

Expository Tracts. No. 7.

WALKING
ON THE WATER.

BEING

THOUGHTS ON MATT. XIV. 22–33.

BY THE

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WALKING ON THE WATER.

MATTHEW XIV. 22–33.

- 22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.
- 23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.
- 24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.
- 25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.
- 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.
- 27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying. Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.
- 28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.
- 29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.
- 30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried saying, Lord, save me.
- 31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?
- 32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.
- 33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

READER,

The miracle recorded in these verses, is one of singular interest. It brings out in strong light the character both of Christ and His people. The power and mercy of the Lord Jesus, and the mixture of faith and unbelief, in the best Christians, are beautifully illustrated. Come and learn this day the lessons which the passage contains.

1. Learn, in the first place, from this miracle, *what absolute dominion Christ has over all created things*. You see Him “walking on the sea,” as if it was dry land. Those angry waves which tossed up and down the ship of His disciples, obeyed the Son of God, and became a solid floor under His feet. That watery surface, which was ruffled by the wind, bore up the feet of our Redeemer, like a rock. To our poor, weak minds, the whole event is utterly incomprehensible. The man of science will tell you that to walk on water is a physical impossibility. Enough for us to know that it was done: enough for us to remember, that to Him who created the seas at the beginning, it was perfectly easy to walk over their waves when He pleased.

There is encouragement here for all who desire to be true Christians. Let them know that with Christ nothing is impossible. Nothing can overcome a Christian, if Christ is on his side. There is nothing created, which is

not under Christ's control. "All things serve Him." He may allow His people to be tried for a season, and to be tossed to and fro by storms of trouble; He may be later than they wish in coming to their aid; He may not draw near till the "fourth watch of the night:" but never let His people forget that winds and waves and storms cannot move without Christ's permission. "The Lord on high is mightier than the voice of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." (Psalm xciii. 4.) A believer may do all things and bear all things through Christ strengthening him. (Phil. iv. 13.)

2. Learn, in the second place, from this miracle, *what power Jesus can bestow on them that believe on Him*. You see Simon Peter coming down out of the ship, and walking on the water, like his Master. What a wonderful proof was this of our Lord's divinity! To walk on the sea Himself was a mighty miracle; but to enable a poor weak disciple to do the same, was a mightier miracle still.

Reader, there is a deep meaning in this part of the history. It shows you what great things Jesus Christ can do for those who hear His voice, and follow Him. He can enable them to do things which at one time they would have thought impossible; He can carry them through difficulties and trials, which without Him they would never have dared to face; He can give them strength to walk through fire and water unharmed, and to get the better of every foe. Moses in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, the saints in Nero's household, are all examples of Christ's mighty power. A true Christian need fear nothing, if he is in the path of duty. The waters may seem deep; but if Jesus says "Come," he has no cause to be afraid.

3. Learn, in the third place, from this miracle, *how muck trouble Christians bring upon themselves by unbelief*. You see Peter walking boldly on the water for a little way; but by and by, when he saw "the wind boisterous," he was afraid, and began to sink. He forgot the wonderful proofs of his Lord's goodness and power, which he had received. He considered not that the same Saviour who had enabled him to walk one step on the water, must be able to hold him up for ever. Fear took away his memory: alarm confused his reason. He thought of nothing but the winds and waves, and his immediate danger. His faith gave way. "Lord," he cried, "save me."

Reader, you have here a lively picture of the experience of many a believer! There are many who have faith enough to take the first steps in following Christ, but not faith enough to go on as they began. They take fright at the trials and dangers which are in their way. They look at the enemies that surround them, and the difficulties that beset their path: they look at them more than at Jesus; and at once they begin to sink. Their hearts faint within them: their hope vanishes away: their comforts disappear.—And why is all this? Christ is not altered. Their enemies are not greater than they were.—It is just because, like Peter, they have ceased to "look to Jesus,"

and have given way to unbelief. They are thinking about their enemies, instead of thinking about Christ. Oh, that men would lay these things to heart, and learn wisdom!

4. Learn, in the last place, from this miracle, *how merciful our Lord Jesus Christ is to weak believers*. You see Him stretching forth His hand immediately to save Peter, as soon as Peter cried to Him. He did not leave him to reap the fruit of his own unbelief, and to sink in the deep waters: He only seemed to consider His disciple's distress, and to think of nothing so much as delivering him from it. The only word He utters is the gentle reproof, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Reader, you see here the exceeding "gentleness of Christ!" He can bear with much, and forgive much, when He sees true grace in a man's heart. As a mother deals gently with her infant, and does not cast it away because of its weakness and waywardness, so does the Lord Jesus deal gently with His people. He loved and pitied them before conversion, and after conversion He loves and pities them still more. He knows their feebleness, and bears long with them. He would have us know that doubting does not prove that a man has no faith, but only that his faith is small. And even when our faith is small, the Lord is ready to help us. "When I said, My foot slippeth; Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up." (Psalm xciv. 18.)

Reader, consider how much there is in all this to encourage men to serve Christ. Where is the man who ought to be afraid to begin running the Christian race, with such a Saviour as Jesus? Where is the sinner who need hang back, and shrink from the service of Christ? Come this very day to Jesus, and commit your soul to Him. Begin, if you never began before, to take up the cross and follow Christ. Fear not that the Son of God will ever let you perish, if you will only put your trust in Him. If you fall, He will raise you again; if you err, He will bring you back: but His mercy shall never be altogether taken from you. He has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," and He will keep His word. Only remember, that while we do not despise little faith, we must not sit down contented with it. Our prayer must ever be, "Lord, increase our faith."