

Jesus Said ...

“Be of Good Cheer”

Mark 6:50

Jesus loves you! He comes to you saying, “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”

Life is full of storms of uncertainty, disappointments and sorrows. Never before have there been so many people who are depressed or just feel “down.” Is this your problem? Do you feel that no one loves you or that you just don’t count for anything? If this describes you, “cheer up” because Jesus knows your problems and why you have them.

Once when Jesus’ disciples were in a ship on the Sea of Galilee, a violent storm came up. Jesus, a short time before, had provided food for more than 5,000 people from a boy’s lunch of five loaves and two fish. He did this miracle to show the people that He was the Jew’s Messiah and the Saviour and Lord of the whole world. After this meal, He told the disciples to get into a ship and cross the sea to the town of Bethsaida while He told the people good-bye. When the people were gone He went to a mountain to pray.

It was late in the evening when Jesus finished praying. As He looked across the water, He saw the disciples fighting for their lives in the storm.

After the disciples were on the water for about eight hours, Jesus went to them. Even though the water was tossing high with waves, Jesus walked without difficulty. It was around three o'clock in the morning when He came close to them and started to walk past them.

As He continued walking, they saw Him and screamed out in fear. Jesus went to them saying, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." When He got into the boat, the wind and storm stopped. The disciples were so startled at what was happening, they didn't know what to do. The Bible says they had forgotten the miracle of Jesus feeding the huge crowd and their hearts were dull at this time toward Jesus and His teachings.

Your life is in many ways like a sea voyage. There are many waves of difficulty, danger, disappointment, and depression. These and more troubles may sweep over you as waves mount over a small ship. If you take Jesus on board, it will be a very different experience than trying to cross life's sea alone. Without Him you will make shipwreck of your life. With Him your voyage may seem rough but He will calm the storms. If you allow him to stay in your life and obey all His orders, He will bring you, at the end of your voyage, to *His* haven of safety, which is heaven. Jesus knew long ago that your life would have times of distress. He says to His followers and to you, "In the world ye shall have tribulation [trouble and sorrow]; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

If you are not a Christian, this assurance does not apply. In order for His delivering power to be effective in your life, you must allow Him to enter your life and take control. Remember, the stormy sea became calm when Jesus entered the ship. The life of the sinner is shown in Isaiah

57:20, 21. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

If you want the peace in your life that only Jesus can give, ask Him now to enter your heart. To do this you must pray the sinner's prayer, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." He will come into your life with a calmness more real than the calmness of the sea. The Apostle Paul speaks of this peace in Philippians 4:7: "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

As a Christian, you may have times of storm and unrest. This may be caused by a cooling of your relationship with Jesus. He wants you to be hot in your love toward Him. In speaking to the Church of Laodicea in the Book of Revelation, He said, "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue [spit] thee out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:15, 16). If this condition makes Jesus sick, it is no wonder that a man feels as though he is in a storm when this condition exists.

It may be that Jesus allows times of testing. He brings circumstances into our lives to show us our direct dependence on Him for everything. He may have caused the storm on the sea to test the faith of His disciples. Jesus watched them during the storm, perhaps waiting for them to call on Him for help.

Why does Jesus allow such times of testing to come on those He loves? He knows that even as Christians we have a tendency toward sin and selfishness. Even at our best we cannot live a righteous life in our own strength. The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah said in a prayer, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). We can surely see from this Scripture that we must receive our

guidance and strength from Him. The Apostle James says in James 4:8: "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you."

Jesus has done so much for us by showing us how to live a life pleasing to God. He died on the cross to give His blood as an offering to God for our sins. He has done all He can without running against our will. So, when He comes to your life with tests, don't do as the disciples did, crying out in fear, thinking He has come to harm you. Be sure you are in right relationship with Him when the waves of testing come, so you can grow in your faith to a closer walk with Him.

For the disciples, the storm in their hearts was more frightening than the storm on the sea. As Christians, we should not let outward conditions affect the peace in our hearts. The Prophet Isaiah wrote, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3).

Another reason Jesus allows testing times is to teach us faith, so we can help other Christians in their testing times. The Bible says that God "comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (II Corinthians 1:4).

When testing comes, the Bible has many promises of God's care. God allowed many difficult times in King David's life. Sometimes when David sinned, God worked in his life to bring him to see where he stood with Him. Often it seems David allowed his troubles to get him "down." He wrote in the Book of Psalms of his struggles. Psalm 10:1 says, "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" Psalm 13:1: "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? . . . how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" Psalm 22:1: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the

words of my roaring?"

But then David speaks of the greatness of God being with him and delivering him. In II Samuel 22:7 he says, "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God: and he did hear my voice out of His temple, and my cry did enter into his ears." At another place David writes, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry" (Psalm 34:15). Read Psalm 23 to find more of the care God provides. *Remember*, Jesus said, "Be of good cheer." This means be cheerful.

Are your troubles too much for you to handle? If they are, you can be sure Jesus can help. He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

When troubles come, "Be of good cheer." They need not lead to despair. Jesus is more real to us even than our troubles. Remember, He walks on the waves to deliver us. They will pass but He will stay with us.

But we are so often absorbed with our own affairs, trying our best to steer straight, anxiously watching the events around us, and allowing ourselves to be overwhelmed. We may be so taken up with the things around us that we have no time to look across life's waters to see who is coming through the storm to help us. We must keep our eyes and total attention on the only one who can help us. God said to people who had turned from Him, "In returning and rest ye shall be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Isaiah 30:15).

A traveling evangelist often speaks of the great need for Christians to be "God conscious." Are you always aware of Jesus' presence with you? Is He really your best friend? A favorite hymn of many is, "What a Friend We Have in

Jesus.”

*What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins
and griefs to bear,*

*What a privilege to carry everything to God
in prayer.*

*O what peace we often forfeit, O what need-
less pain we bear.*

*All because we do not carry everything to
God in prayer.*

—Charles Converse

If your troubles are great, call on Jesus. He will answer and help you. You may want to go to a Christian friend and have Him help you. He may have had victory over a similar experience in his life. Tell him your problem and then pray together, claiming Jesus' promises.

Jesus said, “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”

—Raymond P. Brunk

If you have any questions, or if you need further help, feel free to contact the person whose name appears below.

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