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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at "Galeed" Chapel Brighton,
Sunday morning 5th November 1967

"But straightway Jesus spake unto them saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, 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. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Mathew 14 v.27-31.

These narratives, the actual experience, are not written for narratives sake, there is a teaching in them, teaching to profit if the Holy Ghost should make application of the truth. It is very noticeable in the Gospel how the Lord in various ways manifested His deity, His divine power, manifested Who He was; and what a comfort this is, if the Holy Ghost should reveal that glorious One. O how we do need the blessed Spirit to apply the Word of God and make it spirit and life in our experience.

Even in this chapter the Lord Jesus intended that there should be insufficient food for this multitude, but when they said we have here but five loaves and two fishes, He said, bring them hither to Me; and this is not confined to this narrative only, it applies to every condition and circumstance that we may be involved in, in life's journey.

You will remember the same thing with the father who had an afflicted son, but the disciples could do nothing with him and the Lord said, "Bring him unto Me". O if the Holy Ghost should grant you faith to bring everything to Him. It needs faith in Him to believe that He is, to believe that He is divine, that His power is omnipotent, that His wisdom is infinite, that nothing is impossible to Him. "Bring them hither to Me". So, in the narrative that we have before us, the Lord Jesus purposely instructed His disciples to gather into this ship. He knew what He would do, when they were gone He went forth into a mountain to pray, and what did He pray for? The Lord Jesus, when on earth, He prayed for nothing but for His people whom He came to redeem, and all His prayers were concentrated in that blessed 17th John, it gathered up all His desires, all His intercession for His dear people throughout all time. As He said in that prayer, "I pray not for these only, but for them also who shall believe on Me through their word". Therefore, that prayer of the Lord Jesus will have a perpetual validity while the earth stands; and while these disciples were gone forth and the ship was tossed with waves, He was in a mountain apart for prayer.

"But when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a Spirit and cried out with fear, but straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid". The Lord has spoken thus to His people, His word is a living word, because He is the same yesterday, today and for ever. It is a great thing to believe by God given faith in the Person of God's eternal Son incarnate. It is because He is what He is that the word of God is eternal and it is because He continueth ever that He has an unchanging Priesthood, so that the Scripture is the eternal word of the eternal God and is as valid this morning as when it was given by inspiration of God, and His people will live to know it and to receive the benefits of it.

"Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid". If that same blessed One should come to us in all our various circumstances in

this changing scene of life, we shall know then what that peace is. But I believe we shall be "careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make our requests known unto God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

"Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid". But this word will only be spoken in the midst of conditions that cause fear, not otherwise. It would be meaningless. Some of you may have known just what this is. The Lord may speak it to you in the midst of united trials, in the home, among the family, and the exercises and anxieties of business or in the conflicts of your soul. He may visit you in a hospital and just whisper this word into your heart: "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid". That is sufficient. I. What a Person He is! Do we know Him? Has He ever come to us in the midst of snares on every hand, in the midst of impossibilities, in the midst of deep sorrows, high rising fears? "Be of good cheer, it is I". If it were not 'I' to us it would not matter who it was, for we shall be brought to that:

"None but Jesus, can do helpless sinners good".

We shall be brought to and kept to that blessed centre and Object of faith: "It is I, be not afraid", and when He speaks you will not be afraid, it does not matter what concerns you. O the sufficiency of the fulness of Christ! of His divine ability!

"And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water". Peter's faith was attracted to Christ, at this moment his faith was strong. He was not looking at the water, he was looking at Christ. "If it be Thou"; and this is very sweet in experience. Some of you who have passed through deep waters, very real afflictions and the Lord has spoken, "It is I, be not afraid", has it not made a response of faith in your heart, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the waters". There is something very real there. Not take away the waters, he did not ask for a calm, but, "If it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee, on the waters". Things remain just as they are. O the power of the voice of the dear Redeemer, the friend of sinners, the Brother born for adversity, when you are brought into the depths, this alone will do it: "It is I, be not afraid".

"Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come". Faith wants to embrace Him. For a moment he lost sight of the waves, for the moment you had lost sight of all your distresses, your anxieties, your infirmities, your pains, be able to say, "My light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things that are seen but at the things that are not seen, for the things which are ^{not} seen are eternal" and are seen in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. "And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the waters". This may interpret some of your cases, may be bring back some sweet season of refreshing from His presence. Ah my friends, it is good, as we said lately, for faith to bask in the sun of Christ's smiles, but it needs the same faith in a greater exercise to cleave unto Christ, to come unto Him when all around the soul is giving way and we feel to be sinking in deep mire where there is no standing, and I do believe that you will find, and in my little way I have proved that I have received more instruction and teaching in my soul in a path of affliction and adversity than anywhere else.

But look at this sweet faith, look at the response, that is what I feel here: "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid", then faith speaks, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee, on the waters", and so as troubles surround you and pains and conflicts and adversity and persecutions, if the Lord speaks in the midst of it and says, "It is I", faith will say, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee" really, in the midst of all this fear and confusion, and chaos and sinking, "Bid me come unto Thee". "And He said, come". So that we see

Peter did not act presumptuously; as one friend said in prayer this morning, not rush into His presence presumptuously. But he asked: "Bid me come unto Thee". The attitude of soul here, to my mind, is very blessed. There was trouble, they were in jeopardy, the boat was likely to capsize, but the Lord spoke to them, and faith responded.

"He said come; and when Peter was come down out of the ship he walked on the water to go to Jesus". The great point here to my mind is this, that the storm was not allayed at all, there was still a tempest, but for the moment you hear nothing about the tempest: "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water: and He said, come, and when Peter was come down out of the ship he walked on the water to go to Jesus". Have you ever known that mighty faith? For the moment he was unconscious of the storm, he had his eyes upon the Lord Jesus, what a sight. O my friends, you know the difference, when you see everything but Jesus, when you look to yourself, see and feel your own weakness, when you look at your enemies and see their strength, when you look at the earth and see deadness, darkness and despair. But have you ever lost sight of everything in a sight of Christ?

"He said come". Come belongs to the Gospel, depart belongs to the law, and if the Lord has ever said come to you under any circumstances, he will never say depart. Have you ever heard his voice saying come? It is the same come really as in this Gospel. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, I will give you rest". I only can give you rest. I have everything in Me in which you can rest. "He said come". "And when Peter was come down out of the ship he walked on the water to go to Jesus". Habakkuk says something like this when he prayed to the Lord: "In the midst of the years remember mercy", and they were very solemn years in the days of Habakkuk. The Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation were threatening the people and it caused Habakkuk to tremble, but he asked the Lord to remember His mercy in the midst of the years, that is to say, right in the midst of those conditions of way and conflict and confusion; and it is a mercy to have that faith that can trust in the Lord in the midst of conditions which threaten us with destruction, and the Lord will bring us there. O what teaching there is in this narrative! But the Lord is about to teach Peter something. It was evidently Peter's disposition to be self-confident, and he could be confident in his faith, he had a good faith, but the Lord will not allow us to live upon our faith. He will not allow us to live upon our experience even if it is a good experience. There is the trial of faith, and He will remove every support and help but Himself.

"But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid". Now we begin to hear something about a storm. The eyes of his faith were off from its blessed Object and he looks now at the storm, the wind boisterous. Does this interpret your experience? This is the trial of faith. O what infinite wisdom there is in God's dealings with His people, none teacheth like Him, and can you realise, do you feel as you look back in your lifetime and your experience, that you are conscious of a measure of this leading and teaching in those things through which you have been caused to pass or through which you are passing now. You may feel that every day brings something new, to renew your trials and difficulties, the temptations of the devil. You may feel that your strength is waning, your heart and your flesh fails, and that you will never hold out and hold on. Well, "Pour not on thyself too long, lest it sink thee lower, Look to Jesus, kind and strong, mercy joined with power", but I can tell you this that the Lord will cause you to look to yourself long enough. Long enough to prove that there is "no help in self I find, though oft I've sought it well."

"But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid". They were afraid before, but the Lord Jesus coming allayed their fears, but now turning aside from the Lord, he was afraid and began to sink. I am

sure this is an experience. Every one led of the Spirit will know it, it does take in a little of what we were considering lately, "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing", if you have never known what that is you have much to learn yet, and the force of that word is this, "There is no standing". "But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and beginning to sink". This also is in soul exercise, when the Lord withdraws the influence of His presence, when He brings us into darkness and not into light and the beasts of the field creep forth into your soul, and you seem left under the power of unbelief and atheism which is in our nature. When the word of God is blacked out as we used to black out the windows in the war time, it seems as though every precious voice, the words of the Scriptures are blacked out. When the Lord is completely silent you begin to sink. Why, this is a living soul. A nominal professor knows nothing of this sinking, he can keep his faith alive, keep his soul alive in a kind of life, religious life, religious activity. But he began to sink, and this is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is a peculiar experience, but I feel it, at the moment, there is something very precious in it. I know what it is, some of you know what it is to feel to sink into despair. "The pains of hell gat hold upon me, I found labour and sorrow", and if the pains of hell get hold upon you my friends, you will sink. What a mercy, what a mercy it is that when we are in darkness we have got no light. You may think that is strange, but there are those who can light a fire and walk in sparks of their own kindling. Be thankful that if, when you are in darkness, you have got no light and there is only one cure, "Cause Thy face to shine and we shall be saved".

"He began to sink". This is one purpose for the record of Jonah, a case which has been a comfort to many sinking souls. In his experience he was in the belly of hell, but the great thing was, he had a life that the belly of hell could not kill. He had a faith that lived and laboured in the bottom of the sea with the weeds wrapped about his head. He remembered God. The memory of faith is different from mental memory. You may have a mental memory and remember things, but when faith remembers things by the Spirit it brings back the things remembered into the heart. Jonah said, "I remembered the Lord", "I remembered He is almighty, I remembered He is omniscient, I remembered that He is immutable, unchangeable, and therefore my prayer entered into heaven, into His holy temple.

"Beginning to sink, he cried". It was not the sinking that gave evidence of life, you cannot live on your sinkings, you cannot live on your bondage, but the evidence of life was the cry, "And beginning to sink, he cried". These are simple words, but how searching they are, and if we put questions to our own souls: Have you ever cried unto the Lord? When my heart is overwhelmed within me, unto Thee O Lord will I cry, when my heart is overwhelmed within me lead me to the Rock that is higher than I". This is faith, and faith has an Object and that Object is all-sufficient, it is higher than I, higher than sin, greater than the devil. "Beginning to sink he cried saying, Lord save me". Now we have come down to rock bottom, to reality: "Lord save me", and we shall be brought to that crisis. Have you ever been brought to a crisis in your soul, in your experience? It is nothing less than salvation is of any use. If a man comes here and he is a rich man, it would be no comfort to him to say well, if I sink I have got plenty of money, you may come to a wise man here, a scientist when he is sinking, and say, well your knowledge of things is great, not a bit of good. Have you ever been brought to a crisis? It is a spot where nothing is of any use to you but the Saviour. It was just the same with the gaoler, when those prison doors were opened and he was about to kill himself, "Paul cried out, do thyself no harm, he came and said, sirs, what must I do to be saved?" . In the fall we are in a sinking condition. We are in a city of destruction, and we have destruction in our very being because of the ruins of the fall.

"But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid and beginning to sink he cried saying, Lord save me". That was all the religion he had got and there is a heap of religion that has not got that in it.

This is the one thing needful. You throw away all the rest of your religion and if you have not got this you have got nothing.

"Lord save me". Do you know it? Do you know that sinking? This is the way that we learn the truth of that word in Deuteronomy, "He is the Rock, His work is perfect". O then, by faith to be brought to go out of self unto Christ, and I believe that the exercise of soul in the main is just that, a continual going out by faith, out of self and all that self is, out of the world and all that the world contains, unto Christ and all that He is, all that He has, all that He has accomplished, all that He is now doing in heaven, ever living to make intercession for sinners. Well, you look at these verses and see if you know anything about them.

"But straightway Jesus spake unto them saying, be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid". He said to them earlier in the chapter when the disciples said, "Send the multitude away, Jesus said, they need not depart", "The Creator is here, omnipotence is here, the earth is mine and the fulness thereof, they have no need to depart". Do you know Him? We were singing about Him,

"With heaven and earth at His command,
He waits to answer prayer".

"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". It is the same had now. That firm and friendly hand of divine and invincible grace, He stretched it forth. We have the same precious truth in the illustration of the dove, went out from the ark but could find no rest for the sole of her foot, but she came back, did not fly straight in the window in the ark but hovered around the window. O some weary doves, they come to the windows of the Gospel, to the means of grace and they cannot fly straight in, they hover around, but Noah put forth His hand and took her and pulled her in unto him in the ark, that is an experience of a weary dove. Sometimes in your weariness and conflict you enter into the sanctuary of God and sit and listen to the unfolding of the Gospel and it is as though the Lord by His Spirit puts forth His hand and takes hold of you and brings you in, right inside of the Gospel, unto Himself.

"And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him". That is a precious word, beautiful expression. He caught him, he was sinking, he was falling, may feel to be falling over a precipice, or as one with the house afire, there is only one way of escape, to jump from the window and if there should be a sheet held in the street below to catch you, I believe it was John Bunyan who said that he would venture to jump into eternity into the arms of the Lord Jesus and if He catches me I shall be saved, if not I shall venture upon Him.

"He caught him". Has He ever caught you? Caught you by His word, it may be like this, caught you in this, "Fear not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed for I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." That will catch you, keep you from sinking. Or He may say to you, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee". "And beginning to sink he cried, saying, Lord save me, and immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand". Sometimes He waits to be gracious. But O He knows the cases of His people. He knew that this needed immediate attention. "Stretched forth His hand and caught him". Is not this just what some of you feel, to be sinking and sinking, falling, you need those almighty arms of love and mercy to be layed beneath you to catch you. No freewill here. O free and sovereign grace. The precious truth that is in these verses in experience., and you will only know the truth by being brought into those conditions where Christ alone can be of any avail, "and immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand", "and caught him" and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? He did not despise his little faith. Such a little faith was great a little earlier when he walked to the Lord

Jesus on the water. Weakness is not in faith but it is in the one in whom it dwells. But faith under the power of the Spirit will rise, rise and break through every tie that attempts to bind you to the earth. It will break through every objection. Faith, hope and love, these three mighty men will cut their way through and will bring the soul to the Lord Jesus.

"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ?" Why did he doubt ? When you see the Lord Jesus, when He speaks, when He gives this loving reproof when through fear you have doubted Him; O the tenderness ! What mercy there is in this gentle rebuke, "Wherefore didst thou doubt ?". It is the same gracious loving rebuke that we have in Isaiah, the church there said: "My way is hid from the Lord, my judgement is passed over from my God,". I am in a place now where the Lord does not see me, and He does not take up my case, He does not execute judgement for me, He takes no notice of me. But the Lord said, Why do you say it ? Why do you say such things ? "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard that the mighty God, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary, there is no searching of His understanding", Why do you say it ?

"Wherefore didst thou doubt ?" Well, when the Lord brings us back thus, O how precious He is to the soul ! Well, may He give us a measure of this precious faith that we may live by faith and die in the faith.

Amen.