

“Still On The Boat”

As Christ followers, it seems that in moments of sudden and unexpected misfortunes or tense situations our natural humanistic tendency is to default to panic and fear. How many times have we made decisions out of panic and fear? Or, have allowed our steadfastness to be shaken so much so that we begin to doubt or question the very things that we know are true or have tremendous faith in? Take for an all too common example a breadwinner's sudden loss of employment and thereby income to an already financially strapped family. Or, as a business owner who's revenues have catastrophically dropped and is forced to make drastic decisions. In a different scenario, the single individual who feels that time is passing them by and, as such, the opportunities for family dwindling. Or, an unexpectedly large bill comes in the mail and must be paid immediately. The list can include the loss of a spouse, a bad medical prognosis, and so on. I have my own as well as you. Any one of these situations can instantaneously throw anyone into a momentary state of panic and fear. This natural inclination that we all succumb to (some temporarily and others, unfortunately permanently) can create havoc in our thought process, decision making, attitudes, and overall well being. The moment that we sense that we have lost control of a situation or have been thrust into the unfamiliar and uncomfortable, our minds tend to gravitate to the worst case scenarios and drum up false and chaotic endings. It is amazing that our immediate default setting is to think about every negative and awful outcome that can possibly happen as a result of that situation without ever considering taking a moment to gather our thoughts and quickly re-evaluate and remind ourselves of who is there with us throughout the entire ordeal. As author Max Lucado writes, “it's not the absence of storms that sets us apart. It's whom we discover in the storm: an unstirred Christ.” Far too many of us forget that during these scary moments in our lives Jesus is still on the boat.

The interesting thing about such occurrences is that we forget how God had gotten us through other ordeals in the past. It seems as if the memory file that contains all the previous times that God has been there for us gets temporarily deleted. As a result, we jump onto the first emotions that are ever present and that is panic, fear, confusion, and doubt. When these emotions become predominate, our thinking becomes cloudy, to say the least, and hence, our immediate actions, words, and behaviors do not become congruent with who we are and what we believe. For that moment, all that we know about Jesus and have experienced goes by the wayside. This is exactly what happened to His apostles.

In Matthew 8:23-26, Mark 4:35-40, and Luke 8:22-25 we read how the apostles reacted when faced with a sudden fearful storm out at sea. In all three accounts, we can picture the sheer panic and fear that overcame these devout followers of Christ. What is interesting is that these guys had just finished seeing Jesus heal the sick, give sight to the blind, rebuke the demon-possessed, and perform many more miraculous works. They also witnessed Jesus give a major discourse spoken with amazing authority, the Sermon on the Mount, and yet, in that moment of unexpected trial, they forgot that the same Jesus they had been hanging with was the same Jesus sleeping on the boat. Panic and fear created amnesia for these guys in a moment when they could have recalled who they had with them on the boat. The same Jesus who had amazed them just a few hours earlier. They lost sight of who was with them. This is obvious when we read that they were convinced that they were going to die. Talk about allowing your panic and fear stricken mind to run wild! These

guys let loose! They even questioned Jesus...”do you not even care..? Imagine that!. Getting so caught up in panic and fear over a situation that you question whether God is aware or even cares. Am I talking to anybody? I know that I have trafficked this road before. Once awake, Jesus questions and challenges them. His remarks illustrated to the apostles that their knee jerk reaction was uncalled for and could have been avoided if they had turned to Him instead of to themselves. In other words, the apostles saw a situation that was out of their control and panic and fear set in because they knew that the fearsome storm was too great for them. Their focus should not have been on their own inability to handle such a problem but instead on the One who was able to...Jesus. Couldn't the same be said about us today?

I've learned that the natural reaction to unpleasant and scary circumstances beyond our control is to immediately fall into the realm of confusion, doubt and then a steady progression to panic and eventually fear. However, this does not have to be the place where we stay. When we quickly come to our senses and realize that under our own strength, wisdom and understanding that overwhelming storm will never be overcome. It is only when we remember the One who has in the past shown Himself mighty on our behalf...when we believe that He already knows what we are going through and promises to be there again as long as we place our faith in Him and be assured that He is still on the boat.

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