



CHRISTADELPHIAN ISOLATION LEAGUE

EXHORTATION

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SECTION LEADER:

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Readings: 1 Kings 3, Jeremiah 30, Mark 4

"Peace, be still!"

It had been a tiring day and it was now evening. Jesus said to the disciples: *"Let us cross over to the other side"* (Mark 4:35 NKJV), that is, to the eastern side of the Lake of Galilee. Mark particularly portrays Jesus as the Servant. Servants work hard and have little opportunity to rest, and the way Mark describes the incident, suggests that Jesus was exhausted. We read that when they had left the multitude, the disciples: *"...took him along in the boat as he was."* (Mark 4:36). Perhaps they had to help him into the boat because he was so exhausted. Jesus sank down into the stern of the boat and went to sleep on a pillow.

Galilee is renowned for its sudden storms. Under certain conditions the wind rushes down from the surrounding hills and quickly churns up the calm water into a raging tempest. Many of the disciples were experienced fishermen who were used to these conditions, but on this occasion the storm was exceptionally fierce. Mark records that: *"a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling."* (v37). This was too much even for the experienced fishermen. They began to panic, fearful that their boat would be swamped and would sink. Despite this turmoil, Jesus remained asleep. How exhausted he must have been! Even though the boat was being tossed by the crashing waves, the wind was howling around them, and the terrified disciples were calling out, Jesus was still asleep.

Fearing for their lives, the disciples woke Jesus and said: *"Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"* (v38). Of course Jesus cared. He had been sent by God for the purpose of saving those that would otherwise perish: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life."* (John 3:16).

Jesus rose from sleep and: *"...rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still!'"* To the amazement of the disciples, the wind and the sea obeyed his voice and *"there was a great calm."* (v39). Jesus also rebuked his disciples for their lack of faith: *"Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"* (v40).

We can sympathise with the disciples. Which one of us would not have panicked under similar circumstances? It's a comforting thought, that those whom Jesus rebuked on this and other occasions, were those closest to him. They lacked faith, but Jesus still loved them, and through such experiences taught them to trust in him. There are times when we are conscious of our lack of faith. Let us not be discouraged, but use the experiences we have, to learn and improve, knowing that Jesus is also with us to strengthen and support.

"Clothed and in his right mind"

Why did Jesus cross the lake in the first place? It seems that there was only one reason, and that was to heal the demented man who called himself "Legion". Following the incident of the calming of the stormy sea, Mark records that: *"...they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes. And when he had come out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit."* (Mark 5:1, 2). Here was a different kind of storm: a storm that raged in the mind of this man with a severely deranged mind. Like the storm on the lake, the storm in this man's soul seemed to be raging out of control. Many attempts had been made to shackle him, but each time: *"the shackles [were] broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him."* (v4). But Jesus,

who calmed the sea, possessed the power also to calm this man's rage and restore him to sanity, so that he was found: "...sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind." (Luke 8:35). Jesus, having healed this man: "...crossed over again by boat to the other side." (Mark 5:21).

Storms of life

Most of us face storms at some time in our lives; difficult and trying situations which can shake our faith and expose our weaknesses as followers of the Lord Jesus. Let us endeavour to keep calm and place our trust in God. We find comforting and relevant words in **Psalm 46**:

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling." (vs1-3).

Another psalm describes a situation very similar to the one the disciples of Jesus experienced on the Lake of Galilee:

"Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on great waters, they see the works of the LORD, and His wonders in the deep. For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths; their soul melts because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses. He calms the storm, so that its waves are still." (Psalm 107:23-29).

So if storms hit us in our personal lives, let us try to remember that our God: "*calms the storm, so that its waves are still.*"

"The sea and the waves roaring"

The idea of the stormy sea is also used symbolically of the turbulence amongst the nations and peoples of the earth. Jesus used this idea in the Olivet Prophecy as a description of conditions on the earth just before his return:

"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken." (Luke 21:25, 26).

There is no doubt that we are now living in turbulent times in these days just before Jesus returns. We are certainly seeing that: "*men's hearts [are] failing them for fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth.*" The storm has begun and we must expect it to become worse as we approach the final day of judgement. Whatever the near future holds, let us remember that: "*...all authority has been given to me [Jesus] in heaven and on earth.*" (Matthew 28:18). He has the power to still the stormy sea. Just as when he spoke to the storm on Galilee, "*Peace, be still...and there was a great calm*", so in the future Jesus: "*...shall speak peace to the nations.*" (Zechariah 9:10).

We do not know how severe the storms will become before the Lord returns. But whatever happens, we have the assurance that: "*the Lord knows those who are his*" (2 Timothy 2:19), and he will not let us perish forever.

Let us then remember our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in bread and wine. May he soon return to establish his Father's kingdom, a time when this earth will at last be at peace.