

Bethel

Pulpit

Peace, Be Still

Sermon Number 464

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 7th August, 2011**

Text: *“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” (Mark 4. 39).*

These wonderful miracles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ clearly display His eternal power and Godhead. They bear witness to who He is. But when we read them, we always need to remember that foundation truth: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” – His power the same, His love and mercy the same, His compassion the same.

Mind you, it is very evident that we do not witness these remarkable outward miracles the same today, and of course there is a reason for that. In the Word of God you do not just have miracles taking place haphazardly. They are for a purpose. And you do not get miracles all the way through the Bible. You read the lives of some of the great men; there were no miracles in them. But you have them – Israel in the wilderness with the nation first being formed. You have them in the Book of Kings when the kingdom was being established, Elijah and Elisha. And then you have them, as you would expect, when our Lord and Saviour Jesus was here on earth. Then finally you have a few when the church of God was being established, just after Pentecost. But you notice as the Acts of the Apostles continues, the miracles become fewer and fewer. So for us today it is the spiritual teaching, the spiritual lessons that we have to learn. Yet we must always say this: we must never limit the holy One of Israel, never limit God, never think of Him as being such an one as yourself. God's people at times do bear witness to miracles in their lives and cannot deny it.

Well then, this wonderful miracle, the stilling of the storm. “The same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.” And the next chapter, chapter 5 begins, “And they came over unto the other side.” But there was a dreadful storm in between. So it is with the life of faith. So often the Christian life is compared to a heavenly voyage when the Lord's people embark with their backs to the

world, leaving the world's deceitful shore for ever, sailing on, hoping to reach their desired haven. When our religion begins, if it is real, it is as if the Lord Jesus takes us by the hand and says, "Let us pass over unto the other side." And as surely as the Lord has said that to us in the beginning, so He will bring us safely there. "They came over unto the other side." That beautiful word: "So He bringeth them unto their desired haven." O but beloved friends, you will never reach heaven unless you sail heavenwards. You will never reach heaven unless you embark from this world and leave the world's deceitful shore behind you for ever. "And with Jesus through the trackless deep move on."

So wherever the Lord begins, He finishes. "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." So if the Lord has sweetly constrained you to embark, to set sail, to enter the boat, then one day sooner or later He will bring you safely to the other side. But there is not any shortcut to heaven. It is a voyage, and there will be the storms.

"And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full." As many of you will know, the Sea of Galilee is subject to sudden storms like this because of its situation below sea level. Suddenly, without any warning, these storms come. O sometimes in the life of a believer, very suddenly these storms come. It may be all peace one moment, and the next moment it might be a storm.

I feel I need to be very careful when I speak in this way. The last time I spoke from this word was on the banks of the Sea of Galilee, and I said, "Everything is peaceful with all of us. But we do not know what might happen." And shortly afterward I broke my foot. So we do need to speak carefully. But these storms. The Lord will have it so. They did not perish in the storm. They did not lose anything in the storm. They gained a lot in the storm. They said, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

Now what is a storm, what is a tempest to one, may not be so to another. You may look on one person and it may seem only a little thing,

but to them it is a storm. And some of you may look on them and everything seems to be perfectly calm. You do not know what is going on in their life. Over the years at Bethel occasionally I have looked from the pulpit, perhaps speaking on a word like this, and looked at someone and thought that person does not seem to have any trouble, and the very next day, or the next week, they have come to see me and told me of some great burden. So do not sit in judgment on anyone else.

But some of you *have* come into these storms, and some of you have them at present – trouble, sickness, ill health, bereavement, the loss of loved ones, fear, the unknown way, parents with children. These storms, greater or less, the storms come, and the Lord has never promised you plain sailing towards heaven. There is a word – the Lord says, “And ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done.” There is a reason for these storms. One is to teach you that you are not going to have two heavens, one here and one hereafter. Another is that you might remember Calvary.

“On His dear head, O what a storm
Of awful vengeance fell!”

But then there are the inward storms. In the beginning, when you are concerned about your sins and your soul and a never-ending eternity, you can find no peace; or when you are tempted by Satan, when indwelling sin rises up; and then when there are things that fill your heart inwardly with fear and anxiety. But many of you have these storms, and some of you are in the storm and tempest this morning.

“There arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship.” They always used to say that if the ship is in the sea, however fierce the storm, it can usually manage, but it is very sad when the sea gets into the ship. “The waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship.” So they could not perish because Christ was with them, and you cannot perish because Christ is with you, and He *is* in the ship with you, and says, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” He says, “I am with you always, even unto the end.”

“And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow.” I take it that what this pillow would be, would be the kind of seat or cushion

that the steersman usually would sit upon. And the Lord Jesus was asleep. Now there are two things here. “He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep.” One is, the real, true, proper, sacred humanity of the Lord Jesus. He was a real Man, and He was subject to every sinless infirmity. He did not sin; He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” He could not sin. He was impeccable, because His human nature never existed apart from His divine Person. But the mystery of it: He could be tempted. He was subject to sinless infirmities, and weariness was one of them. He was weary at Sychar’s well at midday, and sat on the well and asked for a drink, and He was weary in this boat, and fell asleep. Hold that fast: the true, sacred, proper humanity of the Lord Jesus. He is true, almighty God, but a real Man. He must be a real Man to take the sinner’s place in substitution, in Gethsemane and at Calvary. He must be a real Man to suffer, bleed and die. He must be a real Man to sympathise. In our early days we used to sing,

“Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find.”

“He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep” – a real Man.

The second thing: He was completely unperturbed by this dreadful storm. One of the other gospels calls it a tempest. He was not bewildered and troubled like His disciples were. He could quietly lie down and sleep. “He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow.” Well, what of His poor disciples? They were not asleep. There was as great a storm going on within them as there was without, because they thought they were going to perish. They should not really have thought that with the Lord Jesus in the ship with them. The Lord rebuked them. He said, “Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?” We do need these little rebukes at times. “Why are ye so fearful?” “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me.” But they took the sinner’s safe retreat, and this is the way you have to go and the way I have to go, and I trust we have done in the past, and I trust we always will be able to.

“And they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish.” O have you noticed one thing: all the raging noise of this storm and tempest, the wind and the waves did not wake the Lord Jesus; He still slept on? But the poor, fearful, trembling prayer of His disciples did

wake Him. There is a lot there. These poor prayers of His disciples did wake Him. “They awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish?” You have heard me say this many times, but I repeat it. It was not a good prayer. They were almost suggesting that the Lord Jesus did not care for them. What about that beautiful Scripture – it was one of these disciples himself who wrote it many years later: “Casting all your care upon Him” Why? “For He careth for you.” “Master, carest Thou not?” They almost suggested the Lord did not care, that He was going to leave them to perish. But it received a most blessed answer. “He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.”

I do like that expression of Thomas Hardy of Leicester, that Mr. Popham quoted so often: “Try what your poor prayers can do.” When you feel your prayers are not very good, there is not much prayer in them, there is a lot of unbelief, a lot of hardheartedness, “Try what your poor prayers can do.” Because the wonderful thing is the Lord does not answer our prayers because they are good prayers or eloquent prayers. He answers them on the ground of mercy, the ground of grace. It was a poor prayer, but it received a very blessed answer. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

“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.” We sing in the little children’s hymn, “The winds and waves obey Him.” He is the almighty Creator. If we see His sacred humanity, here we see His divinity, His Godhead, His divine, almighty power. “The wind ceased.” The sea stopped raging. “There was a great calm,” and it was immediate. The power, the divine, almighty power of the Lord Jesus in answering a poor prayer. “He arose, and rebuked the wind,” just as if the elements were like some wild animals, and He brings them under control. He speaks to them. He spoke to the wind and rebuked it.

“He ... rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.” Well, you have probably heard me speak from this subject more than once over the years. I think I have found this: that preaching from a text at various times, there seems to

be a different emphasis. My real emphasis today is on this: *“Peace, be still”* – the blessed ability of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to give peace. I have often thought about this. You can think of peace in two different ways. Sometimes when we speak of peace, we speak of two countries who have been fighting. They have been at war, and then there is a truce, and there is peace. We think of two people who have been at enmity, and then there is peace. That is one way we speak of peace. Another way we speak of peace is as a feeling of calm.

I often think of it like this. When I was a little boy, when the 1939 war broke out, September 3rd, we felt dreadful about it, that we were at war, that peace was much needed. We were not going to be at peace – well, it was over six years. I remember being with my older brother and it was one of the first days of the war, and in our little, slow-moving town, it was a beautiful September day. We were out in the country. My brother said, “Everything is so calm and peaceful, you can hardly believe we are engaged in a terrible war.” Everything felt peaceful, but we were at war.

“Peace, be still.” There are the two ways we can think of peace. Well, in the exercises and burdens of the Lord’s people, you have both of them, because by nature we are not at peace with God, and the whole congregation here in Bethel this morning, by nature we are at war with God; we are at enmity with God; we are enemies with God. It is not peace. It is a state of alienation. That is where every single one of us is by nature, at enmity with God, at war with God. But we do not feel it. We have plenty of peace in our own hearts. “I shall have peace at last,’ I cried.” But these two things going together, when the Lord begins His solemn, saving, separating work in the new birth: that inward peace is destroyed, that false peace is destroyed. You know you are not at peace with God, you are at enmity with God. You are far off from God by wicked works. You are under His condemnation.

“What shall I do, or whither flee,
To escape the vengeance due to me?”

Well some of you know this: you feel at peace, and then your false peace is disturbed. Perhaps some of you are there this morning. You know that inward turmoil, that inward storm. You have to die. You have to meet your Maker. There is hell before you. But then the Lord deals with you in

love and mercy. You want to find peace, and you want to know it both ways. You want to feel your peace is made with God, and you want to feel that inward peace, that inward calm.

“Peace, be still.” It is a beautiful word. May the Lord whisper peace in many a conscience, many a heart in Bethel chapel this morning, and you will know what it is for the Lord Jesus to still the storm for you. Has the Lord ever stilled a storm for you? Has He ever given you that great calm? Well, He is the Prince of Peace. Many of the names of the Saviour are lovely names. But it is this: “His name shall be called ... The Prince of Peace.” And He came into this world from heaven to make peace between a holy God, His Father, and guilty sinners here upon earth. He “made peace through the blood of His cross.” What was necessary to make peace? To take away the cause of the difference, the cause of the enmity. What was it? The sin, the guilt, the ruin of His people, and at Calvary when the Saviour died, He took away all the sins of all His people, taking them for ever out of the way. There was no reason why a holy God and a guilty sinner should not now be at peace. That is why the angels sang of it over Bethlehem and why we sing at Christmas, “Peace on earth, and mercy mild.” Well, what is the reason for it? “God and sinners reconciled.”

“Having made peace through the blood of His cross.” “Peace, be still.” O but beloved friends, not only did the Lord Jesus as the Prince of Peace make peace, but *He gives peace*. Just before He went to Calvary to die, He said to His immediate disciples and to His church to the end of time, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” What did the Lord Jesus mean when He said, “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you”? Well, two things. First of all, the world cannot give you this peace. If the queen came and said, “Peace, be still,” it would not give you peace. The world cannot give it. But secondly, the world cannot take it away when the Lord gives it.

“Peace, be still.” O but this troubled conscience. You can no longer find any peace. Your false peace is destroyed, but there is that great concern now about eternity. O where shall I spend eternity? How can I face a holy God? You know the Lord Jesus made peace by the blood of His cross, but you want to feel that peace within your heart, that peace within

your conscience. And the Lord Jesus says, “Peace, be still” – of course, not always in those exact words, not always even by a word, but in love and by His Spirit speaking peace.

“Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.”

Again, some of you go back to that first time when you found peace, when you first found a resting place. It was not in yourself; it was not in anything anyone said to you; it was not just the preaching. It was Christ. It was His love. It was His mercy. It was His promise. It was His precious blood. You found a resting place. You could lie down there. You knew something of that rest which remains in Christ for the people of God. O that wonderful peace that the Lord gives!

“He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.” Then we pass on. In the life of the child of God, in his spiritual pilgrimage, his heavenly voyage, there will be these storms, sometimes outward and sometimes inward, and you will know just the feeling of the disciples. Some of you might be there this morning – things in your life, in your family, in your circumstances, this week, next week, the unknown way. How ever great your anxiety, how ever great your trouble, the Lord Jesus with His still small voice can say, “Peace, be still,” and He can cause there to be that great calm. Perhaps you will say, “For the Lord God will help me ... and I know that I shall not be ashamed.”

“Peace, be still.” Perhaps you wondered why I read the forty-sixth Psalm. It was laid on me this week that that very, very well-known word in verse 10 is exactly what the Lord Jesus said here. What I am referring to: “Be still, and know that I am God.” It is one of the very well-known words of Scripture. “Be still, and know that I am God.” It is exactly the word the Lord Jesus spoke here: “Be still.” That forty-sixth Psalm – in those early days of the Reformation, Martin Luther had many a storm, terrible storms, but when things were at the worst, he used to say to his friend Philip Melancthon, “Come on, Philip, let us again sing the forty-sixth Psalm,” and of course he put it into verse himself: “A mighty stronghold is our God.”

There are three things: Stand still, sit still, be still. Israel on the banks of the Red Sea – there was a storm there, a tempest there. “Stand still,

and see the salvation of the Lord.” What about that sitting still? “Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall.” Because Ruth had a lot of anxiety; she had a lot of inward storms. “Sit still, my daughter.” The reason she could sit still: because she left the whole lot in Boaz’ hands. She had not got to do anything herself; he did it all. “Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.”

And then, “Be still, and know that I am God.” Well, that is what the disciples knew that day, the very thing they knew. They knew that the Lord Jesus was God. They said, “What manner of Man is this?” He must be more than just a man. “What manner of Man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” O may the Lord speak to some troubled heart this morning and say, “Be still, and know that I am God.” Really there He tells us who He is. “Be still.” But why, Lord? How? There are all these things. “I am God” – almighty, merciful, all-wise, gracious, listening to your prayer, listening to your case, able to deal with it, giving the peace, stilling the storm, bringing you safely through. “Be still, and know that I am God.” Our hymnwriter says,

“Dear Jesus, show Thy smiling face,
And Calvary’s peace impart.”

Because when the Lord Jesus on the Sea of Galilee said, “Peace, be still,” it was just a word of omnipotence, just as when He spoke in creation: “Let there be light: and there was light.” “He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.” But when He whispers peace to a poor, troubled conscience, it is not just that power, that word of creation. It is as our hymnwriter says: “Calvary’s peace impart.” He does not just say, “Be still, for I am God.” It is, “Be still, because I shed My blood at Calvary.” “Be still, and know that I am God.” “Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.”

Then of course there is everlasting peace. That hymn of John Newton – he has so much to say about the tempest, and then he comes to the end of it: “Ending in eternal peace.”

“For a moment I withdrew,
And thy heart was filled with pain;

But My mercies I'll renew;
Thou shalt soon rejoice again;
Though I seem to hide My face,
Very soon My wrath shall cease;
'Tis but for a moment's space,
Ending in eternal peace."

"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." Jesus said, "Let us pass over unto the other side." "And they came over unto the other side."

* * *

Jesus, my Lord, my Life, my All,
Prostrate before Thy throne I fall;
Fain would my soul look up and see
My hope, my heaven, my all in Thee.

Here in this world of sin and woe,
I'm filled with tossings to and fro;
Burdened with sin, and fears oppressed,
With nothing here to give me rest.

In vain from creatures help I seek;
Thou, only Thou, the word canst speak
To heal my wounds, and calm my grief,
Or give my mourning heart relief.

Without Thy peace and presence, Lord,
Not all the world can help afford.
O do not frown my soul away,
But smile my darkness into day.

I long to hear Thy pardoning voice;
O speak, and bid my soul rejoice;
Say, "Peace, be still; look up and live;
Life, peace, and heaven are Mine to give."

Then, filled with grateful, holy love,
My soul in praise would soar above;

And with delightful joy record
The wondrous goodness of the Lord.

S. Medley