

[R4618 : page 169]

ST. PETER CRIED "LORD, SAVE ME"

- JUNE 5. - MATTHEW 14:22-36. -

Golden Text: – "Then they that were in the ship came and worshiped him, saying, Of a truth thou are the Son of God."

RESPECTING its heroes the Bible, unlike any other religious book, tells the naked truth. Today's study emphasizes both the strength and the weakness of St. Peter's natural disposition. We identify the character here pictured as the same which was displayed on other occasions – noble and courageous, but rather forward and boastful. Not a single weakness of any of the Bible characters seems to be smoothed down or cut away in the narrative. It was this same St. Peter who, after hearing Jesus tell of his approaching death, took the Master to task for it, upbraiding him for speaking after this manner and assuring him that he did not tell the truth, and that the disciple knew more than his Master; that the latter was either ignorant or else wilfully misrepresenting the future. No wonder the Master rebuked him, as in this matter being an adversary.

The same courageous man afterward drew his sword and smote the servant of the High Priest in his Master's defense. Yet with all this it was only a few hours later when he denied him entirely with oaths and cursing. Nevertheless, the Master loved him; with his peculiar combination of weakness and strength he had, withal, a noble, faithful heart, even while he boastfully declared, "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I." Our study shows us St. Peter with the other disciples in a fishing-boat on a boisterous sea. Jesus had declined to go with them in the boat, withdrawing himself to the mountain for a season of prayer. The boat had not yet reached her destination, when the disciples saw the Master walking upon the water and drawing near. At first they

were all affrighted; then reassurance came from his word, and finally St. Peter asked the Lord's permission that he might walk to him on the water. This permission was granted, and we cannot doubt that, had the Apostle maintained his faith, he would have reached the Lord in safety, for the same power that had exercised itself in him and in the other disciples for the healing of sick and the casting out of demons was absolutely able to keep him from sinking into the water.

"O THOU OF LITTLE FAITH"

But while St. Peter's faith was stronger than that of the others and stronger than ours today, in that he even attempted to walk on the water, nevertheless it was not strong enough. As his eye caught a glimpse of the boisterousness of the sea his faith began to fail and he began to sink. The Master, however, caught him, saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt"! The lesson of the occasion being ended, the wind ceased. All the disciples then offered the Lord their worship, realizing afresh that he was the Son of God in power; that even the winds and the waves obeyed him.

"A hand that is not ours upstays our steps,
A voice that is not ours commands the waves;
Commands the waves, and whispers in our ear,
O, thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?"

All are sinners. "There is none righteous; no, not one." Some do not realize the extent of their imperfections. **[R4618 : page 170]** Nevertheless it is safe to say that all sane people recognize themselves as imperfect and hence as unworthy the recognition of the great Creator. They cannot commend themselves to him as being worthy of his favor and life eternal. It is when this conviction of unworthiness becomes deep-seated; when the realization is keen that "the wage of sin is death," that the heart is most likely to realize the value of life eternal and to cry unto the

Lord for deliverance from darkness, from sin's bondage and from its death sentence. To all such the Savior stands ready to lend a helping hand, as in St. Peter's case. He will not reproach such for their sins if they have repented of them and turned to righteousness. Rather, he will say, "Why did you not come sooner? I was quite willing to aid you as soon as you cried."

THREATS OF TORTURE FAILED TO CONVERT THE WORLD

Our forefathers used to think that they should picture before the sinner's mind an everlasting torture at the hands of devils. It seemed to them that such pictures would be more successful in drawing men from sin to righteousness than the Scripture penalty which declares that the wages of sin is death, "everlasting destruction." (2 Thess. 1:9.) But they overdid the matter. Their message failed to convert the world. It merely tortured the saintly, the loving, the Godlike. Men reasoned that there was probably some mistake about it, as it is contrary to all human experiences that life could persist in such untellable torture. Now, however, with the aid of the modern Bible, superior translations, marginal references, etc., the people of God are learning more and more that God's Word is true and that it should not be twisted – that when it says *death* it does not mean life in torture.

Indeed, some have told us that to their minds the utter blotting out of existence which God has ordained to be the fate of those who refuse his every opportunity and offer of salvation is more of a terror to them than life in any condition would be. One reason that it has greater terrors undoubtedly is that it is more rational, and thinking people can and do receive it more earnestly and give it more weight. It is from everlasting destruction that the Savior stands ready to deliver every member of Adam's race from the death penalty – from the tomb and all the imperfections of mind and body which are parts of death. Jesus' death at Calvary

was of sufficient value to cancel the sins of the first man and of all those who share the death penalty with him. Without Christ's death there would be no resurrection, no future life.

A little while and the faithful ones shall come forth in the "first resurrection" to be Christ's Joint-heirs. Then will come the general uplift of mankind, including the awakening of those of the whole world from the sleep of death. Our Lord's help of Peter corresponds to that greater help of the whole world. It also illustrates how those who have already become the children of God would be in danger of sinning again, were it not for our Lord's helping hand.

=====