

## THE STORMY SEA! (Mk. 4:35-41)

<sup>35</sup> And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. <sup>36</sup> And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. <sup>37</sup> And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. <sup>38</sup> And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? <sup>39</sup> And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. <sup>40</sup> And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? <sup>41</sup> And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

What a discovery! ... What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him? He Who is God ... is more powerful and more glorious than creation can measure. Job declared, **Job 26:5** Dead *things* are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof. ... <sup>7</sup> He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, *and* hangeth the earth upon nothing. <sup>8</sup> He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them. ... <sup>12</sup> He divideth the sea with his power ... <sup>13</sup> By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens ... <sup>14</sup> Lo, these *are* parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand? ... And here is this same God, - in Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the glorious Trinity, - on the Sea of Galilee, in a boat.

Earlier in the day, He had been teaching along its shores (Mk. 4:1). He had begun by presenting the parable about the different types of soil ... and then He had drawn His disciples to the one side to explain privately the meaning of His illustrations. He followed that up by telling them about the candle/lamp and how they wouldn't put it anywhere other than a place where it would be effective by shining a light. Then, He told them about the seed that grows even though the farmer doesn't understand how, and He finished up by telling them the parable of the mustard seed. ... These were probably only a few of the engagements He was involved in during that long and busy day. Yet, this was the kind of ministry He did on a daily basis. Undoubtedly, the sick and the needy were brought to Him, the demon-possessed, etc ... and He dealt with them all.

So, by the time the evening came, He and His disciples were relaxing in the boat on the, calm, smooth, tranquil waters of one of the most beautiful lakes in the world. ... And since it *was* evening, most of the people who had been with Him were on their way home and Jesus decided to finish the day with a sail across to the other side of the lake. ... There was more to it than that, of course. Jesus had a reason for everything He did. He did not come to this world for a holiday ... He came to do His Father's business, and 5:1 tells us He was going across because of a Divine appointment with a demon-possessed man called Legion in the graveyard of the Gadarenes.

Before that, though, when the multitude on the shore had dispersed, the boat Jesus was in, - and also a few others (a small flotilla), - were sailing along enjoying the tranquillity. ... Where was Jesus, and what was He doing? He was doing the most natural thing in the world that any of us would have been doing after a hard day's work, - **38 he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow.** He had lain down. The glorious Son of God, the **Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6)** was safely asleep on board a little boat with His disciples on their way across the Sea of Galilee. ... He Who had created the water upon which they sailed ... He Who had formed the sky ... He Who had made the wood used to build the boat ... there He was, *asleep*. There was no safer place that day, - anywhere in God's creation, - than that place with Jesus. And here we have the calm before the storm.

Well, in verse thirty-seven we have the upset, **37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.** I've been privileged to sail on this same Sea of Galilee on three occasions, - each of them as beautiful and as tranquil as the one before. But, on this particular evening, - getting dark, - it was not peaceful at all! It started to blow a gale. It wasn't just *any* storm ... it was a *great* (μέγας) storm of wind ... Indeed, Mark uses those three words to emphasise how ferocious a storm it was! And remember also, Mark was recording this incident as Peter related it to him ... and Peter was an experienced fisherman who was well-used to the storms on the Sea of Galilee. Nevertheless, even he, - Peter, - described it as **a great storm of wind.**

And it wasn't *lapping* up alongside the boat ... it was *beating* ferociously up against it, and it was coming in over the sides and filling the boat! This was frightening!! Yes, of course, they had experienced storms on the Sea of Galilee before, - they were fishermen, after all, and 'they knew the score' ... but they had never ever been out in a storm like this one!

What was the Lord teaching them? What was going on here? He simply wanted to explain to them how He can be relied upon, even in the most frightening of circumstances. ... The same man who wrote the chorus, "Thank You, Lord, for saving my soul" (Seth Sykes from Springburn in Glasgow) also wrote the chorus, "With Christ in the vessel we can smile at the storm" ... That's how it ought to have been for the disciples in the company of Jesus ... but it was far from how it truly was! The disciples were struck with panic! Fully grown men, used to the sea, were petrified shivering wrecks! ... The water was coming in too fast, and they couldn't keep it out. The winds were far too strong, and the sail was bending. It is evening, night-time and *dark!* ...

... And yet, in the midst of all the commotion, Jesus was sleeping, **38 he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow.**

He was 'out', as we say ... oblivious to all the panic and fear. Sound asleep ... totally calm in the midst of the storm. ... He was the only One Who was though! ... **38 and they awake him**, - I'm sure they did! I'm sure they resented Him being able to sleep when they were panicking all over the place! The boat was rocking, the waves were beating, the noise was frightening ... and they were all going to drown, - they were sure of it! And yet, Jesus **was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow** ... A pillow! He was in the lap of luxury ... not a care in the world, sound asleep!

How could He be sleeping at a time of their great need?! Waken up, Jesus! Master/Teacher, **carest thou not that we perish?** ... ἀπόλλυμι ... We are going to be destroyed, and You are lying there sleeping! ... Can you see what they were *really* saying ... Master, You are not much use to us!

But, *what* had they just called Him? They called Him 'Master' ... Master of what? Is He only the Master in the simple things of life, - when things are going well, - or is He the Master of everything? They called Him 'Master' ... but did they truly believe He *was*?!

Look at what they said to Him, **Master, carest thou not that we perish?** It didn't cross their minds to petition Him to save them from their dilemma. ... And look also at verse thirty-seven ... They had already tried everything within their own expertise to deal with the storm ... Jesus was their last resort! They didn't go to Him first, but they ran to Him when their own attempts had completely failed.

They had never been in this situation with Him before. Yes, He had performed many miracles ... but they had all been on dry land! It was nothing like this! Besides, the miracles He did were to *other* people ... and it is always different when you are needing Him to work in your life. It's far easier telling others what Jesus can do for them but it is a different story when *you yourself* have to trust Him in the midst of the hard times!

But, realistically, where else are they going to turn? There was nowhere else! And neither was there any one else! And so they applied their simple and weak faith to this plea, **Master, carest thou not that we perish?** ... In no way does it sound like the right approach to petition the Master. ...

It had nothing of the glorious etiquette you would expect of subjects coming to the King. Instead, their words tumbled out of their scared hearts ... *Master, carest thou not that we perish?* ... I wonder if their 'we' included Jesus?!

Often when we pray we like to get the words right ... We like to find the right way to express how we are feeling, but these men simply blurted out their need ... and that is what Christ needed to hear. "In my need Jesus found me, put His strong arm around me" ... On hearing their cries He stood up, **39** and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, *Peace, be still*. ... And the fierce storm proved incapable, - powerless, - to defy His command!

There were no theatrics. No bands blaring. There was no effort really. He simply spoke to the wind and it immediately died down. The storm recognised His voice ... just as in those days of creation when *In the beginning God said (Gen. 1)* ... He had lost none of His ancient power for He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). He does not change (Mal. 3:6). He tells the winds and the waves what to do, and they must obey Him!

Previously there had been "a great storm" ... but now the Saviour had replaced it with "a great calm" (v.39). ... There was no longer any gale force wind threatening to collapse the sail. There were no massive waves bashing up against the boat. There was no rocking from side to side. There were no shouts and screams of fear ... When Jesus said, *Peace, be still*, ... the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ... Calm was restored. The psalmist wrote, **Ps. 107:23** *They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; 24 These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. 25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. 26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. 27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. 28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. 29 He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.*

... That is what God did, and that is what He does every day since He created this world. He has kept it in order, **Ps. 104:13** *He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. 14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth ... 19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. 20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. 21 The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. ... That is what He does for He is in charge of it all, - there is not a rain drop that falls apart from His command ...*

... And He also speaks in His Word about a time when His creation will be restored to the perfection that was present in Eden, **Is. 11:6** The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. **7** And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. **8** And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. **9** They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. ... Are you trusting in God's promises?

Science is not in control of the atmosphere, - God is. The so-called 'greenhouse gases' are no ultimate threat to His creation. There is nothing *anywhere* or *any time* that is beyond His authority, and we have the confidence spoken of by Paul that we **Rom. 8:21** shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. **22** For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. ... None of the greatest scientific minds, - with all their machinery and instruments today, - can do what Jesus did over two thousand years ago in that storm on the Sea of Galilee for He calmed it completely! ... That is the authority our God possesses! ... He is the One in Whom I trust all of us have our confidence. We lean on His word knowing it to be the perfect and absolute truth that nothing can withstand!

And He turned to those men in the ship with Him, - after the wind and the rain had abated, - and He looked each of them in the eye, **40** And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? ... Notice He didn't say, how is it that ye have [little] faith? ... but He said, how is it that ye have no faith? ... You either trust Christ completely, or you don't trust Him at all! Either He is able to save you all the way, or not at all. ... The only faith worth having is the one that has its complete confidence in Him! All other faiths will fail you!

Jesus died on the cross of Calvary, and what He did for us there is too great for us to comprehend. The suffering He endured was poured out upon Him for our eternal salvation. ... And yet, since He has already done so much for us in the past, why do we sometimes doubt Him in the present, and even for the future?

The power He demonstrated on Calvary is the power He keeps us with today. ... "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins ... And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains". William Cowper wrote another verse, "Lord, I believe Thou hast prepared, unworthy though I be, For me a blood-bought free reward, a golden harp for me! 'Tis strung and tuned for endless years, and formed by power divine, To sound in God the Father's ears no other name but Thine." ...

Sometimes, - like the disciples in the boat, - we get afraid and wonder, *Master, carest thou not that we perish?* ... “Oh yes, He cares, I know He cares ...”

Notice how after Jesus had asked them, *Why are ye so fearful?* ... the disciples are then described, **41** *And they feared exceedingly*. They were even *more* frightened after the storm had been stilled! Why was that? ... They were frightened when they realised they were in the presence of the living God! ...

Why were they afraid? They were afraid because, - in their humility, - they acknowledged how far short of God’s glory they fell. “With Christ in the vessel, we’ll smile at the storm” ... *No*, they weren’t smiling, they were petrified, even moreso when the storm had ceased. ... When they realised His glory, they grasped the awfulness of their sin. ... Like Isaiah in the temple, **Is. 6:5** *Woe is me! for I am ... a man of unclean lips* ... In the mirror of God’s holiness they were wretched sinners ... and undeserving of Christ to save them from the storm.

“We have had Jesus with us all the time, and yet we allowed our fears to doubt Him” ... Here is what Paul wrote, **I Cor. 10:13** *There hath no temptation [time of testing] taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted [tested] above that ye are able; but will with the temptation [testing] also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

Jesus was in the boat with them, “What have I to dread, what have I to fear, Leaning on the everlasting arms.” We sing, “Safe in the arms of Jesus ... There by His love o’ershaded, Sweetly my soul shall rest.” ... How hard these truths are to express when we are in the storm, and yet the same God Who is with us in the calm never leaves us nor forsakes us, no matter how fierce and frightening the storms of life become.

I would not dare to claim I would have been any different to those disciples in the boat with Jesus. Sadly, I fear I would have been like them ... Nonetheless, like the father who came to Jesus pleading, with tears in his eyes, **Mk. 9:24** *Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.*

There is a ‘good’ fear to have, though ... and it is not the hopeless fear of the things around us, like what the disciples had experienced on this occasion. Instead, - as the psalmist explains, - this fear is a holy fear for it is the fear of the Lord which brings us hope, **Ps. 25:14** *The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him ... 31:19* *Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee ... 33:18* *Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him ... 34:9* *O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. ...*

... And when you know that fear of God, - when you love and hold His Name in the highest reverence, and trust in Him as the sovereign God with all things under His command and control, - then the fear of the world will fade and melt away, **46:2** Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ... **56:4** I will not fear what flesh can do unto me ... because here is our unqualified confidence, **Ps. 145:17** The LORD *is* righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. **18** The LORD *is* nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. **19** He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them. ... And that is what Solomon meant too, **Prov. 9:10** The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.

There is one final simple thought, and it is found in the opening verse of our present study, **Mk. 4:35** And the same day, when the even was come, he [*Jesus*] saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. ... Jesus was fully intending to be on the other side of the Sea of Galilee later that very evening. He knew all about the storm for He had planned it, - it would not have happened without His permission ... but no storm, no wind, no rain, no waves battering the ship would stop Him and hinder His predetermined intentions ... for on the other side of the lake that evening He, - and they, - would *definitely* be, for He would not lose a single one of His people! ... Tremendous! That is the confidence with which every born-again child of God is privileged, “He will keep me till the river Rolls its waters at my feet; Then He’ll bear me safely over, Where the loved ones I shall meet.”

Along that short and eventful trip the disciples had some learning to do! ... Sometimes, - like them, - we can also be ‘a bit slow’ to believe ... but I trust that through the study of God’s Word today He will have impressed that confidence more deeply upon our souls, for His glory’s sake. Amen.