

The Gospel Greats Weekly Newsletter

Paul's Epistle

"Forget The Sea"

by Paul Heil TheGospelGreats.com April 2016

This world is full of distractions. A phone rings. A knock on the door. An unanticipated car failure. A plumbing problem. A baby's cry. A family member's sudden illness. A new roof leak. A pet's poorly-timed rambunctiousness. Some days it seems like just one thing after another – and we never even get near to doing what we had planned to accomplish. Distractions can cause serious problems. Because cell phone use by drivers can be distracting – and potentially disastrous – 14 states, the District of Columbia and other areas already ban hand-held cell phone use by drivers. 46 states ban text messaging by drivers. Some states, faced with pedestrians walking into the path of cars because they were busy texting, are even considering banning cell phone use while walking across a street. These are safety-related considerations resulting from distractions – distractions that can harm us (or others) physically. But there is another very serious aspect of distractions – distractions can harm us spiritually.

On last weekend's broadcast, you heard Mark Bishop talk about why he named his new group "Forget The Sea." That seems to be quite an odd name for a group, but as he noted, it's both a name and a short sentence. He intends it as a reminder to each of us to keep our eyes focused on Christ. Mark says he got the idea from the account in Matthew 14. Jesus had just fed the five thousand and then told his disciples to get into their boat to cross the sea of Galilee to meet Him on the other side. They climbed in and set sail. But as they crossed the sea in the middle of the night, they saw something most unexpected and, yes, terrifying. They saw Jesus walking toward them – on the water! The ever-impetuous Peter cried, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water" (v. 28). The Lord obliged. "Come." Peter scampered out of the boat and, with his eyes on Christ, actually began walking on the water! But, well, then he became distracted: "...when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!'" (v. 29). The Savior, of course, did.

Notice that as long as Peter had his eyes on Christ, he was able to do what Christ had told him to do. He really was walking on the water! But then, despite experiencing this astounding miracle, Peter became distracted by the wind and the waves. He looked away from Christ. And what happened? He began to sink. Mark Bishop thinks that's such an important message that he named his group that – "Forget The Sea" – simply so that people will ask him about it and he'll be able to explain. As Mark puts it, "We wanted to remind folks to forget the storms, forget the waves, keep your eyes on Jesus – and forget the sea."

What happens to us as Christians when we allow distractions to remove our focus from Christ? Christ, in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13), says of such a person that the "cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful." Allow distractions to remove your eyes from Christ and you will become "unfruitful." Rather than growing stronger in the faith, your Christian life will wither – or at least fail to show the fruit the Lord wants us to exhibit (see Galatians 5:22-3, Ephesians 5:9) and we won't be able to accomplish what the Lord

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wants us to do. It's not easy, I know, but we really need to set aside more "distraction-free" time with the Lord. Time to pray. Time to read and study the Bible. We need to be aware of the damage distractions can do to our spiritual life.

Carefully consider — how can you accomplish this in your life? I know, it's a tall order in today's hectic world. But it's essential to our spiritual well-being. How do we focus on Christ? How do we deal with distractions? A beloved century-old hymn has this prescription for doing just that:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.*

- Paul

*Refrain from "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus," by Helen H. Lemmel, 1922.

Comments on this article? E-mail Paul at: paul@thegospelgreats.com

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