shaken with confusion. By now their fears have overwhelmed them. Then come the comforting words of Christ our Prophet (Matthew 14:27). "Be of good cheer," or be courageous. Why? "It is I; be no afraid."

2. There is the word that calms all our fears. When we truly know that Jesus Christ, the eternal and almighty Son of God, the Lover of our souls, is with us, fear must flee. For a sinful fear of man or circumstances cannot abide in the presence of Christ the sovereign King (any more than darkness can abide when the light is turned on).

D. At this point, Peter, hearing the words of Jesus, seeks permission from Jesus to come to Him.

1. His faith/love were genuine, but yet weak. That's not a contradiction. Weak faith is real faith. Obstinate disobedience is no faith.

2. Peter actually joins the Lord on the water and walks toward Him. All is going great as long as Peter's eye of faith is fixed upon Jesus; but when He looks around and sees the ferocity of the wind (and feels the crashing of the waves), when his eyes are taken off Jesus through fear, he sinks into the depths.

3. In desperation, Peter cries to the Lord, and He mercifully rescues Peter, and walks with Peter on the water the rest of the way back to the boat. We not only see the amazing power of Christ in rescuing Peter, but also in giving to Peter the power to defy the Law of Nature and to walk on the water himself.

4. Note how tender the Lord is with this doubting Christian (Matthew 14:31). The Lord does not leave Peter to perish in his sin of doubt, even though Peter began so well and then fell. Is this not the experience of us all who trust in Christ alone for our eternal salvation? We start the day well, but then fall. But as with Peter, so Jesus is there to save us who are of "little faith". Peter may have felt like he was drowning, but Jesus was there to rescue him (and so He will do for you).

E. Jesus not only wondrously demonstrated His Kingship over all creation by walking on the water (wherein He subdues all things unto Himself), but also by silencing this mighty storm immediately as He and Peter stepped inside the boat (Matthew 14:32).

1. For hours these experienced fishermen had struggled to get to shore, and in a moment the waves and wind entirely ceased. To go from such total chaos to such perfect peace in a moment illustrates what Jesus is able to do in your life and mine (Colossians 3:15).

2. The disciples confess Jesus is the Son of God—so must we.

III. The Forgetfulness of the Disciples (Mark 6:51-52).

A. Herein is expressed the root problem which Jesus sought to expose in the faith of His disciples—they had a weak faith because they had a forgetful faith. They had forgotten the miracle performed just a few hours before in their presence, wherein Christ had multiplied the two fish and the five loaves of bread to feed thousands of people. Rather than remembering Christ's power and mercy to the multitudes, they forgot.

B. Consider similar exhortations from the Lord to Israel that they be not forgetful of God's mercy, power, faithfulness, and righteousness: Psalm 103:1-5; Deuteronomy 8:11-20.

C. Application

1. Should we be concerned about our forgetfulness of God's promises and His warnings? As parents, we may allow for our children's forgetfulness when they are very young or just learning something new. But there comes a time when forgetfulness is no longer a viable excuse for not doing what they are told. If we continue to accept their forgetfulness ("But dad/mom, I forgot") as an excuse for disobedience, they will continue to make excuses for disobedience even into adulthood. This is true of all of us. We seek reasons to justify our sinful forgetfulness.

2. Forgetfulness in the Christian life is often just another word for neglectfulness. We are forgetful because we are so neglectful and have not put Christ and His mighty works in the preeminent place that He so highly deserves in our heart/lives. We usually remember that which is truly important to us. Let us rehearse His truth, recite it, write it down, and practice it. When the truth is written upon the desires of our heart, we will truly want to remember—not just say so.

3. Are you a forgetful hearer or an effectual doer of God's Word? We will find ourselves falling into a sea of doubt in our lives, if we do not remember His truth and works, if we do not meditate upon them, if we do not talk of them with others (young people/adults), if we do not continue to thank Him for His faithfulness. Without a remembering heart—fear, doubt, unbelief, and sin of every kind will likely take advantage of us. The disciples fell because they did not remember Christ in all of His glory, power, mercy, faithfulness, and righteousness. We will surely do the same if we forget Him.

4. Although we might forget Him, I have great news—Jesus will never forget you (Isaiah

49:14-16). That melts my heart. Take hope and take courage, for Jesus comes to you even in the fourth watch of the night in the midst of the greatest storms you face: "It is I. Be not afraid."

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