

JESUS NO PHANTOM

NO. 957

A SERMON
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“And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.”
Matthew 14:26.

SOME of the richest comforts are lost to us for want of clear perception. What consolation could be greater to the tempest-tossed disciples than to know their Master was present, and to see Him manifestly revealed as Lord of sea as well as land? Yet because they did not discern Him clearly, they missed the incomparable consolation. What is worse, at times the dimness of our perception will even turn the rarest consolation into the source of fear. Jesus is come, and in His coming the sun of their joy has risen, but they do not perceive it to be Jesus, and therefore thinking it to be a phantom, they are filled with alarm, and cry out in dread. He who was their best friend, they were as much afraid of as though He had been the arch enemy.

Christ walking on the wave should have put all fear to rest, but instead thereof they mistake Him for a phantom appearing amidst the storm, foreboding darker ill. They were filled with dismay by that which ought to have lifted them up with exultation. Oh, the benefit of the heavenly eye salve by which the eye is cleared! May the Holy Spirit anoint our eyes therewith. Oh, the excellence of faith which, like the telescope, brings Christ near to us, and lets us see Him as He is! Oh, the sweetness of walking near to Christ, and knowing Him with an assured, confident, clear knowledge, for this would give us comforts which now we miss, and at once remove from us distresses which today unnecessarily afflict us.

The subject upon which I wish to speak, will be indicated to you if I supply you with the outline of it first of all. The first head will be this—*it is too common an error to make a phantom of Christ*, and, secondly, *we are most apt to do this when Jesus is most evidently revealed*, and therefore, thirdly, *from this spring our greatest sorrows*, and fourthly, *if we could be cured of this evil, Jesus would rise very much in our esteem, and many other blessed results would be sure to follow.*

I. IT IS TOO COMMON AN ERROR TO MAKE A PHANTOM OF CHRIST.

There are some who make a Christ of a phantom, I mean they take that to be their Savior which is but a delusion, they have dreamed so, they have excited themselves up to a high pitch of presumptuous credulity, they have persuaded themselves into delusive comfort, and they make their excited feeling or fancy their Christ. They are not saved, but they think they are, Jesus is not known to them, they are unspiritual, they are not His sheep, they are not His disciples, yet they have put something up before their mind's eye which they think to be Christ, and their ideal of Christ, which is but a phantom, is Christ to them. A terrible error! May God save us from it and bring us to know the Lord in deed and in truth by the teaching of His Holy Spirit, for to know Him is life eternal. But an equally, and probably a more common error is to make a phantom of Christ. More or less we have all erred in this direction. Let me show you this for reproof and direction.

First, how often we have done this *in the matter of sin and like cleansing of it!* Our sin seems to us, when we are convinced of it, very real. Real indeed it is, our offenses against God are no imaginary ones, we have really provoked Him to wrath, and He is angry with us every day. The stain of sin is not on the surface merely, the leprosy lies deep within. Sin is a horrible evil, and when our spirits have been able to see the reality and the heinousness of it, they sink within us. But oh, what a glorious thing it is

when we can with equal vividness see the actual cleansing from sin which Christ confers on all believers by His precious blood! To see the scarlet and to weep over it is well, but then to see that same scarlet vanish in the pure white of the atoning sacrifice, this is better. Did you ever get as clear a perception of the second as you have done of the first? It is a great blessing when God makes sin to be experientially heavy to you so that you feel it, but it is a greater blessing still when the atoning blood is quite as vividly realized, and you see the sweat drops bloody of Gethsemane, and the pouring out of the life of the Redeemer upon Calvary, and the agonies unknown by which guilt was fully expiated before the eternal throne.

My brethren, when we are under concern of soul, or even after our first conviction, when sin returns heavily upon our spirits, our fears, and terrors, and alarms, are real enough, no one dares to say to us then that we are in a state of nervous excitement about a fiction, our danger then is right before us, as clearly as the flames are before some poor person immured in a burning house, we are sure of the danger, we see it, we perceive it, we feel it in the very core of our nature. But there is salvation provided by the Redeemer, He took our sin upon Himself, He suffered the punishment of it, He has put the sin away, believing in Him our sin has gone, we have a right to peace, we are fully warranted in standing before God and saying, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

What we want is not to think of this as a dreamy thing, which may or may not be, but to realize it as a fact quite as sure, quite as certain as our distress and the sin which caused it. We are not to look through the storm upon the Savior and view Him as though He were a will-o'-the-wisp, a ghostly thing, while the storm that surrounds us is real, but to see a real Savior for real sin, and to rejoice in real pardon, a pardon which has buried all our sins, a real salvation, a salvation which has set our feet upon a rock beyond the reach of harm.

Brethren, if we came to this point about sin we should have less of the groaning, or if as much of the groaning, we should still have more of the rejoicing. We lament for sin, and we do well. I hope we shall till we reach the gates of heaven. Sin can never be too much lamented or repented of, but at the same time we are not to so mourn over sin as to forget that Jesus died, and thereby cancelled all our guilt. No, with every note of lamentation lift up the joyful strain of triumph, for iniquity is gone, Christ has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and he that believes in Him is not condemned, neither can he be, world without end.

The same remarks apply to *the matter of our acceptance with God after our pardon*. Dear brethren and sisters, if I may speak for the rest of you, our shortcomings in Christian duty are often very painfully real to our souls, we cannot preach a sermon, or offer prayer, or give alms, or do any service for our Lord but what we feel, when all is done, that we are unprofitable servants. The faults and imperfections of our service stare us in the face, and there is not a day we live but what we are compelled to say that we come very far short of what Christians should be, in fact, we are led sometimes to question whether we can be Christians at all, and very rightly are we anxious as to the truthfulness of our professions.

When we come to the Lord's Table, and examine ourselves, we find many causes of disquietude, and much reason for trembling of spirit. Looking through the whole course of our Christian career, shame must cover our face, we have good need to say, "Not unto us, not unto us be glory," we cannot suppose ourselves able to take any glory, our life has been so inglorious, so undeserving, so hell-deserving. And there are some Christians to whom this state of things is very, very, very, very painfully conspicuous. They are of a desponding turn of mind, much given to looking within, and their inward corruptions and the outward displays thereof cause them continued disquietude and alarm.

My brethren, there is so much that is good about all this, that who shall condemn it? But at the same time the sacred balance of the soul must be maintained. Are my shortcomings real? Equally real is the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, in which all believers always stand. Are my prayers imperfect? Ay, but equally perfect and prevalent are the prayers and intercessions of my great Advocate before the throne. Am I defiled with sin, and therefore worthy to be rejected? Is that true? Equally true is it that in Him is no sin, and His eternal merits have weight with the ever-blessed Father, and stand me in as good

a place as He, my representative and surety, stands before the throne. Yes, I am in myself unworthy, but I am accepted in the Beloved. “I am black,” “Yes,” says the believer, “it is so,” add however the next clause, “but comely,” equally sure it is that we are comely, yea, in God’s sight we are “without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

As JEHOVAH sees us in Christ Jesus, He beholds no iniquity in us, Christ has put our blemishes away, and made us comely in His comeliness, He sees everything that is lovely in us, Christ has bestowed His own beauty upon us, for He is made this day of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. All we want is in Christ. Our standing is safe in Him, and the love of the Father towards us comes to us without diminution at any time, despite our flaws and failures, through the perfection of the beloved One’s acceptance. Now do not overcloud this fact. Do not look at the Lord your righteousness as a phantom, do not cry out as if you thought His work to be an impalpable something that comforts others, but cannot comfort you. The work of Jesus is the grandest of all facts. O for faith to grasp it, and rely upon it as such!

The principle applies next *in the matter of sanctification*. Very real and close to our souls, my brethren, is the flesh, it makes us groan daily, being burdened, very close home to us are our corruptions—these foes of our own household worry us too much to allow us to forget them. Very plain to us also are our temptations, they await us on all sides. And the inward conflict which comes of our fallen nature, and the temptations of Satan and the world—this too is very clear. We can no more doubt our conflicts than the wounded soldier doubts the bloodiness of the battle.

All these things are evermore before our eyes to our grief. But I am afraid that here, too, Christ Jesus is often to us as an apparition merely, and not as a real sharer in our spiritual conflicts. Know you not, beloved, that Jesus Christ is touched with tender sympathy for you in all your temptations? Understand you not that He has prepared provision for you in all your conflicts that you may surely win the day? Expect you not even yet to say, I have overcome through the blood of the Lamb? Will you not at this hour shout the anticipatory note of triumph, “Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”?

You have corruptions within—this is a fact, but Christ is formed in you the hope of glory—this is an equal fact. There is that in you which would destroy you, but there is also that implanted in you which cannot be destroyed—this is equally true. You are in the first Adam made in the image of the earthy, over this you lament, but in the second Adam you already begin to bear the image of the heavenly, and you shall perfectly bear it before long. Can you not grasp this? Alas! we do not lay hold of these things, do not get to say, as the apostle John did, “which we have seen, with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.”

Too much is this with us a doctrine to be accepted because we are taught it, a matter to be received because some other persons have experienced it, but too little is it a subject of inward living experience. For you and me to know by blessed realization that it is so, that the Holy Spirit sent forth from the Father is in us and with us, and that Christ will overcome our sin within us by the power of the cleansing water which flowed with the blood from His side, and will as much deliver us from the power of sin, as He has already saved us from the guilt of sin—this is heavenly experience indeed.

We must not forget to illustrate this state of mind also by the condition of many saints when *under trial*. How often when the storms are out, and our poor barque is filling, do we realize everything but what we should! We are like the disciples on the Galilean Lake. The ship is real—ah, how the timbers creak! The sea is real—how the hungry waves leap up to destroy them! the winds are real—see how the canvas is rent to ribbons, how the mast bends like a bow! their own discomforts are real—wet to the skin with the spray, and drenched, and cold are they all! their dangers are real—the ship must certainly go down with all on board! everything is real but the Master walking on the waves, and yet, beloved, there was nothing so real in all that storm as the Master. All else might be a matter of deception to them, but He was real and true. All else did change, and pass away, and subside into calm, but He remained the same.

Now observe how often we are in a similar condition. Our wretched circumstances, the bare cupboard, our bodily weakness, the loss of that dear child or parent, all the distresses that await us, the dread of bankruptcy, or penury, all these seem real, but that word, "I am with you," appears often in such circumstances to be a matter of belief certainly, but not a matter of realization, and that promise, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose—" we dare not deny it, but we are not comforted by it to the degree we should be, because we do not grip it, grasp it, know it. The holy children in the fire knew they were in the fire, but they were safe because they knew to an equal certainty that the Son of man was there with them. And so in the furnace you know that "no trial for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous," know equally well that where Jesus is, the trial is blessed, and the affliction has sweetness in it unknown to aught beside.

I shall only illustrate this in two other points. My dear brethren, in the matter *of death*, I do not know whether you can all think of death without a shudder. I am afraid there are not many of us who can. It is very easy to sing, when we are here on Sundays rejoicing with all our brethren—

*"On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye."*

I am afraid, I am afraid, I am afraid we would rather live than die after all. A missionary told me the story of an old Negro woman in Jamaica who used to be continually singing, "Angel Gabriel, come and take Aunty Betsy home to glory," but when some wicked wag knocked at the door at the dead of night, and told her the angel Gabriel was come for Aunty Betsy, she said, "She lives next door." I am afraid it may possibly be so with us, that though we think we wish the waves of Jordan to divide so that we may be landed on the other shore, we linger on the bank shivering still. It is so. We dread to leave the warm precincts of this house of clay, we cast many "a longing, lingering look behind."

But why is it? It is all because we realize the dying bed, the death sweat, the pangs, the glazing eye—we often realize what never turns out to be reality, but do not realize what are sure to be realities, namely, the angelic watchers at the bedside, waiting to act as a convoy to bear our spirits up through tracts unknown of purest ether. We do not realize the presence of the Savior receiving saints into His bosom that they may rest there until the trumpet of the archangel sounds. We do not really grasp the rising again—

*"From beds of dust and silent clay,
To realms of everlasting day."*

If we did, then our songs about dying would be more true, and our readiness to depart more abiding. For what is death? It is a pin's prick at the worst, often scarcely that, the shutting of our eyes on earth and the opening of them in heaven. So rapid is the departure of the saint, the movement of the soul from the body here to the presence of the Lord yonder, that death is scarcely anything, it is swallowed up in victory. O for the realization, then, of Jesus, and death would lose all its sting.

And once again, and this is the last illustration I will give on this point, I am afraid that in *Christian work* we very often fall into the same style of doubt. Here is an enterprise, and straightway if we are wise we realize the difficulties, if we are something more than wise we exaggerate these difficulties and conclude that with our slender means we shall never be able to grapple with them, but ah! why is it that we so seldom think of the living present Savior, who is the church's Head? Calculate the forces of the church if you will, but do not forget the most important item of all, the omnipotence of the Lord her King. Reckon up if you will all the weakness of her pastors, and teachers, and evangelists and members, but when you have done that, fancy not you have calculated all her resources, you have only considered the very fringe thereof, the main body and the strength of the church lies in the fullness of the Godhead bodily, which dwells in the person of Jesus Christ. Shall heathendom be real? shall priestcraft be real? shall Romanism be real? shall the corruption of the human heart and the alienation of the human will be real? and shall I not equally realize the omnipotence of Christ in the realm of spirit, and the irresistible

power of the Holy Ghost, who can turn men from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God? Let not Christ be a phantom to His church. In her worst hours, though tossed like a ship in the storm, let her Lord, as He walks the waves, be real to her, and she will do and dare right valiantly, and the results will be glorious. Thus much on the first point.

II. Secondly, the worst of it is that WE MAKE CHRIST A PHANTOM MOST WHEN HE IS MOST REALLY CHRIST, most really revealed as the Son of the Highest.

Observe, my dear brethren, when our Lord Jesus Christ walked on the land by the seashore, none of His disciples ever said, "It is a spirit," none of them said, "It is an apparition," yet they did not see Christ when He walked on the shore, on *terra firma*, they saw His manhood, that was all, there was no more to be seen of Christ as He walked there than there is to be seen of any other—simply a man, no Godhead is there revealed, but when Christ walked on the waves, there was more of Christ visible than there was on the land, then they saw His manhood, but they also saw His Godhead, who could make the liquid waves up-bear Him. There was more of Christ to be seen, and yet then they saw the least.

Is it not strange where He uncovers most, we see least, where He reveals Himself most clearly, our unbelieving eye is least able to see! Yet, mark you, Christ is never so truly Christ anywhere as when He works beyond the ordinary course of nature. He is Christ if He takes a little child upon His knee and blesses it, but more of the Christ is seen when He puts His hand upon the damsel, and raises her from the dead, or calls Lazarus out of the tomb. He is the Christ when He speaks a gentle word to a sorrowing heart, but oh, what a Christ He is when He says, "Winds be hushed, and waves be still!" Then is His glory laid open to faith's strengthened eye. Truly He is most Himself when He is most above all others, when, as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His thoughts above our thoughts, and His ways above our ways.

And, brethren, we have never seen Christ unless we have seen Him far above all others, and acting beyond the bounds of expectation and reasoning. The Christ is half hidden when He acts as another man. The whole Christ does not appear in the ordinary run of our affairs, it is in the extraordinary, the unusual, the unexpected, that we view the glory of Christ, and see Him fully. So it is that we refuse most to discern and glorify Him when He is most openly displayed.

Let me show my point. Christ, I say, walking on the sea, is most of all Christ there, and yet His disciples do not perceive Him, so in *the pardon of very great sin* you see the most of Christ, yet whenever a man has fallen into a great sin, that is, a vile sin in the esteem of others, then he says, "Ah! now I cannot be forgiven this." Why, man, Jesus is most truly Jesus when He pardons grievous iniquity. The putting away of your little transgressions, as you have thought them to be, do you think this is all He came for—to redeem such as have fallen and a little transgressed? Is He a little Savior for little sinners to be little worshipped?

Oh! but herein He comes to be Christ in deed and in truth, when bloody murders, black adulteries, scarlet blasphemies, and crimson filthinesses, are all washed away by His blood. Then see we Him as "a Savior and a great one," as one who is "mighty to save." Why is it that we will not discern Him when He abundantly pardons? Why, my brethren, do we honor Him as He should be honored, if we only think that the sentimentalism of sin is put away by Him? If we own that the reality, the filthiness, the damnableness of sin is put away by Jesus, and trust Him when our sins seem blackest, foulest, most abhorrent, then we do Him honor and see Him to be the Christ He is.

So again *in great distress* of the soul. It pleases God often after conversion to allow the fountains of the great deeps of our corruption to be broken up, and we never felt before as we do then, we had not expected this, and are overwhelmed with surprise to find ourselves such corrupt, such deceitful, such foul things. Then at the same time Satan will invade the heart with fierce temptations and diabolical insinuations, and, alas! our suspicious spirits will imagine that Jesus Himself cannot help us in such a condition.

Oh, but man, now is the time for the divine manifestation! Now shall you see the Christ. Do you suppose that the Lord Jesus comes only to speak peace to those who have peace already, or to give peace

to those enduring a trifling disturbance of mind? Man, do you think Jesus a superfluity? Or do you imagine that He is only suited for little occasions? Be ashamed of such insinuations, for He reigns on high above tremendous storms, He rules the largest waves and the most roaring floods, when all our nature is vexed, when our hopes are gone, and our despair is uppermost, it is amid the tumult of such a tempest that He says, "Peace, be still," and creates a calm. Believe in the Christ who can save you when your temptations threaten to swallow you up. Do not think Him to be only able to save when you are not in extremities, but believe Him to be best seen when your uttermost calamities are near.

I might select many other cases as illustrating this, but I will run over one or two in rapid review. We are perhaps enduring an *unusually severe trial*, and need more than usual support, but we fearfully say, "I cannot expect to be supported under this affliction." Ah! your Christ is a phantom, then. If you saw Him you would know that there is nothing too hard for Him, that the sustenance of a soul, when it is at its lowest famine point, is easy enough work for the divine Consolator, and you would cast yourself on Him believingly, and not act towards Him as now you do.

Yes, but you need great supplies for the present time of distress, your circumstances are trying to the last degree. Do not, now that you need great supplies, make Christ to be poor and stinting in your esteem, but rather, like Abraham, say, "The LORD will provide." Abraham, in extremity, when about to slay his son by God's command, finds that God interposes, and the ram is found for a burnt-offering. In your worst poverty Christ will interpose, Jesus will prove Himself to be the Lord of heaven and earth. You shall see that in Him all fullness dwells.

Can you only rely upon Jesus in little and ordinary troubles? I know it is sweet to run to Him in such times, but is He to be only an ordinary, fair-weather friend to cover you from little showers, and walk with you when a little gale is blowing, will He refuse to be with you in stormy weather, or to traverse with you the boisterous sea? O do not so miserably spirit away the Savior! Do not pantomime the Redeemer when you want Him in very deed. You have real poverty, and a real cross, and real difficulties, now in the mount of the Lord shall it be seen that He is true to His word, and His name, JEHOVAH-JIREH, across the darkness of your want shall be written as with letters of fire.

In times of *great* danger, again, we sometimes gloomily mutter, "Now we shall not be preserved, Christ has kept us up till now, and we quite believe that He would do so if the circumstances of today were no worse than those of times gone by, but now we are extremely tempted, now we are violently assailed, now our sorrows multiply, will He help us now?" Dare you say, "Will He?" when you know that He cannot change? Dare you say, "Can He?" Is anything too hard for the Lord? Are you going to make your Savior into a mere appearance? He is a real Savior, lean on Him, He will bring you safely through, cover you with His shield, and keep off the fiery darts from you. He will not leave you or forsake you.

Great deliverances! Alas! we fancy that these will never occur, Jesus will not work these as aforetime, so we wickedly imagine, and if they are wrought, we are like Peter, who could not realize his escape from prison. He knew the saints had prayed for him, but when he was delivered from the prison, and found himself in the streets of the city, he could not think it was a fact, he "wist not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision." Often before God has delivered us, we have said, "it cannot be"—our Christ was only a spirit, and when He has delivered us we have said, "I do not understand it, I am overwhelmed with amazement," the fact being that we do not get such a grip of Christ as to be assured that He is real, present, mighty, gracious, or if we did, we should receive even His greatest deliverances as natural proofs of His goodness and greatness such as faith is warranted to expect.

"Is it not surprising," said one, "that God should have heard my prayers, and has been so gracious to me in providence?" "No," said an old saint, whose long experience had taught her more of the Lord, "it does not surprise me, it is just like Him, it is His way with His people." Oh, to feel that great mercy is like Him, that is what we should expect of God, that He should give great deliverances, should walk the waters of our griefs, and bid them cease their raging!

It is a blessed faith which enables us to recognize Jesus on the waters, and to say, “I know it is Jesus, nobody but Jesus could act so wondrously, I might not have known Him if I had seen Him working in an ordinary way, or traveling like a common wayfarer, but here amidst extraordinary seasons I expected His help, if I had never seen Him before, I expected to see Him now, and now I do see Him, and I am not amazed, though I am delighted. I looked for Him, and knew that when the need of Him was greatest, His coming would be sure.” When faith brightens the eye of hope with the flash of expectation, joy is not far away.

I will only add that if we will but realize Christ, our *great successes* which will be sure to come, over spiritual foes within and over difficulties without, will again infallibly prove to us His reality, but the probabilities are that we shall think Him not capable of giving us such great successes, and we shall toil on despondingly where we ought to have rejoiced in the Lord.

As to our ultimate future we have too often thought it will be hard *to die*. We have trembled at standing before the judgment seat, we have read of the day of judgment, and thought, “How shall I bear it?” forgetting that we shall know our Redeemer better in death than before, and in the resurrection and in the glory that shall follow, we shall see Him more clearly revealed than now, and therefore we ought to think more of Him and lean upon Him in all the great concerns of eternity with a great, a confident, and childlike faith.

III. But I must pass on to the third head. OUR GREATEST SORROWS ARISE FROM OUR TREATING OUR LORD AS UNREAL.

It is because of our attenuating, vaporizing, and spiring our Lord away, and making Him into a myth so often, instead of gripping Him with a common sense, practical, firm, realizing faith, that we suffer so much from our troubles. For, brethren, it is a sad cause of trouble to have a phantom Redeemer, a Savior who cannot actually pardon sin when it comes to be great sin, a Savior who gives us only a little indefinite hope about our guilt, but does not literally put it away. This is the seed-bed of all manner of evil weeds. I do not wonder if you are vexed with doubts and fears if you have not realized Christ. O that you would all learn to sing with Hart these precious lines—

*“A Man there is, a real Man,
With wounds still gaping wide,
From which rich streams of blood once ran,
In hands, and feet, and side.*

*(’Tis no wild fancy of our brains,
No metaphor we speak;
The same dear Man in heaven now reigns,
That suffered for our sake).*

*This wondrous Man, of whom we tell,
Is true Almighty God;
He bought our souls from death and hell,
The price, His own heart’s blood.”*

Beware my brethren, of resting content with anything short of faith in an actual, literal, living Mediator, for nothing but reality will be of any use to you in the matter. Of course, with a phantom Savior for real sins, an apparition of a Redeemer for real bondage, you cannot find comfort. Of what use is the appearance of bread and the resemblance of water to famishing pilgrims in the desert? If you have a phantom helper for real woes you are the worse for such help. If your Savior does not actually and practically support you in times of need, and supply your wants and console you under depression, then in what respects are you better off than those who have no helper at all? Jesus is a friend indeed. His grace, love, and presence are no fictions, of all facts they are most sure. If I have to carry a real load, and

then have a ghost to assist me, I am in truth unassisted. We want true power, force, and energy, in our helper, and all that faith sees in Jesus her Lord, but you will readily see how sorrows multiply where Jesus is lightly esteemed.

Besides, to some Christ is not only, as it were, an impalpable spirit, but He is really an indifferent, unfeeling spirit. Jesus to His disciples on the sea seemed as though He would have gone by them and left them to their fate, and we often dream that our gracious Lord is unmindful of us, at any rate, we forget that he is tenderly mindful of our case. It did not strike you when you were so poor last week that Jesus knew it, and was grieved for your affliction. You forgot, dear brother, when you were trembling as you went into the pulpit, that Jesus knew you trembled, and would uphold you while bearing your testimony. Too seldom do we remember that—

*“In every pang that rends the heart
The Man of Sorrows bears a part.”*

Ah! good husband, you knew your wife pitied you, you noted well the teardrop when she saw your grief. Ah! dear child, you knew your mother sorrowed for you. Ah, but if you did but know Christ, you would know this too, that He never puts you to an unnecessary pain, nor ever tries you with an unneeded trial. There is a needs be for all, and He has sympathy for you in all.

Many a poor sinner even imagines Jesus to be an angry spirit, and he cries out for fear. He imagines that Jesus is wrathful and will reject him with indignation. Ah! you do not truly realize my Savior if you think He would ever reject anyone who came to Him. When on earth what a real Physician of souls He was! He mingled with publicans and sinners, He did not talk about them as people who ought to be looked after, but He actually went after them Himself and suffered one of them to wash His feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head. He was accustomed to touch diseased sinners with His finger as He healed them. He was not a dilettante Savior, He did not come into this world to save us from suppositious sin and imaginary troubles.

There is nothing which is more overlooked, but which ought to be better remarked about our Lord, than His common sense practicalness. He is utterly devoid of sham and pretense. He is always in the Gospel history as real as the scenes of life around Him, He never strikes you as theatrical and pretentious. May we all feel that He is really a loving Savior, a tender Savior, and a practical Savior to us. May you know Him, may you realize Him, and then your sorrows will either come to an end, or be accepted with thanksgiving.

IV. Lastly, IF WE COULD BUT BE CURED OF THIS DESPERATE MISCHIEF, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WOULD HAVE A HIGHER PLACE IN OUR ESTEEM, AND MANY BENEFICIAL RESULTS WOULD FOLLOW.

For, first, did you notice that after the disciples knew it to be Christ, and He came into the ship with them, they said, “Of a truth you are the Son of God”? If you once realize Christ, you will know Him in His person as you never will know Him by all I can tell you, or you can read about Him. You once read about a man, you saw his likeness in the “Illustrated News,” you heard people talk about him, but at last you were in his company, and sat down with him, and then you said, “Now I know the man, I did not before.” Oh, if you can realize Christ so as to draw near to Him by faith, you will feel that you now begin to know Him in truth, and what is best, you will know Him then with assurance.

They said, “Of a truth you are the Son of God.” You were persuaded that He is God by what you found in Scripture, but when you came to see Him, when He became real to you, the doctrine of His Deity needed no arguments to support it, the truth that Jesus Christ is Lord, is then woven into your very being. He is the Son of God to you, if to no one else.

What did those mariner disciples when they saw that it was indeed Jesus who trod the wave? It is added, “They worshipped Him.” You will never worship a phantom, an image, an apparition. Know Jesus to be real, and straightway you prostrate yourself before Him. Blessed God, blessed Son of Man,

coming from heaven for me, bleeding for me, standing in glory, pleading for me, I had thought of You and heard of You, but now I see You, what can I do but worship You? It is the grasping of Christ that produces devotion, it is the mistiness of our thoughts about Him that is the root of our undevout frames of mind. God give us a firm hold of Christ, and we shall instinctively adore Him.

They not only worshipped Christ, but they served Him. Their worship was such that whatever He bade them do they did it, and the vessel was steered whither He would until it brought Him to the other side where He wished to go. They who realize Christ are sure to obey Him. I cannot obey that which floats before me like a cloud, but when I see the man, the God, and know Him to be as real a person as myself, as much a matter-of-fact existence as my brother, then what He bids me do I do, my obedience becomes real just in proportion as the Master who commands it becomes real to my soul.

Then it is, dear friends, that we become humbled in spirit. No man realizes Christ without also realizing himself, and being bowed down in self-humiliation. "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." But with the humility comes a deep and profound joy and peace. With Christ in the vessel, known to be there, we smile at the storm, whether it continue or subside we are equally peaceful now that we have realized that Christ is with us.

I do believe that the actualizing of their Lord is the main thing that Christians want, they require, first and foremost, a real Leader, they need to grasp His reality, and feel His actual power. And is it necessary for this that He should come here in person? I trust not. If He were to appear this morning on this platform, and His servant should hide his head, you would say, "Behold the glorious sight, yonder is our Lord." I know your heads would bow to worship, and then you would open your eyes and gaze on Him, and feast your souls with the sight, and then each one would say, "What can I do for Him?"

And if the condescending Master gave you each leave to come and spread offerings at the feet of the Crucified, oh, what heaps of treasure would be brought! Each one would feel, "I have not with me what I wish," but you would say, "Take all I have, my blessed Lord, for You have redeemed me with Your blood." Is not He just as dear to you now, though unseen? Is not faith as mighty a faculty as sight? Is it not "the evidence of things not seen"? Is not Wesley's verse true?—

*"The things unknown to feeble sense,
Unseen by reason's glimmering ray;
With strong, commanding evidence,
Their heavenly origin display.*

*Faith lends its realizing light,
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly;
The invisible appears in sight,
And God is seen by mortal eye."*

Does not faith make Jesus as real to us as our sight would do? It should do so, I pray it may. And then see how true will be your consecration, how abundant will be your service, how ready your thanksgiving, how abounding your offerings! May God grant you grace to get into this true position, both you who are saints and you who still are sinners, for in having a real Christ you will have the reality of every good. God give it to you for Jesus' sake. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 14:12-36.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.