

8:1 See on 7:28.

*The multitudes*- Used 48 times in Matthew alone. The verbal picture is powerful- the Lord Jesus at the head of a multitude, with them, followed by them, and yet so alone...

8:2 *Worshipped*- The Greek literally means to bow or crouch. Perhaps it is being used here in that literal sense, inviting us then to imagine the Lord extending His hand to the kneeling man (8:3). Or the idea could be that the man's worship was not in any external display of respect, but in the fact he believed in the Lord's ability and power to respond to his request. In this case, the man worshipped Jesus *in saying* "If You will, You can...".

*If You will, You can...*- The Lord replied that this was indeed His will (8:3). This coincidence of human will with that of our Lord is what fellowship with Him and answered prayer is all about. The phrase "If You will, You can..." is recorded identically in all three of the synoptics (Mk. 1:40; Lk. 5:12), as if they all wished to draw attention to the man's attitude and make an example of it- accepting that the Lord has all power ("can" = *dunamai*), but that our will is not always His.

*Make me clean*- The leper didn't ask so much for healing as for cleansing. He wanted the healing *so that* he could be accepted into the community of believers in the temple. Our requests for health and healing should likewise be motivated by a desire to use the healed situation in the Lord's service. Faith is inculcated by an appreciation of the height of Christ's exaltation. He now has all power in Heaven and in earth, and this in itself should inspire us with faith in prayer and hope in His coming salvation. On the basis of passages like Ex. 4:7; Num. 12:10-15; 2 Kings 5:7,8, "leprosy was regarded as a "stroke" only to be removed by the Divine hand which had imposed it" (1). The leper lived with this understanding, and yet he saw in Jesus nothing less than God manifest. Inspired by the height of the position which he gave Jesus in his heart, he could ask him in faith for a cure: "If thou wilt, *thou canst* [as only God was understood to be able to] make me clean".

8:3 *Touched*- The Lord is described a staggering 28 times in the synoptics as touching people. This was a studied rejection of the false teaching of 'guilt by association' or 'contamination by contact'. More than that, the Lord was at such lengths to identify Himself with suffering people.

*Be clean-* In Mt. 10:8 the Lord told the disciples to likewise "cleanse the lepers". Again the Lord is giving the disciples the work of the priests to do. For it was their job to pronounce lepers cleansed. But He is asking them to do what He Himself had done in Mt. 8:3. His work was to be theirs. The later NT references to *our* being cleansed by the Lord Jesus (Eph. 5:26; Tit. 2:14; 1 Jn. 1:7,9 etc.) perhaps look back to how the historical Jesus cleansed lepers in Galilee. We are to see ourselves in that isolated and rejected man.

*Leprosy-* The Greek literally means 'scales' and the same word is used of scales falling from Saul's eyes in Acts 9:18. It could've been any skin disease rather than Hansen's disease.

8:4 *For a testimony-* The Lord had told the cured leper to tell no other man but go and offer for his cleansing, in order to make a witness to the priests. All three synoptics record this, as if it made a special impression on everyone (Mt. 8:4; Mk. 1:44; Lk. 5:14). It could be that the Lord is using an idiom when He told the leper to tell nobody: 'Go and make a witness *first and foremost* to the priests as opposed to anybody else'. Such was His zeal for their salvation. And the fact that "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7) shows how this apparently hope-against-hope desire of the Lord for the conversion of His enemies somehow came true. We noted on 8:3 that the work of the priests was to cleanse the leper- but this had been done by the Lord. The man was therefore to show himself to the priests- in order to demonstrate to them that another priest and priesthood was already coming into operation.

8:5 *There came-* A poor translation. The Greek word is related to that translated 'worship' in 8:2. The parallel is thus drawn between the socially isolated and poverty stricken leper, and the wealthy, respected Centurion. The point is that they both were experiencing the same utter desperation which led them to cast themselves upon the Lord. Social differences are therefore eliminated within the community gathered around Christ- on the basis of our common recognition of our desperation and His unique and sole ability to help and save.

8:6 *My servant-* Masters were well known for disregarding the welfare of their slaves, so in the centurion's passionate concern for his slave we have an insight into the nature of this delightful man.

*Lies at home-* The same words recur in 8:14, where Peter's mother also lies at home sick, and the Lord heals her. The centurion's servant and Peter's mother are thus being paralleled- just as in 8:5

the wealthy Centurion and the poor leper are paralleled. The point is being made that many people from very different lives and circumstances had one thing in common- desperate need for healing and salvation at the hands of the Lord.

*Grievously tormented-* The same word for 'grievously' is used about the disciples' fear during the storm on the lake (Mt.8:26); the Lord was seeking to educate the twelve by showing them His ability to cure a person in a 'grievous' situation, and then the next day (or later that same day?) giving them the opportunity to themselves be in a 'grievous' situation from which likewise just His word was sufficient to save them. But they failed to see the similarity. And so a bit later, He have them another opportunity to learn from this situation. The servant was "tormented", and the very same Greek word is used about how the disciples "toiled" or were tormented in trying to row their boat in another storm (Mk. 6:48); in Mt. 14:24 we read that their ship was "tossed", or tormented [same word again]. And again, they failed to learn the lesson- that a word from the Lord was sufficient to save them out of 'grievous torment', just as it had done for the centurion's servant. In our struggle to attach meaning to event, we are to likewise perceive how the Lord demonstrates His power in another's life- and then brings us into a situation which in essence is similar, so that we might ourselves experience His power to meet *our* human need. And whether we 'get it' or not, He tends to repeat the lessons, as He did with the disciples.

8:7 *I will come-* See on 8:9 *Come and he comes*

8:8 *Not worthy-* He was aware that Jews were not supposed to 'come to' or under the roof of a Gentile (Acts 10:28). He was therefore aware that the purpose of God at that time was for Jews rather than Gentiles- his understanding was quite deep. See on 8:9.

*Speak the word only-* He had a deep belief in the power of the Lord's word, and may well be alluding to the unique Hebrew conception of the creation of all things being through the medium of a word spoken. One of Paul's many allusions to the Gospels is in 1 Thess. 1:5, where he observes that the Thessalonians had not heard "the word only" but had had it confirmed by signs and miracles. He seems to be reminding them of the centurion, who believed "the word only" *before* he experienced the healing miracle.

8:9 *A man under authority-* The centurion had perceived exactly who the Lord Jesus was- a man, who was under (Divine) authority and yet had others beneath *his* authority. And he understand

the Lord Jesus as his representative, very similar to him, but with far more power. Admittedly he seems to have misunderstood the issue of demons- he understood that the Lord could say 'go' to whatever mighty ones [cp. his soldiers] were making his servant sick. Whatever his beliefs about sickness and its cause, he believed the Lord Jesus was far more powerful than whatever was causing it. But the Lord all the same commended the man for his *faith* even if the precise content of that faith was misinformed, and if his way of life as a Roman centurion was not the best way of being a Jesus follower; not to mention that he was a Gentile. This opens a helpful window onto how the Lord feels about those who strongly believe in Him but have their understanding of some details awry.

*Come and he comes-* The same word just used by the Lord in saying that in response to the centurion's request: "I will come" (8:8). Perhaps the centurion is marvelling at the grace of the fact that he had asked the Son of God to come, and He had come in response...

*Go and he goes-* The centurion seems to have believed in demon possession. He understood that his servant was "grievously tormented" by them. He believed that the Lord could cure him, in the same way as he could say to his underlings "go, and he goeth" (Mt. 8:6-10). And so, he implied, couldn't Jesus just say to the demons 'Go!', and they would go, as with the 'demons' in the madman near Gadara? The Lord didn't wheel round and read him a lecture about 'demons don't exist' (although they don't, of course, and it's important to understand that they don't). He understood that this man had faith that He, as the Son of God, had power over these 'demons', and therefore "he marvelled, and said... Verily... I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel". He focused on what faith and understanding the man had. With the height of His spirituality, with all the reason He had to be disappointed in people, the Lord marvelled at a man's faith. It is an essay in how He seized on what genuine faith He found, and worked to develop it, even if there was an element of false understanding in it.

8:10 *He marvelled-* He admired him [Gk.]. Here we see the humility of the Lord Jesus, that despite His own peerless perfection, He could admire the faith of a man who as a centurion was yet far from His own level of spirituality. Despite His peerless faith, the Lord Jesus marvelled at the extent of other's faith; the Gospels stress how sensitive He was to the faith of others (Mt. 9:2,22,29; 15:28; Mk. 5:34; 10:52; Lk. 7:9,50; 8:48; 17:19; 18:42). Yet measured by His standards, they probably hardly knew what faith was. "No, not in Israel" suggests the Lord thought that Israel's faith was something *very* high; when their rejection of Him was the cruellest tragedy in their history. The Lord marvelled at the man's faith, and also at the extent of unbelief in others (s.w. Mk. 6:6). Given the Lord's tiredness, mental and physical exhaustion, demanding

program, extreme loneliness etc., the fact He had the emotional energy to marvel is an essay in His extreme sensitivity, and how He let neither His spiritual mission nor His external circumstances stop Him from having such sensitivity regarding the spiritual state of others. In this we see a deep challenge to ourselves.

There must have been certain similarities of personality type between the Lord and His mother. Thus in Lk. 2:33 Mary “marvelled”, and the same word is used about Jesus in Mt. 8:10 and Mk. 6:6.

*Found-* The Lord was and is actively searching for faith in people. He is the man looking to find a great treasure (Mt. 13:44), seeking to find a pearl of great price (Mt. 13:46), finding a lost sheep or coin (Mt. 18:13; Lk. 15:4-9), finding weak and rejected workers to work for Him in His work (Mt. 20:6), wanting to find spiritual fruit on the fig tree (Mt. 21:19), finding willing guests for His own wedding (Mt. 22:10)- any who believe in Him. As He meets so many disappointments, imagine His joy at finding *our* faith, incomplete and at times misplaced as it is. Surely in all this work of seeking and finding just a few He was living out His own command to seek, because we will find (Lk. 11:10). He seems to allude to the idea in telling the disciples to fish on the right side of their boat, and they would find (Jn. 21:6). The incident is replete with symbolism- the message surely is that we will find converts for the Lord, if we seek for them as the Lord did. We in our turn are searching to find the Lord (Acts 17:27); and He is seeking to find us. Hence the flash moment when the searching God and His Son meet searching man in conversion to Christ. Ultimately we are 'found' at the Lord's return (Phil. 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:7; 2 Pet. 3:14), but we are also 'found' by Him at the point of first faith in this life.

*Faith-* But as demonstrated in the comment on 8:9, this man had profound *understanding*. Faith must have content, it is belief *in* something, and in this sense faith and understanding are connected.

8:11 *Sit down-* Gk. ‘to recline’. The reference is to the Messianic banquet, where Gentile Christians will sit with Abraham and the Jewish fathers- because they have become the children of Abraham by faith and baptism into Christ (Gal. 3:27-29). Lk. 12:37 comments that the Lord will have to *make* the faithful sit down at that banquet- so strong will be our abiding sense that ‘I am not worthy of this’.

8:12 *The children of the Kingdom-* The similar passage in Lk. 13:28 identifies this class as “you yourselves”, the Jews of the first century in whose streets the Lord had taught (Lk. 13:26). They were therefore still in some sense God’s Kingdom, even though the political form of that Kingdom had been overthrown in Zedekiah’s time (Ez. 21:25-27). Likewise those who are under

the dominion of the King are in a sense His Kingdom right now, even though the Kingdom is not yet restored in its visible, literal, political sense.

*Cast out into outer darkness-* The metaphor continues from the idea of reclining at banquet in 8:11. Some would be cast out from that happy, well lit room- into the darkness outside. The idea of entering a banquet and then being cast out of it is repeated in the parable of the man without a wedding garment, who enters the banquet but is then likewise cast out into “outer darkness” (Mt. 22:12,13). That man therefore becomes symbolic of the Jews who trusted in their fleshly descent from Abraham as a guarantee of salvation and eternal fellowship with him. ‘Cast into outer darkness’ to experience weeping and gnashing of teeth is paralleled in Mt. 13:42 by “Cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”. The “furnace of fire” and the “outer darkness” are both therefore figurative. The language speaks of intense aloneness (in the darkness) and searing mental pain. The spectre and possibility of rejection at the last day is brought frequently before us in the Scriptures, especially in the teaching of the Lord Jesus. It is an element, a dimension of life, that we need to bear in mind. On the one hand, the Lord seems eager to save anyone who believes, such is His grace; on the other pole there is this kind of language about condemnation. I submit that this is an intended, irreconcilable paradox which we are left with, purposefully, and for our good. I doubt that the paradox can be resolved, at least not by any intellectual, expositional process.

*Weeping-* Either we will mourn now in repentance (Lk. 6:25; the Greek for "mourn" is often in a repentance context), or we will mourn at the judgment (Mt. 8:12 etc.). Having foretold the inevitable coming of judgment day, Yahweh Himself pleads with Israel: "Therefore also *now*... turn ye even to me... with weeping, and with mourning" (Joel 2:12).

*Gnashing of teeth-* Weeping and gnashing of teeth is emphasized in Matthew (Mt. 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30). Luke mentions it once (Lk. 13:28), Mark and John never. It was clearly a dimension to the Lord’s teaching which struck Matthew deeply, and he used it often in his teaching of the Gospel, of which ‘the Gospel according to Matthew’ is a transcript. Gnashing of teeth suggests anger, and Lk. 13:28 says it is triggered by seeing Gentiles in God’s Kingdom and Jewish people from the time of Jesus rejected. So it is partly anger with self, but also the raging anger which comes from jealousy. We need to meditate upon the way in which actual human beings who met Jesus in the flesh are for sure going to reappear at the day of judgment. On their deathbeds or later in life they may’ve idly reflected ‘Ah yes, there was that Jesus guy I met once, the one they killed, and then a cult started based around Him afterwards’. Such people will reappear at judgment day, and their same basic personality will continue. As they were furious at the Lord’s claim that Gentiles would be in God’s Kingdom, so they will be in a blind rage about

it still at judgment day. The only other time the Greek for ‘gnashing’ is used in the New Testament is in Acts 7:54, where again the Jewish conscience was pricked, leading them to gnash upon Stephen. How they were then in the first century is how they will be at the last day. The gnashing of teeth is clearly connected with the anger which comes from jealousy at others’ acceptance. One cannot help think of the very many professing believers who have huge anger at the thought of an open table, or of someone they consider to be ‘outside’ of their small circle breaking bread at the Lord’s table. Those same basic structures and constructs of thinking, that same essential personality, will reappear at judgment day. The awesomeness of having been resurrected and actually meeting Jesus in person will not change our basic personalities. Our spirit, in that sense, is preserved. The time for change of attitudes and transformation of character is now. In the OT, gnashing of teeth always means to hate somebody, often the righteous (Job 16:9; Ps. 35:16; 37:12; 112:10; Lam. 2:16). Could it not be that the rejected hate their Lord and His people, who will be watching the judgment in some form, and therefore go and join the ranks of the embittered armies that come against Him? Or is their extreme hatred against themselves? Ps. 112:10 speaks of the wicked gnashing with their teeth and melting away, suggesting that the slinking away process goes on even in the outer darkness; they wander, but in their aimless wandering they slowly slink yet further away from their Lord- the one who once faint would have carried them on His shoulders, gathered them under His wings. It's a terrible picture. Cain, in typifying all the rejected, felt that his condemnation was something greater than he could bear (Gen. 4:13).

8:13 *Go your way*- The Lord several times uses this word (literally, ‘depart’) to a person after having healed them or having had a saving encounter with them. He used it to the healed leper in Mt. 8:4, and again in Mt. 9:6 (the paralyzed man); Mk. 5:19 (Legion); Mk. 5:34 (the woman with an issue of blood); Mk. 7:29 (the Syrian woman); Mk. 10:21 (the rich young man); Mk. 10:52 (the blind man); Lk. 17:14 (the lepers); the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:16); the blind man at Siloam (Jn. 9:7); the resurrected Lazarus (Jn. 11:44). This is a significant theme, therefore, in the Lord’s dealings with people. It suggests a commission, a sending forth on His work- the same word is found in the commission to “Go into the vineyard” to work (Mt. 20:4,7; 21:28), ‘going’ to bring forth fruit (Jn. 15:16) and finally in ‘going’ to the world to tell them of the Lord’s resurrection (Mk. 16:7). We are each individually sent out from Him to do His work in our own unique way. The way for the great commission is therefore prepared by these many examples of ‘sending’. That commission, the sending out, is therefore a totally personal matter- not something to be merely considered by missions committees, or groups of enthusiasts. We are each personally ‘sent’, bidden depart on our personal way, as a result of our encounter with the Lord.

*As.. so* – The idea could be that the quality, nature and extent of healing was dependent upon the nature of the faith. We ask for forgiveness for our own sins “as” we have forgiven others. There

is here a recognition by the Lord that issues like faith and forgiveness are not simply black or white situations. They are processes, and there is clearly a sliding scale of measurement for things such as faith and forgiveness. The point is that according to where we set the slider on our own faith or forgiveness, so there will be a corresponding response from God. God's possibility is our possibility; and this is what the Lord was teaching the man who thought that it all depended upon the Lord's possibility alone (Mk. 9:23). The extent and nature of the Lord's healing seems to have been limited by the faith of the recipient (Mt. 8:13 " as...so" ; 9:29 " according to" ; 12:22 " inasmuch" ).

*The selfsame hour-* The phrase could mean that the servant was cured within the same hour, or at that very instant. In this case the suggestion would be that the centurion's faith was great and therefore the cure happened totally and instantly. The Greek for 'healed' is also translated 'made whole', so there could be a comment upon the extent (total healing) and immediacy (instant) of the cure- as a result of the man's great level of faith.

8:14 *He saw-* As if the Lord noticed the problem and took the initiative to assist, rather than being asked to. Yet Mk. 1:31 states that "they [told] Him about her" and He responded. Surely the overall picture is that He did notice her need. But He waited to be asked before responding- not because He would not otherwise have responded, but because He wanted to pique the intensity of request and entreaty on their part. We sense the same spirit in how He appeared to be asleep on the sinking boat, and how He made as if He would go further on the way to Emmaus. And His apparent silence in our own lives is surely to provoke our prayerfulness and faith likewise.

*Sick of a fever-* The Greek literally means 'to be on fire'. This is yet another example of phenomenological language. A high temperature was thought to be a sign that something was on fire within a person; that wrong idea is repeated without correction, just as the language of demons is. The simple point being made, time and again, is that however folk understood disease, the power of the Lord Jesus was so infinitely greater that whatever was supposed to be causing the illness effectively didn't exist.

8:15 *Touched her hand-* One of the colossal 28 references in the Gospels to the Lord touching needy and neglected people, thereby showing His desire to connect with us in our humanity. We noted under 8:14 that the belief was that this woman's high temperature was because of our fire deep within her. By touching her *hand*, an extremity, perhaps the Lord was showing that actually



that belief was wrong. But as with the whole issue of belief in demons as a cause of unexplained illness, the Lord dealt with the issue by inference and implication rather than a direct statement that ‘this is wrong’. He reserved such a style for the condemnation of spiritual intolerance and other moral issues.

*The fever left-* Also the language of the day, because illness was understood as having to go somewhere when it was healed.

*Ministered-* Her response to her healing was to serve the Lord and His people. This should be the underlying motive why we ask for healing and good health- so that we can serve. And our response to the Lord’s touching of us can never be passive- it involves some level of active serving. Perhaps the use of *diakoneo* looks forward to the office and practice of women being deacons, ministers, in the early church. For the church of any age is to be an extension of the men and women who followed the Lord Jesus in Galilee. There was a Rabbinic prohibition of women serving men at table, so this is yet another instance of the Lord and His people being driven by their desire to respond to God's grace to breaking accepted social norms about gender.

8:17 *Took our infirmities-* “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases” is how Is. 53 described the cross; but these words are quoted in Mt. 8:16,17 about the Lord’s healing of people. The miracles therefore were performed in the spirit of the cross- personally identifying with the sick and healing them through that identification.

8:18 *When... saw-* An example of how the Lord was so human that He still acquired knowledge by the exercise of His senses. Knowledge was not just beamed into Him.

*Multitudes-* Why did the Lord dislike the crowds? It may be that He simply found it nervously and spiritually too exhausting for Him to be surrounded by so many wrongly motivated people. If so, what does that mean about our decision making in view of our human limitations? Or it could be that His focus was upon the training of the twelve and He didn’t want to be distracted from that. Or perhaps He foresaw that if the crowds remained too long with Him, then they would begin a public revolt to enthrone Him as a King or at least some figurehead in protest against the Roman occupation. Hence His continual emphasis that His kingdom was about internal renewal, not external revolt. There may well have been a simple logistical issue- He could not normally address thousands of people and be heard by them all without speech

reinforcement. The feeding miracles seem to have involved the use of a natural amphitheatre which enabled this. But thousands of people just tagging along, pressing closer to see or feel a miracle... often there would have been no chance to actually teach them anything, and most of the crowd would've only heard exaggerated and distorted versions of what was being said and done by Jesus. And there was also the very real practical danger of a stampede and people being trampled to death; Lk. 12:1 speaks of how one such "innumerable multitude... trod one upon another".

*The other side-* The Greek *peran* doesn't have to mean this; it can also simply mean to go further or beyond.

8:19 *Scribe-* Not necessarily a religious one, although probably this is the reference. The same word is also translated "clerk". It was after Jesus had commanded the disciples to sail to the other side of the lake, that this scribe came to Him. By talking to this man, who likely was just asking the Lord trick questions and trying to catch Him out, the Lord delayed their departure; with the result that they nearly lost their lives in the storm that came (Mt. 8:18-23). The disciples must have many times during that storm reflected with bitter annoyance how the Lord has gotten them in to this problem all because He had been wasting time with that Scribe. But the Lord had such a hopefulness and a spirit of passionate concern for the salvation of the individual, however arrogant and conceited they seemed to be, that He would risk danger in order to spend time with such a person. I find this an amazing example, surrounded as we are by a majority of people who appear like that Scribe.

*Follow you-* A massive 76 times we read in the Gospels of people following Jesus. Following Him *wherever He goes* is the characteristic of the faithful (Rev. 14:4). The following of Jesus around Palestine therefore was presented in the Gospel records (and they are transcripts of the preaching of the Gospel) as the pattern for all who would later follow Him. His teaching in these verses, as so often, is that following Him is not about being part of a large crowd which broadly identifies with Jesus and hangs around Him, although often not hearing and taking seriously His words (see on 8:18). It is about real self-sacrifice, and a following Him to the cross. In this we see a rebuke of the cultural 'Christianity' which has historically been so much a part of the Western world. It's hard to follow Him; whereas joining the Christian denomination in which they were raised is for many people easier to do than not do. But really following Jesus is not so easy, and it leads to the death of the cross.

*Wherever you go-* He sensed the Lord was trying to distance Himself from the crowds (see on 8:18) by going on beyond them, or to the other side of the Lake. And this man said he was willing to do that, to be in the inner circle which the Lord visibly had around Him. For when surrounded by the crowds, He addressed Himself to the disciples (Lk. 12:1; and also in giving the Sermon on the Mount, Mt. 5:1 cp. 8:1). “Go” here translates the same Greek word as the Lord has just used in 8:18- He commanded the inner circle disciples to “depart”, or “go”. And this scribe wanted to be in that inner circle and to go with them. The Lord Jesus had a way of gently turning comments and questions back on the person who made them, and of redefining the terms used. The man said that he would follow Him “whithersoever you go”, i.e. to whatever end point the road may lead to. The Lord replied that He had nowhere to lay His head. In other words, it’s the following of Him that we need to focus on, rather than the hardness of some possible great future sacrifice that may lie ahead. It’s the road, and not the destination, that are important (Mt. 8:19-21).

8:20 See on 6:26.

*To lay His head-* The only other time the Greek phrase is used in the record that on death, He ‘bowed His head’ (Jn. 19:30). His later warnings about what it meant to follow Him were to the effect that it meant carrying our cross with Him to the place of crucifixion. Perhaps there is a hint of that here. It may be that that night, the Lord literally had nowhere to sleep. But it was not the case for Him every night. Yet He seems to be purposefully painting a demanding picture in order to make the point- that following Him was not a case of tagging along with the crowd, hearing garbled reports of His words from others and enthusiastically hoping for some personal benefit from being involved with Him. Jesus died because He gave out His Spirit, as an act of the will. He gave His life, it was not taken from Him by murder. The fact the Lord died not just because events overtook Him and happened to Him is perhaps reflected in Paul’s speaking in Rom. 6 of “the death that he died... the life that he liveth”. He died a death; he Himself died it; and yet just as truly, He lived a life. He didn’t just let events happen to Him. He was not mastered in His life by human lusts and selfish desires; He was in that sense the only ultimately free person to have ever lived. When He “bowed his head”, the same Greek is used as in Mt. 8:20: “The Son of man has no place to lay / bow his head”. It was as if He only lay His head down, giving out His life, when He knew it was time to rest from a day’s work well done. He lived a surpassingly free life, and freely gave that life up; it was not taken from Him. When the Lord spoke of how “the son of man has nowhere to lay his head” (Mt. 8:20), He was apparently alluding to a common proverb about how humanity generally [“son of man” as generalized humanity] is homeless in the cosmos. In this case, we see how the Lord took every opportunity to attest to the fact that what was true of humanity in general was true of Him. Perhaps this explains His fondness for describing Himself as “son of man”, a term which can mean both humanity in general, and also specifically the Messiah predicted in Daniel.

8:21 *Another of His disciples*- The scribe of 8:19 could therefore be classed as a ‘disciple’. The term doesn’t necessarily refer to the twelve, although there does seem a distinction between the ‘multitudes’ who followed and from the edge of that crowd heard a few garbled versions of the Lord’s words and work (see on 8:18), and ‘disciples’, those who were willing to be learners from Him as from a rabbi.

*Suffer me first*- This was perhaps said in response to the Lord’s decision to move on beyond the crowds, or “to the other side” (see on 8:18). Like the scribe, this man wanted to be in some kind of inner circle. And he had shown some interest- it would seem that on the morning of his father’s funeral, he had come to listen to Jesus. But he wanted the Lord to delay His departure until he had completed burying his father that afternoon. It seems that a third individual also wanted to follow the Lord further in response to the command He gave to the inner circle to “depart”; for Lk. 9:61 records another person wanting the Lord to just wait until he had run home to say goodbye to his family and explain his absence.

8:22 *Follow Me*- All three people (see Lk. 9:61) wanted to follow Jesus. But the Lord’s point is that unless they were going to pay the price until it hurt, then they were not following Him. They were just tagging along the huge crowds. There is a clear link between following Christ and carrying His cross. Mt. 10:38; Mk. 8:34; 10:21 make it apparent: “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”. But there are other less evident connections. The man following his father’s coffin was told to break off and come follow Christ instead (Mt. 8:22)- as if following Him involved following Him unto the place of death. The faithful women who literally followed Him to the cross are described as *also* having followed Him in Galilee (Mk. 15:41), as if their following then and their literal following of Him to Golgotha were all part of the same walk.

8:23 *His disciples followed Him*- This is quite a compliment, given the definitions the Lord has been giving in :22 about the difficulty of following Him truly.

*Followed Him*- Chapter 8 emphasizes this theme of following Jesus, the Greek literally means to take the same road as (8:1,10,19,22). Verses 21 and 22 emphasize that this was not as easy as merely literally walking around Palestine with Him, externally following- but it involved the loss of all one holds dear in human life. And the road or way taken by the Lord ultimately led to the cross. A huge 76 times this word is used in the Gospels. The following of Jesus in all ways is the essence of Christianity- for the faithful are those who follow the Lamb *wherever* [and that surely

is the emphasis] He goes (Rev. 14:4).

8:24 *There arose*- Same Greek word occurs in 8:26 "there was / arose a great calm". Just as easily as God can raise up a crisis, He can raise up the resolution to it. The changes of tense in the Gospel records suggest an eye witness telling the story. Take the parallel Mk. 4:37: "And there arises a great storm of wind , and the waves beat into the boat, insomuch that the boat was now filling" (RV). But the rest of the account in the surrounding verses is in proper past tenses- e.g. "He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said..." (Mk. 4:39). The impression we have is of the author getting carried away with the memory of the event, and telling it as if it's happening. And this is especially fitting if in fact the Gospels were performed live rather than coldly memorized as prose.

*Tempest*- The word is also translated "earthquake". The waves from the earthquake "covered" or 'hid' [s.w.] the ship. Given the intensity of the situation it seems unlikely the Lord was really "asleep". Here we have a picture of the apparent silence of God. He appeared to be asleep, He remained with eyes closed, lying there as the boat was hidden beneath the waves. But He did this surely to pique the intensity of faith and urgency of appeal in their prayer to Him for salvation. And the apparent silence of the Lord in our lives is ultimately to try to achieve the same effect.

*Asleep*- The Greek could also stand the translation 'lying down to rest'.

8:25 *Came to Him*- 'Coming to' can be understood in the sense of worship. His apparent silence led them to an intensity of prayerful approach to Him

*Awoke*- Literally, to raise up. 'Asleep' in 8:24 can also mean simply to lay down to rest. It seemed He didn't want to do anything- until they imposed upon Him with all their energy and intensity of focus upon Him and Him alone as their Saviour. And the whole situation was raised up to that end.

*Save us*- Peter used the same word when he urged the Lord in another storm "save *me*" (Mt. 14:30). We see how the Lord repeated the storm experience in the lives of the disciples, hoping they would learn the lesson of faith and focus upon Him, and repeating them so that they might be learnt. The two incidents are again connected by the rebuke "Ye [plural] of little faith" (8:26) and then to Peter "You [singular] of little faith" (Mt. 14:31).

*We perish*- The same Greek words for 'save' and 'perish' also occur together in Mt. 16:25, where the Lord teaches that if we seek to save our lives in this world then we will perish. He could thereby be making a criticism of the disciples' plea to be saved from perishing; His sense would then have been 'You should have an even greater, focused intensity upon your need to be saved spiritually and not to perish eternally'. Again the two words occur together in Mt. 18:11, where

the Lord says that He came to save those who are perishing- and again, He has in view spiritual, ultimate salvation. The perishing disciples on the lake, in need of saving, are therefore being set up as a picture of the intensity of desire we should have for forgiveness and salvation. The way essential intention is understood as prayer is perhaps reflected in the way Matthew records that the disciples prayed during the storm on the lake: "Lord, save us, we are perishing!" (Mt. 8:25). Mark records that their actual words were "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?" (Mk. 4:38). Perhaps this was read by Matthew's inspiration as prayer. An alternative would be that they firstly said the words recorded by Mark, and then those by Matthew- in which case we could perhaps notice the difference between "Teacher!" and "Lord!", as if the higher they perceived the greatness of the Lord Jesus, the more moved they were to prayer.

Mark records that they actually said: "Carest thou not that we perish?" (Mk. 4:38). His whole life and death were because He *did* so care that they would not perish (Jn. 3:16). It's so reminiscent of a child's total, if temporary, misunderstanding and lack of appreciation of the parent's love and self-sacrifice.

8:26 *Fearful*- Fear and unbelief are again connected in Rev. 21:8. The unbelief refers ultimately to disbelief in our salvation, fear of condemnation; see on 8:25 'We perish'.

*Little faith*- See on 8:25 "save us". The question as to *why* they had little faith echoes to us. Why is it that faith is so hard for us? The track record of the Father and Son as rewarding faith is clear and without question. This *why* question drives each individual into personal introspection, reviewing our history, past and present influences upon us, the nature of our personality. *Why* do we not believe very strongly... ? The records of the Lord's words to the disciples in the sinking ship are significantly different within the Gospel records. Luke's record has Him upbraiding them: "Where is your faith?", as if He thought they had none. Matthew and Mark have Him commenting: "O ye of *little* faith...". Putting them together, perhaps He said and implied something like: 'O you of little faith, you who think you have a little faith, in my view you have no *real* faith. Come on, where is your *real* faith, not the little bit which *you* think you have...?' (Mt. 8:26 cp. Mk. 4:40). The Greek for "little" faith is also translated 'almost'; as if the Lord is saying that they almost had faith, but in reality, had nothing. The Lord spoke of how just a little piece of real faith, like a grain of mustard seed, could result in so much (Mk. 11:12,13)- as if He recognized that there was pseudo-faith, and the real thing. *Oligopistos* ("little faith") is used five times by Matthew (Mt. 6:30; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20); it never occurs in Mark and only once in Luke. Perhaps Matthew's Gospel record was written to challenge those whose faith was small, and he encourages them that the disciples likewise started with "little faith".

It seems to me that all the Lord's servants are taught by increments, progressively, being given tests as to the degree to which they have grasped what the Lord has sought to teach them previously. And the Lord Jesus used a similar structured approach with the training of the twelve

disciples. When the Lord commented “Have you not yet faith?” (Mk. 4:40 RV) it becomes immediately apparent that He was working with the twelve according to some program of spiritual development, and He was frustrated with their lack of response to it and slow progress. He surely has a similar program in place, and makes similar patient efforts, with each one of us. It is apparent to any reader of the Greek text of the Gospels that Jesus almost always left the verb “believe” without an object (e.g. Mk. 4:40; 5:34,36; 9:23). The question naturally arose: ‘Believe *in what or whom?*’. And seeing the speaker of the words, the answer was there before their eyes.

*Rebuked-* The Greek can mean just this, but it is also translated 'to solemnly charge'. There are times in the Gospels where the sovereign authority of Jesus as Lord simply shines through. He did His work with a minimum of such displays of authority. Yet there are enough of them to make us appreciate how He could so easily have 'come down from the cross'; such incidents of sovereign authority in His ministry simply pave the way for us to appreciate the degree of self-control and wilful sacrifice and suffering which He achieved on the cross. The peoples of the first century, and their predecessors, believed that demons and the Satan monster were somehow associated with water – that was why, they figured, the water mysteriously kept moving, and at times blew up into storms. When we read of God ‘rebuking’ the waters and making them calm or do what He wished (Ps. 18:16; 104:7; 106:9), we’re effectively being told that Yahweh of Israel is so infinitely superior to those supposed demons and sea monsters that for God’s people, they have no effective existence. The Lord Jesus taught the same lesson when He ‘rebuked’ the sea and wind during the storm on the lake (Mt. 8:26). The same Greek word is used to describe how He ‘rebuked’ demons (Mt. 17:18 etc.). I have no doubt that the Lord Jesus didn’t believe there was a Loch Ness–type monster lurking in Galilee which He had to rebuke in order to save the disciples from the storm; and likewise He spoke of ‘rebuking’ demons as a similar way of teaching others that *whatever* ideas they had about demons, He was greater and was in a position to ‘rebuke’ them. Likewise He assured His men that they had the power to tread on snakes, scorpions, and all their enemies (Lk. 10:17–20). The image of a victorious god trampling his foes and snakes underfoot was well established in the surrounding cultures, and had entered Judaism. The Lord is teaching those fearful men that OK, if that’s your perception of things, well, in your terms, you have ultimate victory through working ‘in My name’.

Mark records that the Lord commanded the waves “Peace, be still”. His authoritative "Peace, be still" (Mk. 4:39) was probably primarily addressed to the Angels controlling the natural elements. The reference to Angels 'ministering' to Him after the temptations suggests their inferiority. Thus He could summon twelve legions of Angels at the time of His greatest passion—maybe He remembered this incident and it was a temptation to Him to use this power over Angels at the crucifixion.

*A great calm-* All three of the Synoptics use the same phrase (Mk. 4:39; Lk. 8:24). It would've been a profound experience. The whole experience looks ahead to the calm of God's Kingdom being brought about by intense latter day prayer during a tribulation so intense that unless it were shortened, the faithful would die. When the Lord calmed the raging sea into a still calmness, He was consciously replicating what happened when Jonah was cast into the sea. He said plainly that He understood Jonah's willing submission to this as a type of His coming death. Therefore He saw the stilled sea as a symbol of the peace His sacrifice would achieve. And yet even during His ministry, He brought that calmness about; for in principle, His sacrifice was ongoing throughout His life. His blood is a symbol both of His cross and of the life He lived.

8:27 *But-* This is simply a connecting word, and doesn't necessarily imply anything negative.

*The men-* An unusual term for the disciples. But it's understandable- they were awed by the power and majesty of the Father and Son, and therefore keenly felt their humanity.

*Marvelled-* A word so often used about the response of people to miracles. The Lord had marvelled at another's faith in 8:10, and now men marvel at His faith. A very positive mutuality is suggested here between the Lord and His followers.

*What manner of man-* What *sort* of man is this (Gk. *potapos*), they asked themselves. They felt very much their own humanity (hence they are called "the men" at this time), and their awe was because they sensed that Jesus too was a man. Accepting the humanity of the Lord Jesus is relatively easy on one level, as a matter of theology, exposition or logic. But then comes the far harder part- the awe at the fact that One who was like me could actually do so much and be so much. And this can lead to our feeling a kind of gap between Him and us, although we know He shared the same nature, this in a sense means that we feel the spiritual distance between Him and us very keenly. In later spiritual maturity, Peter seems to have reflected upon this gap and realized that it was bridgeable- for he uses a similar word in saying that because of God's grace, "what manner of persons (*potapous*) ought we to be...". Just as Jesus was human and yet different from unbelieving men, so that same element of difference can be seen in us. The whole consideration is an essay in His humanity and representation of us as humans.

"What manner of *man* is this?" was maybe said on perceiving that His actions were in fulfilment of the prophecy that *Yahweh* would still the waves of the sea. And in the context of stilling another storm, He comments: "Fear not, it is I" - not 'it's *me*'. He was surely suggesting they connect Him with the essence of the *Yahweh* Name, I am that I am. But the connection was only for those who would truly meditate and connect things together. As our Moslem friends have



correctly pointed out many times, Jesus Himself never in so many words claimed to be Messiah. When others said this about Him, He replies by describing Himself as the "son of man". Indeed, this was His preferred self-image. He was intensely conscious of His humanity, His solidarity with us, and it was as if He directed us who later have believed to image Him first and foremost as a *man of our nature*. Of course, He was and is so much more than that. But because we are human, we have to image ourselves around a perfect human- Jesus, the real and full humanity as God intended. Here those who believe Jesus was God Himself place themselves at a distinct disadvantage- our understanding that Jesus did indeed come "in the flesh" ought to be a tremendous inspiration to us to be like Him. The power and compulsion of His life and example are surely diminished by relating to Him as God Himself.

*Obey Him-* The disciples spoke of the wind and sea as if they were conscious entities, able to be obedient to the word of Jesus. The same word is used to describe the marvel of the people that "even the unclean spirits... obey Him" (Mk. 1:27). Just as wind and sea are not actually living entities, so unclean spirits likewise don't actually exist. But the disciples clearly had the idea in their head. Yet the scale of the Lord's power over such entities in fact showed their effective non-existence in practice.