

4596-U

SILVER STAR BIBLE SCHOOL - 2000

DAVID, A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

Speaker: Bro. David Pride

Exhort: Christ in the Vessel

Reading: Matthew 8:1-27

My beloved brethren and sisters!

We often read during the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ of things relating to the sea. A major part, of course, at least in time, in the ministry of the Lord, is spent in the region of Galilee, almost 2 years out of the 3-1/2. Obviously, it's called the 'Galilean ministry' as a result of that. And as a result of the fact that the prominent feature of that region was the Sea of Galilee itself, the focal point of many of the things that the Lord Jesus did during that time period, were things related to the sea, things around the sea. Actually, the sea was a lake, it was a lake some 13 miles from north to south in length, and about 7-1/2 miles from east to west. But, b&s, that's not really the important thing, not the geography, not the size, but the important thing is the fact that Jesus was there! that Jesus walked the shores of the sea of Galilee, teaching, feeding, healing, touching the lives, b&s, touching the lives of men and women in such a way, that their lives would never, ever be the same.

And you know, He's touched our life that way. Our lives, because of the touch of the Master, will never be the same, will they? And so, Galilee takes on supreme importance to us because Jesus was there. I like to think about the scenes that have to do with Galilee, I like to think of things that have to do with water, the ponds, the lakes, the waterfalls, the ocean. I come from the smallest state, but it's called 'the ocean state', and we have by some intrigue mathematics found that this smallest state of all has about 400 miles of shoreline. But it's beautiful shoreline, and we love the things to do with the ocean and with water, probably because of the fact that the scriptures so often brings us to think on these things. How many times does our mind go to the words 'He leadeth me beside the still waters'? Usually, brethren and sisters, there is some sort of difficulty in our life that just causes us to look for the serenity of still waters; or, as it says in the Psalms, 'that there is a river, the streams thereof make glad the city of our God', as we grasp hold of these things for encouragement and for strength and for the peace and serenity that we need in times of trial and times of stress!

Of course, things to do with water are not always so serene; we can't always count on the seas to be calm and placid. Sometimes it's just the opposite, b&s, as we know full well; there can be great turbulence, the Sea of Galilee was like that! It was very common that the winds would sweep down from the heights of Mount Hermon from the north, snow-covered heights bearing their chill breezes to this almost tropical area of Galilee, which was 600 feet below sea level. And it would come down into that tropical area, and because of the tremendous climatic differences, you'd have a clashing of air masses that would cause the sea to go into turmoil, and it would rise up almost before your eyes because of this very thing, and often times it happened, and we see scenes like that in the scripture that have to do with the disciples of the Lord, that have to do with the Lord Jesus Himself. If you'd like to venture out on the sea of Galilee at times like this, you'd be afraid to do so; if you were already out there, you'd be in great trouble, because you'd be caught in the roughness and the turmoil of the sea, and you'd have a very difficult time just making your way back to land, and perhaps you wouldn't.

Well, we trust don't we? we trust, b&s, that 'He leadeth us beside the still waters', and yet at the same time, we recognize the fact, that real life that we live day in and day out, presents its storms to us and we need to deal with them and sometimes they're so rough it's as though we're going to be swallowed by them. 'Not forever by still waters' we've sung, b&s, not forever in green pastures, that's the reality of the lives that we live even in the truth, it is the reality of the lives that we live, isn't it? Sometimes for our good, come these storms with all their turbulence; it's the stormy wind fulfilling His Word, as the Psalmist says, and it's for our good.

Just turn to one of the Psalms, the 107th Psalm, b&s, where it just opens out our thoughts, our minds, to the things of the sea, to the relationship of these things to our lives, to the wonder of God in the creation of the wonders of the deep, because that's the term that's used there. In Psalm 107, we read at verse 23 'That they that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of Yahweh; and His wonders in the deep. For He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man' (and now we begin to see how woven into this is the spirit of the individual himself, who has to face the great stormy sea that rises up to the heavens, and sometimes just engulfs us). Now we see the thinking of those are spiritually minded in relation to these things, yes, they reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, and sometimes, b&s, we are at our wit's end, 'then they cry unto Yahweh in their trouble and He bringeth them out of their distresses' (and may I just say, b&s, it just strikes me just reading this now, that sometimes this is the very approach that we use as a pattern for our lives). It's as if, when all else fails, then you call upon God. And it's rather sad when you think about it that way, when we should be calling on Him all the time, when we should be calling on Him when the sea is serene and placid and things seem to be going so well in our lives; but so often, it's when all else fails. And yes, it is necessary,

and yes, we reach that point, and yes, sometimes we're at our wit's end and we don't know where to turn, and we call upon the Father in our distress. 'He maketh the storm a calm', a calm, b&s, 'so the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven'. Our desired haven, b&s, is the peace and the serenity of that time when, yes, there is a river who's streams make glad the city of our God and we're partakers of that time.

We read from the gospel of Matthew this morning, it seemed appropriate to me; our readings have taken us into Matthew as they do twice a year, and we'll come to the 8th chapter now and just look at one of these incidents that took place on the sea of Galilee. It's also recorded in Mark chapter 4 and Luke chapter 8, how often we read of Jesus entering into a ship, b&s. And here He had been teaching and healing and many had been brought to Him, and He healed all that were sick, we're told. And I believe, I believe that the Master was exhausted! I don't see the miracles that the Lord Jesus did as though He performed some magical feat with absolutely no feeling within Himself. We remember one occasion where He would say (unbeknownst to Him) that a woman just reached out and just touched the hem of His garment, and He said, 'that virtue has gone out of Me' or power has gone out of Me. And Isaiah is quoted here in this record, b&s, interestingly enough. Look at verse 17, 'He healed all that were sick that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet saying, 'Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses'; reading from the Old Testament, 'He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows', so even in His life He took these things upon Himself, b&s, as He relieved the great anguish and distress of those that came in contact with Him.

Looking at verse 23, 'And when He was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him: And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea', (let me just tell you something about the word 'tempest' here because we just tend to read through words, that's our way, we're just reading). The word 'tempest' here, b&s, is used 14 times in the New Testament in its original form, this is the only place you find the word 'tempest' in the English, the other 13 times it's translated by the word 'earthquake', in every other case. It's the word 'seismos' (4578) from which we get that idea of the reading of the strength of an earthquake, and that's built into that whole idea. But that will give you an idea of what was going on, on the sea of Galilee; this was as if there was an earthquake in the sea, it was that extreme! 'And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves; but He was asleep. And His disciples came to Him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us we perish. And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?' Practically, immediately, upon entering the ship, Jesus was at the stern of the ship asleep, b&s, and the storm moves in there on Galilee; this great tempest that covers the ship, as though the ship was baptized by the sea, totally immersed. Mark says it was full, that's what was going on there, and Jesus is asleep. You wonder how many times, don't you? as you try to see the scene, please, b&s, try to picture the scenes of scripture; you wonder how many times the disciples would just look at Jesus and then look out over the sea and look at Jesus, and

say perhaps among themselves, 'why doesn't He do something?' He was, of course, even in sleep Jesus was showing the way of faith, even in sleep, b&s, the way of faith.

We sang, didn't we? 'though rough winds may wrestle our God will perform and with Christ in the vessel we smile at the storm'. Do we? b&s. I don't know about you but I don't know if I do much smiling when the sea is that rough, I think it's more likely that we do exactly as they did, that we cry out for help! You know, when you listen to their words from the 3 gospels and you just bring them together, you begin to see the extremity that they were in, just crying out to Jesus who's sleeping! Matthew, 'Lord, save us, we perish' this we read together; in the gospel of Luke it's 'Master, Master, we perish!' but this from the gospel of Mark, b&s, 'Master, carest thou not that we perish?' and those words, b&s, hearing those words here at this table, sounds so out of place, don't they? when we see the extent that the Master cared that we not perish. The love so great that we not perish, and it was 'Master, carest thou not that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea and there was a great calm'. And this is a little window on the kingdom, b&s, because the very thing is about to happen again, just look at it again, as a little window on the kingdom, because He's about to say before the seas and the waves that are roaring, and that's the stage of the sea that we're in, the seas and the waves roaring. He's about to stand before the sea and say, 'Peace, be still' and there will be a great calm. And there will be a 'sea of glass' yes, a sea of glass mingled with fire, but a sea of glass nonetheless, and all will say as they did then, b&s, 'What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?' and we need to say that NOW; we need to be so impressed by this man that cares for us, that we need to say from our deepest heart, 'what manner of man is this?'

Let's think of another incident there on the sea of Galilee. We'd like to walk with Peter, b&s, no, we'd like to be Peter for a moment this morning, can you do that? can you be Peter for a moment this morning? I'm not asking you to use your imaginations and just go wild with these things, but just to relate to what we are reading in the scriptures that you can see yourself there, you can ask yourself the question, 'what am I doing? how am I responding? how am I reacting to this? because you're there and I'm there! We'll be Peter for just a few moments, can you relate to Peter? For I, b&s, find it quite easy to relate to Peter, perhaps more than any other in the scripture. You know, so often there is the 'full resolve' to do the right thing for Christ; that was Peter, and never afraid to say so, b&s, even to Jesus Himself, he was never afraid to just speak up and tell Jesus what he would do for Him. Sometimes I feel like that, perhaps you do too! and yet at the same time, almost immediately, so many times, the best intentions, the highest resolve just crumbles and melts away. Perhaps we're Peter in that sense; this is the man, my dear brethren and sisters, that could clearly declare to Jesus what the true foundation of the ecclesia is, as you'll remember. Matthew 16, well known to us, we don't need to turn to that, you remember the Lord Jesus asking the question, 'who do men say that I am?' and the answers come, and then Jesus said, who do you say that I am? and Peter steps forward, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God' and Jesus says to him, 'Blessed art thou Simon, son of John (Bar-jona)' why b&s? because Peter had a good thought? because Peter came up with the right answer? it's not that, b&s,

anymore than for us to go to this Word and say something from it, and have someone congratulate us on the wonderful thought that we've come up with, it isn't ours, it's of God. And so it was with Peter, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona because flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven'. And that great blessing, to be followed almost immediately, almost in the next breath, b&s, of Peter stepping in front of the Lord and opposing Him in His very mission, in the very act of atonement and redemption that He's involved in, and Peter is saying to Jesus, who says, 'I must go up to Jerusalem, I'm going to be taken by the hands of wicked men, I'm going to be crucified, I'm going to be slain, and on the third day I'll rise again' and Peter stands in front of Jesus and he says, 'Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee;'. And Jesus has to just take him and put him in his place as so often has to be done for us, and say 'Get thee behind me, Satan! for thou savourest not the things that be of God but the things that be of men'. Jesus is the leader, Jesus is our leader, we follow Him, but I wonder sometimes, brethren, if we don't take the place of Peter in this.

But let's enter into a ship once again on the sea of Galilee: We'll find this in Matthew chapter 14, and we'll try and keep all our thoughts from the gospel of Matthew, and Jesus isn't with us this time in the ship, at least it may appear that He isn't; in our faith and in our trust in Him I think we will all agree that He never leaves us, or forsakes us. For in Matthew 14 this record is in verse 22 through verse 33, they're making their way, the disciples are, across the sea to the other side and Jesus has gone into a mountain to pray alone with His Father; they were never alone, b&s, they may have felt that but they were never alone. He saw them all along, He saw them toiling says the gospel of Mark, in his record, He saw them toiling in the sea, working on their faith, is what they were doing; they were toiling in their faith. It was a long struggle, look at verse 24, 'But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with the waves: for the wind was contrary'. There they are again in the midst of Galilee, in trouble, toiling, as Mark says, with their faith, just trying to stay afloat, just trying to make it to land and to safety. Never out of sight of their Lord, if they and if we through the eye of faith, can just look through the storm, b&s, we'll see Him there! They would see Him coming to them, walking on the water He came; and it was in the 4th watch, this had been a long struggle. Can we see Him coming in the 4th watch, b&s? That's the watch you know, that's from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m., the watch that just precedes the dawn, that ushers in the dawn of a new day. We think of ourselves in the 4th watch, looking through the storm to see Jesus coming; and they saw Him coming on the sea, walking on the water. They're fearful, b&s, they can't believe their own eyes, some say you know, 'seeing is believing' other people say, 'believing is seeing and that's far better', that's a far better thing; but verse 27, 'Straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid'. And who's going to answer on that occasion, b&s? we know who it is, it's got to be Peter; you wonder where all the others are, you wonder where you would be, where I would be, we wonder if we'd be in the darkest corner of that vessel somewhere, just kind of huddled in the darkest corner wishing the whole thing would go away! But not Peter, he's standing at the edge of the ship crying out to Jesus now; the only one, full of resolve he is! What an incredible thing he asks, out of his love for the Lord, what an incredible thing, b&s, verse 28, 'Peter answered and said, 'Lord, if it be

thou, bid me come unto thee on the water'. That's the faith of this man, it's immense, b&s, the faith of Peter; he's asking Jesus to call him to Him, and allow him to walk to Jesus on the water. And Jesus answers with just one word, 'Come', and Peter's over the side on his way to the Lord, walking on the water to Jesus. That's a mountain of faith, b&s, but you know, the problems always come when you take your eyes off of Jesus, don't they? and Peter begins to look around and the sea and waves are still crashing and roaring all around him. And faith begins to fail, and he brings to sink down into the waters, and he begins to be engulfed by it.

And the cry has to be made again, doesn't it? 'Lord, save me!' and I say to you, b&s, when we question the faith of Peter, just ask yourself where we would be on that occasion? Just ask where the others were and if you would be with them? and ask yourself how many times in the turmoil of the seas of your life, you've sunk down into those waters and you've had to cry out for Jesus, and say, 'Lord, save me', and in an instant, and I don't want you to miss this, b&s, this is the thing, in an instant as if there was no space, no distance, JESUS IS THERE! the hand is there, immediately the scripture says, He's got hold of Peter and they walk on water together. It had to be that way, back to the ship and into the safety of that ship. As with Christ in the vessel we smile at the storm, b&s, and so in verse 33, 'Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God'.

Now quite done with Peter; not quite done with us in Peter! I'd like you to just think about the last view that Peter had of Jesus, before the crucifixion! Just a bit earlier than that, if you go to Matthew 26, b&s, just a bit earlier than that he had once again, stated his resolve to the Lord Jesus never to leave Him; wherever that path lead, he told Jesus he would be there! Never mind what everyone else did, he'd be there for Jesus! Well, that's our resolve, isn't it? isn't it the resolve of everyone of us? Can it be any less than that, do you think? Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, Romans chapter 8. Matthew chapter 26 and verse 33, 'Peter answered and said unto Him, though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night before the cock crow thou shalt deny Me thrice. Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee'. (Then all the rest joined in) 'Likewise said all the other disciples' they all joined in now to the words of Peter and were one with Peter in a sense. But Peter's the leader, he's the spokesman; from the power of that resolve, it was to the oil press at Gethsemane! and in that place, b&s, all disciples forsook Him and fled.

The last view of the Master for Peter, takes place in the palace of the high priest; he's followed along (you see, Peter, the beauty of this is he can't let go) and he's followed along after Jesus. He's struggling with his faith, no doubt; it's not a pleasant night there in Jerusalem, it's a cold night; I doubt if it's as cold as the coldness that had settled into Peter's heart at that time, b&s, but it's a cold night in Jerusalem and they've made a fire. Now Peter was warming himself at the fire, it's the world's fire, my dear b&s, the world's fire may feel comfortable and warm for a time, but it doesn't last. The awful chill comes back and just settles in, and things happen at the world's fire, sometimes even to the

denying of the Lord that bought us; and three times the question comes, 'aren't you one of His disciples? yes, you are, I know you are, I can tell, I can tell by your accent, that you're one of His disciples' and three times Peter says 'I am not' and on the third time with cursing, he says, 'I know not the man of whom you speak', and the cock crew just as Jesus had said. This is what Luke records, b&s, in 22 chapter and the 61st verse, 'And the Lord turned (as if He was just passing through the palace at that point in time) and Luke tells us, 'And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him 'before the cock crows thou shalt deny Me thrice'. And Peter went out and wept bitterly'. Now I ask you this, what do you think was in that look? what do you think that look said to Peter?

Do you think that look said, 'Peter, I knew you'd let Me down', do you think that look said to Peter, 'Peter, when it comes to faith.... but do you ever think that He's looked at you that way? Do you? have your eyes ever met the eyes of the Master in one of your darkest moments, just to see that look? I'll tell you what I think was in it, b&s, this is just my own thought as to what was in that look that Peter saw. I think in that look was all the love and all the compassion and all the forgiveness that the Lord could possibly offer to Peter or to us. I believe that look said, b&s, 'Peter, (and Peter is us you remember) Peter, I love you and what I'm going to do for you now, is I'm going to take this to the cross'. 'AND PETER WENT OUT AND WEPT BITTERLY'.

Well, it wasn't over, b&s, for Peter; the grace of God is beyond anything that we can recognize as possible, but IT IS THE GRACE OF GOD. And it wasn't over for Peter because among the first words after the resurrection, you'll remember, the angel to the women at the tomb said, 'to go you're way and tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see Him as He said unto you'. So when you think about the time when Jesus looked at Peter, perhaps you can ask yourself this question, b&s, what does that look mean to me? Peter wept bitterly, he wept bitterly and he changed. By the grace of God, we can too! But just listen to this, from the man who at one time denied His Master, and by grace is restored, just listen to this, b&s. This is from his first epistle, 'Wherein ye greatly rejoice (this is Peter speaking) ye greatly rejoice though now for a season, if need be ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth; though it be tried with fire, might be found onto praise, and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Whom having not seen, ye love, in whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls'.