

## **PETER WALKING ON THE SEA**

### **NO. 3562**

A SERMON  
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*“And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be you, bid me come unto you on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, saying Lord, save me.”*  
*Matthew 14:28-31.*

A FEW reflections will be sure to cross the mind of any thoughtful reader of this narrative.

**I. THE MIXED CHARACTER OF THE BELIEVER’S EXPERIENCE** is here very palpably suggested to us. Peter was undoubtedly a bold believer in Jesus Christ. He addresses his Master devoutly, calling Him, “Lord”—a name of reverence, the use of which evidences the change that had been worked in his character and the obedient spirit it had produced. But the misgivings implied in that, “if”—“if it be you”—savors rather of unbelief and yet we find this hesitancy immediately followed by an expression of such strong confidence that we marvel at the request he uttered, “*Bid me come to you on the water.*” Then cheered by the Lord’s prompt answer, “Come,” we find him showing his courage by descending from the vessel, setting foot on the sea and actually walking on the water. Thus did he participate in the wonder which Christ worked and share in the miracle of subduing the elements. His valor, however, soon evaporates. For, “when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid.” *The faith that buoyed him up gave place to a fear that bowed him down.* He who was walking on the liquid wave one instant is sinking beneath the surge the next. The gallant cry, “Bid me come to you on the water,” is quickly exchanged for the grievous wail, “Lord, save me.” So great his pluck, so dire his panic! And is this a common experience? Are all God’s people thus subject to changes—alternating between calm trust and craven fear? Can they be neither one thing nor the other completely—neither altogether believing or totally unbelieving! We think it is even so. We will not say how much frailty of the creature is mixed up with fealty to Christ in the best of men, nor how far the grace of God may protect us from the guilt of double-dealing in the conduct of our lives. But we do mournfully confess that in our own experience, the good and the evil contend for the mastery and sometimes it seems but the turning of a hair which shall vanquish. Fully assured though we are that the new life which has been implanted in us will ultimately gain the victory, but not less fully conscious are we that disasters and defeats are constantly occurring on our path to triumph.

Our trophies are never won without troubles. He that knows anything, it seems to me, of what it is to live by faith, will find throughout his earthly career a continual conflict. He may never fall so low as to doubt his interest in Christ, yet he may sometimes wet his couch with tears and wonder if God has forgotten to be gracious. He may be enabled to hold on his way for years without a slur on his character, yet will he often have to engage in such terrible struggles against inbred sin and to endure such sore pressure from troubles without, that he is compelled to cry out, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” *One day you may be on Tabor’s summit witnessing your Master’s transfiguration, and another day you may be in the Valley of Humiliation, groaning in spirit, diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.* One day you may be as strong as a giant and all things seem possible to you—and another day you may be as weak as a baby and weep for the joys that are fled. You may one day “surname yourself by the name of Israel” and another day call yourself, “the worm Jacob,” fearing lest you should be trodden down by the common ills of life and utterly crushed. Our way to heaven is uphill and downhill. Our life is made of checkered materials—it is

not all of one fabric. Sometimes full of hope, we bound forward with elastic step—soon the sun ceases to shine, the big raindrops fall, the vapors rise, and we sit down with folded arms and fixed eye, wearing a sad, leaden cast. As in our experience, so in our nature, good and evil meet, but cannot blend—they are at constant variance. I mention this well-known fact because it may serve to comfort some of the younger sort who but of late have begun to go on pilgrimage. They fancied that since they were born again and enlisted in Christ's army, they would never afterward have to fight with sin within—though perhaps they might be tempted, their soul would never give any consent to it. They boasted when they put on the harness, as though they had taken it off. They sowed today and they expected to reap their harvest tomorrow. They had scarce got loose from the shore, yet they expected soon to reach the port. When the vessel is a little buffeted and heaved to and fro by contrary winds, they cannot understand it. Beloved, it is so with all of us. Those saints of God who appear to you to be favored with perpetual sunshine could tell you quite another tale. Some whom God highly honors in public, He often deeply humbles in private. He has a way of taking His children behind the door and making them see some of the abominations within them, while at the same time He is giving them to see the beauties of Christ and enabling them to feed on Him. Do not think that yours is an extreme case, because your spiritual life is one of much contest with sin. So far from being extreme, I believe it is but a specimen of the way in which the Lord deals with all His own beloved ones.

There I leave that first observation. *Peter is at one moment confident, another instant he is dismayed.* At one moment he is treading the waves like a miracle worker and the next instant he is sinking like an ordinary being. And so it is with us—sometimes aloft and soon crying out of the depths, “Lord, save me.” And for our second reflection, we observe that—

## II. FAITH LOVES VENTURESOME SERVICE.

Peter, when full of faith, said to his Master, “Lord, if it be you, bid me come to you upon the water.” Faith seems to have a secret instinct revealing her military and royal character. In the old wars of Troy, we read of one who, being told by a prophet that the war would not be to his honor, sought to escape from the Greek ranks and hid himself among the daughters of the king. But he was discovered by Ulysses, who sent a peddler, or one disguised as such, to sell various wares—and while the maidens at the gate came to buy the various trinkets in which they delighted, there was placed in the basket a trumpet or a sword, and the young hero, disguised as he was, yet let out his taste and chose the warlike implement. It was his nature to do so—and he was discovered by the choice. Now, amidst ten thousand allurements, faith is quite certain to choose that which appertains to boldness and to venturesomeness. John is full of love, he stays in the vessel, but Peter abounds in faith and he must be doing some high action congruous to the nature of faith and therefore, he says, “Lord, if it be you, bid me come unto you on the water.” *That is the kind of thing for faith to do. Anybody can walk on the land, but faith is a water-walker.* She can do, and act, and work where others fail. Remember it is not said in Scripture that faith will pluck up mustards seeds or that it will remove molehills. These little things are not the sphere for faith, but it is written, “You shall *say unto this mountain*, Be you removed hence; or this sycamore tree, Be plucked up by the roots.” Faith loves to deal in great things, in marvelous adventures, in projects beyond human power. We are not to come to God and ask Him to do for us what we can do for ourselves. There is no room for the exercise of faith where reason and human strength will suffice. Faith is a vessel expressly built for the deep seas. She is not a coaster, to keep close to the shore. She pushes out where she can neither see the shore nor fathom the depth, for she has a compass on board and she looks up to the stars which God has fixed for her guidance. She has, too, a blessed Pilot, so she feels herself secure and all at home in the wild waste of waters, with no human eye to gaze upon her and no human hand to help.

“If it be you,” said Peter, “let me come to you on the water.” If you have faith in God and that faith is in active exercise, I am persuaded you will feel an instinct within you prompting you to dare something more than others have ventured to attempt, eager to honor Jesus Christ more than anyone else would think possible, who had little faith or no faith at all. What a blessed instinct it is which impels

some of our brethren, as it frequently has done, to leave their native country and go out to preach the Gospel in regions beyond the sea! Not building upon another man's foundation, but like the bold apostle, seeking to extend the bounds of Immanuel's kingdom. How blessed it is when some brother finds it in their heart to consecrate more of their substance than is ordinary to the Lord's work, not grudging what he can spare, but glorying over what he can sacrifice! Yea, and blessed it is when faith kindles to furnace-heat and stimulates one to undertake a work for which he alone would be incompetent. God preserve such a man! How I rejoice at every mention of our brother Muller at Bristol! What lessons of trust in God's promise and His providence has he taught to Christians and Christian churches. How graciously has Christ made him to walk on the water! How securely has he sped his course these many years as safe on the flowing current of subscriptions as if he were proceeding on the solid bases of a rich endowment! How wonderfully his orphanage has been supported! He walks on waves in very truth. This sole dependence upon the eternal providence of a faithful God is indispensable to us. I trust we are not entire strangers to it in our measure and degree. It is no novelty to us to put our foot down on what we thought to be a cloud, and find that God had placed a rock there, to walk right on in the dark and see the midnight turn to noonday—to rest on the invisible and prove it to be more substantial than the visible—to depend upon the naked promise of the covenant-keeping God and reap greater riches than all the treasures that could come from relying on an arm of flesh. Faith then, is a venturesome thing and if any of you have not yet been nerved with courage because you believed, I pray that your faith may grow till you feel compelled to attempt more than of your own unaided strength you can possibly do.

Brethren, undertake something for Christ. Is there a brother here who ought to preach, but is too timid? I hope his faith will overcome his diffidence. Is there a sister here who ought to take a class in the school, but she is shy and hesitant? I hope her faith in the Savior will get fresh impetus from her love to souls. "Such trust have we through Christ to Godward." Oh! that you may all be urged by strong convictions to attempt something in His service, that you be taught by the Holy Spirit to set about it wisely. And that you may be enabled by that sufficiency which is of God to do it effectually! Though you may often have stumbled in plain paths, you shall be able to walk on the water in safety when and where Jesus bids you. I say this advisedly, for, venturesome as Peter's faith was, he would not make a move without first having the Master's permission. "If it be you, bid me." We must not fondly imagine that we can do whatever we choose, but we may fairly expect that whenever God allots us a work, He will give us grace adequate to accomplish it. Peter walking on the sea without divine permission would be a presumption to attempt and an impossibility to perform. But Peter, with Christ's *amens*, might have walked across the Atlantic itself if his faith had not failed.

So it is with you. If your Lord has called you to a work, rely upon Him for the power to achieve it. He will not forsake you. But if it is merely your own whim or caprice which has thrust you into a position for which you are not qualified, you have no right to reckon upon the divine aid to speed your false steps. Blessed is he who goes to his Father and asks His counsel, for he shall always find that where God gives us guidance, He will give us grace. But—

### III. FAITH REALLY DOES WORK WONDERS.

This is our third observation. Peter came down from the vessel. I think I see him bounding over the bulwarks. How strange he must have felt when that water in which he had been so often swimming became as solid marble under his feet! How elated he must have felt—a man with his temperament naturally would so feel—when he began to walk and found the water like a sea of glass beneath his tread! It was a marvelous thing to do. Others have made their way through the sea, but Peter walked over it. The laws of gravitation were suspended for his support. Picture the scene. What Jesus was doing, Peter was doing. Faith made Peter to be like his Lord. There were two walking, the one by His own infinite power, the other by the power imparted to him—the power of faith.

*Remember that faith will make any of us like Christ.* "He that believes on me, the works that I do shall he do also," said the Master, "and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my

Father.” It does often seem impossible in certain conditions to act in a Christ-like spirit, but faith can make you walk the waves of the sea. Your Lord was patient in poverty—faith can make you walk that wave, and be patient and contented, too. Christ was loving and gentle under the most fearful and multiplied provocations—faith can give you that same gentleness of spirit and lowliness of mind—you can walk those billows, too. Our Lord, in the midst of prosperity, refused worldly honor. When they sought to make Him a king, He hid Himself from the temptation. And you in the high places of the earth, tempted by wealth, with flattery poured into your ears, may still walk, as Jesus did, safely through it all if you have but faith in God, faith in the blessed Spirit, faith in Him who is ever with you, even to the end of the world. There is nothing Christ did, except the great atoning work, which His people shall not do in and through Him, by the exercise of their faith. What a blessing it would be if God’s people really did believe the power that lies in them by the energy of faith! So many of us give up, succumb, lie down as if we were weak, but we are not weak. When we are weak in ourselves, then are we strong. This is no empty fiction, but a certain fact. We are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Let not, therefore, the believer think that he can only do what another man can do. He is of a nobler race. God dwells in him. Oh! what a glorious thought that is—God dwelling in a man! That wonderful word, “enthusiasm”—so often turned to ridicule and used as a term of reproach—what does it mean but God in a man? Enthusiasm! When God is thoroughly in a man and the man knows it, then he is not cowed or put back by difficulties, or daunted by sneers. He is not so mindful of his feebleness as to excuse himself from effort or to imagine that he can do nothing. In the confidence of that power which inspires him, he marches boldly on, fully assured that victory awaits him, and that victory he rests not till he realizes—it is given to his confidence. So does God requite and reward the man that puts his trust in Him. May we always have enough of faith to be doing wonders. Some poor souls have enough faith to carry them to heaven. Others have just enough faith to maintain decent character, but he shall be honored of God who has such implicit, and such heroic, and such enduring faith that he can dare jeopardize, do exploits, and bear sufferings, because his Lord is with him. We must attempt some things which look like impossibilities or we shall never keep up the esprit of the true soldiers of the cross. We pass on to make a fourth remark.

#### **IV. INTO THE SOUL OF THE MOST FAITHFUL AND CONFIDENT DISCIPLE, UNBELIEF GENERALLY FINDS SOME DOOR OR OTHER FOR ENTRANCE.**

*Peter had looked at the waves* and his faith was just strong enough to believe that Jesus could make him walk on the sea, but he had never taken the winds into his calculation. *Had he thought of the winds as well as the waves,* and reposed upon Jesus for the whole, I have no doubt his faith would have held out and not have so fearfully given way. The first two or three steps on the water had exhilarated him and made him feel what wonders he was doing, but there came a rough blast which threatened to overthrow him and as he could scarcely stand against so rude a wind upon so slippery a floor, he began to be afraid. Something occurred which he had not foreseen and in strange surprise he yielded to blank unbelief. Thus it often comes to pass with us. We arrange our faith according to our estimate of the perils and perplexities that lie in our path. We even plan the events that will probably happens to us and we feel sure that we can trust God in all these circumstances, but a fresh contingency arises upon which we had never reckoned, a wind which we had not thought of, and forthwith our courage fails, we do not trust God for that. I wish we had a faith which was free from and totally independent of weights and measures—a faith that trusted God for ten thousand things as readily as for one—that would rest upon God for a century as securely as for a day, a faith that would just cast itself, sink or swim, into the sea, believing in God that whether the winds were blowing or not, whether the waves were raging or not, everything is easy to omnipotence, and nothing can compromise the faithfulness of the Most High. But alas! my brethren, we are always being startled by some new prodigies. Perhaps we are too fond of calculating changes, predicting probabilities, and forestalling the future. Hence comes our chagrin when we are frustrated or disappointed. If we walked on, leaving everything to His divine decree and watchful

providence, confiding in our heavenly Father's wisdom and His love, we need never be amazed or bewildered—our faith would be equal to any rumor or riot that might arise.

Just as unbelief introduced into Peter's mind a terror of the wind and upset him at once, so the devil has ways of finding some point or other upon which to overthrow our faith. I have sometimes been full of joy in the Lord and I have usually noticed that depression of spirits almost invariably follows and that from some circumstance which at other times would not have caused me the slightest disturbance. Satan knows how to use any trivial thing to spoil the luster of our faith and the placidity of our joy. With what subtlety he will assail you! A difficulty you have been laboring under may have been removed by God's providence. You may be very grateful and ready to set up your stone of thankfulness, and to praise the name of the Lord. Soon a new difficulty will be suggested. While you are blessing God for all His mercy, all of a sudden some trouble like a squall occurs. It may not be worth mentioning, but it will assume such strange proportions that it covers up all your joys and leaves you a prey to unbelief. How watchful we ought to be against unbelief, for of all sins this is one of the most heinous. Like Jeroboam, of whom we read that he sinned and made Israel to sin, unbelief is itself a sin and becomes the parent of all sorts of sins. We sometimes talk to one another about our doubts and fears as if they were infirmities to be pitied rather than crimes to be loathed, but we seldom talk to each other about the delinquencies of our conduct, such as angry tempers, hasty words, harsh judgments, unbecoming levity, or lax conversation. No, we would be ashamed to confess transgressions that are far too common among people professing godliness. Why is it that we do not blush to acknowledge our doubts that mistrust God and our fears that stagger at His promise? Are they not quite as much sins against the commandment of the Lord and the duty of every faithful Christian as drunkenness, or dishonesty, or any offense against the moral law? To doubt the faithfulness of God is atrocious. Who can estimate the amount of virus there is in the sin of unbelief? It would stab at the very heart of God. It would pluck the crown from the head of JEHOVAH. Let us hate unbelief with all our hearts and watch against it. Remember that it can attack us from any quarter of the compass unless we keep perpetual guard. Those of us who have been boldest in the Lord's battle and foremost in His service, may yet be overtaken with this sin, succumb to its debasing influence, and be left in the rear, shorn of honor and covered with shame. And now for a fifth reflection—

**V. IF AT ANY TIME FAITH SEEMS TO BE OVERTURNED BY AN INVASION OF UNBELIEF, IT THEN SHOWS ITS TRUE CONQUERING CHARACTER.**

Peter was soon made to doubt, but with what ease did he begin to pray! I like to think of the spontaneous character of Peter's prayer. He begins to sink and he prays in a minute. He no sooner finds himself going down, than he says, "Lord, save me." This shows what a living thing his faith was. It might not walk the water always, but it could always pray, and that is the better thing of the two. Your faith may not always make you rejoice, but if your faith can always make you trust the precious blood, that is all you need. Your faith may not always take you to the top of the mountain and bathe your forehead in the sunlight of God's countenance, but if your faith enables you to keep in the straight road that leads to eternal life, you may bless God for that. To walk the water is not an essential characteristic of faith, but to pray when you begin to sink is. To do great wonders for Christ is not indispensable to your soul's being saved, but to have the faculty of always turning the heart to Him in time of distress is one of the sure marks of divine grace in the soul. I am sure Peter did not intone his prayer on that occasion. I am quite certain that he did not believe in having to search for music to which to set that prayer. It just came up from his heart. And are not these the very best prayers, that well up from the soul, freely flowing forth from the lips because the heart compels the tongue to speak? The heart, knowing its own bitterness, reveals it unto the Most High. Beloved, are you prayerful in such a respect as that? I do think it is a blessed plan to set apart time for prayer, and so to take your half-hour, or your hour, as you may be able, for secret devotion, but better than the set time for prayer is the spirit of prayer. While a regular habit of prayer is a great help to piety, the spirit of prayer promotes habitual, unintermitting communion with God.

I once asked, down at Wootton-under-Edge, where Mr. Rowland Hill's study was and they told me that was a question which they could not answer. "Why, how is that! Did he never study his sermons? Oh! yes, he was always studying his sermons—it did not matter whether he was in the parlor or in the paddock, attending to his correspondence or looking after the cows, going out into the village to buy goods or walking in the garden amidst flowers and fruits—he was always studying his sermons, so that he was one of the readiest of preachers. That is one of the best habits that a man can cultivate. So they said it was with his prayers. He was not a man who shut himself up for prayer, but he seemed to be always praying wherever he went. He would be often heard saying true prayers when others fancied his mind must be full of other thoughts. The story that is related of him at Mr. George Clayton's chapel in York Street, you will, most of you, remember, for I have repeated it several times. After he had been preaching, he lingered about the building so long that the pew-opener went to him and told him that it was time to close the place. The old gentleman was found tottering round the pews singing to himself—

*“And when I shall die,  
‘Receive me,’ I’ll cry.  
For Jesus has loved me,  
I cannot tell why.  
But this thing I find,  
We two are so joined,  
That He won’t be in glory  
And leave me behind.”*

This peculiar practice of conversing, as it were, with oneself—of repeating texts of Scripture or verses of hymns, the propensity to pray with the heart and lift up the thoughts continually to God—well, it seems to me an indication of spiritual-mindedness above any common level. "Know," says David, "that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for himself." But how should the man thus set apart behave himself? The Psalmist will tell you, "Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still." Oh! for a mind always active, never stagnant, always tranquil! Oh! for the wings of a dove. Take a pigeon. Put it away in a cage—send it a distance in the country. Keep it there awhile. Then, on a certain day, let it loose—you will soon know where its home is, for it mounts up, flies its circuit, takes its bearings, surveys its course, and then away it pursues its trip through the air till it reaches the dear old dove-cote. Does your soul make its way to the ark and return to its rest with a like sacred instinct? All through the day you may be taken up with many cares. The shop or the warehouse, the nursery or the kitchen, may be your cage. There comes a moment when you are let loose and you get free. Where does your soul fly? Flies it off like a dove, to its resting place? When it see the crows on the wing, if anybody asked me what trips they were taking, I could not tell them. But if they would wait till evening I would quickly solve the riddle, for then they would be quite sure to be seeking their nests. Does your heart, in the time of trouble, fly away to God? Does your spirit in the hour of distress seek the rock of refuge and speed to the Great Deliverer? Then are you like Peter. You may not always walk on the waves, but you can always say, "Lord, save me." Can you say that from your very soul, resting on the Savior's mighty arm? Then have you got the essence of a faith which will lead you through growth in grace up to the perfection of glory.

#### **VI. OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS EQUALLY KIND, BOTH TO STRONG FAITH AND TO LITTLE FAITH.**

Strong faith says, "Bid me come to you on the water." Now Christ sometimes refuses to answer prayer after its own kind. The prayer of anger, in which James and John entreated that fire might come down from heaven to destroy the Samaritans, He rejected. The prayer of ambition, when the two sons of Zebedee craved a place, one on His right hand and the other on the left, in His kingdom, was denied. But the prayer of faith, though it looked bold and venturesome, our Lord received graciously and answered speedily. "Bid me come to you on the water." "Come," said Jesus. Is strong faith represented here by

any of you? If you ask a great thing of God, you shall have it. If you have but faith in Jesus, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you, for the desire of the righteous shall be granted. “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” Have you a great plan of usefulness! Have you an intense anxiety for soul-winning! Have you a strong yearning for the evangelization of your district! Believe, fear not to tempt fortune, for all things are possible to him that believes. The hands of Christ are pledged to faith. He will honor the trust you repose in Him. If you will but repose in Him, He cannot, will not deny you. True faith is His own work. If He has worked the prayer in you, He will surely answer it. Go forth, then, in this your might of faith and the Lord be with you.

*But perceive you not how kind He also was to little faith?* No sooner does Peter begin to sink and cry, “Save me,” than there is manifest good will and quick help in the Savior’s movement. “Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him.” Our Lord did not pause to parley. He did not upbraid him or say, “Peter, you have dishonored Me by your unbelief.” He did not accuse him harshly, rebuke him sternly, or punish him severely, leaving him to go down twice, and pulling him up the third time thus inflicting in him the pangs of death without its extreme penalty. Ah! no, the prompt help was ready for the pressing emergency. The sinking one was made to stand. After that He said, “O you of little faith, wherefore did you doubt?” Christ gives liberally and upbraids not—or when He does upbraid, it is always after His large generosity has abated the grievance. He gives the choice portion and then chastens us for our profit. He does not make us wait till we are submerged again and again, but He listens at once to the feeble cry of His sinking servants and not till after He has delivered them does He expostulate with them. Aesop tells a story of a man who saw a boy drowning and sat on the shore, and lectured him upon the imprudence of venturing beyond his depth. And there are some people who do the same with poor sinking souls. They tell them of what they ought to have done, of what they have not done, and of what they ought now to do, which they cannot do—but they do not stretch out their hand to help them. They observe the burden which is too heavy to be borne, but they lift not a finger to lighten it. Our Lord takes off the burden first, sets His servant on his feet and then gives him a word of counsel or of rebuke. Go to Him, then, Little Faith. Go to Him before you retire to your rest. Tell your Savior of the grief that distracts you, of the woe that overwhelms you. Confess your sins, acknowledge your inability to rescue yourself, and cast yourself now upon the gracious promise of the loving God. Whether you be strong or weak, my brother, repair to the same place, for Jesus stands at the gate of mercy’s house willing to receive all those who come to Him.

### EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

#### MATTHEW 14:25-27.

##### *25. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.*

Jesus is sure to come. The night wears on and the darkness thickens—the fourth watch of the night draws near, but where is He? Faith says, “He must come.” Though He should stay away till almost break of day, He must come. Unbelief asks, “How can He come?” Ah, He will answer for Himself—He can make His own way. “Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.” He comes in the teeth of the wind and on the face of the wave. Never fear that He will fail to reach the storm-tossed boat—His love will find the way. Whether it is to a single disciple or to the church as a whole, Jesus will appear in His own chosen hour and His time is sure to be the most timely.

##### *26. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit: and they cried out for fear.*

Yes, the disciples saw Him—they saw Jesus, their Lord, and derived no comfort from the sight. Poor human nature’s sight is a blind thing compared with the vision of a spiritual faith. They saw, but knew not what they saw. What could it be but a phantom? How could a real man walk on those foaming billows? How could he stand in the teeth of such a hurricane? They were already at their wits’ end and

the apparition put an end to their courage. We seem to hear their shriek of alarm, “they cried out for fear.” We read not that “they were troubled.” Before, they were old sailors and had no dread of natural forces. But a spirit—ah, that was too much of a terror. They were at their worst now and yet if they had known it, they were on the verge of their best. It is noteworthy that the nearer Jesus was to them, the greater was their fear. Lack of discernment blinds the soul to its richest consolations. Lord, be near and let us know You. Let us not have to say with Jacob, “Surely God was in this place and I knew it not.”

*27. But straightway Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.*

He did not keep them in suspense, “Straightway Jesus spoke unto them.” How sweetly sounded that loving and majestic voice. Above the roar of waves and howling of winds, they heard the voice of the Lord. This was His old word also, “Be of good cheer.” The most conclusive reason for courage was His own presence. “It is I, be not afraid.” If Jesus is near, if the spirit of the storm is, after all, the Lord of love, all room for fear is gone. Can Jesus come to us through the storm? Then we shall weather it and come to Him. He who rules the tempest is not the devil, not chance, not a malicious enemy—but Jesus. This should end all fear.

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