

Bail More!... or Snore

'Bail more. Bail harder! Bail MORE! Bail HARDER!!' With waves tumbling over the side of the boat and the wind nearly ripping the sails, no matter how much they all toiled, they were losing the battle, and the little ship was about to capsize. Only a short while earlier, Jesus had told them to take the boat to the other side of the sea of Galilee, but that was then... now, the wind and waves were threatening their very lives and He was sleeping at the back of the boat! Sleeping!

Scared, exhausted and at wits end, they woke Jesus up, exclaiming, "Master, don't you care that we are about to die!?" (See Mark 4)

Years later, Peter lay chained between two soldiers, about to die once again, this time at the hands of Herod. Earlier, upon the shores of Galilee, Jesus had told Peter how he would die and clearly indicated he would live to be an old man. But that was then... now, the king was intent upon execution. However, this time it was Peter who was sleeping. Sleeping! Sleeping so

hard that the angel who came to set him free had to give him a kick just to wake him. (See Acts 4)

Now, how does someone facing certain death sleep so soundly? How can you and I deal with the calamitous world in which we live with that kind of peaceful confidence? In the first case, Peter was a wreck and about to be wrecked. He had heard the Lord's command to go to the other side of the sea but the circumstances changed and Jesus seemed to be 'tuned out'. In the second case, Peter had also heard Jesus speak concerning his life and death, but with James having just been executed and now his own death being scheduled for the morning, again the circumstances had changed and surely he could have felt like Jesus was 'tuned out' again.

But he didn't. This second time, he was behaving just like Jesus. Why was that? What was the difference? Clearly, Peter was a different man. Earlier, upon the sea he had followed Jesus – he had heard Jesus. In the second circumstance, he had

followed Jesus – he had heard Jesus – but this time was very different. This time, he believed Jesus.

Of course, he 'believed' Jesus in the first instance as well, but it was a shallow intellectual belief, one that lacked spiritual power. In fact, Peter could assert, before anyone else, that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. He could follow Him for years and do all that Christ commanded. He had that kind of belief as do many Christians. But it was shallow and limited to the rational. It made sense only when the circumstances made sense. And for every follower of Christ that's key point to understand.

My granddaughter was crying the other day because the girls she went to Christian school with just a couple years ago are now 'sleeping around', getting drunk on liquor or high on drugs and want nothing to do with Christianity. The very ones who had recently been honored in the Christian school as daily examples of godliness are now embracing worldliness. Sadly, this is pervasive in our generation many in the church

have this kind of 'belief'. It's a belief that 'caves to the waves', that adapts to the circumstances, that lacks power when pressed.

But Peter had become a different man. His faith was deep and unshakeable. How? Had he 'worked through' his problems? Had he achieved a 'higher plane' of sinless living? Did he find a secret prayer or great book or conference speaker that had delivered the answer? Nope.

Quite simply the difference in Peter was the empowering presence of God's Spirit. After the Lord's resurrection, Jesus had breathed upon him and given him the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. (See John 20:22) and then in Acts 2, Peter had received the anointing, the 'coming upon' of the Spirit while in the upper room. The first gift saved his soul and the second empowered him to serve. **It is only by God's Spirit that we can hear Christ's Word and truly believe, that is, believe despite the adverse circumstances.**

When you surrender your heart to the Lord and ask him to forgive your sins, to save your soul, you are given the

indwelling of the Holy Spirit just as the disciples were when Jesus breathed upon them. Yet, in addition to this, you have available to you the power of the Spirit by way of His filling, overflowing, anointing, His 'coming upon'. It is the power to believe and to be a testimony like Jesus in the storm or Peter in the jail cell. Now, this subsequent anointing is NOT the same thing as your salvation, it is your power to serve, to sleep in the back of the boat or between two guards if you know what I mean. It's 'timing' isn't what's important, the Bible shows that this powerful anointing can come at the same time as the moment you first believe. But whether He comes upon you then or later, He is utterly supernatural and a tremendous help for selfless ministry and godly living in a godless age.

As the times wax worse, our circumstances as believers are not going to be without serious challenges. In these last days, the Bible declares, times will wax worse and worse. Trials and deception will abound and shallow intellectual belief just isn't going to cut it. But Jesus

has spoken, "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you." We know the end of the story and it's glorious!

So, if you haven't received the anointing, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, I encourage you to simply pray to receive it. Talk to your Pastor or Elders. They can pray with you, laying their hands upon you. Study the book of Acts and you'll learn how to discern Him and His work. This is important because unfortunately, there are fakers out there, deceivers who will lead you down a serpentine trail if you let them. They'll claim they are 'spirit-led' but it isn't God's Spirit! You see, the power of the Holy Spirit is NOT a toy or game for pleasing or glorifying yourself or any other minister. Here's a clue -- the Spirit will not put a spotlight on you -- He is dedicated to glorifying Christ. The power of the Spirit is for service to Christ, for His glory and His alone. See Gal 5:22-26!

So whether in a storm or a prison cell, you can sleep soundly because Christ has spoken and you absolutely

believe Him. You know in your 'knower' that you can take Him at His Word. He has said, "I love you" on the Cross of Calvary and that He will guide you through all this life's challenges. Be filled with His Spirit and be at peace!