

upon our material needs rather than upon Him who is able to supply all our needs; when we concentrate upon the temptation from which we seek deliverance rather than upon our Deliverer. Such prayer is a source of weakness rather than of power because it enlists our imagination on the side of our temptation rather than on the side of Him from whom we seek help"—Clovis Chappell, Sermons From the Miracles, p. 190.

- E. Peter's prayer a lesson for us: "And beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and took hold of him, and saith unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt" (30b,31)?
1. Peter was honest with himself in facing up to reality. He did not close his eyes to fact. He realized his condition and did not try to conceal the facts. Neither did he depend on his own strength alone: He called upon Christ's. "There is one thing, if possible, worse than a blind and stupid pessimist who sees nothing but shadows, and that is a blind and stupid optimist who sees nothing but rainbows"—Clovis Chappell, Sermons From the Miracles, p. 190.
 2. He called upon resources available: He prayed frankly to the point. His prayer was a confession of failure, also of need. He forgot his pride (Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:8,9). He took the mighty hand of the Lord: the hand that had healed the sick, restored life, given sight to blind eyes, cleansed lepers, etc.
 3. The result: "Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and took hold of him..." (Mt.6:30,31).

CONCLUSION -

- I. Is anyone here now sinking into fear, doubt, or the dark sea of sin? If so, then do what Peter did: Take the hand of God which is offered to you today.
- II. One of the great tragedies of this age is that the average Christian tries to walk by sight rather than by faith in God's word (2 Cor. 5:7; Romans 10:17).
- III. Our sinking lives would be different if we had more faith like that of Peter. They would not be so dull, weak and uninteresting.
- IV. May we heed the Lord's invitation to "Come unto me." Whatever our condition may be, his hand is able and willing to supply our need, if we come obediently (Luke 11:5-13).

STUDIES IN MARK--LESSON SIXTEEN

Walking On the Sea

Mark 6:45-52; Matt. 14:22-33; John 6:15-21

INTRODUCTION -

I. LESSON LINKS AND CONTEXT.

- A. After returning from a preaching tour through Galilee, the apostles reported all to Jesus (Mark 6:30). So great was their work and its effect upon the people that Herod, who had recently beheaded John, became convinced Jesus was John risen from the dead. To escape from the multitude and gain time for rest and relaxation, Jesus suggested that they retire to a desert place (Mark 6:31; Matt. 14:13).
- B. However, the people saw them going across the sea, and great numbers ran, by land, and crowded around him again (6:32,33). Instead of sending them away at once, he had compassion on them, taught them, then, late in the day, fed 5000 men with five loaves and two fish.

II. NATURE OF THE LESSON.

- A. How Jesus taught Peter a lesson in trust.
- B. The potential of the believer in Jesus is always supremely great, but his possibilities are always in keeping with God's word (Romans 10:17).

DISCUSSION -

I. THE DISCIPLES AND MULTITUDE DISMISSED (6:45-47).

- A. Sent away: "And straightway he constrained his disciples to enter into the boat, and to go before him unto the other side to Bethsaida, while he himself sendeth the multitude away" (45).
 1. The miracle of feeding the 5000 aroused such excitement the multitude was about to take Jesus by force and make him king (John 6:15), so he sent the disciples away, then dismissed the cheering crowd.
 2. Then he retired into the mountain to be alone in prayer.
- B. He departed: "And after he had taken leave of them, he departed into the mountain to pray" (46).
 1. He had foiled the attempt to make him king by force.
 2. He spent much time alone in prayer: Picture that night.
- C. In the midst of the sea: "And when even was come, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and he was alone on the land" (47).
 1. This says "when even was come" they were "in the midst of the sea," the place where he came

to them "about the fourth watch of the night."

2. It was a night of great distress, but of little progress, until he came.

II. JESUS CARES FOR HIS DISCIPLES AND CAME TO THEM (6:48-50).

A. Walking on the sea: "And seeing them distressed in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them, about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking on the sea; and he would have passed by them" (48).

1. It was while the disciples were in distress on the sea, contending against contrary winds, that Jesus came to them, revealing himself in a remarkable way which demonstrates to all his power to relieve the distressed, restore the faith and calm the fears of believers on the dark and stormy sea of life.
2. Jesus often sees and comes to us in a way that makes us dread rather than welcome his approach, as we face life's "contrary winds."
3. Sometimes he comes asking for service that we do not wish to render (Matt. 28:18-20; 25:14-30; Romans 1:14,15).
4. Sometimes he comes demanding that we give up certain sins or pleasures that we do not desire to give up (Matt. 16:24; 6:33; James 1:7,8; 1 Thes. 5:22; 1 Tim. 5:6).

B. Supposed it was a ghost: "But they, when they saw him walking on the sea, supposed it was a ghost, and cried out" (49).

1. That was an unexpected appearance, and a new miracle.
2. Jesus does come to us: He is a Spirit, not a phantom (Titus 2:11; Rev. 3:20).

C. Their fears calmed: "For they all saw him, and were troubled. But he straightway spake with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (50).

1. He will calm the fears of any soul who will listen to and feed his faith on his word (Prov. 16:20).
2. The Good Shepherd knows and sees every struggle his church is facing now (Prov. 15:3; Heb.4:13).
"The Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5; Matt.28:20).

III. JESUS AND PETER (Matt. 14:28-31).

A. Bid me come: "And Peter answered him and said, Lord,

if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the waters" (28).

1. The effect of the Lord's presence upon Peter was immediate and great: Fear was displaced by faith and impossibility was turned into possibility.

2. Whether his motive was worthy or unworthy (pride), he had no desire to undertake what he did until he recognized Jesus.

B. Peter walked: "And he said, Come. And Peter went down from the boat, and walked upon the waters to come to Jesus" (29).

1. Jesus and his words always inspire such faith in the heart of one who truly knows him, as long as the mind is fixed upon him (Hebrews 12:2; John 8:37).
2. He delights in a daring and romantic faith, but not once did he praise a prudent or conservative faith (Matt. 9:20-22; 14:28).

3. The storm, gravitation, and human experience were against Peter, yet Jesus encouraged him to take the unusual step.

4. Instead of rejoicing at and encouraging great faith today, we are often among the critics and those who discourage such bold and daring action.

5. It is possible some of Peter's fellow disciples tried to belittle and discourage him, though it is not recorded.

C. Peter's fear: "But when he saw the wind, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me" (30).

1. His example is inspiring, even if he did fail.
2. He dared to try and do what others were afraid to attempt to do.

3. One had better try and fail a thousand times than to be too cowardly to undertake anything.

4. Peter's daring step looks foolish only because of our mistaken view.

D. Why did Peter fail? What happened?

1. He focused his mind on his difficulties rather than on the Lord's promise: Like the ten spies of Israel, an easy & foolish thing to do.

2. "He saw the wind:" So obsessed by the unfriendly forces, he forgot to assess and concentrate upon the friendly powers at his disposal: Counting his liabilities, he forgot his assets.

3. We may have similar experiences: Did you ever feel you were losing your grip on the Lord, prayer, or things spiritual (Luke 8:14)? This will be the case "when we focus all our attention