

Fellow Soldiers in the Army of Christ



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 13

READ FOR THIS WEEK’S LESSON: Luke 5:6–8, 11; Mark 3:14; Matthew 8:23–27; Mark 4:35–41; Mark 9:33–37; Matthew 20:20–28.

MEMORY VERSE: “They said to each other, ‘He [Jesus] talked with us on the road. He opened the Scriptures [Bible verses] to us. Weren’t [were not] our hearts burning inside us during that time?’ ” (Luke 24:32, NlrV).

FROM THE EARLIEST DAYS OF HIS MINISTRY (WORK DONE FOR GOD), JESUS DID NOT WORK ALONE. He chose humans to take part in preaching, teaching, and ministering. The four Gospels focus on His life, death, and resurrection (return to life from the dead). And they also show how closely He worked with His disciples, those closest to Him.

So, as the great controversy (war) went on around Jesus, we can also find it going on around His disciples. Until the bitter end, when Jesus cried, “It is finished,” Satan found it impossible to make Jesus stumble and fall. But Christ’s followers were much easier to trap. Their faults gave Satan opportunities to take advantage of them.

Pride, doubt, stubbornness, self-importance, selfishness—these weaknesses opened the way for Satan. Half of their problem was that they, with their opinions, did not listen to what Jesus said would happen.

They had a lot of hard lessons to learn. So do we!

THE CALL OF PETER (Luke 5:6–8)

When we think of how important the issues are in the great controversy, it is amazing (surprising) that Jesus would use humans to help Him in ministry. This is especially true when we think about the faults in the ones He chose. Of course, if we think about the condition of fallen man, no one He chose would have been perfect anyway.

Jesus was walking along the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Followed by a crowd of people, Jesus noticed two fishing boats whose owners were cleaning up after an unsuccessful night. These fishermen already knew of Jesus. He had taught in their synagogue (place of worship), where He surprised everyone with His words (Luke 4:31, 32). Jesus had even cast out a demon from a man in their synagogue (Luke 4:33–36). They had seen Jesus at Peter's house healing Peter's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38, 39). And He also healed many others later that evening (Luke 4:40, 41).

It is no wonder that a crowd was following Jesus along the beach. Jesus stepped into Peter's boat and asked Peter to push out a little from the shore so that all could see Him. And then Jesus spoke to the people (Luke 5:3). When finished, He told Peter to go out into deeper water and throw his freshly cleaned net into the water. Peter surely thought that it would not be successful. But out of respect for Jesus, Peter did as He told him to do.



Jesus asked Peter to throw his freshly cleaned net back into the deep water just off the shore.

Read Luke 5:6–8. What do Peter's feelings and actions tell us about him? And how do they help us to understand why Jesus chose Peter, even though he had faults?

Peter's feelings and actions are amazing (wonderful). In this way, he reminds us of Jacob wrestling with the angel. Both men recognized that God was with them. Both felt an overpowering sense of unworthiness (Genesis 32:24–30). One thing is clear. Peter recognized his sinfulness because he knew that the Lord was there. Peter's open confession of his sinfulness is the opposite of how some of the religious leaders felt. They are the ones who pointed to Jesus as a sinner (read John 9:24). But they refused to admit their own sinfulness.

Luke 5:11 says that the fishermen "forsook [left] all" and followed Him. This means that when their nets were so full that they were about to break, the men still left everything to follow Jesus. What message is there for us here?

“WITH HIM” (Mark 3:14)

When Jesus called the first disciples on the shores of Galilee, they had already witnessed His power over evil. They had seen Jesus challenge demons (Luke 4:34–36), heal the sick (Luke 4:38–41), rule over nature (Luke 5:4–6), reveal sin, and then comfort Peter by saying that there was no need to fear (Luke 5:10).

Some time later, after praying all night (Luke 6:12), Jesus met with His followers (disciples). From that larger group, Jesus chose twelve, calling them apostles (teachers and leaders; Luke 6:13). The Greek word *apostolos* means “to send out.” Before Jesus sent them out, He spent some time with them, giving them instructions (Luke 9:1–5) that were like the ones He gave to a larger group of 70 some time later (Luke 10:1–16).

Read Mark 3:14. What did Jesus want His apostles to do before He sent them out on their own? What important message is in here for all of us?

How many times are today’s Christians more eager to race off and work for Jesus rather than spend time with Him? The simple fact is that when we go out to do the gospel work, we often race off with our own to-do list. We bypass the Savior of the world and try to replace Him with ourselves. It is too easy to have a “Messiah complex,” which means we think it is up to us to save the world. But we forget that Jesus alone is Savior.

So much of Christian history has been filled with those who preached the name of Jesus. But they had not spent time with Him, had not known Him, and had not been changed by Him. The last thing our world or the church needs are those who run around in the name of Christ but have not been “with Him.” One of Satan’s greatest tricks in the great controversy has been his ability to take advantage of those who claim the name of Christ but also misuse that name. So, before sending them off, Jesus wanted these men to be with Him in order to learn from Him.

What does it mean to us, today, to be without Jesus? What are useful, real-time ways in which we can have that time with Him now?



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JESUS' POWER OVER NATURE (Matthew 8:23–27)

Read Matthew 8:23–27; Mark 4:35–41; and Luke 8:22–25. How is the great controversy shown in these verses?



“Satan is even now trying to cause bad things to happen upon sea and on land to seal the fate of as many as possible.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, page 348.

We do not fully understand how much Satan influences the natural world. But the Bible does show that his influence is there. We find this in the story of Job (read Job 1:18, 19). Ellen G. White also tells us that “Satan is even now trying to cause bad things to happen upon sea and land to seal the fate of as many as possible.”—Adapted from *In Heavenly Places*, page 348. This is another example of Satan’s power in this area. Among the many bad things that happen and the disasters in nature, we are seeing how real the great controversy is here on earth.

In this special story, after a long day of teaching, Jesus suggested that He and the apostles go to the opposite shore, where there were fewer people. Partway into their journey, a fierce windstorm struck them suddenly. Waves crashed into the boat (Mark 4:37). Jesus was so tired He lay sleeping in the stern, seemingly unaware. The disciples were so busy battling the storm that it was some time before they realized that Jesus was asleep.

Jesus does not say anything when they first cry out to Him. He does not give any sermon to scold them or to suggest ways that the disciples can do better in the situation. Jesus just stands up, raises His hand, and tells the wind and waves to settle down and be quiet, as if they are simply bad children.

At this, the disciples are just stunned with awe (great respect). “They were terrified [scared]. They asked each other, ‘Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!’” (Mark 4:41, NIV).

The lessons are many here. But with this story, we can understand how great Jesus’ power is. So, we need to trust Him, no matter what.

We can know how real the Lord’s power is, even over nature. But the one place where He will not force that power is on our own wills. What should this tell us about how careful we need to be with the important gift of free choice? And what should it tell us about being even more careful in how we use that gift?

WHO IS THE GREATEST? (Mark 9:33–37)

Read Mark 9:33–37. What lesson did Jesus teach the disciples here? And what is the message here for anyone who claims to follow Jesus? Read also Matthew 18:3–5.

This debate among the disciples was about their views of the future. They thought that Jesus was going to free Israel from the Romans, to restore (give back to the people) the kingdom of David, and to rule as its new king. They thought they would enjoy all the glory (honor) that the nation experienced under King Solomon. When that would happen, they guessed that they would have important parts to play in the newly restored (made new) kingdom. But even that was not enough. They wanted to know who among them would be the “greatest” in the kingdom. Does that sound like Lucifer (Satan) was influencing them? (Read Isaiah 14:14.)

Read Matthew 20:20–28. How did Jesus answer this request? What was His important point?

Perhaps the most disappointing thing about this sad event is the setting and time when the story took place. The disciples were on their way to Jerusalem where Jesus was about to be crucified (put to death on a cross). He had just explained to them that He was going to be betrayed, sentenced to death, mocked, whipped, and crucified, and then rise again on the third day (Matthew 20:18, 19). As soon as He finished saying all this, the question of who was greatest came up again. The disciples did not even hear what Jesus said. It was clear that they were not listening. Interested in their own small-minded ambitions, the disciples missed the important issues. Their minds were on an earthly kingdom that would never come. And they missed out on what Jesus was telling them about the eternal kingdom that He was offering them through His own death, which would happen soon.

It is easy to think about how narrow-minded the disciples were. Look at yourself and ask: *What narrow-mindedness do I need removed from my own soul?*

JESUS EXPLAINS THE WORD (SCRIPTURE) (Luke 24:19–35)



A group of women visited Jesus' tomb only to find it empty.

It was the third day after Jesus' death. His followers were still numb with shock. They thought He would crush the Romans, but it seemed that the Romans had crushed Him instead.

Many disciples met together with the apostles after the Crucifixion (Jesus' death on the cross). Some women from their group visited the tomb early Sunday morning. Luke names three of them, but there were others who had come with Jesus from Galilee (Luke 23:55; Luke 24:1, 10). They returned from the empty tomb to tell the "eleven and . . . all the rest" of two men in shining clothes they had seen there (Luke 24:9, NKJV).

Luke records that on that Sunday afternoon two of Jesus' followers walked back to their home, a two-to-three-hour journey from Jerusalem (Luke 24:13). It is likely that they were so busy in their discussion of what had happened over the weekend that they did not notice a Stranger walking nearby. Maybe they would never have noticed Him if He had not entered their conversation by asking why they were so sad (Luke 24:17).

This question really fired up Cleopas. He wondered how the Stranger did not know about all the things that had happened. "What things?" the Stranger asked (Luke 24:19).

Read Luke 24:19–35. What did these people say that showed their lack of understanding? How did Jesus explain the truth to them?

Notice that Jesus made points from Scripture. Jesus pointed to Scripture in His battle with Satan in the wilderness. In the same way, Jesus used Scripture to push back the darkness that these two disciples were in. After Jesus explained to them the Scriptures about Himself and His mission, He gave them some powerful experiences to help support those teachings. First, He showed Himself to them. He gave them proof that He had been raised from the dead. Second, He "disappeared from their sight" (Luke 24:31, NIV). Jesus gave them a perfectly clear Bible study on the power of His forgiving and cleansing death. With the powerful experiences they had just received, these two followers had very good reasons for faith.

Here again, as all through the Gospels, we find Jesus keeping the Scriptures front and center. How, then, can we guard ourselves against any type of thinking that would cause us to question the authority of the Bible?

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: When here on earth as a Man, Jesus cast out demons (Luke 6:18) and gave hope to the hopeless (Luke 6:20–23). He showed people how to live out God’s *agape* love (Luke 6:27–49) and healed the centurion’s servant (Luke 7:2–10). He also raised a widow’s dead son (Luke 7:12–16) and calmed a storm (Luke 8:22–25). He freed the demoniac (possessed by evil spirits) at Gadara of his demons (Luke 8:26–39) and healed a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years (Luke 8:43–48). He raised Jairus’s dead daughter (Luke 8:41, 42, 49–56) and even raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been dead for four days (John 11:39–44). He did all that, but people still struggled to believe in Him. “Even Christ’s own disciples were slow to learn and to understand. They loved Him and had great respect for His character [thoughts; feelings; actions]. But still their faith in His being the Son of God became weak at times. Their desire to accept the traditions of the fathers, and their continual failure to understand His teachings showed how difficult it was for them to free themselves from false ideas.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, volume 18, page 116. Faith is a gift from God. But it is a gift that people can refuse to accept. And that is because, as we have been warned, Satan is real. The great controversy is real. And the enemy works hard to cause us to doubt and disbelieve. Salvation is found through faith in what Christ has done for us. Satan knows that, so he will do everything he can to turn us away from that faith. Fortunately—and we must always remember this—Jesus is much more powerful than the devil. And if we hold on to Jesus, Satan cannot defeat us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 What answer would you give to someone who asked, “If Jesus has so much power over nature, why do so many people, even Christians, suffer so much?” How does the great controversy fit into the answer?
- 2 What are some of the reasons we have for faith in Jesus and what the Bible says about Him? Also, we may have good reasons, but why do so many people struggle with faith? What are the things that cause us to doubt? And what is the best way to deal with them?
- 3 As we saw this week, Jesus chose some people with weaknesses to work with Him. What hope does that give you about how Jesus can use you, even with your own weaknesses?