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The Power of Perfect Love

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[Attributes of God - A Forgiving God to](#)

[An Advocate](#)

[#1-#14](#)

[Rest](#)

[From Suffering](#)

[Servant to "Yes](#)

[your Majesty"](#)

[Weeds in the](#)

[Kingdom: Part 1](#)

[Who Is He?](#)

[Reflections of a](#)

[Father: Part 2](#)

[Reflections of a](#)

[Father: Part 1](#)

[Making the](#)

[Connection](#)

Pastor James May

THE POWER OF PERFECT LOVE

Matthew 14:22-31, "And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, it is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou; bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

One of the greatest miracles of Jesus' earthly ministry had just occurred. Over 5000 men, plus many more women and children were fed from just 5 loaves of bread and 2 small fish and there was much left over. In fact there was 12 baskets of leftovers for anyone who wanted to take some for the journey home.

Jesus had proven His power and desire to supply our every need. He had shown his compassion and concern for man's state of depravity.

a) Jesus knew that man was unable to reach God so He came down to earth, took upon Him the form of a man so that He could supply our need of a Savior.

b) Jesus knew the inability of man to supply his own needs. He knew that, as a result of the fall in the Garden, man's best efforts would never be good enough to supply even the basic needs of life. Satan was out to destroy God's creation and without the direct intervention of Almighty God, Satan could have easily succeeded in starving man to death and causing us to destroy the economy and ecology of the earth so that it would be an uninhabitable, dead planet.

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We frail humans often are overly concerned with what we will do to pay our bills, feed our families and to make ends meet.

God is able to do exceedingly and abundantly more than we can imagine. He has promised in His word to supply our every need and to pour out blessing upon us that we cannot even contain. God not only wants to bless you and supply your needs (not necessarily all of our desires for some of our desires do not fulfill the plan of God for our lives). Not only does He want to supply your need, He wants you to have blessings enough that there are leftover fragments to use in blessing other people and to meet the needs of the church.

Our God is abundant in mercy, abundant in grace, abundant in compassion, abundant in provision; Our God is a God of abundance!

Isaiah 59:1, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:"

After performing this great miracle, Jesus desired for His disciples to get into a ship and return to the Land of Gennesaret. This was a journey that the disciples just didn't want to take, especially without Jesus going with them.

Gennesaret was under the jurisdiction of Herod. It had only been a very short time since Herod had arrested John the Baptist and had him beheaded. The disciples were more than glad to leave with Jesus when he led them off into a desert place to be alone with Him. It was in that desert place where Jesus fed the 5000. How many of you know that it is better to be in a desert place with Jesus than to be in a land of plenty without Him?

The scripture said that Jesus "constrained" the disciples to get into the ship. At first He simply said go and I will come later. Then, when the disciples questioned His command, Jesus had to command them to go on without Him.

I have been to the place, in my walk with the Lord, where I felt that Jesus was leading me into a place that seemed dangerous. Have you ever questioned God? Have you ever

doubted whether it was God that was talking to you or if you were only hearing your own thoughts? Have you ever said to Him, “now Jesus is this really you talking?”

I can't say that I blame the disciples for being concerned about going over to the enemy's camp without the Lord with them. I don't want to go into the devil's territory without the Lord by my side either.

What the disciples didn't know, and what we often forget, is that Jesus would never really allow them to go on the journey without Him. He was going to prove their faith and trust in Him but it would take a strong message to get them to understand just how close and how powerful Jesus really is.

According to some Bible scholars, Jesus sent His disciples away and stayed behind with the crowd because He wanted to tell the crowd some things that the disciples didn't need to hear. Perhaps this is true. Jesus doesn't always speak the same thing to each of us because the circumstances and call upon our lives are different. I do know that Jesus speaks peace to us and that everything He says and does for us is meant to lead us to a place of obedience and relationship with Him.

It seems more logical to me that we should believe that Jesus sent His disciples away for another reason. Those who would call themselves the disciples of Christ must, of necessity, be led into different paths of service than those who simply stand on the outside looking in.

The life of discipleship demands a greater obedience, a stronger faith and a testing of our trust in the Master. It is only in the school of trials and tests that we are proven and transformed into real disciples. We can only learn to become more like Jesus by having every facet of our heart revealed for its true nature. One trial at a time, one test at a time, one obedient act at time, we are transformed into the image of Christ. Anyone can be a “Christian” in the good times, but it takes a disciple with a real conviction to be a Christian in the hard times. It is the tests, the trials and the troubles that test and build our faith and trust in God. We cannot always see this happening or understand the process until the test is over and we have stayed true to God and seen our faith increase.

This is what Jesus had in mind for His disciples as they sailed out into the sea and headed for uncertain and dangerous territory that was on the other shore.

Heaven is our home but Jesus has commanded us to “occupy” until He comes to take us home. We are travelers and strangers in a foreign land. We are place here to reach the lost and help those in need who have no other hope than to come to know Jesus as the Lord of their lives.

Jesus was sending the disciples on a journey through the dangers of life just as He does you and I, but He wasn't sending them alone.

At first all went well. The little ship performed well and the disciples were enjoying the journey. Thank God for the good times, the times when the seas are calm and the sun is shining brightly. But, it wasn't long until the sun went down in the west and skies grew dark. Not long after, the storm clouds began to gather and the contrary winds started to howl in the pitch darkness of night. The only light they had was either candles or lanterns. The light was not powerful enough to allow them to see and I can imagine that the wind and the waves were playing havoc on the little light they had. How bad it must have been

to be miles from shore in the middle of a storm, with the wind trying to rip the ship apart and the waves washing over the ship filling it with water faster than they could bail it out. Their situation was desperate and they sensed that it would take a miracle for them to survive the storm.

Oh friend, what a perfect picture of life this story gives to each of us. We set sail on the seas of life. (Water, in scripture often denotes the masses of people) Sailing on in life, meeting people, dealing with people and just going about our daily routine is sometimes enjoyable. The future is bright, everything is going our way, life is wonderful, everyone is healthy and happy, but then the bright sun begins to fade and darkness begins to settle upon us.

That darkness may come in the form of a sickness, a disease, a loss of income, a squabble among family members, troubles in our relationships, troubles in our marriages or any one of a thousand things.

We sail on into the darkness of night for the journey lies ahead and there can be no turning back. Our only hope is to reach the safety of Heaven's shore. Our only recourse is to continue to obey the command of God to keep sailing on no matter how bad the storm may get.

Sometimes the darkness only lasts for a little while and the day breaks again, but there are times when it seems as though the night will never end. There are times when we can "rest in the arms of the Lord" and sleep peacefully through the night and it quickly passes. But there are times when it seems as though the "arms of the Lord" are not there and sleep leave us. Then doubts and fears begin to set in as the storm grows.

That night, on the stormy sea, the disciples' became fearful also. They could feel the cold hand of death as it lingered so very near. Satan was out to destroy every one of the disciples that night and they knew it. Satan knew that these men of God were going to be instrumental in winning the world for Christ and he was doing everything in his power to stop them before they could begin their ministry for Jesus.

Jesus allowed Satan to put His disciples to the test but He would not allow them to be tested above what they were able to bear for the time had not come for them to be removed from the earth. God still had work for them to do.

The fear and hopelessness of the situation gripped the hearts of the disciples that night. The darkness was impenetrable with the little bit of light they had. The waves were overwhelming. The end seemed inevitable.

Then, in a flash of lightning, they saw something coming toward them, walking on the stormy waves. They screamed in fear, "it is a spirit". I don't believe that they meant the Holy Spirit either. They just knew that it was an "apparition" or a "ghost"; perhaps it was the angel of death or the spirit of the underworld coming to take them down into a watery grave. Their fear had temporarily blinded them and they could not recognize the Lord as He came to them.

I cannot say that I would not have felt the same way as the disciples that night. (Do you believe in ghosts?)(Do you believe in demonic powers and the power of Satan to strike fear into the heart of man?)(Do you believe in familiar spirits?) The powers of darkness are very real and no man can overcome them in his own power. Thank God that Jesus in

you is greater than all the power of the devil and that, in Jesus, you don't have to fear such things!

But even though I trust in God and I know that Jesus in me is more powerful than the powers of darkness, I don't want to go spend the night in some place where "spirits and manifestations of ghosts" is reported to have occurred. I don't believe in tempting God and I believe that it best for us to stay close to Jesus and let Him take us there, under His command, if that is what is needed.

I want to know that when I have to confront the demonic powers of hell that I have Jesus with me and that I haven't strayed from the presence of the Lord and put myself into a place where I shouldn't be.

Jesus was not far from His disciples. His eyes had never left from watching over them. His hand was never too short to reach out to save them. His power over the storm of winds and waves was never limited. God is not troubled by our storms. He has the power to stop them and bring peace and blessing with only a single gesture of His mighty hand or a single Living Word that comes from His lips. All of creation, including the demonic powers of Hell, is under His feet and He is in control of it all.

It was Peter who first recognized that it was Jesus out there on the waves. Jesus' words of comfort, "be not afraid, it is I", had cut through the fear and doubt that engulfed the disciples' hearts. The Word of God is alive and powerful and can cut through the darkest night and the greatest storm. Nothing is impossible with God, not even the circumstances that seem so impossible to us.

Peter stepped out of the boat that night, and for a short time, he walked on the stormy waves too. It is a testimony to his trust and faith in Christ and in his ability to keep His eyes on the Master. As long as Peter looked to Christ, he could stay above the storms of life. As long as he kept his eyes on Jesus his faith was strong and his mind was clear and his heart was full of faith.

But just like Peter, you and I cannot keep our eyes on Jesus because the circumstances of life and the glitter, glamour, clamor, noise, voices, and cares of life often draw our gaze away from the Master and then all we can see is the impossibility of our circumstances.

Peter looked at the storm, the waves and the lightning, and his faith was weakened. He began to sink once again; only this time there was no ship, no hope of survival, for the thing that he depended upon to keep him afloat was no longer there.

God has a way of pulling out from under you those things that you will put your trust in. Our trust is not in finances, jobs, people, things or possessions. Our trust is not in our economy, our government, or our military might. Our trust must be in Jesus and Him alone!

Note that when Peter cried out to the Lord for help, Jesus was instantly there to lift him up. I don't know how far away Jesus was when Peter began to sink but Jesus was there instantly when he cried for help.

Looking back again at Isaiah 59:1, the Scripture says "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear."

Jesus is ever near to us! His eye is always upon His children. He will never leave us nor forsake us! He stays closer than a brother and He will be there always, even to the very end of this life. Then He will be there to escort us into the portals of Heaven.

I believe it was President Franklin D. Roosevelt who said to the Congress of the United States during his famous speech declaring war on Japan after the attack on Pearl Harbor, "WE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR BUT FEAR ITSELF!"

Those words, spoken by man, are reflective of this incident of the storm at sea in the Book of Matthew. The greatest weapon that Satan can muster against the Children of God is fear. If we become fearful of losing our soul; if we become fearful of schisms and divisions in the church; if we become fearful of the storms of life, then Satan is the victor for he knows that fear destroys faith and trust.

1 John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

If we have the love of God within us, that Love will make us keep our eyes upon the eyes of the one we love, Jesus Christ. Just as young lovers cannot see one another enough and want to spend every moment with one another. And just as husbands and wives, if they are following the example that Jesus has given to tell us how a marriage should really be, never want to be separated but are so very concerned with one another and desire to be together always, we should always want to be close to Jesus and keeping our eyes on Him.

Peter loved the Lord and wanted to be near to him. I cannot say that the other disciples didn't love Jesus either because, in the end, they were all saved. I just believe that Peter's love was so strong that he was quicker to lay aside his fear for a moment and step out in faith.

The point of this message is this. How much do we really love Jesus? If our love is shallow, the storms will seem so much stronger. If we have a deep love for Christ and we keep our eyes on Him, the storms will still come, the circumstances won't be any different, but we will live above those storms and we will never fall.

Do you love Jesus this morning? How much do you love Him?
Have the storms of life been getting you down? Do you feel as though you are going down for the last count? Do you have a sense of dread, doubt, fear and uncertainty about your future?

Get your eyes on Jesus and learn to love Him with all your heart. Then show that love in your faith and works for the Lord. You will be amazed at how quickly the Lord will lift you out of the storm or speak peace to your life.

In closing, it is impossible to Love the Lord unless you first get to really know Him in a personal and intimate relationship.

If you are here this morning and you don't know the Lord as your personal Lord and Savior, then you also cannot love Him and the storms of your life may well drown you. Even though God knows all and sees all things, He is under no obligation to keep you from drowning in your circumstances if you are not His child.

We are all created in His image, we are all of the same family of mankind, but we are not all God's Children. Only those who have surrendered their hearts and lives to Jesus in true repentance and have asked Him to come into their lives and accepted Him as Lord and Savior are really the Children of God. Only the true Children of God can love the Lord in a right relationship with Him. And, only that love of God in the heart of a Child of God can cast out fear and bring peace in every storm.

Why not surrender your life to Him this morning? Why not **ask Jesus to come into your heart** to live?

Jesus will come quickly to you, just as He did to Peter on that dark night. Jesus will lift you out of the pits of sin. Jesus will anchor your soul on the Rock and He will begin to help you to overcome every storm of Life.

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