

ONE OF THE MASTER'S CHOICE SAYINGS

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“But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart.”
Matthew 14:16.

OF course the Master was right, but He appeared to speak unreasonably. It seemed self-evident that the people very much needed to depart. They had been all day long hearing the Preacher. The most of them had not broken their fast and they were ready to faint for hunger. The only chance of their being fed was to let them break up into small parties and forage for themselves among the surrounding villages. But our Lord declared that there was no necessity for them to go away from Him, even though they were hungry, famished and in a desert place. Now, if there was no necessity for hungry hearers to go away, much less will it ever be necessary for loving disciples to depart from Him! If these, who were hearers only—and the bulk of them were nothing more, a congregation collected by curiosity and held together by the charm of His eloquence and by the renown of His miracles—if these needed not to depart, much less need they depart who are His own friends and companions, His chosen and beloved. If the crowds needed not through hunger to depart bodily, much less need any of the saints depart spiritually from their Lord. There is no necessity that our communion with Christ should ever be suspended—

*“To walk with Christ from morn till eve,
In Him to breathe, in Him to live—*

is no mere wish, no visionary's prayer—it may be realized—we need not depart from Jesus! There is no need that the spouse of Christ should wander from beneath the banner of His love. Mary may always sit at Jesus' feet. There is no Law which says to holy fellowship, “To here shall you come, but no further. Here shall your communion cease!” There is no set hour when the gate of communion with Christ must inevitably be closed. We may continue to come up from the wilderness, leaning upon the Beloved. We “need not depart.” Yet is it so commonly thought to be a matter of course that we should wander from our Lord that I shall ask for strength from Heaven to combat the injurious opinion.

I. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, THERE IS NO PRESENT NECESSITY FOR YOUR DEPARTING FROM CHRIST. At this moment we may truthfully say of all the saints of God, “They need not depart.”

There is *nothing in your circumstances* which compels you to cease from following hard after your Lord. You are very poor, you say. But you need not depart from Christ because of penury, for, in the depths of distress the saints have enjoyed the richest Presence of their once houseless Lord. Your poverty may be pinching you at this very moment—to be relieved from that pinch you need not break away from Jesus, for fellowship with Him may be maintained under the direst extremity of need. Indeed, your need increases your necessity to walk closely with your Lord so that patience may have its perfect work and your soul may be sustained by the mighty consolations which flow out of nearness to Jesus. Need shall not separate the soul from communion with Him who hungered in the wilderness and thirsted on the Cross! You tell me that in order to relieve your necessities, you are compelled to exercise great care and anxiety. But all the cares which are useful and allowable are such as will allow of a continuance of fellowship with Christ! You may care as much as you ought to care—and I need not say how little that is—and yet you need not depart from Him who cares for you. But you tell me that in addition to deep thought, you have to expend much labor in order to provide things honest in the sight of all men. Yes, but you need not depart from Christ for that reason! The carpenter's Son is not ashamed of the sons of toil—He who wore the garment without seam does not despise the peasant's smock or the servant's apron. Labor is no enemy to communion—idleness is a far more likely separator of the soul from Christ. Not to the idlers in Herod's court did Jesus reveal Himself, but to hard-working fishermen by the lake of Galilee. If Satan is never far away from the idle, it

is pretty plain that it is no disadvantage to be busy! A toil amounting to slavery may weaken the body and prostrate the spirit, but even when heart and flesh fail, the heart may call the Lord its portion. There is no service beneath the sun so arduous that you need depart from Christ in it! But rather, while the limbs are weary, the spirit should find its rest in drawing nearer to Him who can strengthen the weak and give rest to the laboring and heavy-laden.

Do you tell me that you are rich? Ah, indeed, how often has this made men depart from Christ!—

*“Gold and the Gospel seldom do agree—
Religion always sides with poverty.”*

So said John Bunyan and his saying is true. Too often the glitter of wealth has dazzled men's eyes so that they could not see the beauty of Christ Jesus. But O, you few wealthy saints, you need not depart! The camel can go through the needle's eye for, “with God, all things are possible.” Men have worn coronets on earth and inherited crowns in Heaven! He who was the man after God's own heart swayed a scepter. To grow rich in substance does not make it inevitable that you should become poor in Divine Grace. Do riches bring you many responsibilities and burdens—and are you so much occupied with them that your fellowship with the Lord grows slack? It should not be so. You need not depart from Him. You can bring those responsibilities and the wealth to Jesus and communion with Him will prevent the gold from cankering and the responsibility from involving you in sin. Very often the servant of God who ministers to the Church of Christ finds so much to do in watching over the souls of others—and in caring for the various needs of the flock—that he is in danger of losing his own personal enjoyment of his Lord's Presence. But it need not be so. We can make all our many works subservient to our personal communion with our Lord and, as the bee flies to many flowers and gathers honey from each one, so may we, out of many forms of service, extract a sweet conformity to Him who was always about His Father's business. We need not be “cumbered” either with much serving or with much suffering. Our surroundings are not to be our sovereigns, but our subjects. We are, in all these things, to be “more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

Brothers and Sisters, you need not depart *because of anything in Christ Jesus*. Those whom we love most would not desire us to be always with them and never out of their sight. A guest is very welcome, but the proverb says that after three days he is stale. A mother does not always want her child in her arms! Its face is the epitome of beauty, but at eventide she is glad that those dear blue eyes no longer shine upon her—she is happy to lay her treasure in its cradle basket. We do not always wish for the company of those whom we compassionate—if they will condense their requests and do their errands rapidly, we are best content. And Jesus Christ says to us, His poor dependents, His crying children, “You need not depart.” When we are weeping, He will lay us in His bosom and give us rest. When we are famishing, He will entertain us at His royal table till we forget our misery. He is “a Friend that sticks closer than a brother” in this respect, for we need not, in this instance, heed the wise man's caution, “Go not into your brother's house in the day of your calamity,” for we may, at all times and seasons, resort to our elder Brother! We may ask Him, “Where do You dwell?” and when we receive His answer, we may go forth and dwell with Him and make His house our home. Do you not remember His words, “Abide *in* Me”? Not merely “Abide with Me,” but, “Abide *in* Me.” The closest contact with Christ may be maintained with the utmost constancy—

*“You need not depart, you may tarry for, yes,
Unchanged is His heart, He invites you to stay!
He does not despise nor grow weary of you,
You're fair in His eyes and most comely to view.
Then wish not to roam, but abide with your Lord
Since He is your home, go no longer abroad!
Lie down on His breast in unbroken repose,
For there you may rest, though surrounded with foes.”*

II. Secondly, NO FUTURE NECESSITY WILL EVER ARISE TO COMPEL YOU TO DEPART FROM JESUS. It will always be true, “You need not depart.”

You do not know what *your needs* will be and though you are no Prophet, your words will be true if you affirm that no need shall ever necessarily divide you from Jesus because your needs will, instead, bind you to Him. “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.” “And of His fullness have we all received, and Grace for Grace.” We will draw nearer to Him, in time of need, to obtain the Grace we need! We shall never be forced to go elsewhere to find sup-

plies for our spiritual needs! There stands another trader over the way who gladly would have you deal with him—"his Infallible Holiness," as he styles himself—but, ah, if you need Infallibility, you need not wander from Him who is "the Truth!" And if you desire holiness, you need not withdraw from Him who was the "Holy Child Jesus." To gain all that the superstitious profess to find in Babylon, you need not depart from the Son of David who reigns in Zion! They tell us that we must confess our sins to a priest—we will stay at home and lay bare our hearts to the great High Priest who "sprang out of Judah" and who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." They teach that we must receive absolution from one chosen from among men to forgive sins—we go at once to Him who was raised from the dead "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." They tell us that we should continue in morning and evening prayers—we do so, and offer our "matins" and our "vespers" where no bells call us except the bells upon our High Priest's garments! Our daily office may not be according to "the use of Sarum," but it is according to the use of those who "worship God in spirit and in truth." They cry up their daily sacrifice of the "mass"—but in Him who "offered one Sacrifice for sins forever," we find our All-in-All! His "flesh is meat, indeed," and His "blood drink, indeed." You "need not depart" to pope or priest, church or altar, for you may rest assured that there dwells in the Man, Christ Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, all that your spiritual needs shall need for their supply! And on no occasion—for any needs that can by any possibility arise—need you go down into Egypt for help, or trust yourself to Assyria or Babylon!

You will experience *great trials* as well as great needs. That young man, fresh from the country, has come to town to live in a godless family. And last night he was laughed at when he knelt down to pray. My young Friend, you need not forsake the faith, for other saints have endured more severe ordeals than yours and have still rejoiced in the Lord! Yours are only the trials of cruel mocking—*they* were stoned and sawn asunder—yet neither persecution, nor nakedness, nor sword divided them from the love of God in Christ Jesus their Lord! Many also are those with whom God, in His Providence, deals severely—all His waves and billows go over them! Through much tribulation they enter the Kingdom of God and everything in the future forebodes multiplied adversities—but still, "they need not depart" from Jesus their Friend! If, like Paul, you should come to a place where two seas meet. If you should experience a double trouble and if neither sun nor moon should give you cheer, yet you need not suspend, but may rather deepen your fellowship with the Man of Sorrows! Christ is with you in the tempest-tossed vessel and you, and those who sail with you, shall yet come to the desired haven. Therefore be of good courage and let not your hearts be troubled. The Son of God will be with you in the furnace heated seven times hotter than normal. He has said, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." This proves to a demonstration that you "need not depart" from Christ in great trials!

You will also encounter *many difficulties* between here and Heaven. Those who paint the road to Glory through rose-colored glasses have never trodden it. Many are the hills and dales between this Jericho and the city of the Great King! Let who will, be without trials—Christians will have their full share of them! But there shall come no difficulty of any kind, between here and Paradise, which shall necessitate the soul's going anywhere but to her gracious Lord for guidance, for consolation, for strength, or for anything besides! Little know we of the walls to be leaped or the troops to be overcome—but we know full well that we never need part from the Captain of our salvation, or call in other helpers.

Death will probably befall us, but we "need not depart" from Jesus in the hour of our departure out of this world. On the contrary, when the death-dew lies cold on our brow we will sing—

"If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now"—

and we will say with the Apostle Paul, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Straight on into eternity—and on and on forever—that word, "depart," never need cross our path. As never in eternity will the great Judge pronounce the sentence, "Depart, you cursed," upon His saints, so never in His Providence, nor in the severest trial will He render it necessary that the saints should in any sense depart from Him—

*"Never, O time, in your darkest hour
Shall I need depart from Him,
Though round me your blackest tempests lower*

*And both sun and moon grow dim.
Faster and faster each grief shall bind
My soul to her Lord above
And all the woes that assail my mind
Shall drive me to rest in His love."*

There is no necessity, then, in the present—and there will be none in the future—for departing from communion with the Lord!

III. Thirdly, “they need not depart.” that is to say, NO FORCE CAN COMPEL THE CHRISTIAN TO DEPART FROM JESUS.

The world can tempt us to depart and, alas, too successfully does it seduce with its fascinating blandishments! Its frowns alarm the cowardly and its smiles delude the unwary, but none need depart. If we have Grace enough to play the man, Madam Bubble cannot lead us astray! “Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.” We need not be taken in the world’s traps—there is One who can deliver us from the snare of the fowler! We are not ignorant of the devices of Satan and the temptations of the world—we are not *compelled* to fall from our steadfastness—and if we do, it is our willful fault. There is no necessity for it. Many live above the world—many in as difficult circumstances as ours. There are those in Heaven who have found as hard hand-to-hand fighting in the spiritual life as we do—yet they were not vanquished, nor need we be—for the same strength which was given to them is also available for us!

“But,” says one, “you do not know where I live.” Perhaps not. “You do not know what I have to endure,” cries another. Most true, but I know where my Lord lived and I have read that He endured “such contradiction of sinners against Himself” that Paul holds Him up as a pattern to all His people! He did not depart from holiness, nor from love to you. “You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” Perseverance to the end is possible to every Believer—no, it is *promised* to us and we may have it for the seeking! You need not depart from Christ, my young Friend—the world cannot drag you from Jesus, though it may entice you. Yield not and you shall stand, for “there has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor 10:13).

Satan is a very cunning tempter of the souls of men, but though he would gladly constrain you to depart from your Lord, you need not do his bidding. Satan is strong, but Christ is stronger! His temptations are insinuating, but you are no longer in darkness that you should be deceived by him. You “need not depart.” Even though surprising temptation should assault you unawares, it ought not to find you sleeping. Has not Christ said, “What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch”? You will not be surprised if holy anxiety stands sentinel to your soul. Prayer and watchfulness will warn you of the enemy’s approach and, therefore, you need not be driven to forsake your Lord.

Yes, but it may be that in addition to the world and to Satan, you are very conscious of *the terrible depravity of your own heart*. And, indeed, that is the chief ground of fear! The heart is deceitful, prone to wander and ready enough to depart from the living God—but you “need not depart” from the Master because of that. The newborn nature takes up arms against the body of sin and death. The Holy Spirit also dwells within to conquer indwelling sin. Shall not the life which is from above subdue the natural death? Shall not the Spirit of God purge out the old leaven? You “need not depart” from Jesus! It is true that you have a fiery temper, but it must not prevail—there is a cure for that plague. Perhaps we are inclined to levity, but we need not let our frivolous nature reign—Grace can overcome it and will. “Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound.” There is no unconquerable sin! There is no Dagon that shall not be broken in the presence of the Ark of God! There is no temple of the Philistines which shall not fall beneath the might of our greater Samson! We need not, as the result of temperament, or because of any sin that does so easily beset us, depart from Jesus, for Grace is equal to all emergencies.

Do you call to mind that there may be another force employed beside that of the world, or of Satan, or the corruption within, namely, *the lamentable coldness of the Christian Church*? Truly it is to be feared that more have departed from close walking with Christ through the chilliness of inconsistent professors than from almost any other cause! New-born children of God too often feel the atmosphere of the church to be as freezing as that of an ice-well. Their holy warmth of zeal is frozen and their limbs are stiffened into a rigor of inactivity—so that it is a marvel that they do not die—and die they would were not the spiritual life immortal and eternal! But, Brothers and Sisters, even in the midst of the coldest church we “need not depart” from a near and elevated fellowship with the Lord. The church of Rome is a

church defiled with error and debased with superstition, but was there ever a nobler Christian woman in this world than Madame de la Mothe Guyon? She did not depart from Christ, though in the midst of a pestilent atmosphere. Remember, too, the names of Jansenius, Arnold, Pascal, and Fenelon which are an honor to the universal Church of Christ—who ever walked in closer communion with Christ than those holy men did? In the midst of the darkest ages, there have shone forth the brightest stars! John wrote, by Inspiration, “You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments.” Often am I told, by some Brother in a country village where the minister seems to have gone to sleep 20 years ago and has never awakened since, that he finds it very hard to rejoice in the Lord, for his Sabbaths are a burden instead of a joy. My dear Brother, you need all the more Grace if this is your case! You must have more vitality within if you see so much death without. You “need not depart” from Christ—on the contrary, by becoming an example of living near to Christ, yourself, you may be the means of quickening others, for, thank God, Grace is contagious as well as sin! At any rate, it is certain that though many influences may seduce us, no force can compel us to depart from Jesus—

*“No power in earth or Hell
Can force me to depart—
Christ is my unconquerable strength,
He fortifies my heart!
Fixed in His love I stand,
And none shall drive me thence—
Enclosed I am within the hand
Of Love's Omnipotence!”*

IV. Regarded from another point, our text may teach us that THERE IS NO IMPOSSIBILITY IN KEEPING CLOSE TO THE BELOVED.

Many Believers think that if they have fellowship every now and then with Jesus, with long intervals between, they are quite as much advanced as they need be and have probably reached as far as human nature is ever likely to go. An affectation of superfine godliness is suspicious but, at the same time, a higher standard of religion than is commonly seen among professors at this time *can be maintained*—and ought to be maintained. We ought to attain to such a walk with God—to so calm and serene a frame—that the light which shines upon our pathway shall be constant and clear. “Enoch walked with God” for hundreds of years. So cannot a man, nowadays, walk with God for 20 years? Enoch lived in the dark age of the world, comparatively, so cannot we, who live under the Gospel dispensation, continuously walk with God? Enoch begat sons and daughters and so had all the cares of a household—yet he walked with God—so cannot we, who have the same cares, yet still, by Divine Grace, be enabled to maintain unbroken communion with Christ? I know the place is high where they stand who consciously abide in Christ, but will you not strive to climb there and bathe your foreheads in the everlasting sunlight of Jehovah's face? I know that it would require most jealous walking, but you serve a jealous God and He demands holy jealousy from you! Oh the joy of living in the embrace of Jesus and never departing from it! Oh the bliss of sitting always at His feet, abiding with the Bridegroom and listening to His voice! Surely the gain is worth the exertion and the prize is worthy of the struggle! Let us not, since the attainment is not impossible, murmur at the difficulty, but rather, in faith, let us ask that we may begin tonight to achieve the blessed result and continue to achieve it till we are privileged to see the face of Christ in Heaven! Others have done so—why shouldn't we?

Brothers and Sisters, the way to maintain fellowship with Christ is very simple. If you desire to retain in your mouth all day the flavor of the “wines on the lees well refined,” take care that you drink deeply of them by morning devotion. Do not waste those few minutes which you allot to morning prayer! Lay a text on your tongue and, like a wafer made with honey, it shall sweeten your soul till nightfall! During the day, when you can do so, think about your Redeemer—His Person, His work. Pray to Him and ask Him to speak to you. All day long lean on the Beloved. During the day, serve Him and constantly say, “Lord, how can I best serve You in my calling?” Consecrate the kitchen, consecrate the market-room—make every place holy by glorifying the Lord there. Converse much with Him and it will not be impossible for you to abide in Him from the year's beginning to its close! You “need not depart.” There is no mental or spiritual impossibility in the maintenance of unbroken communion with Christ if the Holy Spirit is your Helper!

V. Once more, we “need not depart.” That is to say, THERE IS NO REASON THAT CAN BE IMAGINED WHICH WOULD RENDER IT A WISE, PROPER AND GOOD THING FOR A CHRISTIAN TO DEPART FROM CHRIST.

Suppose that *the search after happiness* is the great drift of our life, as the old philosophers assert—then we “need not depart” from Jesus to win it, for He is Heaven below! If you desire pleasure, forget not that the pleasures of God which are in Christ—His joy, the joy that fills His great heart—are more than enough to fill *your* heart! I sometimes hear people say, as an excuse for professors going to doubtful places of amusement, “You know, they must have some recreation.” Yes, I know, but the *re-creation* which the Christian experienced when he was born-again has so completely made all things new to him, that the vile rubbish called recreation by the world is so dull to him that he might as well try to fill himself with fog as to satisfy his soul with such utter vanity! No, the Christian finds happiness in Christ Jesus—and when he needs pleasure, he does not depart from Jesus.

Perhaps it is said that *we require a little excitement now and then*, for excitement gives a little stimulant to life and is as useful to it as stirring is to a fire. I know it and I trust you may have excitement, for the medicinal power of a measure of exhilaration and excitement is great. But you “need not depart” from Christ to get it, for there is such a thing as the soul’s dancing at the sound of His name while all the sanctified passions are lifted up in the ways of the Lord! Holy mirth will sometimes so bubble up and overflow in the soul, that the man will say with Paul, “Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell; God knows.” Joy in Christ can rise to ecstasy and soar aloft to bliss! If you desire to wear the highest crown of joy, you “need not depart” from Christ.

“But,” it is said, “*we require food for our intellect*. A man needs to develop his intellectual faculties. He must learn that which will enlarge and expand his mind.” Certainly, by all means. But, O beloved Brothers and Sisters, you “need not depart” from Christ to get this, for the science of Christ Crucified is the most excellent, comprehensive and sublime of all the sciences! It is the only Infallible science in the circle of knowledge! Moreover, by all true science you will find Christ honored, and not dishonored. And your learning, if it is true learning, will not make you depart from Christ, but lead you to see more of His creating and ruling wisdom. The most profound astronomer admires the Sun of Righteousness! The best-taught geologist has no quarrel with the Rock of Ages! The greatest mathematician marvels at Him who is the sum total of the universe! He who knows the most of the physical, if he knows aright, loves the spiritual and reverences God in Christ Jesus! To imagine that to be wise one needs forsake the Incarnate Wisdom is insanity! No, to reach the highest degree of attainment in true learning, there is no reason for departing from Christ.

“*We must have friends and acquaintances*,” one says. You “need not depart” from Christ to get them. We admit that a young woman does well to enter the marriage state—a young man is safer and better for having a wife—but, my dear young Friends, you need not break Christ’s Law and depart from Him in order to find a good husband or a good wife! His rule is that you should not be “unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” It is a wise and kind rule and is an assistance rather than a hindrance to a fit marriage. “But,” says one, “I do not intend to depart from Christ, though I am about to marry an unconverted person.” Rest assured that you are departing from Jesus by that act! I have never yet met with a single case in which marriages of this kind have been blessed of God. I know that young women say, “Do not be too severe, Sir, I shall bring him around.” You will certainly fail! You are sinning in marrying under that idea. If you break Christ’s Law, you cannot expect Christ’s blessing. To be happy in future life with a suitable partner you “need not depart” from Jesus. There is nothing in life you can need that is truly desirable, nothing that can promote your welfare, nothing that is really good for you that can ever make it necessary for you to depart from the Lord Jesus Christ!

Now, if this is true, do not some of us feel very guilty? I could weep to think that I have so often departed from close fellowship with my Lord and Master when I need not have done it. I am cast down and weary—and occasionally cumbered with much serving. I know my faith is in Christ, but I have not the calm, unstaggering faith I desire to have. And I know that with a thousand cares, (and I have ten thousand), I need not for a moment lose serenity and peace of mind if I can reach the place which, by God’s Grace, I will yet reach. Do you not feel ashamed that your family troubles and perhaps your family joys have taken you off from your Savior? Some of you have a great deal of leisure and yet you slide away from Christ. Let us be ashamed together, but let us remember that while this verse stands true—if we have departed from Christ and the enjoyment of His fellowship—we can offer no excuse by saying that we could not help it! We do it willfully, we do it sinfully! It is not to be thrust on the back of circumstances. It cannot be laid on the devil nor blamed to

this, nor blamed to that—it is our own fault. We “need not depart!” There never was any need for it and there never will be. May God's Grace descend mightily upon us so that we may henceforth abide in our Lord! May those who know Him not, be led to seek Him by faith even now, and find Him, and then even they shall not need to depart from Him at the last.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 14:13-36.

Verse 13. *When Jesus heard of it, He departed from there by a boat into a desert place apart.* It is well for us to get alone with God when He takes Home the best and most faithful of His servants. Neither the Church nor the world could afford to lose such a man as John the Baptist—so it was well for Christ's disciples to retire with Him to a desert place that He might teach them the lesson of that highly-favored martyr's death.

13, 14. *And when the people had heard thereof, they followed Him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick.* He needed quiet, but He could not get it just yet. He was not “moved” with indignation against the crowd that had sought Him out, but He “was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick.” Out of the fullness of His heart of love, He condescended to do for the people what they most needed.

15. *And when it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.* Human compassion might have moved the disciples to say something more kind than that heartless request, “Send the multitude away.” Perhaps they wished to spare themselves the sight of so much distress, but they evidently did not expect the answer that Christ gave them.

16. *But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; you give them something to eat.* Christ seemed to say to His disciples, “If you only exercise the power that is within your reach, *with Me in your midst*, you are equal to this emergency—‘You give them something to eat.’”

17, 18. *And they said unto Him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them to Me.* “They are little enough in your hands, but they will be ample when they get into Mine.” When everything that we have is in the hands of Christ, it is amazing how much He can make of it. Bring your talent to the Lord Jesus, be it ever so little—sanctify to Him every possibility that lies within your reach—you cannot tell how much He can and will do with it.

19. *And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass.* It must have been a beautiful sight to see those thousands of men, women and children at once obeying His command! There were five loaves and two fishes—probably five small barley cakes and a couple of sardines—so the people might have said, “What is the use of such a multitude sitting down on the grass to partake of such scanty fare as that?” But they did not say that—there was a Divine Power about the very simplest command of Christ which compelled instant obedience! “He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass.”

19. *And He took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to Heaven, He blessed.* This was that “blessing of the Lord” of which Solomon says that “it makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.” If you get this blessing on your five loaves and two fishes, you may feed five thousand men with them—besides the women and the children!

19, 20. *And broke, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.* Much more than they began with, for it is a Law of the Heavenly Kingdom that he who gives to God shall be no loser—his five loaves and two fishes shall turn to twelve baskets full after thousands have eaten and been satisfied! The more there is of complete consecration to Christ and His blessed service, the more reward will there be in the world to come and, possibly, even here!

21, 22. *And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children. And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a boat, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.* He always takes the heavier task upon Himself. They may go off by themselves, but He will remain to send the multitudes away. Besides, no one but Christ could have done it—only He who had made them sit down to the feast could make them go to their homes.

23. *And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray.* He had had a long day of preaching, healing and distributing the bread and fish—and now He closed the day with prayer to His Father.

23. *And when the evening was come, He was there alone.* Dr. Watts was right in saying to His Lord—

*“Cold mountains, and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of Your prayer.”*

He is not now on the bare mountainside, but He is engaged in the same holy exercise up yonder before His Father's Throne.

24. *But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.* This is the case with the good ship of the Church of Christ today—it is “tossed with waves” and the wind is “contrary.” It is very contrary just now, but then, Christ is still pleading for the ship and all on board. And while He pleads, it can never sink.

25-29. *And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit: and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered Him, and said, Lord, if it is You, bid me come unto You on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the boat, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.* You who are wanting to get to Jesus should make a desperate effort to get to Him—even walk on the water to get to Jesus. Walking on the water might be an idle and evil exhibition, but to walk on the water to go to Jesus is another matter. Try it and the Lord enable you to get to Him!

30-32. *But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me! And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him, and said unto him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? And when they were come into the boat, the wind ceased.* The Greek word implies that the wind was tired, weary, “done up,” as we say. It had had its boisterous time and spent its force—but now it knew its Lord's voice and, like a tired child, fell asleep.

33. *Then they that were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth You are the Son of God.* This seems to have been the first time that the disciples arrived at this conclusion so as to state it so positively. Yet, do you not think that after the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes they might have very fitly said, “Of a truth You are the Son of God”? Sometimes, however, one wonder will strike us more than another and, possibly it was because they were in danger when this second miracle was worked and, therefore, they the more appreciated the coming of Christ to them at midnight. They were in no danger when the multitude were fed. Perhaps they were not themselves hungry. That strikes us most which comes most home to us, as this miracle did.

34-36. *And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of Him, they sent out into all that country roundabout and brought unto Him all that were diseased; and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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