

Following Yeshua May Put Us in Harm's Way To Be Like Yeshua Means – To Serve Others

In my last post, we learned that we need to count the cost of following Yeshua. In this post, we will learn that not only is there a cost in following Yeshua, but at times, we may find ourselves in harm's way.

The Stormy Seas

"He boarded the boat, and his talmidim followed. Then, without warning, a furious storm arose on the lake, so that waves were sweeping over the boat. But Yeshua was sleeping. So they came and roused him, saying, 'Sir! Help! We're about to die!' He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? So little trust you have?' Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and there was a dead calm. The men were astounded. They asked, 'What kind of man is this, that even the winds and sea obey him?'" ~ Matthew 8:23-27. Obviously, this miracle shows Yeshua's power over the natural world.

"He boarded the boat, and his talmidim followed. Then, without warning, a furious storm arose on the lake, so that waves were sweeping over the boat. But Yeshua was sleeping. So they came and roused him, saying, 'Sir! Help! We're about to die!'" Yeshua and the talmidim ***boarded the boat*** to cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, as had been planned (see 8:18). Matthew emphasized that Yeshua got into the boat and the talmidim ***followed***. This may have been a wordplay by Matthew to connect this miracle with the preceding episode and give it a discipleship focus. In other words, this is what discipleship might involve!

This boat probably was a fishing boat. Josephus wrote that there were usually more than three hundred fishing boats on the Sea of Galilee at any given moment. This boat was large enough to hold Yeshua and his twelve talmidim. Mark explained that it was evening when they finally set sail (Mark 4:35). Setting sail in the evening was not unusual because Kefa was used to fishing at night (John 21:3). Fishing was best then; storms usually came in the afternoon.

The Sea of Galilee is an unusual body of water. It is relatively small (13 miles long, 7 miles wide), but it is 150 feet deep, and the shoreline is 680 feet below sea level. Storms can appear suddenly over the surrounding mountains, stirring the water into violent twenty-foot waves. The talmidim had not foolishly set out in a storm. They usually did not encounter storms at night and did not see this one coming. Even though several of these men were expert fishermen and knew how to handle a boat, they had been caught without warning in this ***furious storm***. Their danger was real as ***the waves sweeping over the boat***.

"But Yeshua was sleeping. So they came and roused him, saying, 'Sir! Help! We're about to die!'"

While the waves swept over the boat, ***Yeshua was sleeping***. He probably had laid down on the low bench in the stern where the helmsman (or pilot) would sit and had fallen asleep on the leather cushion. That Yeshua could sleep during this storm indicates his complete exhaustion and reveals his human nature. That the noise, the violent rocking of the boat, and the cold spray of the water did not awaken him gives us a glimpse of the physical drain on Yeshua throughout his earthly ministry.

The talmidim had embarked on this journey at Yeshua's request after a long day. Then, of all things, a storm blew in - and not just any storm, but a "furious" one that was threatening to sink the boat and drown them. Worst of all, Yeshua was sleeping through it! Didn't He realize that they all were *going to drown*? So they ***came and roused him***. They cried above the crashing water, ***"Sir! Help! We're about to die!"***

Although the talmidim had witnessed many miracles, they panicked in this storm. As experienced sailors, they knew its danger; what they did not know was that Yeshua could control the forces of nature. Often our souls are troubled because we feel there is a problem where God can't or won't work. When we truly understand who God is, however, we will realize that He controls both the storms of nature and the storms of the troubled heart. Yeshua's power that calmed this storm can also help us deal with the problems we face. Yeshua is willing to help if we only ask him. Never discount his power even in terrible trials.

"He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? So little trust you have!' Then he got up and rebuked the winds

and the waves, and there was a dead calm." ~ Matthew 8:26. Abruptly awakened from a deep sleep, Yeshua arose and rebuked his frightened talmidim. The talmidim had seen Yeshua do wonderful miracles, but they had not taken their knowledge of His power and applied it to every situation. So he asked them, ***"why are you so afraid?"*** They wanted Him to do something; He wanted them to trust Him! There is no place in true discipleship for fear - which itself arises out of lack of faith (disbelief). The Greek word here for **"afraid"** (*deiloi*) means "cowardly fear." The talmidim were acting like cowards when they should have acted with faith in their teacher. Despite all that the talmidim had seen and heard thus far, they still had not grasped that Yeshua was himself God, with God's power and authority over all of creation.

Standing in the stern of the rocking ship, Yeshua ***got up and rebuked the winds and the waves.*** This shows Yeshua's confidence in Himself and His faith in the Father's care. Just as Yeshua had healed and cast out demons with only a word, so His words calmed the furious storm. The effect of Yeshua's words was that suddenly ***there was a dead calm.***

Anyone who has been in a frightening storm at sea or saw the movie ***"Perfect Storm"*** can understand what an incredible sight it must have been to have the sea suddenly become calm. The forces of nature, when unleashed - whether as a tornado, hurricane, earthquake, or waves of water on a rough sea - can be terrifying because we are completely at their mercy. The power of the Teacher to speak and control the waves shocked the talmidim. The storm was out of control, their fears were out of control, but Yeshua was never out of control. He may have had no home and no place to lay his head (see 8:20), but he had power over all the forces of nature.

"The men were astounded. They asked, 'What kind of man is this, that even the winds and sea obey him?'" ~ Matthew 8:27. Yeshua's power ***astounded*** the talmidim; however, they still did not completely understand, as their question betrayed: ***What kind of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?*** They should have known because this miracle clearly displayed Yeshua's divine identity. Being with the human, compassionate Yeshua was fine for these men; being with the powerful and supernatural Son of God terrified them.

Yeshua's talmidim could certainly be described as a motley crew. They were a mixture of "landlubbers" and seasoned sailors. The storm had them all frightened. The fishermen, like Kefa and John, knew those waters well, and their fear came from experience. They had probably lost friends to such storms. Non-sailors like Matthew were simply terrified. Perhaps the fear in the eyes of their mates frightened them as much as the storm itself.

In the storms of life, Yeshua is still the master. He shares our boat. Sooner or later, the wind and waves will offer us several key lessons:

- Sometimes, no one but Yeshua can do anything.
- No matter how bad the circumstances, God is in control.
- When we reach the end of our resources, Yeshua has not even started.
- Hopeless situations make the clearest occasions to trust in God's preserving power.

Yeshua wants us to have a full picture of faith. That includes bravery under duress. We cannot learn to be brave in a classroom, but only as we get out and live in our broken world. The faith that Yeshua admires is tested by crisis and struggle and emerges confident in God's power. If you face a crisis today, pray for bravery and trust completely in God. Perhaps those near to you would be helped if you encouraged them to trust in Yeshua.

In my next post, we will continue in our series "To Be Like Yeshua Means – To Serve Others." We will return to examine a powerful encounter in the spiritual realm.