

The unfolding of your words gives light.

To Seek and to Save

An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke

²²Now on one of *those* days Jesus and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, “Let us go over to the other side of the lake.” So they launched out^a. ²³But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they *began* to be swamped and to be in danger^b. ²⁴They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing^c!” And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm^d. ²⁵And He said to them, “Where is your faith^e?” They were fearful and amazed,

^a 8:22 **Now on one of those days Jesus and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, “Let us go over to the other side of the lake.” So they launched out.** Mark (4:34) places this event the evening of the day Jesus gave the parable of the sower and tells us that there were other boats in the fleet (4:36).

Luke uses the verb here translated “launched out” eighteen times in Acts, usually referring to a boat putting out to sea (cp. Acts 13:13; 16:11).

^b 8:23 **But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger.** Matthew (8:24), Mark (on a pillow, 4:38) and Luke all record the detail that Jesus was sleeping. Certainly a sleeping Savior makes the spiritual lesson of this story more profound, but what else does it communicate? Simple lesson: Jesus was tired. Does that surprise you? This is not some superhuman Roman deity come down from Mt. Olympus to strut His stuff. This is the Creator humbled to the point of fatigue so extreme that He can sleep through a storm in the bottom of a 20-foot skiff.

The reason the wind descended on the lake (more detail from Doctor/sailor Luke) is that cold, dense “katabatic” winds from surrounding mountains (like 9000 foot Hermon forty miles to the northeast) regularly plunge into Galilee (over 600 feet below sea level) on summer nights, sometimes with violent force.

Luke tells us the boat was “swamped” and Matthew and Mark agree.

^c 8:24 **They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!”** The storm did not awaken Him, but the disciples did. Matthew adds that the disciples said “Save us” and Mark records that the disciples questioned if Jesus cared that they were perishing.

^d 8:24 **He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm.** There are radical opposites in this boat between One so fully human that He would sleep during a storm at sea and One so fully divine that He could calm the storm with a word. The contrast is that much more dramatic knowing that these extremes dwell in the same person.

^e 8:25 **He said to them, “Where is your faith?”** The issue of fairness might easily come up here. Jesus is the one Who gave the orders to get into the boat. He “got them into this.” Is it not perfectly understandable to be afraid when you are aboard a sinking ship? This is like the text in Exodus 32 where Moses argues with God over which of them led Israel into the wilderness.

But the real issue here is the matter of faith. What did they do wrong? There are two matters at hand that demonstrated their lack of faith: forgetting what Jesus said and forgetting His presence. J.C. Ryle describes how getting caught up in our senses makes us forget what really matters:

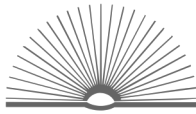
They forgot everything but the sight and sense of present danger, and, under the impression of it, could not even wait until Christ awoke. It is only too true that sight, and sense, and feeling, make men very poor theologians.

The Gospel of Luke
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

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saying to one another, “Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him^{a?}”^b

What did Jesus say when they got into the boat? Just like God told Israel He had brought them out of Egypt to bring them into the promised land (Deuteronomy 6:23), Jesus said, “Let us go over to the other side of the lake.”

^a 8:25 **They were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, “Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?”** The men were “fearful and amazed.” This is a right response to God’s power.

“Who then is this?” is the most important question to ask about Jesus. If He is a mere man who has learned to fool mother nature, His calming of the water is meaningful only for discussion of human potential. If He is the Maker of water and, hence, its master, this miracle calls all who observe to their knees.

^b 8:22-25 Does God change when your circumstances change? The Sunday School answer is “no,” but how does your heart answer in the middle of hard times? Circumstances often do change our theology. It’s almost as if we think God is good when the sun is shining and uncaring when there is a storm.

So in this narrative Jesus was a great preacher and revealer of truth during the day but not so caring when a storm threatened to sink the boat (a boat He happened to be riding in). Was it the design of the Master to send His faithful servants into such fearful circumstances? Was this random or was it purposeful?

Consider other times Jesus put the disciples into fearful situations:

- John tells of a storm the disciples experienced when Jesus was not in the boat and came walking on the water to rescue them.
- He took them places where the mobs became violent.
- He brought them—and sent them—to people controlled by demons.

Jesus scolded the disciples for their unbelief because the storm made them forget Who ordered them into the boat and actually got into the boat with them. What faith produces in those who have it:

1. When you believe God has a better plan than you, you will obey. If you believe the world revolves around you then every difficulty becomes the enemy. If your purpose is to glorify the Sovereign One then any difficulty becomes His means to make you useful in the big picture. Faith brings obedience.
2. When you believe God has a very delightful end in mind, you will see beyond immediate crises. This does not mean you will experience no fear. It means your attitude toward God in fearful times will be one of trust instead of accusation.
3. When you believe God does everything good, you will stand in awe of things worthy of awe. In other words, your delighted response to His works brings Him glory. That’s why in Scripture people celebrated even after His violent judgments.
4. When you believe the Scripture, you will see Jesus as He is instead of as He appears. Things are not always what they seem to be. It looked like Jesus was doing nothing. In reality He was very active getting His disciples to the best vantage point to see Him as He is. Rather than despairing and feeling sorry for yourself you can paraphrase Romans 8:29 and say, “God actively bringing Himself glory today by making me like His Son.”

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