

## Sovereign Over All

For those who are familiar with Eric Liddell, it is likely by means of the Oscar winning movie, *Chariots of Fire*. Personally, I was introduced to the “Flying Scotsman” through the beautifully filmed and scored movie that won the Academy Award for Best Picture in 1981. However, while the movie is one of my favorites, Eric Liddle’s biography, [\*Complete Surrender\*](#) by Julian Wilson, gives an even more beautiful insight into the missionary life and legacy of Liddell. While the young man and son of missionaries to China is most known for competing in the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris, refusing to run on Sunday, and winning a gold medal in the 400 meters, it is his subsequent return to China and faithful missionary work with China Inland Missions that captures my attention. It is through the confinement in a Japanese internment, the suffering due to ministry and malnutrition, and the struggles with a terminal illness that the man’s mettle becomes evident. Langdon Gilkey, a theologian and survivor of internment camp wrote of Liddell: “He was overflowing with good humor and love for life, and with enthusiasm and charm. It is rare indeed that a person has the good fortune to meet a saint, but he came as close to it as anyone I have ever known.”

If you were to ask the average person on the street what they would consider to be the opposite of fear, they might answer with things like contentment, assurance, or being principled. The most common response would likely be, “Courage.” It seems like the logical answer, doesn’t it? Yet, the Bible often has a different trait in mind. David wrote, “When I am afraid, **I put my trust in you**” (Ps 56:3), and God spoke to His people through the prophet Isaiah, encouraging them to “**fear not, for I am with you**; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Is 41:10). Likewise, Jesus points to this trait on several occasions in Luke 8:25, 48, 50, admonishing those alarmed not to fear. What is this trait we are called to possess? **Faith**.

As the Savior’s ministry in Galilee draws to a close and He is about to clearly disclose His divine identity and purpose, Luke focuses on reminding his readers of the Savior’s superiority to the priests and kings of the Old Testament. He does so by recording a series of miracles that demonstrate Jesus’ sovereignty within four spheres: nature, demons, disease, and death. Each event places a person or group of people into circumstances that demand them to choose between fear or faith. The most familiar of these is the story of Jesus calming the storm (Lk 8:22-25). At His request, the disciples have joined Jesus in a boat heading to the other side of

the Sea of Galilee. The journey begins with sunny skies and calm seas as Jesus takes a nap in the bottom of the boat. Soon, however, dark clouds roll in, the winds begin to howl, and waves incessantly crash over the bow of the boat, filling it with water. Overcome with the fear of perishing, the disciples wake Jesus with panicked shouts of “Master, Master, we are perishing!” In turn, their Master rebukes the wind and the waves, muzzling them and creating “a calm.”

It is easy to miss the irony of the scene. The King of the entire universe is taking a nap on the bottom of a tiny boat, with winds and waves bearing down on the disciples that are with Him. Yet, the fear of storm has the disciples in its grip. They are more afraid (petrified) of the storm than they are afraid (in awe) of Jesus. Clearly the “object” of our fear matters, because greater fear casts out lesser fear. **Jesus is God**, the Son. Besides Him there is no other (Is 45:5). **Jesus is sovereign**. He has the power, wisdom, and authority to do anything He chooses (Job 42:2). **Jesus is everywhere present**. This is especially true in the lives of His followers (Matt 28:20). **Jesus is gracious and merciful**. His love is unwavering and true (Ps 145:8). Jesus deserves our fear and respect (Prov 1:7).

All of us are grateful for the times of rest and joy that come from life’s calm seas. Likewise, we all experience the threatening winds and pounding waves of life at one time or another! Eric Liddell loved and feared the Lord more than he craved recognition and feared suffering. His life was filled with the joys of following Jesus through the calm **and** the storms. According to a fellow missionary, Liddell’s last words were, “It’s complete surrender”, in reference to how he had given his life to God. Fearing the Lord recognizes that Jesus is securely sovereign, richly rewarding, and gloriously good!

**Psalm 46:1-7 (ESV)** - **“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.** *Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. SELAH*

*There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. **The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.** SELAH”*