

“Walking by Faith: The Courage of Peter”
The Reflection Year Series

Scripture: **Matthew 14: 22-32 (NIV)**

²² Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³ After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, ²⁴ and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. ²⁵ Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear.

²⁷ But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” ²⁸ “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” ²⁹ “Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” ³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?” ³² And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

Subject Question: What three Characteristics of Courage, does Matthew teach us as modern day Christians concerning Peter’s encounter with Christ on the raging waters of a ravaging storm?

Compliment answer: Courage is Built, Courage is Revealed, and Courage is Power.

Big Idea: The three Characteristics of Courage that Mathew teaches us as modern day Christians concerning Peters encounter with Christ on the raging waters of a ravaging storm are: Courage is Built, Courage is Revealed, and Courage is Power.

Homiletical Idea: **“Water-Walking”**

Purpose: I want the congregation to understand the very human life and actions of Peter and the transformative nature of Courage.

Introduction: There is an interesting circle of events that we can see in our story today. In a literary form, we see it presented as a chiasm—ABCBA. (See notes) For our purposes it’s more easily explained as a circle. Peter begins with **Faith in Christ:** Vs. 25-28a, *²⁵ Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they*

said, and cried out in fear. ²⁷ But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” ²⁸ “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied. Peter had been with Christ long enough to begin to understand Christ’s marvelous life-message of love and miracuoolous life-changing ability to perform miracles. His faith in Christ was growing... as will anyone’s who walks with Christ long enough. We next, see His **Focus on Christ**: Vs.28b-29, ” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”²⁹ “Come,” he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. With faith in hand and Jesus in sight, the only disciple in the boat who dared to have the courage to go to join in with Jesus on the water lifted himself over the edge and for a moment tasted the miraculous... But like you and I, fickle creatures that we are, we see Peter next, **Floundering Before Christ**: Vs. 30, ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink,. Seemingly, without a steadfast focus on Christ, his faith in Christ, waned, floundered, and His taste of the miraculous faded, and the courage that enabled him to get out of the boat...well... But not all is lost! We see the returning element of **Focus on Christ** in Vs. 31, (Peter) cried out, “Lord, save me!” ³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?” Amazing isn’t it, that the same refocusing on Christ, seeing past the surrounding sea to the Saving Savior, enabled Peter to once again find His faith in Christ? Even after he had blown it—even after he had stumbled. Until finally we come full circle: **Faith in Christ**: Vs.32, ³² And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down... And this storm was over... But Peter, now there was a changed man. His life would never be the same. There is one thing missing in our story. Notice that there was no further scolding from Jesus towards Peter...no more rebuke. Simply a needed lesson learned and more, a true example of how faith infused courage can indeed lead every Christian during the stormiest of times. Perhaps the simple underlying spiritual insight is: a growing faith will result in growing confidence and a growing confidence will result in a growing faith. But what is courage? We’ll try to answer that question in the next few minutes...

(The Christian life is Sticky-Business)

Groundwork: Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

14:22-33 Those are not Christ's followers who cannot enjoy being alone with God and their own hearts. It is good, upon special occasions, and when we find our hearts enlarged, to continue long in secret prayer, and in pouring out our hearts before the Lord. It is no new thing for Christ's disciples to meet with

storms in the way of duty, but he thereby shows himself with the more grace to them and for them. He can take what way he pleases to save his people. But even appearances of deliverance sometimes occasion trouble and perplexity to God's people, from mistakes about Christ. Nothing ought to affright those that have Christ near them, and know he is theirs; not death itself. Peter walked upon the water, not for diversion or to boast of it, but to go to Jesus; and in that he was thus wonderfully borne up. Special supports are promised, and are to be expected, but only in spiritual pursuits; nor can we ever come to Jesus, unless we are upheld by his power. Christ bade Peter come, not only that he might walk upon the water, and so know his Lord's power, but that he might know his own weakness. And the Lord often lets his servants have their choice, to humble and prove them, and to show the greatness of his power and grace. When we look off from Christ, and look at the greatness of opposing difficulties, we shall begin to fall; but when we call to him, he will stretch out his arm, and save us. Christ is the great Saviour; those who would be saved, must come to him, and cry to him, for salvation; we are never brought to this, till we find ourselves sinking: the sense of need drives us to him. He rebuked Peter. Could we but believe more, we should suffer less. The weakness of faith, and the prevailing of our doubts, displease our Lord Jesus, for there is no good reason why Christ's disciples should be of a doubtful mind. Even in a stormy day he is to them a very present help. None but the world's Creator could multiply the loaves, none but its Governor could tread upon the waters of the sea: the disciples yield to the evidence, and confess their faith. They were suitably affected, and worshipped Christ. He that comes to God, must believe; and he that believes in God, will come, Heb 11:6.

Pulpit Commentary

Verses 22-33. - Christ's power over the elements. He walks on the water and stays the storm. St. Peter's attempt to walk on the water is successful so long as he exercises faith on Christ. Jesus receives homage as Messiah. Parallel passages: Mark 6:45-52; John 6:15-21. It is strange that the incident of St. Peter is recorded in Matthew only, and not in Mark, for it serves to emphasize what is a leading thought of the preceding narrative, even in Mark, viz. the power that believers receive by virtue of faith on Christ (vers. 16, 19). With Christ in the boat, difficulties cease (ver. 32); they that believe on him can triumph as he did (vers. 28-31; cf. the thought of John 14:19, end). For St. John's purpose the mention of St. Peter was not necessary; since, by way of introduction to the

following discourse, he desired rather to familiarize his readers with the idea of Christ's body being triumphant over earthly limitations (cf. ver. 19, note). Verse 22. - *And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples*. It was not their wish to leave him, especially when the multitudes seemed likely to elect him king (John 6:15). But from the temptation to side with the multitudes our Lord desired now to shield them. Separation and physical work (ver. 24) would calm their excitement, and the object lesson that their Master already ruled over wind and sea would lead them to more perfect trust in his methods. Another reason for his sending them forward may have been that they should use the failing light; and yet another, that he himself desired time for prayer. *To get into a ship; a boat* (ἐμβῆναι εἰς πλοῖον); cf. Matthew 8:23 (**the boat**, Revised Version, reading εἰς τὸ πλοῖον). *And to go before him* (προάγειν αὐτόν: Matthew 2:9; Matthew 21:9). For he would follow. He fulfilled his promise much more literally than they anticipated. *Unto the other side*. "Unto Bethsaida" (Mark); "unto Capernaum" (John). Probably they landed at the western Bethsaida (ver. 13, note), in Gennesaret (ver. 34), and went on to Capernaum, where our Lord again addressed the people (John 6:24-26). *While he sent - till he should send* (Revised Version); ἕως οὗ ἀπολύσῃ, Matthew 13:33 - *the multitudes away*. Why should this take up time? Why did he not dismiss them then and there? Possibly they were too eager to carry out their own plans on his behalf to attend to only one expression of his wish.

What's a Chiasm? A Unique Literary Style in the Bible

A chiasm (or chiasmus if you rather) is a writing style that uses a unique repetition pattern for clarification and/or emphasis. Chiasm is pronounced ky'-az-um. Often called the chiastic (ky'-az-tic) approach or the chiastic structure, this repetition form appears throughout the Bible yet it is not well known. The way you approach the Scriptures should be dramatically enhanced as you learn what a chiasm is, how to recognize chiasms, and how to glean a fresh application from these New or Old Testament passages.

Chiasms are structured in a repeating A-B-C ... C'-B'-A' pattern:

A Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. (5b)

B Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous; (6,7a)

C	Be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. (7b)
D	This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, (8a)
D'	But you shall meditate on it day and night, (8b)
C'	So that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. (8c)
B'	Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, (9a)
A'	For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. (9b)
	(Joshua 1:5b-9)

Simply put, a chiasm is a repetition of similar ideas in the reverse sequence. The importance of the chiastic structure is found in its hidden emphasis. (See [Being an Overcomer](#) for an interpretation of the above chiasm, adapted from my book). And it is not insignificant – I suspect there are more than two thousand examples in the Bible!

My time in God's Word has become truly exciting as I have learned to uncover the chiastic structure. Over the years, I have studied the Scriptures from many different angles – for me, seeing God's Word from the chiastic perspective has added a great deal of meaning. Yet today, many who have read the Bible are just beginning to discover this even though it was identified over two hundred years ago (see [Background of Chiasms](#)).

A chiasm organizes themes much like a sandwich: A) a piece of bread on top, B) mustard, C) a delightful piece of meat, C') another savory piece of meat, B') more mustard, and finally A') another piece of bread on the bottom. Chiasms generally focus on the flavorful meat, but the bread and mustard are necessary for a complete sandwich. Some chiasms do not have a mustard layer, other chiasms have lettuce on both sides of the meat, and some have just one piece of delicious meat.

When God inspired the Hebrew and Greek writers to inscribe their portions of the Scriptures, the chiastic structure was often used to add emphasis. He could not use techniques such as **bold**, *italics*, underline, indentation, bullets, or font size to help the reader understand what is important because these were not

part of the ancient languages at the time. Instead He often used the structural arrangement of repeated thoughts or phrases to accomplish this emphasis.

Thomas B. Clarke, Author

3 Short Lessons on Courage:

- A. Lesson: Courage is Built.
- B. Some people say that courage is something that you are born with; a quality of character that one either possesses or doesn't. And perhaps, to a degree, that is a good insight. It does seem that some people are just born with a good degree of courage. But some aren't. With some God has to take the initiative and through experience and trial and error teach us, equip us, and develop within us a greater degree of courage than we naturally have. Courage, according to the scriptures, is seemingly something that God wants to help each of His children develop.... Peter's example is the ultimate example; his courage wasn't a quality of character, it was more of a by-product of experience. And trial and error.
- C. But one thing about Peter, He maybe wasn't the most courageous of persons to begin with... But the one thing he had going for him was the life changing encounter with this One who had somehow arrested his attention and was changing his heart. In the stormy boat scene, we think that Peter was impulsive... and maybe He was, But Peter was willing to put some feet on his faith... dare to try the impossible, and believe that with Christ and by Christ nothing is impossible. Notice that no other disciple was even willing to get out of the boat. Note as well, like most of us, Peter was a slow learner: this is after all same guy who would in a fit of coward-ness deny the Lord. Yes, he would flounder once again in the sea of opinion as he did on the Sea of Galilee. But Peter, Good Ole floundering Peter (A good name for a "fisherman, by the way) didn't let his floundering or his failure become fatal.
- D. With every failure and with every restoration of his relationship with Christ, Peter became less impulsive and more deliberate, less likely to cower and more likely to be the one whom everyone else looked to as an example of courage and stability. For Peter it was a constant uphill battle of attempt/failure/ attempt/failure/attempt. And little by little God built Courage into Peter's life. Courage is built.

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- A. Courage is Revealed.
- B. Matthew Henry points out: *Christ bade Peter come, not only that he might walk upon the water, and so know his Lord's power, but that he might know his own weakness. And the Lord often lets his servants have their choice, to humble and prove them, and to show the greatness of his power and grace. When we look off from Christ, and look at the greatness of opposing difficulties, we shall begin to fall; but when we call to him, he will stretch out his arm, and save us. Christ is the great Saviour; those who would be saved, must come to him, and cry to him, for salvation; we are never brought to this, till we find ourselves sinking: the sense of need drives us to him. He rebuked Peter. Could we but believe more, we should suffer less. The weakness of faith, and the prevailing of our doubts, displease our Lord Jesus, for there is no good reason why Christ's disciples should be of a doubtful mind. Even in a stormy day he is to them a very present help. None but the world's Creator could multiply the loaves, none but its Governor could tread upon the waters of the sea: the disciples yield to the evidence, and confess their faith.*
- C. In other words, Courage is revealed when the man or woman of God realizes that they are indeed a called man, a converted woman, a blood bought believer and a cherished child of God Almighty. Listen: a convinced Child of God knows the reality that when it seems that Christ is all you have or have left, they are at the perfect place—for there, and there alone, they hear the sweet familial whisper of Christ, take courage, rejoice, because in reality, I all that you need.”
- D. Treasures come and go, beauty and looks fade with time, but the steadfast love of God for His own, is for now and forever. Have you really realized that yet? Have you come to the realization that God was serious when he drew you to Himself? You are A Child of God. Stop letting the Enemy fill your mind and hear with doubts and fears. Courage is built, Courage is realized and lastly...

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- A. Courage is Power. Power in 3 Respects:

- B. Courage is Power in the sense that for the Christian, and only for the Christian, it gives a life-Focus. I am a Christian. When I am weak, I am strong. When I can't, He can. When the world laughs at me and calls me a fool. Jesus comes to me and applauds me for my wisdom in trusting and following Him. When I am in need, I always have hope. When I am sick, He is my physician and when I die He will meet me at Heavens Eastern gate. I am A Christian... That is my focus; that is My Life.
- C. Courage is Power in the sense that for the Christian, and only for the Christian, it lays a life-Foundation. I am a Christian. I don't count on my own righteousness or goodness; my life is not built on my disastrous or delightful deeds, but only upon Christ's ultimate, and invaluable deed for me. I owed a debt I could not pay; Christ paid a debt He did not know. And as such, I know the reality of and sing the glory of, "On Christ the Rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand." None other has stolen my heart so completely, No other can satisfy my deepest longings, none can compare to the glory, the greatness, the wonder of wonders that He is my foundation in this life and for this life. Glory to God.
- D. Courage is Power in the sense that for the Christian, and only for the Christian, it provides Life-Freedom. I can live...because in the deepest recesses of my heart, I now that I am ready to die. But until then I refuse to simply exist; I can live fully, I can life funnily, I can live fantastically, why because I know the reality of the song, Because He lives—
Because He lives, I can face tomorrow
Because He lives, all fear is gone
Because I know He holds the future
And life is worth the living, just because He lives

Conclusion: So what can we take away for Peter this day: In other words, what is courage in a nutshell? In one word, Courage for the Christian just takes sticktoitness.