

## Panic or Peace

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*[In light of our recent study in the book of James, I found this article to be especially relevant. It was written by Joe Chesser, my uncle, who preaches for the Fruitland Church of Christ near Jackson, Missouri.*

—Mark]

We like to blame our fears and frustrations on someone else, even on God. It's never our fault when we are scared out of our wits. It's never our fault when panic grips our hearts.

This is illustrated by the events described in **Mark 4:35-41**. While crossing the Sea of Galilee at night, *"a furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped."* The men in the boat were not novices on these waters. Some were experienced fishermen who had spent their lives facing the challenging storms that often appeared out of nowhere.

But this storm was different. It had the disciples fearing for their lives. They were filled with panic, the nature of which is irrational and desperate thinking. Not knowing what else to do, they tried to allay their fears by pressing on Jesus the guilt of concern. They may drown, but they are going to make sure Jesus bears his share of the burden. *"Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"*

When the storms of life overwhelm us, one way we can respond is by being filled with panic. *"Where is God when you need Him?"* Doesn't God care about my failing health? Doesn't He care about my marriage? Doesn't He care about my \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank) ?

The other way we can respond to the storms of life is to be filled with peace. The amazing part of this story is that while the waves were crashing over the boat, Jesus was sleeping. Sure he was tired, but to sleep in such turbulence? To remain calm in the midst of a raging storm, how is that possible? The answer is faith: faith in the power of God to control the storm; faith in the plan of God that would not allow a mere storm to prevent his going to the cross (*a much more severe storm that he also weathered*). There were much bigger issues at stake than wind and waves.

Panic rules when our focus is on what is seen: wind and waves. Peace and calmness will rule when our focus is on what is not seen: the power of God to overpower the storms around us. Faith gives us the assurance that as long as we are with Jesus, we can weather any storm. He doesn't promise to prevent the storms from arising, but he does assure us of peace and security through them – *if we have faith*. It's your choice: *peace or panic?*