

## **Reasons For Doubting Christ**

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Why did you doubt?" [Matthew 14:31](#).

OUR Lord did not begin His dealings with Peter in this emergency by asking him that question. He first stretched out His hand and saved him from his peril and then He said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" When a man is in trouble, help him out, first, and then blame him for having got into it, if you feel it necessary to do so! It is cruel to bring your censure to bear upon sinking Peter. First give him your help, lest he perish in the sea. And when you have done that, you may chide him afterwards for any fault that you perceive in him. This is always the way with our Master. He gives liberally and upbraids not, except when there shall come to be a special reason for our spiritual profit, when a little upbraiding may do us good. Now I am going, first, to use our text and then I am going to alter it. I shall first speak to God's people, and say, "Why did you doubt, O Christian?" And then put it into another tense altogether, and address it to the unconverted, and say, "Why do you doubt, O you who know the Gospel, but have not yet believed it?"

I. LET US USE THE TEXT AND QUESTION GOD'S PEOPLE—"Why did you doubt?" I am probably addressing some Brothers and Sisters—perhaps a great many who have been through a season of profound gloom and in the midst of that gloom there has been the element of spiritual evil. To be gloomy and depressed is not sinful at all, but there may have been in the midst of that, the sin of unbelief. There may have been a doubting of God—a distrust of His Providence—a questioning of His love. Now I come at this time to such a Brother or Sister and say, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Can you answer that question? Shall I help you?

First, I will suppose some reasons which, if they do exist, will justify you in having doubted. And then I will take the reasons you, yourselves assign, one by one. I shall put them to you to know whether the supposition is allowable.

You may doubt if on former occasions you have found God unfaithful to His promises. If He has lied to you—if, after having said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you," you have found, say on one occasion at least, that He has utterly failed you and forsaken you—then you are perfectly justified in doubting Him in the future and you were justified in doubting Him just now. What do you say to this supposition? I would not ask you to speak what is not true, even for God, Himself, for there is nothing more detestable in God's sight than for

us to attempt to honor Him by a lie. A pious fraud is a most impious blasphemy. No, speak the truth. Has the Lord been a wilderness or a land of darkness to you? Has He said and has He not done it? Can you put your finger upon a single promise and say, "I relied upon this and I found it failed me." He said that they that trusted in Him would never be ashamed nor confounded. Can you say that you did trust Him in some particular event and the failure you experienced made you to be ashamed? Brothers and Sisters, I know what you will say to that supposition. You are grieved almost to hear it made. You rise up with loving indignation and you say, "God is faithful and true! He has not gone back from His promise in any single instance." Then, Brothers and Sisters, I will put it very softly—and I have reasons for doing it very softly—"O you of little faith, if it is so, why did you doubt? If He helped you before, why did you doubt Him in the next trouble? If He fed the five thousand with the loaves and the fishes, why did you think that He could not also make you walk the waters of the sea?

There is another supposition. You may doubt if your case is a new one and so superlatively difficult that it is quite certain that God cannot help you in it. You require something more than Omnipotence and the case is so perplexing that even Omniscience cannot see a way out of it! Now, as I make that supposition, my heart is laughing at the very absurdity

of the terms I use, for if we say Omnipotence, that is all power. It is not possible that anything could be beyond that. And if we say Omniscience, that is all wisdom. It is not even imaginable that anything can surpass that! So I think I had better dismiss this supposition at once. Only it is sometimes put in Scripture by way of question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear." When you answer, "I know that God is able and I know that God is wise to help me," then I must whisper that question again, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

But I will suppose something else, that you may doubt if God has abolished the promises. Dear Brother, is it true that the Bible has run out and become like an old almanac that is done with—that God has spoken somewhere in the dark places of the earth and has said that the seed of Jacob may seek His face in vain and that He will not be held to His Covenant or bound to a single promise that He has made—that He has revoked them all? You are astonished that I should even utter such a supposition! Your soul rises indignantly to repel the imagination, for you say, "All the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him, amen, unto the Glory of God by us." You know and you are assured that He cannot change. He is "the same yesterday, today, and forever," and you are quite certain that He speaks the truth when He says, "My Covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that has gone out of My lips." "God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent." You are persuaded of all this, my dear Brothers and Sisters, are you not? Then all these promises being true and all confirmed with the sprinkled blood of Christ, I must have your ear yet again while I just whisper into it, "Why, then, did you doubt? Why did you doubt?"

There is only one more supposition and it is the worst of all. You may doubt if God Himself has entirely changed—a supposition which has been put by the Psalmist in other language, "Will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? Does His promise fail forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" Now, do you believe for a single moment that God is changed in His love or in the objects of it? Do you think that He has cast away His people whom He did foreknow, that Christ will lose that which He bought with His precious blood? That He will strike off the precious stones of His breastplate the names which from eternity were written there? That He will forget the children of His choice when He said, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you"? And, again, "the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you"? And yet again, "I am God; I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed"? Do you not remember reading the words, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end"? Well, Brothers and Sisters, since those things are so, I shall have to come back to my old question, and say, "O you of little faith, with an unchanged God to trust to, why did you doubt?"

Now, I cannot think of any other supposition that might make it justifiable to doubt, so now I am going to hear or I will repeat on your behalf—some of the answers to the question which, perhaps, you would give.

First, I hear one say, "I doubted because my sinful life became unusually clear and distinct to me. I hope I have been converted, have felt my need of Christ and have put my trust in Him. But I never had such a sight of myself as I had a little while ago. It seemed as if the fountains of the great deep were broken up. I saw that I had sinned foully and fallen far—my best actions I discovered to be polluted and the whole of my life to be marred through and through with an evil spirit and with everything that was contrary to the mind of God. When I saw sin like that, then it was that I doubted." Yes, dear Brother, I know your feelings and such doubts as yours often—too often—come upon men. But did you not know, was it not told you from the beginning, that your sin was such that you were condemned in the sight of God and accursed by His Law? Did you not know that in spite of your sin, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the very chief? Did you not know God willed not the death of any sinner and that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"? Yes, you did know it and, therefore, I can only dismiss that excuse by saying that since you did know that with all your sin, the boundless Atonement was able to meet it—since you did know that with all your blackness, the fountain filled with blood had power to wash it out—"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

"Ah," you say, "but it was not quite a sight of my past sin—it was because of my sinfulness by nature. I thought after I was converted that I would not feel any sin within me, or that if

I did know its presence by experience, that I would conquer it. Instead of that it has been a fight with me every day and only the other day, when I was exposed to temptation, I was carried right off my feet. When I got alone in my chamber and saw how badly I had acted, I looked into

my heart and discovered it to be still full of all manner of evil. And though I hope there is some Grace within me, yet there is so much of the old nature that I know not what to do! That is why I doubt." Yes, but, my dear Brother or Sister, whichever you may be, did you not know of old that the Lord Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of the devil in you and that where He has begun the good work He will carry it on? Did you not know that the Spirit of God is given to help our infirmities and that He sanctifies us and all the elect people of God—that from day to day He leads us to the fountain for sin and for uncleanness in order to be cleansed from sin and that He brings us the power to overcome sin? Did you not know that Christ is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before His Presence with exceeding joy? Yes, you did know that and therefore that meets all difficulty—and I have to say to you again that the excuse will not hold water. "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

"Ah, Sir," says one, "you do not know everything. I doubted because I have been in a case such as never happened to anybody before. I was in a dreadful trouble. O Sir, my trouble was so peculiar that I could not tell it to anybody and I would not have liked to have done so. Wave after wave swept over me. I could not see any way of escape from it at all. It was as extraordinary problem that I am sure that I must be the man that has seen affliction peculiarly marked out from all the rest." Yes, dear Friend, that is very likely. I know a great many that have entertained the same opinion of themselves that you do of yourself—and I have even sometimes put myself down in the category, though you may not think so. But do not you know that it is said, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers Him out of them all"? Did you never read, "In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"? Did you never hear of Gad, of whom it is said that, "a troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last"? Have you not read, "They shall surely gather together against you, but not by Me. Whoever shall gather together against you shall fall for your sake. No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." Did you not know that? If you did not, there was the Book which you might have searched to find the promise. And knowing all that, dear Friend, though your case may be peculiar, you should not have given place to doubt at all, for you have a unique Savior! His people are a peculiar people, but He is a peculiarly glorious Deliverer and Captain to them and He will bring all of them safely to the eternal Glory. Therefore, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

I can suppose another person answering on quite another score. He says, "Ah, Sir, I doubted in anticipation of the trouble because I felt I could not bear the trial I felt that I should sink under it if it did happen. O Sir, I had a fear upon me that if it did occur I should perish." Yes, I too know that experience. How did it turn out? Did the dreaded ill occur? "No," you say. Then why did you need to be crossing the bridge before you came to it? "Oh, but it did occur," you say. Have you perished by it, then, Brother? "No," you are compelled to answer. "I found such strange assistance given in the time of need and such singular succors just when I was in my deepest temptation. You know, Sir, I had looked for the trouble, but I never expected to find such friends as God raised up and such remarkable helps as He found for me." Ah, I see, God has given you two eyes and you shut one of them! You had only looked at the dark side—you did not look at the bright side. "Oh, but," perhaps you say, "I did not think there was any bright side." No, I know you did not, but God knew that it was there! Has not He said to you of old, many times, "Cast your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you"? That is to say whether there is a bright side to it or not, cast it on the Lord and it will be well with you! "He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." "Trust in the Lord and do good: so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." You may say, in confidence, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up," for He has said, "I will never fail you nor forsake you." Well, you knew of this and so I come back to my question, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

I could multiply these cases, but I ask each friend who has been doubting to state his own reason to his own heart—he will easily be able to find an answer.

Now, I want your ear just a minute or two in order to see how your doubts and fears look under certain aspects. "Why did you doubt?"

Look at your doubts in the light of your conversion. You remember when you first knew the Lord. You remember those happy days and weeks when you were first converted—it was the time of your spiritual honeymoon. Suppose, at those times, somebody had said to you, "You will doubt the Savior." You would have said, "Never! Why, the wonders of

God's Grace to me in saving such a lost wretch as I am are so extraordinary that others may doubt, but I never shall." Well, then, just look at these doubts in that light.

After that you had a severe trial, but now you have got out of the difficulty which troubled you, have you not? You have gained the shore again after your buffeting with the waves. Now I want you to look at your doubts in the light of your deliverance. The preacher need scarcely tell how disgusted he has been with himself when he has passed through a trial to think that he could not have left it in the hands of God—he began tinkering with the matter himself and made a failure of it because he tried to meet the need with his own wisdom which was nothing but perfect folly and ignorance! Do you not feel the same? Could not you set yourself up for a scarecrow and laugh at yourself? I am sure you could if the Lord has delivered you.

Once more. How do you feel about your doubts when you get into Jesus Christ's bosom—when your head is where the head of John was and the Lord is looking at you and saying, "I have loved you with an everlasting love"? Suppose the next thing He said was, "Why did you doubt?" Why, you would look at Him with tears in your eyes and say, "Dear Master, I pray You do not say anything about it, I am so ashamed of my doubt. Oh, let it be forgotten. I never had any cause to distrust You. I grieve to think that I should ever have got into a state where such doubts were possible."

I will put you in another position. How do you feel about your doubts when you try to teach other people? Here is a dear, doubting Sister, or Brother and you are trying to comfort the downcast soul. Do you think about yourself when you needed comfort—when you were down in that very way? It is a dreadful thing for a man, when he is very sad and low-spirited, if some Christian Brother goes and cuts a bit out of the man's own sermons and sends it to him. I have had that experience myself, sometimes, and, as I have read my own words, I have said, "What a fool I am!" That is wonderfully near the truth when you say it about yourself, Brother. I do not think we have ever hit the nail on the head much more clearly than when we say we are foolish and ignorant—for that is exactly what we are—only with a dash of sin with the folly when we begin to doubt the ever blessed God who ought to be trusted with very implicit confidence, even as a little child trusts to its mother's love! Never ought a doubt to come into our hearts towards our Savior!

And how do you think your doubts will look when you get to Heaven and look back at them? P. Mrs. Hannah More tells us that she went into a carpet factory and when she looked at the carpet, she could not make out any design and she thought that there had been some mistake. There were long pieces that seemed to have no beauty in them whatever! But the manufacturer said, "Madam, I will take you round to the other side"—then she saw the beauty of the pattern that was being woven into the fabric! Well now, while you and I are here, we are full of doubts because we cannot make the pattern out. We are on the wrong side of the carpet! But when we get to Heaven and see all that God intended and worked for us, I think that even in Heaven we shall call ourselves fools and say, "How could I have judged before my time that splendid design of Providence which was hidden in the Infinite Wisdom and Love of God's gracious heart? How could I have been dissatisfied with that which was working my lasting good?" Why, then, did you doubt?

Two or three words just to say that I think that I can give the reason why some Christians occasionally doubt. Perhaps their brain is weary. I pity them, but they must not pity themselves too much. Perhaps they have not been living near to God. Perhaps they were getting rather proud and thought that if they walked on the water they must be fine fellows. Perhaps they took their eyes off their Master. I reckon that was what Peter did. He began to look at the winds and the waves and, therefore, he could not be looking at Christ, too. Perhaps they began to walk by sight, instead of by faith—that is enough to make anybody sink! There

must have been some cause or other, but, whatever cause it was, it is cause for sorrow, cause for regret, cause for repentance—for the Lord deserves to be implicitly trusted. In answer to His question, "Why did you doubt?" we give this reply, "Good Lord, forgive Your servants in this thing and lead us in quietness and patience to possess our souls."

Thus much to the people of God.

II. Now LET US SLIGHTLY ALTER THE TEXT AND QUESTION THOSE THAT ARE NOT GOD'S PEOPLE. We will pause a minute and use the text in another tense. The Lord Jesus Christ has been into this world and done a great deal for sinners and, as the result of what He has done, He has bid us go and proclaim everywhere free salvation through His precious blood. He declares that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. Many know all about this. They are well acquainted with the truth of Substitution and the way in which God can be just and yet the

Justifier of the ungodly. But they are still full of doubts. They have not believed. Dear Friend, I think I can give you some good reasons for your doubting if I am allowed a little scope for imagination.

And I suppose, first of all, that you have heard of a number of others that have been to Christ and have believed in Him and yet have perished. If you have really known such persons, you are perfectly justified in not believing in Christ. You have a brother, I suppose, that trusted Christ and yet died in despair. You have a sister, perhaps, that put all her confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet was not saved. Now, I am absolutely certain that nothing of the kind has ever occurred. I am equally certain that beneath the cover of Heaven, during all time since Adam fell, there has never been a solitary instance of a soul sincerely seeking the mercy of God through Jesus Christ and putting its trust in Him and yet missing eternal salvation! So if you cannot have that reason, why do you continue to doubt?

I will suppose another reason, namely, that you yourself have been to God with earnest prayer, seeking salvation and trusting in Jesus and yet you have been refused. Now, I am sure that that is not so—absolutely sure! I remember the instance of a man who did not even believe in God or, at least, he thought he did not, but he was awakened to a sense of his danger and he went to God with some such prayer as this—"O God," he said, "if there is a God, convince me of Your Being. Lead me to Yourself, if it is that I have sinned against You and You are angry with me—and I fear it is so. And if You have sent Your Son to be an Atonement for sin, let me know the power of that Atonement." He said that that was all he dared to say at first—but he ended in solid faith and in a renewed heart and life! No matter how far off a man may be from God, if there is a hearty and earnest seeking after Him through Jesus Christ, he will find Him. You have not tried it—I am sure you have not tried it. If you had done so, you would have succeeded. Were it possible that a man had tried simple trust in Christ and were not saved, then, indeed, he might give a reason why he doubts. But you have no such reason.

I cannot think of any other except that you have been informed that the blood of Jesus Christ has lost its power. Have you been assured that the Gospel is abrogated? Have you been given to understand that the New Testament is a dead letter? Have you been persuaded that the gates of Mercy are shut? Have you been led to believe that the invitations of Grace are no more to be given? "Oh, no," you say, "our state were wretched, indeed, if that were the case." Well, then, Brother, Sister, as long as there is blood in the fountain, why do you doubt its power to cleanse you? As long as there is good news for sinners, why do you write bitter things against yourself? As long as a promise stands and there is the invitation, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely," why do you doubt? Surely, if these things are as the Bible declares—that the Lord is ready to have mercy upon the very chief of sinners who come and put their trust in Jesus Christ—you have no cause whatever to not come!

Well, now, I am inclined here to quit your reasons, as I cannot suppose any others that are not conspicuously false. But I can imagine that you suppose that you have such great and special sins that you cannot think Christ can save you. Now I undertake to say this from a very wide experience and observation of persons converted to God—that if you will mention any sin that you have committed, I will mention someone who fell into that same sin and who has been saved from it. If you mention the peculiar aggravations connected with your life, I think that even my own observation will enable me to mention some person who, if not exactly in that form, yet in some other equally bad, has gone as far into sin as you have done and yet has been saved, who, though guilty of unmentionable crimes, has yet been washed in the blood of the Lamb and made whiter than snow! O Beloved, we cannot be telling you always of what we know, but we do sometimes delight to think that there are cases in Holy Scripture which we may tell of as much as we like! There is cruel, savage Manasseh! There is blood-thirsty, threat-breathing Saul! There is the woman that was a sinner! And there is the dying thief that rejoiced to find cleansing in the wounds of Christ! And why should you not be forgiven? There is no cause for doubt!

"But my point," says one, "is, Can this be for me?" You believe the Gospel is true, but you doubt whether it is for you. Well, no, it is not for you if you are not a sinner. If you can say, "I am not guilty," then farewell to all hope, for Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners! If you are a sinner, surely He came to save such as you are! The blessings of the Gospel Covenant are directed to the lost. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Can you not get in there? Perhaps you remember Mr. Whitfield's speech to his brother who had long been in distress of mind, who said at last, across the table, "George, I am lost." George said, "I am glad to hear it," and answering his brother's startled expression, he continued, "because the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." That brief utterance of the Gospel lifted his brother out of despair into a clear and abiding hope in Jesus Christ! Perhaps you have heard of Mr. Whitfield, again, in the Countess of Huntingdon's house when some great lord complained to her ladyship that Mr.



Whitfield had used most extraordinary language in his last sermon—most repulsive to men of taste. Mr. Whitfield said he was there to answer for himself and he asked what the expression was that he had used. "Why," said the nobleman, "you said that Jesus Christ was willing to receive the devil's castaways." "Yes," he said, "I did say that, and I mean to say it again. Did Your Ladyship observe that I was called out of the room a few minutes ago because the bell rang?" "Yes," said the Countess. "And when I went to the door," continued Mr. Whitfield, "a poor creature stood there who had been living in a state of sin and had come to such a condition that even those that associated with her before were unwilling to come near her. She had become unfit even for the lowest work to which the devil, himself, could put her—and she found all her old companions had cast her away. She heard me preach in Tottenham Court and use that expression. It exactly fitted her case. She felt that she was one of the castaways of the devil, himself, and so she sought to tell of pardoning Grace and dying love."

You see, then, that Christ can save to the uttermost! Ah, it is so. It is so! If you have gone far into sin, weep over it. Confess it before God with deep repentance, but come to Jesus Christ just as you are and, whoever you may be, there is no room for doubting! The door of the Ark was a big door. There was room for the hare to go through who went in quickly. And room for the snail to go through with his slow pace. But there was plenty of room for the elephant when he came marching along—there was a chamber on purpose for him and fodder on purpose for him. And so, you elephantine sinners, there is a door big enough for you to come into the house of Mercy! There is provision made and a place for you—and without you, the company will not be complete within the Ark of Saving Grace.

May God bless that open declaration of the Gospel to some poor devil's castaway who has got into a corner of the tabernacle tonight! May such be able to find hope in my Master, Jesus Christ.

Well, now, I think I hear another say, "But I have a cause for doubt which has not yet been mentioned." I think I can guess it. You doubt because you have so many times refused Christ that you say you cannot expect Him to receive you now. That is the reason, is it not? "I have gone into great sin, Sir," you say, or, "I have been trying to save myself by my self-righteousness and my good works. And I cannot expect Him to receive me now." You think Christ is like the sons of men such as you have known. Once a man went to a stable keeper and asked him what would be the price of a horse and gig for the day. "So much," he answered. The enquirer went round the town to see if he could not get one cheaper and when he found that he could not make a better bargain, he came back and said that he would have the one which he had asked for at the first. "No," said the owner, "you will not. You have been going everywhere else and now you may go where you have been. I do not want your business."

You fancy that Jesus Christ is like that, do you? You have been round to Moses and asked him the expense and you find that you cannot meet the claims of the Law. And you have been round to the pope and asked him the price and you find that ceremonies do not

satisfy you. You have tried the Oxford way to Heaven and tried the Roman way to Heaven, but they do not suit you. You cannot get there by them and now you think you dare not come to Christ because you have so long neglected Him. But you may—He is willing to have you at any price! No, he is willing to have you at no price and if you will come at no price, come without money and without price He is still willing and able to receive you, for the Gospel peals out yet these clarion notes, "Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely!" O you who doubt Christ, why do you doubt?

Now I will say no more but this. The way to deal with this state of mind of everlasting doubt and hesitation is to end it—to end it once and for all! Repent, dear Hearer, and may the Spirit of God help you to do so now! Repent of ever having disbelieved the Son of God. Repent of ever having distrusted the blood of Jesus Christ. Repent of ever having doubted the power of the Omnipotent Spirit of God!

I know not to whom this Word will come with power, but, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, I command you to leave off doubting Him and to begin to believe in Him at once! Cease your doubts without a moment's deliberation! You believe Christ Jesus to be God. I know you do. You believe what the Scripture says concerning Him— that He is a Savior able to save. Man, by the living God I charge you not to perpetrate such an insult to Christ as to go on doubting Him! You have the burden of all your sin, but He is a Savior! Trust Him with it, trust Him now! "No," you say, "I will get home and pray." Do not wait for that! I wish you to pray when you get home as much as ever you like,

but, first of all, believe in Jesus Christ! Trust Him on the spot. "Oh," says one, "it will be a venture." Venture, then, Friend—venture! "May I pass in by the gate of mercy?" asks another. Pass through it, whether you may or not, for there never was a soul sent back for coming to Christ by mistake! Never was heard of such a thing as a soul attempting to pass in by the portal of faith and Jesus Christ saying, "Ho, there! What are you doing? You have no right to trust Me. You are not one of My elect. You must go back and you must not dare to trust Me. You are not the kind of man I want." There was never such a case known and there never will be such a case, for Christ's own words are, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." That is any, "him," in all the world that comes to Christ, He never will, He never can cast him or her out! I would make a dash for it, Sinner, if I were you! Sink or swim, neck or nothing, here it is. "I do believe—I must believe—in Jesus Christ and if I perish, I shall still be clinging to His Cross." You will never perish there! May the Lord of Covenant Mercy draw you to this tonight, or drive you to it. I care not which—so long as you get to it and Christ becomes All-in-All to your souls! Let us pray for that.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MATTHEW 14:14-33.

Verse 14. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick Different persons take different views of

multitudes according to the state of their minds. Many an officer, when he sees a multitude, considers how long it would take to march them from a certain place. Another man begins calculating how much food they will all need. Another begins to estimate their wealth, another to calculate what per cent will die in the year. But the Lord Jesus Christ's heart was so full of pity and mercy that the thing for Him to do as He looked upon them was to have compassion upon them. He healed their sick and helped them in their sorrows.

15. And when it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is nowpast; send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves food. This really meant "Get us out of the difficulty." There was no hope that so many of them could get food in the villages and the disciples as good as said, "We cannot bear to see them starving. Help us to forget it."

16. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; you give them to eat.' 'You do not know what you can do, seeing I am with you," the Lord answered. "You can feed them all." O Christian Church, never give up the most difficult problem! It may be worked out. The city may be evangelized, crowded as it is! The nations may be brought to Christ, superstitious though they are, for He is with us!

17. 18. And they said unto Him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them here to Me. He will not work without us. Whatever little gift or ability we have must be consecrated. Christ could easily have made loaves and fishes without taking their little stock, but that is not His way of working. "Bring what you have here to Me." Whenever we have a Church that brings all its store to Christ—(when shall we ever see such a Church?)—then He will be pleased to make enough for the multitude!

19-21. And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass and took the five loaves, and the two fishes and looking up to Heaven, He blessed, and broke it, 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. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children. A wonderful evening that must have been! Just as the sun's slanting rays would fall upon the mighty mass of people, Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, was scattering His beams of mercy over them at the same time! To Him it is nothing to feed five thousand—nothing to do it with five loaves! Where He is present, we may expect wonders, unless, indeed, our unbelief should hamper Him, for sometimes it is too sadly true He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief. O my Soul, chide yourself if you have ever thus hampered the hands of Christ!

22, 23. 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. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain by Himself to pray. It was a very busy day that He had had. If you read the narrative for yourself, you will be astonished at the number

of miracles which He worked that day—and all of them in addition to the preaching—so he must have been well worn with weariness, but He sought rather, the rest and refreshment of prayer than that of sleep.

23, 24. And when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. It did not matter, however. For if His disciples are in a storm, so long as Christ is praying for them, all the storms in the world are unable to sink them! They had a good Protector. From the outlook of that hill, His eyes, which could see through the distance, observed and regulated every breath of wind and every wave upon the lake.

25, 26. 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! "A phantom!" Having all the superstition so natural to sailors, they thought that this was something quite supernatural and boded ill to them.

26-28. 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. Strange impulse! It showed genuine faith mixed with that imperfection and presumption which was so common a feature in Peter's character. However, his Master admired the confidence.

29, 30. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the boat, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me! When he began to be afraid he began to sink. As long as his confidence in his Master lasted, he could walk the waves.

31-33. 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. Then they that were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, of a truth You are the Son of God. Well might they worship, for they had seen abundant proof of His Deity. They worshipped Him, saying, "of a truth You are the Son of God." They could not have meant by this, "You are a superior person, an excellent character." They would not, if they were Jews, have worshipped a mere man, for of all things you ever saw in this life, you never saw a Jew that would worship any form that was visible to the eye! The captivity of Babylon delivered the Hebrew race from idolatry altogether. They may fall into superstition of another sort, but never into idolatry. Mark that. There has not been since that time a man of Jewish race who would have worshipped Christ if he had not believed Him to be God.