

## **How to Have an Unsinkable Faith**

**Matthew 8:23-26**

Good morning! Today, we're continuing our series on "Legit: Becoming a Real Christ-Follower". So, we've been looking at the characteristics of a true follower of Jesus. Just as there is fake news and fake bags and fake shoes and fake clothes there are fake Christians. Are we real or are we fake? I hope this series will make us look deep inside and see what ingredients are in there. Do these ingredients come from the Holy Spirit? Or from the spirit of the world?

So, today, we're on the third message and I've entitled it, "How to Have an Unsinkable Faith."

Have you heard of the term “ ”? This word refers to early Christians who denied their faith. This word was applied to people who claimed to be Christians but couldn't stand torture and persecution and in the end denied Jesus. Folks, I don't want to judge them. It's hard to judge them. Especially if you knew the kind of physical torture and hardships they had to endure during that time. The Bible and history tells us that in the first and second centuries Christians were hunted like dogs and killed mercilessly.

Persecution continues in our day. Many Christians are still persecuted and tortured in many countries around the world especially in the Middle East and Asia. That's why we make it a point to pray for at least one or two Christians or Christian families who are persecuted during our prayer meeting. We get a list of these Christians from the Voice of the Martyrs web page.

We pray that these Christians endure in their faith. We pray that they don't deny Jesus or leave their faith when troubles come.

Now, our situation here in America is not as terrible as theirs. In fact, we're having it relatively easy here. We can meet on Sundays, we can come to our home groups, we can work, we can shop, we can joke, I can preach and joke, we can make fun of the government, we can do many things unhindered. Although we know that there are so many challenges to our faith nowadays, the challenges are not enormous as the challenges those in persecuted countries face. These are real challenges anyway and as Christians we do need to stand our ground, not give in to fear, and be faithful always to Jesus.

So, we may not be facing persecution, but we face what everyone else in this world face: hardships and troubles in life. In the face of trying circumstances, sometimes we falter, we fail, and stumble. Sometimes we lose our ground, our knees wobble, and our faith begins to sink. Which is what happened exactly to the followers of Jesus one stormy night.

Please get your Bibles and turn with me to Matthew 8:23-27. Then, follow along as I read this passage to you.

We see here that some disciples of Jesus followed him. Are these the twelve disciples? No, because the full number of 12 wasn't complete yet at that time. For example, Matthew didn't become a disciple until he encountered Jesus in Matthew 9. So, these disciples must be those people that Jesus preached to starting in chapter 5 which included Peter and his brother Andrew and the brothers James and John.

In any case, these disciples who followed Jesus into the boat, experienced the first test of their faith. Suddenly, they were caught in the middle of the sea in the middle of a storm. Now, they realized that Jesus was not joking when he said that there was a cost in following him.

I want you to back up a few verses. In verse 18 it says, “When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. 19 Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.”

20 Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

Jesus was saying, “If you want to be my follower, you must be ready for what it will cost you. Don’t tell me you’ll be my follower if you’re not willing to follow me anywhere.”

Then, another disciple came and said to Jesus, in verse 21, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” But Jesus told him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

So, there’s a cost in following Jesus. It’s not easy. It takes a lot of faith. And when you have that faith already, it also takes a lot to maintain and grow that faith.

The Bible doesn’t tell us whether these two disciples followed Jesus into the boat or not. I would presume they did. Because they sounded serious. Jesus just gave them a warning.

So, let’s presume they followed Jesus into the boat together with Peter, Andrew, James, and John and maybe a few more. Then, they experienced the storm. Their faith was severely tested.

Every one of us face storms in our lives. When they come, we can’t do much about them. We’re at the mercy of the storm. It must truly be frightening for these disciples. They were expert fishermen, but they were at the mercy of the storm.

What storm are you facing? What kind of difficulty are you going through? Your health, your marriage, your career, your spiritual life, your finances? What are you worried about? In this message this afternoon, I want to share with you a few principles about how to have a faith that doesn't sink.

### 1. Refuse to Panic

These disciples must have that sinking feeling (no pun intended). “We’re gonna drown. We’re going under. We’re helpless”. Look at how they panicked. They’re supposed to know what to do in cases like these. They lost their cool. Which just tells us that even those who seem like they have it together, really don’t when faced with real danger.

This is quite common. We panic when troubles come into our lives. We lose our cool. They throw us out of balance. We feel like we’re being tossed to and fro by the waves of the sea. We become fearful.

As we know, fear is not productive. It produces anxiety. It creates chaos in our lives and impacts those around us. Fear can paralyze us and make us worry unnecessarily. Fear doesn’t change the situation and doesn’t solve the problem.

We shouldn’t be fearful, but we can’t help it. We don’t need to understand the psychology of fear because when it strikes, we feel it, whether we want to or not. But, interestingly, the Bible says this “spirit of fear” doesn’t come from God as 2 Timothy 1:7 says, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”. (NKJV)

No one is perfect, and God knows this. That is why He has liberally sprinkled encouragement against fear throughout the Bible. Beginning in the book of Genesis and continuing throughout the book of Revelation, God reminds us to “Fear not.” For example, Isaiah 41:10 encourages us, “So do not fear, for I am with

**you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”**

Often, we fear the future and what will become of us. But Jesus reminds us that God cares for the birds of the air, so how much more will He provide for His children? Jesus says, “**So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows”** (Matthew 10:31). Just these few verses cover many different types of fear. God tells us not to be afraid of being alone, of being too weak, of not being heard, and of lacking physical necessities. These admonishments continue throughout the Bible, covering the many different aspects of the “spirit of fear.”

These should be enough. But at the end of the day, we're still fearful. Why is that? Which leads us to the next point.

## **2. Realize that Jesus knows your situation.**

You know why we fear? Because we don't have faith. Faith is the opposite of fear. There is no fear when there is faith. Faith drives out fear. Our enemy, the devil, instills fear in our hearts. God, our Savior, gives us faith that endures.

Let me share with you how the devil would like you to be fearful. It happened to me. When I started to follow God's leading about his plan for my life, the devil began to work. I was in Australia when God directed me to undergo missionary training in Hawaii under Youth With A Mission. So, I applied, I was admitted, bought my plane tickets, sold my belongings and was ready to go. A week before I left, I attended our church weekly prayer meeting and at the end of the service, my pastor talked about serving God. Then, he said something about leaving everything to follow God and gave me as an example. He said, “If you feel like God wants you to give up everything to follow him like Rolly” at the exact moment, when he mentioned my name, an insect came straight to my face and hit the center of my glasses. The insect dropped dead on the floor and I saw that it was a wasp or a bee with its sting broken.

That's when I realized that if I weren't wearing glasses, that insect would have stung me right between my eyes. And a thought came to my mind, "You're a marked man, Rolly".

It was like the devil has whispered that he was in a mission to target me in order to discourage me. But I realized, too, that the devil was stupid because he didn't realize that the bee sting wasn't a match for the metal frame of my glasses.

The devil tried again. During my entire studies in Bible school, I was now in New Jersey, I would have bad dreams and nightmares of black big dogs chasing me and barking at me. That happened almost every week. Then, one night, at a time when I was already doing good in school and was totally convinced that God called me to become a minister, I had a very bad dream. I dreamt that I was surrounded by demons and they were brandishing machetes and were trying to kill me. Suddenly, I was holding a lead pipe and flung it around and then I woke up. I was crying and I called my pastor who prayed for me. Then, the most horrifying dream I had was when I found myself in the middle of a grassy field and I saw this man standing quite far from where I was. But then, he suddenly ran toward me and I saw he was carrying a gun and feeling really afraid, I ran away but he was gaining on me so fast until I fell down on the ground and when I turned my head around he was already beside me and he pointed his gun right at my face. At that point, I woke up. But it felt so real. Until now I feel like it really happened. It was the most terrifying thing I experienced although it was just a dream.

Now, I didn't want to scare you. I just want you to know that the devil is real and that his name is Fear. The devil is a liar and fear is a liar."

Right now, I just want us to pause and reflect on the words of this song. "Fear is a Liar".

**VIDEO: Fear is a Liar**

Fear should take no residence in our lives. Tell fear, “You’re evicted.” So, what would drive fear from our lives? Letting in Jesus in our lives. Fear has no power over faith. When faith enters, fear exits.

When you let Jesus in your life, you’re making him the Lord and Master of your life.

There’s a saying that goes, “I am the master of my faith, I am the captain of my soul”. That saying actually are the last two lines of the poem “Invictus” by William Ernest Henley. It is a beautiful poem and I believe has helped many people to conquer life’s difficulties. But it is not true. Because the only person who can conquer for us is Jesus, Amen?

The poem received a response in the form of another poem written by Elder Orson F Whitney and entitled, “The Soul’s Captain (The Answer).

*Art thou in truth? Then what of him  
Who bought thee with his blood?  
Who plunged into devouring seas  
And snatched thee from the flood?*

*The Captain of My Soul  
Who bore for all our fallen race  
What none but him could bear. –  
The God who died that man might live,  
And endless glory share?  
Of what avail thy vaunted strength,  
Apart from his vast might?  
Pray that his Light may pierce the gloom,  
That thou mayest see aright.*

*Men are as bubbles on the wave,  
As leaves upon the tree.*

*Thou, captain of thy soul, forsooth  
Who gave that place to thee?*

*Free will is thine — free agency  
To wield for right or wrong;  
But thou must answer unto him  
To whom all souls belong.*

*Bend to the dust that head “unbowed,”  
Small part of Life’s great whole!  
And see in him, and him alone,  
The Captain of thy soul.*

Isn’t that a beautiful poem? I believe more beautiful than Invictus. Because it contains the truth. And the truth is Jesus, Amen? He is the real master of your fate and the captain of your soul.

Now, if he is the master of your fate, then he knows everything about you. He knows everything about your situation. Nothing is hidden from his sight. Remember, he is God and, therefore, he is omniscient, he is all-knowing. Don’t be afraid then when you don’t have enough to pay the bills, when you are suffering from that lingering illness, when your marriage is in the rocks, when people criticize you, or whatever unfortunate circumstance you’re in. Jesus is not sleeping although it seems he is. He may be quiet, you may not be getting his answer right away, but believe me, he is concerned about you. He says to you, “Surely I am with you always.” Matt. 28:20.

The disciples thought that Jesus wasn't concerned about them. He was, of course. Jesus was just training them to put their faith in him even when he seems quiet.

Folks, that's what Jesus is doing to us as well. He remains quiet sometimes to train us to grow in our faith in him. His delay is not a denial. He wants us to grow.

Now, folks, because Jesus knows your situation,

### 3. **Recognize that Jesus is going to do something about it.**

Folks, let me tell you one truth: Jesus, the Son of God, is actively involved in your life. There is nothing in your life that he is not aware of. And, therefore, he is going to do something about it.

The disciples were panicking. They thought Jesus was so asleep that he didn't care about them. But to their surprise, when Jesus woke up, he did something that amazed them. He stilled the storm with his word.

In the same way, Jesus will surely do something about your situation. The Bible says that nothing is impossible with God." Jesus is your loving God. He gave his life on the cross for you to save you. He gave everything he had. He loves you so much that he will do anything for you.

You just wait. God has his own timetable. We cannot dictate to him. He knows what he is doing. But surely he is going to do something about your situation.

The Bible is full of stories of people who were in desperate situations but God did something about them. For example, the Israelites were slaves in Egypt for a long time. They cried out to God and God set them free. The same Israelites were trapped between the pursuing Egyptian army and the Red Sea and they were afraid they were going to be slaughtered. They cried out to God and God parted the Red Sea.

Samson was a helpless prisoner in the hands of the Philistines and his strength was gone. He cried out to God and God gave him back his strength which enabled him to bring down the roof upon the Philistines. Hannah was desperate for a child. She cried out to God and God gave her Samuel. Jesus was on the cross, suffering for the sins of mankind. He cried out to God and said, “It is finished” and God saved the whole of mankind.

What kind of storm are you in right now? Does it seem like it is never gonna stop? Let me assure you, Jesus can make it stop. He can still that storm. He has done it before and he can do it again. Just keep these principles in mind. Refuse to panic. Realize that Jesus knows your situation. Recognize that Jesus will do something about it.

And even while you’re going through that storm, Jesus will give you his peace. In John 16:33 he says, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

Do you want to have an unsinkable faith? Refuse to panic. Realize that Jesus knows your situation. Recognize that Jesus will do something about it.