

Luke - Commentaries by Alfred Henry Burton

Christian's Library: Volume 8, Two Sides of the Sea of Galilee (8:19-43)

Luke 8:19-43.

It is most instructive to notice the difference between the two sides of the Sea of Galilee on the occasion of our Lord's visit to the land of the Gadarenes.

On the one side the press of people thronging to see and hear Him was so great that His mother and brethren could not get at Him (Ver. 19); on the other side the whole multitude besought Him to depart (vs. 37).

On the one side eager crowds anxious to hear; on the other, a whole population as anxious for Him to depart.

The servant of the Lord may take courage from this deeply interesting narrative. Let us never be disheartened in the work of the Lord, but rather let us be "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

We can conceive the surprise of the disciples when they heard their Lord and Master say, "Let us go over unto the other side of the lake" (vs. 22). What I leave all this crowd of anxious seekers. But His word was enough for them "Let us go," what grace to associate them thus with Himself! To have started off without Him would have been folly, to have stayed behind when He went forward would have been to lose His blessed company. "Let us go," was the word of command; "they launched forth," was the immediate response of faith. This is beautiful! All that the disciple needs to know is just where His Lord would have him be and go, and then to tread his path with unquestioning faith and unhesitating obedience. Waiting upon God in prayer will make this plain and clear.

But, then, granted that we have been guided as to where to go in our blessed Master's service; granted, too, that we have His presence with us in our path, all is not even then plain sailing in the eyes of nature — "there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy" (vs. 23). Here was a test of their faith — "we perish," they cry, as though the waves could swallow up Him who created the universe and held all things in the hollow of His hand. At His word the storm becomes a calm.

Is it not often the case that we need to be challenged with the question, "Where is your faith?" Disappointments may come, results may not be such as we expected, spheres of labor where all seemed success may have been left for what looks like failure. But had He not said, "Let us go?" Was it a mistake then to launch forth? And was He not with them in their dangers, as presently He would be in their disappointments?

On landing at the other side there met Him, not crowds, but a certain man, and he, so far as Luke's narrative goes, was the only one to benefit by the visit. But what a victory was wrought over all the power of Satan in his case! A well-known man he was; all that philanthropy and human effort could do had been expended on him in vain; the devil was in full control until Jesus met him and by His word set the prisoner free, and made him sit at His feet, clothed and in his right mind. Thereupon the whole multitude besought Jesus to depart. The loss of their swine was more than they could endure — "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). Solemn, indeed, it is to see that Jesus takes them at their word. He returned to the side of the lake He had just left, and there "the people gladly received Him: for they were all waiting for Him" (vs. 40).

Had the time been lost? By no means. One man had been rescued from the power of Satan, and he became the honored instrument of a mighty movement in that place. "Return to thine own house," said Jesus, "and show how great things God hath done for thee" (vs. 39). Immediately he sets to work and "published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him."

Is not this a bright example of devotedness and love? Then see the results (read Matt. 14:34-36). A living witness for Christ had been left behind, who did his work so well, and bore his witness so powerfully, that soon after, when once more Jesus visited that place, instead of beseeching Him to leave, "they sent out into all the country round about, and brought unto Him all that were diseased, and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment; and as many as touched were made perfectly whole."

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Christian's Library: Volume 10, Jottings on Luke 3:21, 22 (3:21-22)

EVERY Christian knows the value of the work of the Son of God, and it is the foundation of His peace. It is an answer to any tremblings in the soul that sometimes doubts even what it has confessed, a firm basis and foundation. But we need to grow, and the Lord ministers to our growth. Our love grows, but His never does, it is always at its height. Our love will have an eternity to develop itself in.

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We get to learn our union with Him where He is in the glory of God. But besides that, there is our association with Him in His path down here. He can speak of us as brethren:

“Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, unto My God and your God.”

It is not for us to call Him “Brother.” In His life down here He was alone—

“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone”—

—but when He had died, He was no more alone.

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Whenever a soul is in the truth of its condition before God, there Christ is. He associates Himself here, not with the ungodly and disobedient people, but with those who owned their sins. He was a perfect Man; He had made the stars and rolled the skies, yet here He is praying.

Is it the habit of my soul to be seeking God in prayer? This is not a day of prayer, it is a day of activity; it is not a day of piety. There is no piety without prayer, for after prayer I bear the impress of the company I have been in. Moses’ face shone, but farewell to your piety if you think of your face shining.

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The Holy Ghost descended upon Christ; do we think of our bodies being temples of the Holy Ghost? The Word says it; let us turn to 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20:

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body.”

It is a good thing to be confronted with our privileges. Nothing bows the soul like the sense of grace. I am a son of God, I am in relation to the Father and to Christ. Do I go about my everyday business in the sense of these things?

May We not only testify of His work, but may there be a brighter testimony for Him in life, and walk, and ways, from the power of, this communion.

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