

Expository Thoughts on Mark - Mark 4:35-41

by J.C. Ryle

Christ's service does not exempt His servants from storms, but He is always with them, and His power and patience can carry them through even the most difficult times.

Scripture: Mark 4:35

Topics: "Faith in Trials", "The Nature of Christ"

Description

J.C. Ryle emphasizes the lessons from the storm on the Sea of Galilee, illustrating that following Christ does not shield His followers from life's storms. He highlights that afflictions are part of the Christian journey, teaching us valuable lessons and drawing us closer to God. Ryle also affirms the dual nature of Christ as both fully man and fully God, capable of understanding our struggles and possessing the power to calm our storms. He reassures believers of Christ's patience and compassion, even in moments of doubt and fear. Ultimately, Ryle encourages us to trust in Jesus, who remains unchanged and ever-present in our trials.

Transcript

THESE verses describe a storm on the sea of Galilee, when our Lord and His disciples were crossing it, and a miracle performed by our Lord in calming the storm in moment. Few miracles recorded in the Gospel were so likely to strike the minds of the disciples as this. Four of them at least were fishermen. Peter, Andrew, James, and John, had probably known the sea of Galilee, and its storms, from their youth. Few events in our Lord's journeyings to and fro upon earth, contain more rich instruction than the one related in this passage.

Let us learn, in the first place, that Christ's service does not exempt His servants from storms. Here were the twelve disciples in the path of duty. They were obediently following Jesus, wherever He went. They were daily attending on His ministry, and hearkening to His word. They were daily testifying to the world, that, whatever Scribes and Pharisees might think, they believed on Jesus, loved Jesus, and were not ashamed to give up all for His sake. Yet here we see these men in trouble, tossed up and down by a tempest, and in danger of being drowned.

Let us mark well this lesson. If we are true Christians, we must not expect everything smooth in our journey to heaven. We must count it no strange thing, if we have to endure sicknesses, losses, bereavements, and disappointments, just like other men. Free pardon and full forgiveness, grace by the way and glory at the end,--all this our Savior has promised to give. But He has never promised that we

shall have no afflictions. He loves us too well to promise that. By affliction He teaches us many precious lessons, which without it we should never learn. By affliction He shows us our emptiness and weakness, draws us to the throne of grace, purifies our affections, weans us from the world, makes us long for heaven. In the resurrection morning we shall all say, "it is good for me that I was afflicted." We shall thank God for every storm.

Let us learn, in the second place, that our Lord Jesus Christ was really and truly man. We are told in these verses, that when the storm began, and the waves beat over the ship, he was in the hinder part "asleep." He had a body exactly like our own,--a body that could hunger, and thirst, and feel pain, and be weary, and need rest. No wonder that His body needed repose at this time. He had been diligent in His Father's business all the day. He had been preaching to a great multitude in the open air. No wonder that "When the even was come," and His work finished, he fell "asleep."

Let us mark this lesson also attentively. The Saviour in whom we are bid to trust, is as really man as He is God. He knows the trials of a man, for He has experienced them. He knows the bodily infirmities of a man, for He has felt them. He can well understand what we mean, when we cry to Him for help in this world of need. He is just the very Saviour that men and women, with weary frames and aching heads, in a weary world, require for their comfort every morning and night. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." (Heb. 4:15.)

Let us learn, in the third place, that our Lord Jesus Christ, as God, has almighty power. We see Him in these verses doing that which is proverbially impossible. He speaks to the winds, and they obey Him. He speaks to the waves, and they submit to His command. He turns the raging storm into a calm with a few words,--"Peace, be still." Those words were the words of Him who first created all things. The elements knew the voice of their Master, and, like obedient servants, were quiet at once.

Let us mark this lesson also, and lay it up in our minds. With the Lord Jesus Christ nothing is impossible. No stormy passions are so strong but He can tame them. No temper is so rough and violent but He can change it. No conscience is so disquieted, but He can speak peace to it, and make it calm. No man ever need despair, if He will only bow down his pride, and come as a humbled sinner to Christ. Christ can do miracles upon his heart.--No man ever need despair of reaching his journey's end, if he has once committed his soul to Christ's keeping. Christ will carry him through every danger. Christ will make him conqueror over every foe.--What though our relations oppose us? What though our neighbours laugh us to scorn? What though our place be hard? What though our temptations be great? It is all nothing, if Christ is on our side, and we are in the ship with Him. Greater is He that is for us, than all they that are against us.

Finally, we learn from this passage, that our Lord Jesus Christ is exceedingly patient and pitiful in dealing with His own people. We see the disciples on this occasion showing great want of faith, and giving way to most unseemly fears. They forgot their Master's miracles and care for them in days gone by. They thought of nothing but their present peril. They awoke our Lord hastily, and cried, "carest thou not that we perish?" We see our Lord dealing most gently and tenderly with them. He gives them no sharp reproof. He makes no threat of casting them off, because of their unbelief. He simply asks the touching question, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?"

Let us mark well this lesson. The Lord Jesus is very pitiful and of tender mercy. "As a father pitieth his children, even so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." (Psalm 103:13.) He does not deal with believers according to their sins, nor reward them according to the iniquities. He sees their weakness. He is aware

of their short-comings. He knows all the defects of their faith, and hope, and love, and courage. And yet He will not cast them off. He bears with them continually. He loves them even to the end. He raises them when they fall. He restores them when they err. His patience, like His love, is a patience that passeth knowledge. When He sees a heart right, it is His glory to pass over many a short-coming.

Let us leave these verses with the comfortable recollection that Jesus is not changed. His heart is still the same that it was when He crossed the sea of Galilee and stilled the storm. High in heaven at the right hand of God, Jesus is still sympathizing,--still almighty,--still pitiful and patient towards His people.--Let us be more charitable and patient towards our brethren in the faith. They may err in many things, but if Jesus has received them and can bear with them, surely we may bear with them too.--Let us be more hopeful about ourselves. We may be very weak, and frail, and unstable; but if we can truly say that we do come to Christ and believe on Him, we may take comfort. The question for conscience to answer is not, "Are we like the angels? are we perfect as we shall be in heaven?" The question is, "Are we real and true in our approaches to Christ? Do we truly repent and believe?" *

* The sea of Galilee, or Tiberias, on which the circumstances recorded in this passage, took place, is an inland lake, through which the river Jordan flows, about fifteen miles long and six broad. It lies in a deep valley, much depressed below the level of the sea,--its surface being 652 feet below that of the Mediterranean,--and is surrounded on most sides by steep hills. Owing to these last circumstances, sudden squalls or storms are reported by all travelers to be very common on the lake.

The sea of Galilee and the country surrounding it, were favoured with more of our blessed Lord's presence, during His earthly ministry, than any other part of Palestine. Capernaum, Tiberias, Bethsaida, and the country of the Gergesenes were all on its shores, or in the immediate neighbourhood of this lake. It was on the sea of Galilee that our Lord walked. It was on its shore that He appeared to His disciples after His resurrection. Sitting in a boat on its waters and in a house hard by, He delivered the seven parables recorded in the 13th chapter of St. Matthew. On its banks He called Peter, and Andrew, James and John. From it, He commanded His disciples to draw the miraculous draught of fishes. Within sight of it, He twice fed the multitude with a few loaves and fishes. On the shore, He healed the man possessed with devils; and into it the two thousand swine plunged headlong after that miracle had been wrought.

Few localities in the Holy Land were so immediately connected with our Lord's ministry as the sea of Galilee and the country around it.

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