

# Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

December 22, 2019

Advent: Peace

“Help My Unbelief”

8:00 ~ Service - Communion is for all Christians

9:30 ~ Fellowship & Adult Sunday school

10:30 ~ Service with the King's Kid's - Communion is for all Christians

## NEWS

Advent: Peace, Isaiah 9:6-7a, Luke 2:8-14, Romans 5:1

Candlelight Service ~ Tuesday afternoon, December 24, at 4:30

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

Visit the website ~ [www.myaetheia.com](http://www.myaetheia.com) ~ Hear a sermon at

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Last week we saw a “Sign and wonder,” showing that Jesus was the true “\_\_\_\_\_ of Life” – the ultimate “\_\_\_\_\_ from Heaven,” Who said that “The work of God is this: to \_\_\_\_\_ in the one he has sent.”

In one of the plainest teachings on salvation found in the Bible, it is crystal clear that, “Whoever believes (πιστεύων) will, in Him, have eternal life” (John 3:15). πιστεύων (pēs-tü-ōn), is a present, active, nominative, singular, participle.

1) INTENSE –

2) CONTINUOUS –

3) ACTIVE –

4) INDIVIDUAL –

5) OBJECTIVE –

6) INTELLECTUAL –

**MATTHEW 14:22&23** ~ <sup>22NASB</sup>Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away. <sup>23</sup>After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.

“Immediately He made,” is an extremely intense phrase... Why?

(John 6:14&15)

**MATTHEW 14:24-27** ~ <sup>24NASB</sup>But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. <sup>25</sup>And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. <sup>26</sup>When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. <sup>27</sup>But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.”

Bethsaida, Gennesaret, Capernaum?

Normally, the wind dies down, or is from the other direction during the “Fourth watch,” which is \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ am. So, the wind was “\_\_\_\_\_,” opposed, or opposite.

The language is vivid. “Battered,” βασανίζω (bä-sä-nē-dzō), meaning to torture, as in trying to get a prisoner to talk. It came to mean any tough \_\_\_\_\_ of a person’s will, or character.

The wording and feel hints at a supernatural opposition.

The, “It is I,” bit is actually ἐγώ εἰμι (ě-gō ā-mē) \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_.

**MATTHEW 14:28-33** ~ <sup>28</sup>NASB Peter said to Him, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” <sup>29</sup>And He said, “Come!” And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup>But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” <sup>31</sup>Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” <sup>32</sup>When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. <sup>33</sup>And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, “You are certainly God’s Son!”

Some people see doubt here, some see Peter testing Jesus, and others see it more like, “Lord, since it is You, command me.”

It was somewhat impetuous, even \_\_\_\_\_, but it was Peter.

Not only did Jesus not rebuke him, He gave him the command, “Come,” ἔρχομαι (ěř-khō-mī)!

*Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.*

*God Bless You!*

Peter without hesitation demonstrated an insane amount of \_\_\_\_\_, but then, distraction. Peter began to sink, and he cried out to Jesus to save him. “Save,” is σωζω (sō-dzō).

“You of little faith, why did you doubt?” It seems like a rebuke and it seems like a cautionary tale. Is it?

Peter had incredible faith and concurrently, he had the human proclivity to doubt.

Mark 9:24

Faith never increases without it being \_\_\_\_\_. Tests of faith that are easy are not tests of faith. You cannot grow unless you are \_\_\_\_\_.

To those guys in that boat at that time there was no question at all that Jesus was Divine. At that moment they had tremendous faith. Later we’ll find that they still needed help with their unbelief... Just as we do.

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Check all that apply – detach and place in the offering or the prayer box

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to talk with the pastor about \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I want prayer for \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to volunteer to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I want more information about \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

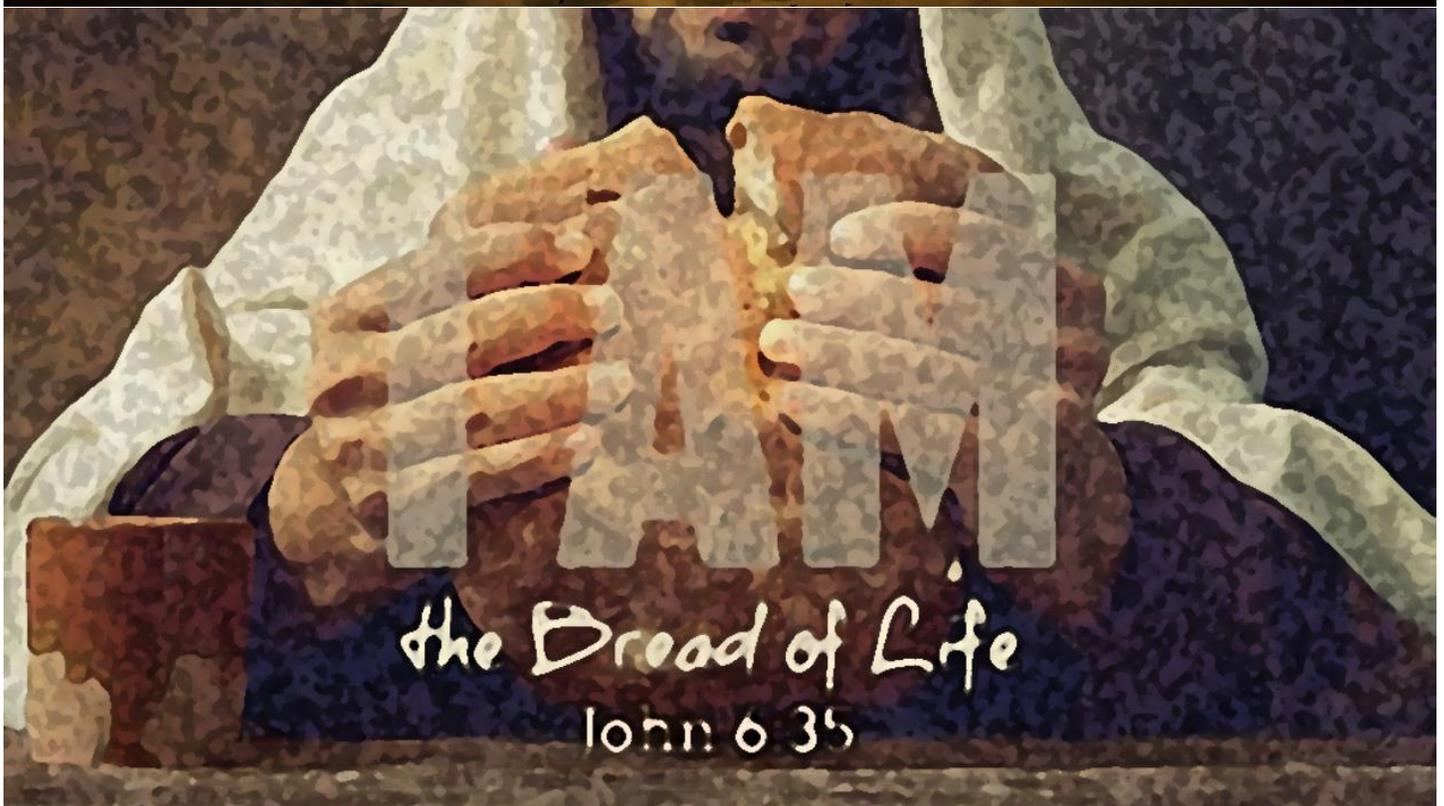
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Alêtheia ~ Matthew 14b ~ 122219

*Welcome Friends*

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO  
**MATTHEW**  
A CLASH OF KINGDOMS

*Alêtheia Christian Fellowship*



Last week we saw a “Sign and wonder,” which is to say

a miraculous signal. Through the supernatural feeding of the vast crowd, God indicated to the world that Jesus was the true “Bread of Life” – the ultimate “Manna from Heaven,” Who was sent by God, to save those who would eat. As “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God,” so Jesus was the Word of God made bread.

We saw from the 6th chapter of John that, that Word of God made bread, made flesh and blood human being, who lived among us as one of us, said that the work of God is this... “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

Today, as we celebrate the Advent of Jesus into our reality – we really need to grasp this Truth. It is the “Truth that will set you free.”

You can do nothing to move God!

You cannot move God positively and you cannot move God negatively – because, hello, just who do you think you are? Really, little ole you is going to make God act?



So, please believe me when I tell you the only thing you must do is BELIEVE – but you must do that – you must.

Now, what does that actually mean? The Biblically defined belief that is salvific – that can save a person's immortal soul eternally – can be easily understood in the formulation of the Greek word alone. In other words, when I describe to a person the kind of belief, they must have in order to be saved; I could save my breath if they knew Koinê Greek, because the word itself, would explain it all for me.

In the few verses centered around John 3:16, which tells us that, “Whoever believes... will not perish, but will instead have eternal life” with God... The formulation, πιστεύων (pēs-tü-ōn), occurs 5 times. In one of the plainest teachings on salvation found in the Bible, it is crystal clear that, “Whoever believes πιστεύων will, in Him, have eternal life” (John 3:15).

πιστεύων, is a participle, or verbal adjective, in the present tense, active voice, nominative case, singular number, and there’s more...

That’s a mouthful. Since this is not a grammar lesson, let me just say that participles are big-time intensifiers, that highlight and stress the importance of the action...

So, the first thing... To believe is...

1) Intense – The activity of believing is vitally important. There is a sense of great urgency. It is serious and it is all-encompassing. This is not just a hobby, a pastime, a sideline gig, or an avocation... this is everything.

Next, as a Greek present tense verb, to believe is...

2) Continuous – As, it is a continuous action. It is who you really are not just who you’re trying to be. It is your modus operandi, it’s what you do. If you believe church

is important, you will attend regularly, habitually, continuously. Therefore, if you don't attend regularly, habitually, continuously, it proves that church is not important to you. To say otherwise, is simply a lie.

Thirdly, the active voice means that the action is done by the "Whoever." So, it is...

3) ACTIVE – I can believe, with all my heart, mind and strength, that lift equals the coefficient of lift times one half rho, "V" squared times "S,"  $[L=CL (\frac{1}{2}\rho V^2) S]$ , but it is all just academic, until I strap my little pink body to two after-burning jet engines. You must jump. You must sit down in the chair!

It is also...

4) Individual – You must choose for yourself; no one can do that for you. The Mormons have it entirely wrong – no one can get baptized on your behalf – the only thing vicarious about salvation, is that Jesus paid your debt vicariously. It's your personal faith in His completed work. It doesn't matter how many times your parents had you baptized as a baby unless you, when able, choose for yourself. Please trust me when I say, no one is going to Heaven who did not, themselves, choose Jesus.

5) Objective – it is directed toward a specific object. A solid thing encompassing the activity of belief. It is not that I believe in some ambiguous, indefinite and mysterious idea of metaphysical Christianity; it is that I believe in the actual person of Jesus Christ Who saves me.

6) Intellectual –not emotional! Emotion along with all kinds of other things may bring us to the precipice, but genuine salvific faith is an intellectual choice – I have seen the evidence, I have carefully considered the ramifications and I choose to believe, I choose to place my trust in God.

That kind of faith is where... we say, I believe I have been saved by Jesus and accepted by the Father and filled with the Holy Spirit and appointed for God's service... Because I trust Him – not me – Him. Because the Holy Spirit has given me spiritual eyes in order to... "Walk by faith, not by sight." I believe I am fully saved without question, or doubt, solely because, I fully trust the One in Whom I believe as demonstrated by the activity of my life.

I said last week that obedience is the proof of trust. Christians don't obey, or in any other way, work, do, or

perform, in order to gain God's favor – Christians recognize that they already have God's favor and they rest in it, by being the person has now made them to be.

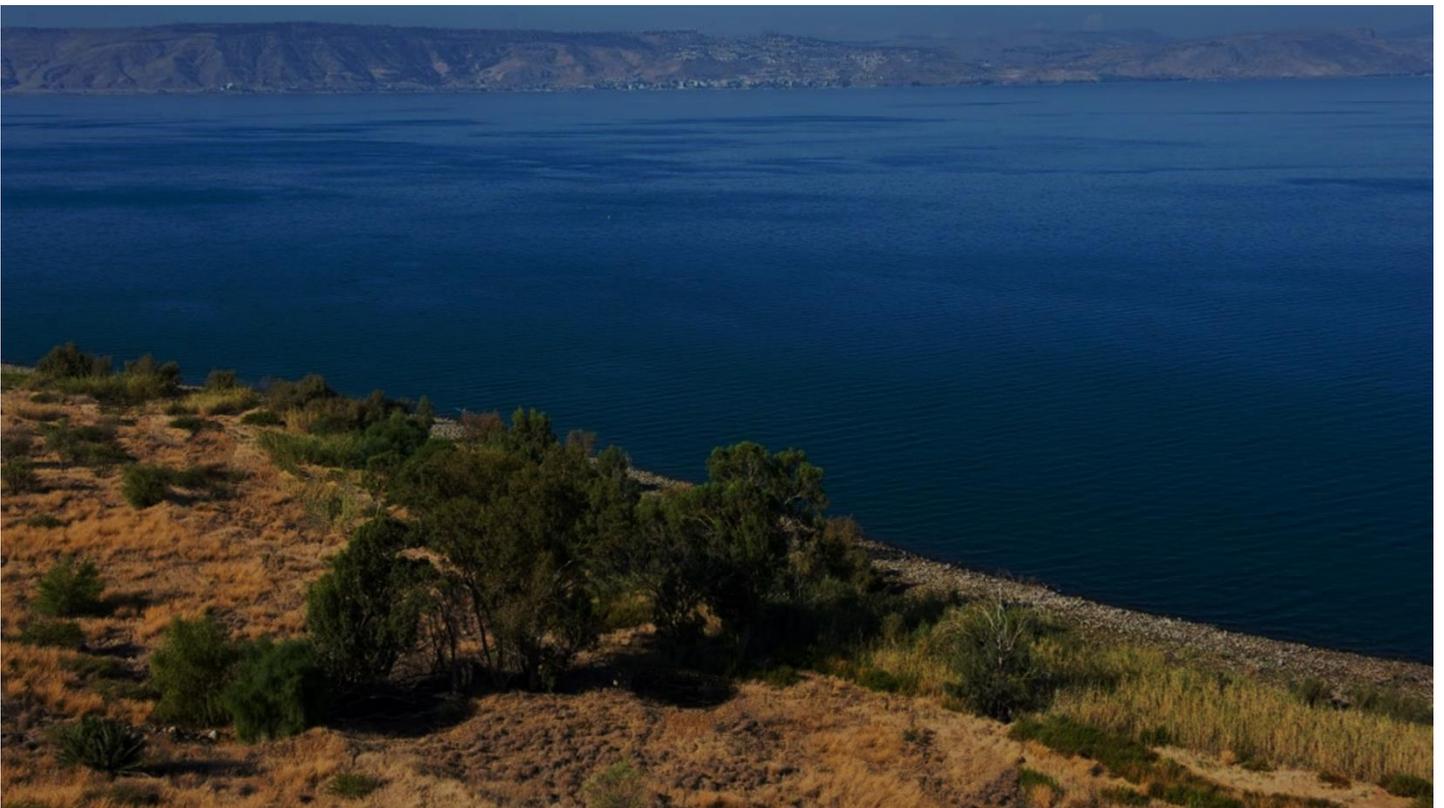


*Be Still,*  
and know that I am God:  
Psalm 46:10

Think about what I'm saying. To rest in God's favor means I no longer have to be driven by human fear to fight and manipulate, to control and perform... I can instead, be driven by God's love to simply be His child and yield to His Spirit to conform me to Christ... I act like a member of the family because I want to be recognized as a member of the family. I want to fit in – I want to be in full communion with Him and with my brothers and sisters in Christ. I have hold of PEACE.

Here's an example... A guy was offered a cigarette and he responded, "No thanks, I'm trying to quit." The other guy said, "You are either a smoker, or you are not a smoker, figure out who you are and be that person." Be at PEACE with who you are.

My friends, you are either a Christian at peace with God, at peace with Christians, at peace with the world, and at peace with yourself, or you are not. Figure out who you are and be that person.



Matthew 14:22&23 ~ 22NASB Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to

the other side, while He sent the crowds away. 23After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.

Matthew starts with an extremely intense phrase used nowhere else except in the parallel account in Mark. It means that Jesus forcefully compelled them to go immediately. As one scholar said, “It has no narrative justification in Matthew or Mark.” There’s no apparent reason why Jesus “Immediately made the disciples” do anything. What was going on?

The event is told also in John chapter 6, where it is revealed that the crowds, due to the miraculous feeding, declared Jesus the be “The Prophet” of Jewish expectation. Because of that, they were determined to “Take Jesus by force to make Him king.”

Jesus had probably already said no in a variety of ways, but they weren’t taking no for an answer. So Jesus, with the urgently forceful command, described by Matthew and Mark, sent His disciples away from this passionately excited and unyielding mob.

Once the disciples were safely away, Jesus told the king-maker horde something to settle them, enough for Him to slip away alone.

Jesus' aloneness is stressed. He was "By Himself," and "He was there alone." Jesus finally has some time to grieve for John. He gets to commune with the Father without interruption, but more than that and all the other reasons... This is a foretaste of the "Garden of Gethsemane" to come.



Matthew 14:24-27 ~ 24NASB But the boat (that the disciples were in) was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. 26 When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."



There is a ton of confusion about the destination of this boat trip. Mark mentions Bethsaida, Matthew will tell us that they landed at Gennesaret, as though that was the intended destination. John mentions Capernaum, and then later says, people saw them on shore from Tiberias. While you can see Capernaum from Tiberias, a little over 6 miles away, you can't make out

individuals on the beach. It would be like looking at Lakeside from Bigfork.

So, what's up? Let's set the record straight. They're all correct. The guys left the eastern coast of the lake intending to sail first to Bethsaida, the hometown of several disciples, drop some guys off there, or pick up something or someone. Then they planned to go to Capernaum, the homeport, the ministry's base of operations. Perhaps drop someone off or again get something there, but their final destination was Gennesaret. At only about 2 miles away from Tiberias, it was close enough for people there to determine that it was Jesus and His Disciples as John reported.

“A long distance from the land,” is actually “Many städiä.” Latin, from the Greek στάδιον, used here. A städiüm, singular, gives us our word stadium. It is a distance measurement equal to roughly 607 feet. About 8 ½ städiä make a mile. Mark's Gospel simply says that they were “In the middle of the sea,” which does not mean actually mean the literal middle of the lake, but the middle of their course across the lake. John is more precise, saying that they were between 25 to 30 städiä, or about 3 miles, not from land, but along in their journey – that's how far they had rowed.



Normally, the wind dies down at night and if it does blow, it is usually from the other direction during the “Fourth watch,” which is 3 am to 6 am. Since the disciples could see Jesus walking on the water, it’s a good bet that it was closer to 6, than 3. Probably in the twilight of predawn. Air typically moves up the slope at that time, so, the wind was “Contrary.” Which is opposed to them, or opposite.

The language of the episode is vivid. Not only are the guys anxious because of the darkness and the contrary weather, they have been straining hard for a considerable time trying to make progress in that

strong headwind. The word “Battered,” βασιανίζω (bä-sä-nē-dzō), refers to tormenting, torturing, or painfully interrogating a prisoner for information. The implication of the word is, will the captive break, will the interrogator get a confession, or not? So, βασιανίζω came to mean any tough test of a person’s will, or character.

The wording and the overall feel hints at a supernatural opposition to the disciples and it is reminiscent of Jesus calming the storm at sea in chapter 8. Like there, the disciples are terrified. Here it has more to do with seeing a ghost than the storm.

The ancient world had many stories of god’s, or even demigods walking on water, but never a mere human. It was thought to be just as impossible then, as it is now.

What they saw, could only be explained as a supernatural phantasm, or specter. In their Jewish minds, what was the chances that Almighty God was out for a stroll on the lake?

It must be something supernatural, and given their circumstances, it was most likely evil. There's a saying that, "Men do not fear swords. They fear monsters."

They assumed that they were seeing a monster and it freaked them out. Jesus quickly said, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

The middle bit, "It is I," is actually ἐγώ εἰμι (ě-gō ā-mē) I AM, While, a person could say, that Jesus just used an awkward expression to simply say, "Hey guys, it's Me," given the Jewish religion, the present circumstances, and the Biblical context, I'm certain that Jesus intended at least an allusion to the Divine Name of God. He is walking on water. The guys would have definitely made the connection.

Even if not fully, even if they questioned it later, they got it.

Matthew 14:3-12 ~ 28NASBPeter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."  
29And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.  
30But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"

31Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” 32When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. 33And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, “You are certainly God’s Son!”

Some naysayers don’t believe that a disciple would say and do what Peter said and did. They obviously don’t know Peter. The fact that this is told in this way makes it more certain that it is historically factual, not less certain.

Bold, blunt, shoot first, ask questions later, Peter, says “Lord, if it is You, command me.” Some people see doubt here, some see Peter testing Jesus, and others see it more like, “Lord, since it is You, command me.” Maybe a bit of all of that.

There’s no doubt that his request was somewhat impetuous, even foolish, but it is, after all, Peter. Not only did Jesus not rebuke Peter, He gave him the requested command. With a one-word imperative “Come,” ἔρχομαι (ě̀-*kh*ǒ-*mī*)! Jesus ordered Peter to Him.

Peter without hesitation actually clambered over the side of the boat that was being buffeted by the wind and tossed by the waves. In that predawn darkness he stepped out onto the black water and started walking to His Lord.

That is an insane amount of trust. Peter was seeing through the eyes of faith that comes from being rivetted on Jesus, but out of the corner of his eye, distraction. All at once he saw with physical eyes again, and quickly realized where he was, and he remembered that people can't walk on water. Good grief, what was he thinking, what he was doing was impossible for him.



Peter began to sink, and he cried out to Jesus to save him. “Save,” is σωζω (sō-dzō), and while it can simply mean to rescue me from my present situation, it is a word used throughout the Bible with the theological sense of eternal salvation that only God can grant. Like the earlier “I AM,” this also signals to the reader, or listener, that deeper spiritual things are at play.



# Jesus Rescues

Jesus does not delay at all, but immediately “Saves” Peter as he desperately asked. Another interesting feature is that Jesus “Saved” him personally, physically, relationally, with an outstretched arm and a touch. Jesus could have just said a word, or waved His hand, or thought a thought, but He reached down and “Took hold of him.”

“You of little faith, why did you doubt?” It seems like a rebuke and it seems like the entire episode is a cautionary tale. I wouldn’t be so quick with that assessment. Jesus, said “Little faith.” We think in terms of a lack, but a “Little faith,” is substantially more than “No faith.”

# DOUBT | FAITH

Peter had incredible faith and concurrently, he had the human proclivity to doubt. Doubt in the face of scary stuff is both normal and abnormal.

It is normal for any reasonable human and it is abnormal for the person who knows Jesus. We have the Holy Spirit within us and YET we are still trapped in the physical reality of decay and limitation.

If we're honest, that's where we live. One of my favorite passages in the Bible is the incident where a father brings his demon-possessed son to Jesus. The Disciples had tried and failed to cast out the evil spirit.

When Jesus arrived, the father said to Him,  
22bNASB “If You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!” 23And Jesus said to him, “ ‘If You can?’ All things are possible to him who believes.”  
24Immediately the boy’s father cried out and said, “I do believe; help my unbelief.” That’s Mark 9:24, “I do believe; help my unbelief.”

I love that, because as I said, that’s where we live. I pray that all the time... “Help my unbelief.” Every person in this room believes to some degree and every one of us simultaneously doubts to some degree.

It is entirely about seeing through the physical to the spiritual reality beyond and we cannot do that on our own. Faith is a gift – pray daily that the Lord would increase your faith.

Initially, everyone says, “Oh yes, good idea, let’s do that, let’s pray for more faith.” Here’s the reality check.

The inside joke in Christianity, is to never pray for patience, because everyone knows that for patience to be built, it must first be required. The word translated as patient endurance μακροθυμία (mäk-rö-thü-mē-ä), actually means to hold your impatience for a long time

and the older translations had it as longsuffering. Well, my friends, to be longsuffering, one must first be long bothered.

Faith never increases without it being tested. You cannot grow unless you are stretched. Peter was stretched, sure he ultimately failed, but he grew. After a lifetime of testing, Peter finished well and his reward is great, that I promise you.

The Lord immediately saved Peter and they were immediately out of the storm. Once again, the wind knows its master and as I said, there is a hint that the Satanic force that stirred up the wind, was soundly defeated.



To those guys in that boat at that time there was no question at all that Jesus was Divine. They hit the deck and worshipped Him as they would God – something no Jew would do unless they believed that He was at the very least intimately connected to God and thus their statement.

“You are certainly God’s Son!” I would personally translate as, “Definitively, You are the Son of God.”

At that moment they had tremendous faith – they truly believed, but we will see that they still needed help with their unbelief... Just as we do.