

IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

Mk. 4:35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. **36** And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship *Ἰπλοῖον*. And there were also with him other little ships *Ἰπλοῦριον*. **37** And there arose a great *Ἰμέγας* storm *λαίλαψ*, a tempest, not a single gust nor a steady blowing wind, but a storm breaking forth from black thunder clouds in furious gusts, with continuous downpouring rain, throwing everything 'topsy-turvy' of wind, and the waves beat *ἐπιβάλλω* into the ship, so that it was now full. **38** And he was in the hinder part of the ship *τῆς ἑστῆς*, asleep on a pillow *κッション*. and they awake him, and say unto him, Master *Ἰδιδάσκαλος*, carest thou not that we perish *ἴβη* destroyed? **39** And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace *Ἰσιλένη*! be still *Ἰφιμόω*, to close the mouth with a muzzle! And the wind ceased *Ἰκοπάζω*, grew weary, tired, 'died down', and there was a great *Ἰμέγας* calm *Ἰγαλήνη*, calmness, stillness. **40** And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful *Ἰδειλός*, timid, in dread? how is it that ye have no faith *Ἰπίστις*? **41** And they feared *Ἰφοβέω* exceedingly *Ἰφόβος*, and said one to another, What manner of man is this *Ἰὸς*! Who is this! that even the wind and the sea obey *Ἰὑπακούω*, listens to and obeys him?

As I began studying for this morning, the news was warning about “Storm Agnes” and how its strongest winds would be around the Irish Sea coastal areas, with speeds up to 75 mph. ... Do you remember the children’s chorus? ...

“With Christ in the vessel

We can smile at the storm, smile at the storm

... as we go sailing home”.

... Has that been your experience, or have you discovered it’s not always as easy as that? ... Problems and disappointments ‘lurk around corners’, and rather than ‘smiling at the storm’, the storms become increasingly formidable. ... Let’s consider very simply and practically this account of the disciples in the boat on the Sea of Galilee with the Lord Jesus.

Storms on the Sea of Galilee were common. The winds would rush down the Jordan Valley and suddenly turn the calm waters into mighty ferocious waves.

Earlier that same day a great multitude gathered around the Lord Jesus on the shore as He spoke to them from the boat (4:1). ... Later that evening, **35** he saith unto them *Ἰἡς μαθηταί*! Let us pass over unto the other side. ... He told them to sail across to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. ... It was a regular journey, and nothing was thought of it. However, Jesus knew what was about to happen.

As they set sail, they talked among themselves. Meanwhile, the Lord Jesus, - God, in human form, - was weary, and He was already lying *Ἰκοιμῶ* on a pillow in a quieter part of the boat. ... He was so tired, so exhausted, and He had fallen

asleep. He took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. ... While His disciples discussed the issues of the day, He lay sleeping, in fashion as a man, *[the King of kings and the Lord of lords]* humbled himself (Phil. 2:3).

“Peter, John, James ... where’s Jesus?” We can see them talking to each other at the front of the boat, and slightly turning round to answer, “Oh, He’s resting over there!” ... We could imagine them being so busy talking about some of the words and actions Jesus had been saying and doing earlier. I suppose they also had other issues to talk about ... their families, what they might be doing when they arrive on the other side of the lake. ... Meanwhile, Jesus was sleeping, completely at peace, with the water lapping against the sides of the boat.

Look at Him again ... *peaceful*. Earlier, His voice had been sounding out over the crowds, but it was silent now. His eyes were closed. His heart was beating gently, and it was one of the most loveliest scenes, as Heaven looked on.

As He slept, suddenly, ³⁷ there arose a great storm of wind, and the boat began to rock up and down, and from side to side. The waves were so ferocious the water started to splash in over the bows. They could hardly see a few feet in front of them! ... This was more serious than the storms they were used to, and they panicked! Not even the experienced fishermen among them knew what to do!

At this point, let’s draw a comparison ... Some of us have been saved for years. We’ve been in many ‘storms’, fearing ‘the waters’ could come in ‘over the side’. ... And one of the reactions is to try and throw the water back into the sea. ... By our human efforts we frantically fight to keep from ‘sinking’ ... but it is hard to stand when the winds are beating around you, and the waves are splashing over you ...

And as we look at our church, perhaps you have some of those emotions, - how are we going to get through the storm?! Can we survive? ... We cannot see the shoreline through the winds and the rain. We cannot hear anything over the howling storm. ...

Let’s return to the boat ... If Jesus was tired, why weren’t the disciples also tired? Okay, they weren’t doing the teaching and preaching, but they had other responsibilities which would have drained their energy. ... So, why weren’t they taking the opportunity to rest? ... Sometimes we don’t take advantage of the opportunities during the quieter moments. ... Why didn’t *they* follow the example of the Master and use the journey across the Sea of Galilee to rest.

Often, we make ourselves busy doing things we have no need to do, and when we need our strength, - spiritual and physical, - we're exhausted!

And there *are* many 'winds' howling around us ... and when the storms *really* begin to blow, waves of doubt and unbelief crash in over the sides! We're out on the sea, far from the safety of the shore, and exposed to the elements.

There's something, - as believers, - we need to take account of though ... There's *Someone* we're forgetting. He is in the hinder part of the ship (v.38), and He's quiet and peaceful ... there is not a sound from Him. It is as if He is asleep on a pillow (v.38) ... but *He is there!* ... The waves that batter against *me*, and the winds that would try to blow *me* off course, and the waters that are trying to sink *my* ship ... *my Saviour is on board!* ... Will any ship that has the Saviour on board sink?! Will the winds blow it off course when He's on board?! ... No, it cannot happen! ... Maybe now we're beginning to grasp there's more truth in the children's chorus than we originally thought ... "With Christ in the vessel!"

Look into the boat again ... No matter how hard they tried to 'stand up' against the winds, and to keep the water out, they saw the sails bend as if they would break, and the winds could blow them onto the rocks ... Yet, while all this was happening, in the hinder part of the ship (v.38), Jesus was asleep on a pillow (v.38).

Instead of wakening Him, - He was only a few feet away, - *they* tried to battle against the elements, but they were wasting their energy. ... I wonder if they didn't disturb Him because they doubted His power, after all, Jesus was a carpenter, not a sailor!

How often you and I have tried to steer a course for which our skills and abilities were inadequate! We sailed into more trouble and into more heavy winds, ... and rather than improve the situation, we found it getting worse. ... Where is the Hope, - the *Jesus*, we say we believe and trust in? ... Where is He as we look into the future? ... He's with us 'in the boat'!

Listen to what happened, ³⁸ and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? ... There's a cry of helplessness and hopelessness from these men. They had lost the sight of their faith in the One Who was with them ... and they shouted *at God*, carest thou not that we perish?! ... We're floundering 'in the open sea', in the storm and the wind and the waves, but also in the tempest of doubting what God can do! ... Remember, "There is no power can

conquer you while God is on your side” ... Master, carest thou not that we perish?
... To our shame, we often do not believe as we ought!

I don't think they fully realised Who they had with them. I don't think it dawned on them if they were to perish, Jesus would too! ... And do you think *Jesus* Who has the whole world in His hands can perish? ... This is the same *Jesus* Who said to His disciples, *Jn. 15:4* Abide in me, and I in you. ... “A wonderful Saviour is Jesus my Lord, ... He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock ... and covers me there with His hand”.

They did eventually realise they needed Jesus, and they didn't have to shake Him to wake Him. Neither did they have to tell Him their fears for He already knew, ³⁹ 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. ⁴⁰ And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

When you and I have such a great God and Saviour ... how can we doubt Him? ... Perhaps the most precious teaching in the Bible is the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, - He is in control of all things. Nothing escapes His attention, and nothing can overrule what He decides. ... Not even if those winds had been a hundred times stronger, and not even if those waves had risen higher than the sails would those disciples have drowned ... because *they had Christ in the vessel!*

I wouldn't be so presumptuous as to insist or even suggest that because you are a Christian, all you have to do is '*smile* at the storm' ... because storms are nothing to smile at. If you are being battered, what God's Word reminds you is that Christ is in the vessel with you. And I would like to change one single letter in the question He asked, - I don't think it detracts from our study, - ... but read verse forty like this, “Why are *we* so fearful? How is it that *we* have no faith?”

And do you notice Jesus didn't say to them, “How is it that ye have *little* faith?” Instead, He dealt with their problem at its root, how is it that ye have *no* faith? ... *Faithless!* ... Can followers of the Lord Jesus be faithless? Yes, not relying on the Lord as they ought, as the hymn describes,

“Prone to wonder, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love ...”

... But it is not terminal for the true believer because the hymn writer concludes,
“Take my heart, oh, take and seal it, With Thy Spirit from above”.

Often being **in the eye of the storm** strengthens our faith and *proves* it. The disciples did not sink, neither did they jump over the side of the boat, instead, they remained on board with Jesus, relying on Him as they witnessed His power, ^{4:41} And they ... said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him? ... They continued with Him on the journey, and reached with Him their destination, ^{5:1} And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. ... Jesus took them to the destination He had promised them (v.35). Isaac Watts wrote,

“My soul obeys the Almighty’s call,
And runs to this relief;
I would believe Thy promise, Lord;
O help my unbelief.”