Fear Not (Part 15/30) – God’s Presence

Alex Schneider · Matthew 14:27 · May 11, 2025



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> 27 But Jesus immediately spoke to them, saying, Take courage; it is *I*: be not afraid.

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Twelve grown and seasoned men are rowing to the best of their ability. They know the rough Sea of Galilee like the back of their hands. But now they are all gripped by panic and fear of death. The storm they are trying to defy is getting stronger and the wind is howling incessantly. Water is already lapping at their ankles. Slowly, the last of their strength leaves them. No sign of the Lord. There! A ghost is coming towards them! The panicked cries of the frightened men fade away in the roaring wind. "Don't be afraid!" a familiar voice suddenly calls out to them, "It's me; don't be afraid!" It is the Lord!

What reason does He give His disciples to be fearless in these harsh circumstances? Does He say to them: "Do not be afraid, for I will calm the storm in a moment"? Does He immediately calm the storm, i.e., does He immediately remove the resistance? No, even if the disciples would certainly have liked that. **The reason why the disciples can be fearless is Jesus' exclamation: "It is I!"**

The lesson that the Lord teaches His disciples, and therefore us also, is as follows: The decisive factor for fearlessness is not that a situation changes but that the Lord is with us. **His presence is above the removal of difficulties.** Of course, He has an interest in helping us in concrete ways, but He first wants us to learn the following: even if a difficult life situation does not change (immediately), we can continue to trust Him.

Every believer can report that the Lord did not immediately take away a need. Perhaps you, too, have been praying for decades for a burdensome illness, the salvation of a loved one or another need - and the storm continues to this day. Then the Lord would like to encourage you today: "**You can still be fearless. Fearlessness is not dependent on the waves raging around you or not but on the fact that I am around you!"**

We find this principle several times in the Bible:

- When David finds himself in the valley of the shadow of death (Ps 23:4), he impressively says that he is not afraid. Why? Because he knows that the valley will soon be crossed? No: "*For you are with me*!" **Still in the valley – but not alone.**
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are not saved from the red-hot fire; the threat remains. But we read about King Nebuchadnezzar's question: *“Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said to the king, ‘True, O king.’ ‘Look!’ he answered, ‘I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God’”* (Daniel 3:24-25). **Unchanged situation – but the Lord is there.**

- Elisha's servant panics when he sees the Syrian king's overwhelming army outside the city walls. Elisha encourages him: *"Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them"* (2 Kings 6:16). Were the enemies gone? Had the servant been promised to get out of there alive? No! **And yet he could be fearless because God was with them.**
- Paul stood alone in court. All his confidants had left him. Does the Lord deliver him as miraculously as He did Peter in Acts 12? Does He immediately ensure that the judge personally escorts Paul to the door and bids him farewell? No, Paul continues to sit in the dock. **But**: *"But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me"* (2 Timothy 4:17).

"Peace does not come from the absence of problems, but from the presence of God." (unknown)

When we find ourselves in difficult circumstances that have not yet changed despite years of prayer, we can still be fearless. Our trust in the Lord should not depend on how high the waves are raging around us and whether we still "see land" but may rest on the fact that we are aware of the Lord's presence. One reason why the Lord does not always (immediately) change a specific need is surely so that we can **learn the lesson of trusting Him in difficult circumstances – precisely because He is there!**

John Paton, a missionary among cannibals, describes this presence of the Lord from his own experience when he himself was in the valley of death: "I felt His power carrying me through. It is a sober truth that the blessed Lord was never so near me and never stood by me in so precious a way as in those terrible moments when muskets, clubs, and spears were pointed at me. O, what a blessing to live and suffer like that when you 'see the unseen'!"

Incidentally, the Lord does not say to his disciples: "It is I, your Lord," but simply "It is I." They knew directly who it was. When I call my wife, it is enough to say to her: "Hello, it's me". The familiarity of my voice lets her recognize directly who is on the phone. Jesus' exclamation is, therefore, a particularly familiar one – **we are encouraged by someone we know well!**

The Lord Jesus is calling out to you today: "Don't be afraid! It is me! Even if the need does not change, your heart may change because I am always with you!"

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