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"HE MAKETH THE STORM A CALM." – PSA. 107:29.

– MARK 4:35-41. – MARCH 6. –

OUR Lord's ministry is supposed to have covered two years at the time of the miracle of the calming of the sea, recorded in this lesson. After the selection of the twelve apostles and the Sermon on the Mount, etc., our Lord returned to Capernaum and soon after began his second tour of Galilee. It was during this interim that he awakened from the sleep of death the son of the widow of Nain – the first recorded instance of its kind in our Lord's ministry. Then came teachings by parables, and in the afternoon of a busy day of teaching – after three o'clock, while still sitting in one of the boats as on a former occasion, having concluded his teachings – he directed that the boat be taken to the opposite side of the lake. The multitude, after being informed that the discourses were ended, were dismissed, and without delay the boat was started. From the various accounts we judge that all the twelve disciples were with him, and apparently other "men" – seamen, as Matthew's account implies.

Travelers tell us that the Sea of Galilee is quite subject to wind storms. Dr. Thompson, describing his own experiences on this little sea, says: "The sun had scarcely set when the wind began to rush down toward the lake; and it continued all night long with constantly increasing violence, so that when we reached the shore the next morning the face of the lake was like a huge cauldron. The wind hurled down every wady from the north-east and east with such fury that no efforts of rowers could have brought a boat to shore at any point along that coast. To understand the causes of these sudden tempests, we must remember that the lake lies low, 600 feet lower than the ocean; that the vast and naked plateaus of the Jaulan rise to a great height, spreading backward to the wilds of Hauran, and upward to snowy Mt. Hermon; that the watercourses have cut out profound ravines and wide

gorges, converging to the head of the lake, and that these act like gigantic funnels to draw down the cold winds from the mountains."

"WE ARE NOT IGNORANT OF HIS DEVICES."

Our own opinion is that "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2) had something to do in the development of this storm – that it had more than natural causes, although the latter might have assisted or even been sufficient. We remember that the Adversary had [R3324 : page 59] already endeavored to induce our Lord to leap from the pinnacle of the Temple, but had not succeeded. Apparently now he would drown him in the sea. But the Lord, who declares himself able to make the wrath of man to praise him, caused the wrath of Satan or the wildness of the elements, whichever it was that induced the storm, to praise him – to show forth his mighty power.

During the storm our Lord lay asleep in the hinder part of the vessel on a cushion. Evidently he was thoroughly exhausted from the labors of his journey and ministry. Meantime, as the storm increased, the boat with its precious load began to fill with water more rapidly than it could be bailed out. No wonder the disciples, fishermen and experts at sea though they were, were alarmed. We cannot avoid the thought that in some manner the Lord's providence had something to do with his prolonged sleep under such circumstances, and that the intention was to put the faith of the disciples to the test. They had seen his mighty works, his healing of the sick, and his awakening of the dead, and they had heard his teachings and had taken a miraculous catch of fish under his direction where they had failed before, and by this time they should have had considerable faith in his power everyway. The fact that they approached him at all indicates that they did have faith to some degree, though not implicit faith.

The slightly different accounts of the event given by Matthew, Mark and Luke, some one has paraphrased as follows, – Matthew: "Save, Lord, we perish;" Mark: "Teacher, carest thou not that we perish?" Luke: "Master, Master, we perish." All three accounts are

correct – one disciple cried out in one way and others in different words. Some one puts it thus: "Little Faith prayed, 'Save us;' Much Fear cried, 'We perish;' Distrust urged, 'Carest thou not?' More Faith said, 'Lord;' Discipleship cried out, 'Teacher;' Faint Hope cried, 'Master, thou with authority.'" Jesus arose (awoke) and commanded peace and quiet, which immediately followed. The record mentions the cessation of the wind and additionally the calming of the sea. Some one might claim that a storm which came up suddenly might happen to stop with equal suddenness, but this would not account for the calming of the sea. Waters thus lashed to a fury could not be calmed thus quickly except by superhuman power. This, indeed, we may assume to be a prominent feature of the miracle.

It is rather peculiar that the Greek word used for "Be still" in this text is the same word used by our Lord to the demon. (Mark 1:25.) This rather corroborates the suggestion foregoing respecting the storm being the work of the Adversary. In any event this miracle shows clearly that storms should not be accredited, as they frequently are, to divine malevolence; for if the Father had caused the storm the Son would not have interfered with it. We do not wish to intimate, either, that every storm is of Satanic origin; we do not dispute that many of them arise from natural causes; but we do hold that some of them are supernatural and of the Adversary, and as a Scriptural evidence along this line we cite the whirlwind raised up by Satan, which smote the house in which Job's children were feasting. – Job 1:13,19.

That our Lord intended this experience to be a lesson to the disciples, along the line of faith in him, seems to be borne out by verses 40,41. He said unto them, "Why are ye fearful? Have ye not yet faith?" Has your faith not yet developed to such a degree that you can trust me, and realize the Father's favor and power ever with me for my protection, and that while with me no harm could possibly overtake you – nothing that is not wholly under my control? No wonder the apostles gained additional reverence for the Lord as a result of this miracle. Apparently it came just in the right time and order to be their

appropriate lesson. In fact we may conclude that every item of their experience and every item of our Lord's conduct, teaching and mighty works was especially for the instruction of these twelve, who were to be his witnesses to us and to the nations of the earth respecting that ministry.

SPIRITUAL LESSONS FOR THE SPIRITUAL HOUSEHOLD.

There is a precious lesson in this miracle for all of the Lord's followers outside of the apostleship, too. We also have need of faith and need of tests to our faith. Our daily experiences since we became the Lord's followers have been guided and guarded apparently by the power unseen, to the intent that as pupils in the school of Christ, we may all be taught of him and develop more and more of the graces of the Spirit, and particularly more and more faith. How important this item of faith is we probably cannot fully appreciate now. It seems to be one thing that the Lord specially seeks for in those now called to be followers. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "With faith all things are possible." Proper faith is understood, of course, not credulity, not reliance upon the words of men, but implicit faith in the Lord for all that he has promised. "According to thy faith be it unto thee."

So important a grace must of necessity require many lessons for its proper development, and it does not surprise us that in our individual experiences as Christians we find those which correspond to the experiences of the apostles noted in this lesson. How suddenly the Adversary may at times bring against us a whirlwind of temptation or of opposition or of persecution. How at such times our sky seems overcast, dark, foreboding; how the waves of adversity or affliction have almost overwhelmed us, and how the Lord seemed **[R3325 : page 60]** asleep and heedless of our distress and indifferent to our necessities! Such experiences are tests of our faith, as this one was a test to the faith of the apostles. If our faith be strong enough under

such circumstances, we would keep on with our proper endeavors to adjust matters corresponding to the bailing of the boat and the working of the oars; but meantime, with an implicit faith in the Lord's promise that "all things shall work together for our good," we would be able to sing as did the Apostle Paul and Silas after being beaten while in the stocks for their faithfulness to the Lord. They rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ. So according to our faith will we be able to rejoice even in tribulation. We cannot enjoy the sufferings; we can enjoy the thought which faith attaches to them, namely, that these are but light afflictions working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Each experience of this kind should be helpful to us. If at first we were fearful and cried aloud, by and by we received the succor, with perhaps the reprimand, "O, thou of little faith;" but as lesson after lesson has come to us, the Master will expect – and we should expect of ourselves – greater faith, greater trust, greater peace, greater joy in the Lord, greater confidence in his presence with us and his care over us, and in his power to deliver us from the Adversary and from every evil thing, and to bring us eventually in safety to the port we seek – the heavenly Kingdom.

THE CHURCH'S EXPERIENCES PREFIGURED.

Some one has suggested, apparently on reasonable grounds, that this experience of Jesus and the Apostles in the boat during the night pictured the experiences of the Church during this Gospel age. The Lord assured his people, saying, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the age," and "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also," and "nothing shall by any means hurt you," etc. The Lord's faithful people all through this age have realized with more or less distinctness the certainty of these precious promises; they have felt that the Lord indeed is with his Church; yet it has seemed at times as though he were asleep, inattentive to the prayers of his faithful, and inattentive to their cries and groans. For

eighteen centuries his dear ones have been tempest-tossed by the Adversary, persecuted, afflicted, buffeted – all through this dark night, in which the only light available has been "thy Word a light to my feet." The experiences of others in the past are our experiences in the present.

We of today represent the Lord's cause in the midst of the raging elements of human passions, oppositions, etc.; and as the Apostle declares of his day, so it is still true that "we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high positions." The storms may seem to come from the world, but really beyond the world is the Adversary. "We are not ignorant of his devices;" our hearts would be at times dismayed except as faith is able to see the Lord with us in the ship, and able to grasp the thought of his mighty power in his own time and way to speak peace to the world.

Soon the time will come for him who careth for us to exert his great power on our behalf, to deliver his people, to say to the raging elements, Peace, be still. Then will follow the great calm, the great rest from the evil one for a thousand years, for he shall be bound that he shall deceive the nations no more. Then will come the eternal rest of the heart to all who are now in the boat with the Lord, and then will come the opportunity for all these to be co-laborers with him in the great and glorious work of blessing the world. It must not surprise us, however, if a dark hour is before us – if the time will come when the stormy winds will be so fierce that many will cry out in fear and trembling. Let us learn well the precious experiences of the present time, so that then our faith shall not fail us – so that in the darkest hour we shall be able to sing and to rejoice in him who loved us and bought us with his own precious blood, and to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

