

Cared For In The Middle of The Storm

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[0 : 0 0] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Take your Bibles, if you would, and turn to Matthew chapter 14 with me and read about a time when the Lord Jesus sends His favorite people on the earth, His disciples, into the storm, and in the middle of the storm, He cares about them.

There's a young man in Arequipa, Peru, whose name is Ephraim Tello. And Ephraim was a young man who got saved out in one of the poorest sections of Arequipa.

And he got saved and attended the church where Ronald Tubillas, who used to be our Spanish pastor, worked. And that was his church, and Ephraim got saved. And Ephraim became a pastor, a youth pastor and assistant pastor.

And then later on, he was starting a church. And as he got that church started, one day they were taking the young people on a trip down to the coast of Arequipa, on the way down to the Pacific Ocean.

And the police stopped the bus they were on, and they asked for everybody's papers. And they started searching. And all of a sudden, when Ephraim, he didn't even have his papers with him, and you're supposed to always have your documents.

[1 : 1 2] And they got him, and they looked him up. They said, What's your name? And he said, My name is Ephraim Tello. And they said, You're wanted for a crime, and we're arresting you right now. This is a pastor, and he was wanted for a crime committed in the city of Cusco.

He had never been to Cusco in his life. And so he's wanted for a crime committed in the city he's never been to. He's absolutely sure that it's a mistake and nothing will happen.

And a few weeks later, he winds up in prison. True story. Spent six months in prison, inside a prison. And Ephraim told me, he said, I can't explain to you what it was like.

He said, When they took us in, they took these sticks, and they beat everybody as you come in. And they're experts. They know how to beat you so nobody knows you've been beaten. And they beat us, and there was blood, and there was everything else.

And one of the guys raised his stick to hit me, and he said, You better not touch me. I'm a man of God. Better keep your hands off me. And the guy dropped his stick and kind of backed up. And they all knew something was different about Ephraim. And when they got introduced the next day, when they introduced each other to one another, and the prisoners, they were all talking about who they were.

[2 : 1 7] And he said, I'm glad to be here, glad to be here. I know God must have brought me here. I trust that God brought me here to the city, or hit me here to the prison so I could be a blessing to you. I'm a pastor. My name's Ephraim Teo.

And he began to talk to them about Jesus. Over the next few months, he started a church inside the prison. And he went to one of the churches in the city. He had some of the church people go to one of the churches, and they sponsored him as he started Patmos Church.

Patmos Baptist Church, which is the place where John the Baptist was exiled. And he said, God must have sent me here. And as he got people saved, people wanted to beat him up because he was standing up and preached to 400 people in his pavilion.

He would stand up and preach the gospel to him, and these people that were getting saved would stand up and say, you don't mess with our pastor. And everywhere he went, he walked around with all these guys, and he is now back out and pastoring his church.

I recently preached for him. Betty and I are giving some money to help a church he's starting. He needs about \$15,000 by the end of the year. But in the middle of the storm, he told me, he said, that first night, there's no light.

[3 : 19] They took my Bible, and they took my clothes, and I was sitting in the corner, shivering in the cold. And he said, never in my life has God been closer to me than that night. He said, and during the different nights, he would go to the bathroom where light came through, an outlet in the roof.

And he would sit in that room by himself and read his Bible once he got his Bible back. And he said, in the darkest days of my life, God was more real to me than at any other time in my life.

He said, I confessed sins I didn't even know I had. He said, you cannot imagine what it's like to be alone in prison for a crime you know you didn't commit. He eventually was exonerated.

It was proven that he didn't do it. They're still trying to put him back in jail. He led dozens of people to Christ, baptized them right there in the prison, and it still goes up about every two weeks to preach to him.

So I want you to know that you may be in the middle of a storm, and you may be wondering, where is God and what's happening? Why is my life falling apart? What's happening in my life?

[4 : 23] Well, here's a story in the Bible about that. Here's a story in the Bible about men put in the middle of a storm by the will of God. They're in the middle of a storm by the will of God.

Their lives are falling apart. They're all alone for six or seven hours fighting to stay alive. The wind is blowing. The waves are rocking their boat. It would have never taken that long to get across the sea.

They knew how to do it. They were mariners. They knew exactly what they were doing. And they're at the point of death before Jesus comes walking on the water and the big story that you know about.

So would you go with me through the passage, write down some things, think about them, study them a moment, see if this helps you in your life. Number one, sent into the storm. Look at chapter 14 and verse 22.

The Bible said, In a straight way, Jesus constrained his disciples to get into the ship and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. I want you to have your Bible open.

[5 : 19] I want you to have a lot of constrained. He pushed them. He forced them. He told them, I want you to get into the ship. I want you to go before me. He said, guys, I'll come later, but I want you to go to the other side.

I'll meet you on the other side. And y'all go on and get in the ship, and I'll be over there later. There's some basic truths you need to bear in mind as you read this story. Jesus is God and knows exactly what's about to happen.

This is not going to be a storm that takes him by surprise. Don't forget, he's the one who can feed 5,000 when they need fed. He's the one who can calm the storms. He's the one who can raise the dead.

He is all-powerful. He is God. He is Jesus. He is God in human flesh. And he is sending his disciples straight into the storm, and he knows it.

With this command, there is a promise. They're going to the other side. Look at verse 22. He said, y'all get in the boat. Well, we'd rather stay with you. Get in the boat.

[6 : 18] I'll be over there later. We're underlining verse 22. Go before him. He told them to go, and he said, you go before me, and you go to the other side. He said, you guys get in the boat, and you go to the other side.

They are alone in the storm, but they are in the will of God. This is a private lesson for his special servants. He constrained them.

He ordered them to get into the ship and to go into the storms. Storms don't come only when you're out of the will of God. Some of us would say, I understand that things fall apart in my life, and I understand that things go wrong when I do wrong, and I understand I can get myself in a mess, and I need to try to figure it out.

But when you serve God, everything's going to go your way. No, it's not. Not one promise in the Bible says that's true. Not one promise in the Bible says that God's people don't go through really harsh, rough times.

Storms come not only when you get out of the will of God, but any time. It helps to listen closely to what he says so we can have hope in the middle of the storm. If they listened, they heard him say, get in the boat, go to the other side, I'll be over there in a little bit.

[7 : 28] If they heard, if they paid attention, he told them to go before him, he'd be there on the other side. They were told to go to the other side. They were going to make it. He was coming to be with them.

He knew exactly what he was doing in their life. So here's some storms. Storms of correction happen in our lives. That's where God is disciplining us or allowing us to suffer the consequences of our sins and our rebellion.

If you get out of the will of God and if you disobey what's right and true and you do what God doesn't want you to do, you need to understand that that can bring horrible consequences and storms in your life.

And there are storms that come because we just do foolish things. You know you ought not be involved in that sexual ex-fa, whatever you say that is.

You know good and well you ought not be using those drugs or using that alcohol. You know good and well you ought not be taking what isn't yours. You know you ought not be doing these things and you go do them and storms will come in your life and your life will be falling apart.

[8 : 27] You'll be saying, what in the world? Why did that happen? Well, you kind of brought that storm on yourself. You kind of brought that on yourself when you did that. That's a storm of correction. That's God allowing you to suffer the consequences of your sin.

But there are some storms that are storms for our growth. Storms to perfect us for our perfection. Storms for our growth where God is causing us to grow in faith.

Listen to this. There is no idea in the Bible that all the things in your life will go well if you obey God. I need you to hear that. There is not one verse in the Bible that says if you do right, everything will go out right for you.

Not a verse. Good people in the Bible got hurt all the time. You ever heard of a guy named Job? There is a whole book written about a guy named Job who was perfect. And of all the guys on the earth, God would have said, that's the guy.

That's the guy. The fact is that is exactly how the story went. And if you recall, Job is down there just minding his own business. The God and the devil are having a conversation. And the devil says, God says, hey, you ever seen my man Job?

[9 : 32] He loves me. He always follows me. He does right. And the devil says, sure he does because you're so good to him. And God said, well, just do whatever you want to him. And he gives him different permissions at different times.

And before you know it, all of his children are dead. All of his wealth is gone. And his health is gone. And the poor guy is left all alone. And he doesn't even have any idea what's going on. There's a guy named Naboth in the Bible.

One of my favorite stories. It's horrible. I remember it was the first time I read it. And it came and made a lot of sense to me. Naboth is a guy who's trying to do right. And there's this wicked king in the land named Ahab.

And his wife named Jezebel. And Naboth has a vineyard. And Ahab wants his vineyard. And Ahab says, I'd like to buy your vineyard. And Naboth says, I can't sell you my vineyard. You know I'm not supposed to sell you my vineyard.

And Ahab said, I'll give you a better vineyard on another side of town. And he said, no. We were commanded never to sell our vineyard. That's what God wants. And I'm not going to sell my vineyard. And he goes to his house.

[10 : 25] And Jezebel, his wife, starts talking to him. And she starts saying, well, what's wrong with my little baby? You're all tore up and everything's all messed up. Because you don't get the, I'll get it for you. And so she goes and sets up two liars.

That stand up and accuse Naboth falsely in a trial. And as I read that story, I'm like, surely the cavalry's going to come running across the mountain. And the cavalry's going to rescue Naboth.

God won't let Naboth die. But he dies. And I believe his wife and his children and everybody in his family died. And all of a sudden, Ahab could have his vineyard. So you need to know that there's nothing in the Bible that promises you that you won't have trouble.

The apostle Paul had a thorn in the flesh. And he went to God three times and said, God, would you please remove this problem, this hurt, this pain? And God said, nope, I'm not going to do it. It's good for you to have a little bit of a problem so you trust me more.

So I just want you to know there's storms that you bring on yourself. And there's also storms that God sends you in your life to grow you. Jesus warned us that in this world we will have tribulation.

[11 : 29] Whichever storm you're in, you can know that he is at work in your life and he has not abandoned you. Let me tell you this. If you did wrong and if you're in the middle of a storm that you brought on yourself, he didn't abandon you.

He did not abandon you. If you're in a storm today and you're thinking, I don't know, I was doing right and this happened, he did not abandon you. You'll know that before it's over. Today is the day for you to learn how to deal with all the problems and struggles you're facing.

To know that he is at work in your life in spite of the difficulties. Number one thing, they were sent into the storm. The second thing, it happens in the story that's really crazy.

Look if you would, in Matthew chapter 14 and verse 23, Jesus separated himself to go pray. He said, y'all leave and I'm going over here to pray by himself.

Lots of times when he goes to pray, he takes them with him. This time he says, y'all go on and I'm going to go pray. Look at chapter 14 and verse 23. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray.

[12 : 28] And when evening was come, he was there alone. You got to remember the story. They don't know how much he knows, but he knows exactly where they are. He knows how the storm's going.

He knows how the boat's rocking and the wind's blowing and the waves are turning, about to turn the boat over. He knows everything that's going on. And he is quietly, patiently on a hillside praying for like six hours.

I'm like, get us out of the boat. Come help. What are you doing to us? But he's alone praying. I want you to know that we have a promise right now.

You have a promise that he's praying for you. Look at Romans chapter 8 and verse 34. Mark that down in your Bible and remember that. Where are you? What's going on in your life? You say, I'm having financial storms.

I'm having family storms. I'm having health storms. I'm getting old. Whatever's happening in your life, I want you to know he's there praying for you. The Bible says in Romans 8, 34, Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that it's risen again, who is at the right hand of God, making intercession for us.

[13 : 35] He is standing beside the Father right now praying for you. You are not alone. He is not uninterested in your dilemma. He is not separated and ignoring you.

He knows what's happening in the lives of the apostles. And he knows what's happening in your life. The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 14, Seeing then we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.

Let's hang on to our profession. Let's hold fast to our profession. Verse 15, For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched for the feelings of our infirmities, but was at all points tempted like as we are.

Our God knows where we are. He understands. Jesus knows. He understands where we are. He's faced temptation. He's lived in a human body. He knows what it's like to live on the earth. And he understands us.

That's why he gives us the promise in verse 16. Come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. If you are hurting right now, you can know this.

[14 : 35] He knows you. He loves you. He cares about you. He understands what you're going through. And he says, Hey, get over here and talk to me. Come boldly to God in prayer and ask for help. And you will find grace.

You will find help. You will find power in the time of need. He was praying certainly for their faith. And you can be certain that he's praying for you right now. He knows where you are and exactly what's happening in your life.

Hold on in the middle of your problems and heartaches. Keep trusting God. He is at work in your life. Know that he cares about you. He's praying for you.

He's at work in your life. He will meet your needs. You can trust him. Now listen to me real quickly. They were sent into a storm and he knew it. And he was alone praying for them. That's a big lesson for us.

Because some of you are in problems and you know you brought it on yourself. You might lie to others and act like you didn't. But you know in your heart of hearts, in the center of you, you know, It was my stupidity.

[15 : 32] It was my foolishness. It was my rebellion. It was my sin that brought this on me. You know that. But he still loves you. He won't quit loving you. He loved you while you were still a sinner. He loves you first.

He didn't love you second. He didn't wait for you to get perfect. He loves you. The Bible says in Romans 5.8, But God commended. God proved. God showed his love toward us. And while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. He loves us.

1 John chapter 4, I think verse 19 says, We love him because he first loved us. So if you're in the middle of a mess you brought on yourself, You're not alone. You're not alone. He loves you. And he cares.

And not only does he care, he's praying for you. Not only is he praying for you, he says, Hey, come on. Come on. Come find me. Come talk to me. I want you to come boldly to the throne of grace and I will help you.

Third thing I want you to look at. Go with me to verse 24. Chapter 14 and verse 24. They're suffering alone in the storm. They're suffering alone in the storm.

[16 : 28] This is a really wild part of the story. They're alone. These guys have given up everything to follow Jesus. They've left their businesses. They've left their parents.

They've left everything. And verse 24, the Bible says, But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary. Doesn't matter how many promises he's made.

Right now in the story, they're alone. And they're afraid. They're in the middle of a storm, in the middle of the sea. They're drowning and death is at every hand. It's got to seem like a real possibility.

If they thought that Jesus had sent them on before him to the other side right now, they might just be doubting it. Maybe right now they're thinking, I don't know. We thought he had a plan for us.

We thought he was working our lives. I thought he said, go to the other side. I thought he was going to be with us. Because when problems come, it's easy to lose focus. And to begin to doubt God.

[17 : 26] We begin to think about ourselves and our desire to survive kicks in. But they were left alone on purpose. You've got to remember, he said, y'all get in the boat.

Get in the boat. Go to the other side and I'll be over there. I'm going to go over here and pray. It was intentional. He sent them into the storm on purpose because they needed to learn a lesson.

Maybe when they were strong, they weren't so receptive. It's amazing. Ephraim is such a good guy. If you knew Ephraim, you'd love him.

He's just a wonderful, fun-loving, sweet guy. But that night, alone in the jail, in the prison, after being beaten and his stuff taken away from him, he said God had never been so close and so real.

He said, I confess sins. I made up sins to confess. I kept saying, God, what in the world is going on? I was alone. And that's what's going on in the story. They're alone.

[18 : 25] Could it be that you were not really listening nor willing to listen until the storm came and got rough and danger was imminent? Could it be, could it be that you're alone suffering in that storm because you wouldn't listen while there wasn't a storm?

I know that's happened in my life. I know there have been times that I wasn't doing bad stuff or wicked stuff, but boy, there's something about problems that will drive you to the Father, drive you to the Savior.

The next thing I want you to look at in verse 25, the Savior came to them. Look at verse 25. And in the fourth watch of the night, he went unto them walking on the sea.

Now, so you know, the fourth watch, the soldiers divided 12 hours into four watches. And so the first watch was six to nine and then nine to 12 and then 12 to three and then three to six.

And he had sent them out that afternoon. So they started going out into the ocean, the sea, the Mediterranean Sea, they're crossing the sea and it's taking hours that it never takes and the wind's blowing and it's at least three o'clock in the morning.

[19 : 34] It's at least three o'clock in the morning. It's the fourth watch. Three or four or five o'clock in the morning. They've been all night. They're probably praying for the sun to come up.

The wind's blowing and everything and they're scared. And in verse 26, the disciples saw him walking on the sea and they were troubled and they said, it's a spirit. And they cried out for fear.

But straightway, Jesus spake to them saying, be of good cheer. It's me. It's I. Be not afraid. It was very late. Three to six a.m.

They've been rowing now for six or seven hours alone in the storm. And the storm was about to kill them. It should have never taken this long to get to the other side.

Sometimes when the storm's happening, you think he left me. He's abandoned me and he doesn't care about me.

[20 : 33] Seems that God's not interested in me. That's exactly what Paul felt in 2 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 8 where he said, for we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble. I want you all to know what I've been going through.

We were pressed above measure. We were pressed out of measure, above strength, in so much that we despaired. The apostle Paul said, things happened so bad in my life. I didn't think I could go another mile.

I didn't think I could take another blow. I didn't think I could let anybody else hit me. I didn't think I could do it. I got to the point I thought I would die. Maybe that's where you are. But the Savior's on his way.

In Isaiah chapter 43 and verse 2 he said, when you pass through the waters I will be with you and through the rivers they shall not overflow you and when you walk through the fire they shall not be burned.

God's going to take care of his people. He loves you. He loves you. Wherever it is you are, whatever's going on, however you're hurting, he loves you.

[21 : 32] They were afraid but here he came walking on the water which is what made them afraid. Isn't that amazing? It's the water that's about to drown them.

It's the water and the wind that's about to turn their boat upside down and he came walking on the water. They didn't recognize him probably because they weren't even looking for him. They weren't expecting him.

Here's something you need to remember. Fear and faith can't live in the same heart because fear blinds our eyes to the presence of the Lord. But the Savior came. The Savior came.

He came walking on the water and he came to them in the middle of their anxiety at the worst point in their life when they were probably at the end of themselves and didn't know if they could go on.

Jesus came. Jesus came. I don't know where you are this morning. I don't know what's happening in your life. I know that things can be rough. I know that you can be having major financial problems.

[22 : 29] I know you can be having major emotional problems. I know there can be problems in your family. I mean Christmas seems to bring out some of these problems in our lives that I just want you to know. The Savior's here.

You're born again. You're a child of God. He loves you. You're not alone. And He is here to work in your life. You're hurting. Run to Him and look for Him.

Verse 28. The sinking shows His great faith. Or His weak faith. Look at chapter 14 and verse 28 if you would. And Peter answered Him and said Lord if that's you let me come on the water.

And Jesus said well come on. It wasn't just a flippant come on it was the command word for come on come. I'll take care of you just come on. And so He walked on the water. But as soon as He got on the water in verse 30 He saw that the wind was boisterous and He got afraid and He began to sink and He hollered Lord save me.

And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught Him and said man you don't have much faith. Man you don't have much faith. Why are you doubting me? Verse 32.

[23 : 38] And they got to the ship. He picks him up walks him back to the ship. Can you imagine that? He's sinking. He reaches down and grabs him and keeps on walking on the ocean climbs in the boat and when he does it all stops and calm came.

Jesus is going to leave His disciples alone soon. He's about to die and be buried and rise again. He's about to ascend into heaven.

They have got to learn how to trust Him and how to walk with Him in the middle of trouble and when they're alone. They've got to believe Him when they can't see Him.

And that's where we are. We have to believe Him when we can't see Him. And Peter jumps out of the boat and takes a giant step of faith. You can mock old Peter all you want but nobody else got out of the boat.

You can mock old Peter all you want but he walked on the water. I don't know of anybody else that's ever done that. And he walked on the water. But when he considers what he's done and where he is and what's happening his faith gets weak.

[24 : 37] All of a sudden he's not focused on the Lord and on Jesus but on His circumstances. And Jesus said why are you doubting? Why do you have such a little bit of faith?

Even in his doubt in fear he knew who to call on. Watch the story before I get to that part. Do you understand what's happening? In the middle of the storm in the middle of all the junk going on in the middle of it Jesus came.

And the second He came Peter's like that's Him. If that really is you let me come. And he got out of the boat and he started walking and he knew God was there. And he knew God had it under control and he knew God was going to do something big in his life and he took off and he walked on the water.

His faith was growing but it was still weak. And right now you're in the middle of a storm and you know good and well that before the storm started you thought you were trusting God and the storm's coming and your faith's been weak and maybe in the middle of the storm you really think I'm getting over this I'm getting power I'm getting the ability to trust God in the middle of all this garbage that's going on in my life.

I'm growing but you might be like old Peter and stumble and sink again. But he doesn't Jesus doesn't abandon him in the middle of the storm as he started down Peter said Lord save me and the Lord stuck out his hand immediately and saved him because he finishes what he starts amen.

[25 : 57] He didn't save you to leave you alone. He didn't save you to leave you to figure things out by yourself. He saved you because he's at work in your life. He is at work in your life.

The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 2 looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith who for the joy set before him endured the cross the spies and the shaman is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

He started it and he'll finish it. He did not save you and say I've saved you now go live it. That's not what he did. He saved you and he will finish it. He that saved you will carry it all the way through.

You can mark this one down. He did not save you to leave you. But in the middle of all that their faith was strengthened. Look at verse 33. Their faith was strengthened.

Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him saying you really are. You really are the son of God. You really are. You're exactly who you said you were.

[26 : 57] Peter gets pulled out of the water the storm gets stopped and Jesus finished what he had started. That's what he always does in our lives. That's what he always does.

You don't know this yet because you're in the middle of the storm. It's four o'clock in the morning. You're praying for the dawn. You're praying for the storm to settle down. And you're wondering if you're going to make it through.

You're alone and you're hurting and no one else seems to care and you're all by yourself and you're wondering if the boat's going to sink at any moment. Finances are a mess. Family's a mess.

All kind of problems all around you. You realize the Lord's there maybe. You realize the Lord's there. But let me just tell you this. He will get you through. And you will look back someday and say man God was good.

Some of the sweetest times Betty and I ever had in our life. Years ago in the first church I started I made a lot of mistakes. I always make mistakes. I'm just like a mistake maker.

[28 : 01] But I was preaching these harsh legalistic ugly messages and so four or five of the men that had money in our church they came to see me and they sat me down and they said we love you.

And you've God's used you greatly in our lives. You've led some of us to Christ. You've helped all of us serve God but you're just too mean. Can you just calm down a little bit? Just calm down a little bit.

Quit being so ugly. Every week you've got to yell at us about something. You yell at us about how our wives dress. You yell at us about our smoking or our cussing or you're always yelling at us. And I said you guys can take a hike.

I'm the blessed God man of God around here and I ain't putting up with it. And they took a hike. And when they took a hike my salary went out the door with them. And all of a sudden there was no money.

None. And I've never had another job on the side. So I don't know where to go get money. I could be a Walmart greeter maybe. And so I actually after a few months I went down to the carpet carpet meal.

[29 : 04] And I walked in and I signed I filled out all the application and they took me back to see the guy that was in charge and the guy looked at my list and he said you don't belong in a carpet factory.

He said I can read enough of your history to know this you should be a pastor. That's what you're qualified to do. You're overqualified for this job. I said I just want you hire drunks. You hire drug addicts.

You hire the scum of the earth. Please hire me. He said no. He said you should go out here and be a pastor. I went home I said God what are you doing to me? And for two years Betty and I lived and we never knew where the next meal was coming.

That's the honest truth. It was agony. It was go alone and cry and pray and beg God to meet our needs and then have him do wonderful things. And I can tell you that was like the sweetest time in my life.

I do not want to do it again. So please don't leave and please don't cut my salary but it was a sweet time and God was at work in my life and you will look back someday over the storm you're in right now and if you'll just keep trusting God it's going to become a sweet story and a victory.

[30 : 09] I arrived back on the field in 1992 in the month of January when I did a missionary that met me at the airport said I've been a missionary 35 years I've never seen a missionary arrive back on the field with so many problems your whole ministry has fallen apart they've stolen your car they've destroyed everything about you I'm telling you your whole life is in ruins.

I'm like good night man I need to get back on the airplane and go back and he said ah don't worry about it you'll make it through he said you have no war stories if you don't have any crises if things don't go wrong you have no stories to tell someday he said you're going to have a lot of stories to tell and that's the God you're serving you're in the middle of it and you're alone but you will see God work and someday some young guy will be talking to you and say I'm going through this and you'll say let me tell you a story about how God worked in my life they've seen Jesus feed thousands they've seen him walk on the water and on the sea and they've seen it be calmed Peter knows that he's God and he's in charge he's in command he can control circumstances he can win over them and so now they worship him they are stronger than they have ever been before verse 34 now that they've been strengthened they begin to serve again lesson's over immediately back to serving it's not like you get a lesson over and you get the summer break get three months to relax they get off the ocean the sea they get off the Mediterranean they come ashore they've had a great night

Jesus didn't say let's go get a coke and some chicken and celebrate he just said time to go to work boys got you through that one time to go to work and look what happens in verse 34 and when they were gone over they came into the land of Gennesaret and when the men of that place had knowledge of him they sent out into all the country roundabout and brought in him all the disease and everybody came and everybody just wanted to touch the hem of his garment now listen to what I'm going to show you see God's at work in your life and the real thing is you're supposed to be serving him that's where your life finds real value your real value is in serving God your real value is in doing something useful with your life sometimes you kind of run over here and you kind of run over there and Christ sees coming sometimes it's because of your fault and sometimes it's not but you can know this he cares for you in the middle of the storm and you can know this he's at work in your life because he's getting you ready to serve him more you got saved to serve you got saved to serve God he didn't save you just so you could sit soaking sour he saved you so you could serve him so during this horrible storm the Savior comes their faith is strengthened and as soon as they hit the ground he doesn't say well y'all go to the house and relax now boys kick your feet up turn the TV on and relax he said no I saved you to serve and all of a sudden the word goes out all across the community

Jesus is here the one who can feed the 5,000 Jesus is here the one who can calm the sea and walk on the water is here Jesus is here the one who can heal people everywhere they are Jesus is here and they all came and here they are you can imagine they have been rowing till at least 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning they have got to be sweaty they have got to be stinky they have got to be tired bone tired but they learned something God got them through the storm and now they go to serving as soon as they got on the other side it was time to get back to work the disciples were seeing him win and calm the storm and heal the sick they saw people knew who Jesus was and they came they came to him their faith is strengthened and they are ready to serve what is God trying to teach you right now because you can mark this one down you are his and he has not left you you are his and he has not abandoned you he is at work in your life you are not just a number you are not just a person you are important to him he is at work in your life what is he trying to teach you how has he been trying to mature you to grow you to perfect you have you been allowing the circumstances of life to cause you to get your eyes off of Jesus and into doubt it is time to stop and say

I am going to trust Jesus and what he is doing in my life it is time to cry out for help like Peter you might grow you might take a few steps of faith you might fall back down again isn't that like us he helps us grow a little bit as soon as we grow a little bit we take a few steps and boy we mess up again isn't that our story but he reaches out his hand and he saves him again and he is back to serving that is why I finish the story with this he knew where he was sending them but he was strengthening them because he had service for them to do he cared about them in the middle of the storm he was praying for them and when everything got really bad he came to them but for their life to have real meaning and real purpose they needed to be serving God and before the story is over that is where they will be well Ephraim got put in jail that night and he got beat I got his story in Spanish I am eventually going to get it into English for you he got beat and put in there and he is all alone and scared the storms are horrible this is a young preacher he was in jail for stealing and running a theft ring in a city he had never been to and he couldn't get out of it he is alone he said he went in that place he said he was just sitting in the corner there is no light he said that one bit of light came in and he said we had very little clothes on and it was Cusco it is 11,000 feet above sea level it is like freezing all the time he said he sat in that corner and he was all alone and he was crying to the Lord and he said God I don't know what is going on

[36 : 19] I don't know why you are letting this happen to me God where are you why is this happening why did they just try to beat me and he started getting close to God and he said during the middle of the night when he was all alone he began to realize the Lord was closer to him than he had ever been in his life and he said Lord if you brought me here you must have a plan for me if you put me in this storm you must have something you want to do for me and so over the next few days he decided I will just witness to everybody in this jail and he started witnessing to all the prisoners he started telling them how to go to heaven drug dealers got saved and violent offenders got saved and so they were coming to his little church he would meet with them and preach to them and they would tell them about the gospel and some of them came to him one day and said you know you have made such a difference in our pavilion anybody in here can go to heaven we need to go to the other pavilions in the prison there are others over yonder he said maybe we can go over there and share the gospel and he said we can't get out they said oh we know how to bribe the guards we'll get them to take us over there and so he said they went and they bribed the guards and so he walked in with six or eight of his bodyguards he walked into a whole other pavilion with another four or five hundred he'd climb up on a stack of stuff and say hey

I'm a preacher I'm here to tell you about Jesus he saw people getting saved in all those places that was his story he got out of jail I asked him I said well how do people treat you in the church and he said well they knew I was innocent I said how do people treat you in the community he said they're terrified he said everybody's scared of a guy that's been in prison and came out alive he said so nobody I said nobody's trying to hurt you he said oh they're scared of me he said I have to work at being nice to them and so he's building a building he's starting a new church and he needs 15 grand by the end of this year to buy that piece of property and so Betty and I are going to give some money and he's being used that's what God's doing in your life I don't know where you are I don't know what's going on and I know you're hurting and I know you're alone and I know you feel like God's abandoned you tragedy has happened in your life but he has not abandoned you come boldly to the throne of grace he's praying for you and he asks you to come and pray he is strengthening you so you will be used of him and the chapter ends with them being used of God again after the storm are you growing in your faith are you allowing all this junk that seems to be happening to be used to perfect you and grow you correct you and mature you are you still whining it's time to cry out

Lord help me Lord help me Father in heaven I love you and I thank you for the chance to serve you and I pray that your name would be glorified and honored and I pray dear God that people in this room might take this lesson home and it might make a difference in their life I thank you for the story I thank you for the truths you teach in it I thank you for Peter and the way he was willing to step out by faith and walk on that water I thank you for the story God and I pray God that you let it be real today in the lives of your people help them to trust you help them to look to you help them to believe you help them to expect you to do great things and I'll give you honor this message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia for more information log on to www.visionbaptist.com where you can find our service times location contact information and more audio and video recordings you