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Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor  
on Thursday, January 22, 1981.

Lesson. Matthew 14. vv. 14-36.

But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. Matthew 14. 27.

Our beloved friends will appreciate and remember at the Prayer Meeting on Tuesday the address was from the ancient history of Israel, containing an immense wealth of spiritual teaching, comfort and encouragement for us even in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and it will be so to the end of the dispensation. It was a matter of investing by divine command in property in the purchase of a field which was overrun by the Chaldeans. A mysterious directive containing a wealth of Scriptural teaching to the people of God concerning our blessed Lord Himself. "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Even when His elect, ruined in the fall, overrun by enemies, the fields were purchased by electing love and redeeming blood. So the whole exercise pointed to the final blessed turning of captivity and a work of divine grace in those erstwhile dead in trespasses and sins, and there was a wonderful resurgence of vital godliness, love, grace, divine power in the land. This word I felt relevant to our spiritual path and exercise before God, for surely there is still much land to possess. We have turned, not according to our own choice but the Lord's, to this Scripture of the New Testament. There is the same principle operating in the narrative relating to the inland Sea of Galilee and the disciples. The episode may be viewed physically, externally, with a blessed spiritual content. So there are a number of facets to it that are undoubtedly the work of the Holy Ghost in the souls and lives of those who fear God here below.

I do not wish to weary you with repetition, but I felt on leaving bed this morning the word read flowed into my spirit and felt this was the subject; the beautiful word the Lord speaks only to His beloved people and they surely need it. "Be of good cheer." Only the Lord can give you

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good cheer. There may be those of bonhomie, who get on with others: to a child of God only One can cheer his spirit, that is the Lord Himself. You do not betray the deep feelings of sadness, distress, pain you often experience. It is a good thing when people are able to hide their innermost feelings. The Lord is able to <sup>give</sup> a degree of calm serenity in trouble, even a brightness, as to dear Emily Vine of blessed memory. Only the Lord can give you this. "Be of good cheer." What would bring cheer to your spirit? The Saviour's presence which we felt on Lord's Day, and we thank Him for it,- answers to prayer, promises fulfilled and performed, your soul pardoned, happy, favoured, ransomed; your soul basking in the sunshine of everlasting love. You will be of good cheer. There is nothing outside of the Lord, the glorious Trinity and His blessed Book, His dear Word, His eternal truth can fill your spirit with holy cheer. There is everything, generally speaking, though the Lord is kind and good,- there is everything to weaken and dispirit, perplex, distress, grieve the people of God and a tempting foe bruising us. David said, "Although my house be not so with God," not as he could wish or hope for. Only the Lord can give you this cheer. If the Lord is pleased to give you a good husband or wife, will that bring you cheer? It will to a degree, but it is to know Christ. There are those who have a good brain, powers of concentration, who sail through exams: if they fear God that in itself cannot bring good cheer. Is there not, my friends, with you an aching void the world can never fill? That heart the Lord has sanctified, capacitated so you are jealous of your heart. It is reserved for Christ once crucified; for my Saviour. Can you say it is reserved for Him? If so and He enters your heart you will know what good cheer is, as Israel when he said, "It is enough. The Saviour has come." My heart is reserved, not for rivals; it is for Christ. Happy soul! Don't you feel increasingly stripped of all below, in self, and in a certain sense of all creatures? It is not that you lack love, affection and dear esteem, a special love and union to the Lord's people. It does mean you feel it is the Lord's work to strip you and give you to feel you are alone. We are alone before God and we shall be when we die. Many outlive their contemporaries and find themselves alone: only the Lord can bring this good cheer.

✓ This is a beautiful word and it is calculated to relieve your down-



cast spirits and remove the dread of Satan's power and the power of men. He says, "Be of good cheer." You may dread the mountains, the storm, the tempest. I was impressed in reading the Lesson by the words of the Saviour to Peter. He did want to emulate the example of his Master and walk on the water, and the Lord said to him, "Come." He actually came out of the ship and walked on the water. Do you ever walk on the water? God is so with you that you are on top of things and everything is beneath you. These are rare occasions. You do not do it in a proud, self-sufficient way: by His Spirit you are on top of things. There is a tremendous difference. For a little while you are on top, with sweet confidence in the Lord: often your troubles are on top of you and you are underneath. "Come," and he came out of the ship, so there must have been faith, and he looked to the dear Saviour. "he walked on the water, to go to Jesus." Have you this year felt sweet confidence in faith of the Lord's appearing and help and blessing, so you have walked on the water to go to Jesus? Then being a poor man, a sinful, unworthy man, certain things engaged his attention. One was the boisterous wind. He saw the effect of it, and you can contemplate the removal of his eye from Christ: he started to look round and that is where trouble begins. Take your eye off Christ and begin to look round: the wind is boisterous and with all the difficulties and immediately you are beginning to sink. I wonder where the friends are tonight? have any of you been there this week? You might say surely after the Lord's Day you would not sink at once! If you are favoured it is not long before the devil comes and things distress you and you are beginning to sink. Possibly the devil said to you, "Your prayers are vain; there is nothing in them: there will be no answer," and oh the distress of your spirit: you are beginning to sink. My friends, the Lord does answer prayer. We need to pray without ceasing; to be all prayer. The Lord does answer prayer: let us magnify and exalt His Name together! I believe many of the people of God find in their <sup>earlier</sup> days of spiritual experience the Lord is pleased to answer prayer soon. When you get in a deeper path, and you will know when you do, you find things very different. You cry and shout and pray for years for things you believe God has promised you. The Lord does show you tokens for good, but these are major things. You cannot give up because God is in them. I will tell you what impressed me. "Immediately



Jesus stretched forth His hand. He will never let you sink. You may have thought you were going to sink. I have thought, this is the time in the pulpit when I shall be in confusion. He never lets a child of God sink. "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, - may He say it to us.- O thou of little faith, Surely knowing Me, did you think I would let you sink? O thou of little faith," It is a loving reproof: it does us good, and almost with a jerk we are brought ✓ back to our right mind. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Is there any reason in Me for you to doubt?" It may be applicable to souls here tonight. You may be afraid of certain things.- It is good when we are afraid of ourselves. We may be afraid of the future, of unanswered prayer, of the Lord not appearing for us, and so on. "O thou of little faith. After all the years of experience of My divine faithfulness, immutable love, enduring mercy, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" This will be a good word for us in the swellings of Jordan. It may be the Lord will so favour us with heavenly transport that we are filled with bliss. Many tremble when they enter the water, and He says to us, "O thou of little faith, after all I have done for you and brought you to this day, wherefore didst thou doubt?" The river overflows its banks all the time of harvest. Look at the ark of the covenant and the priests bearing the ark going over on dry ground in the midst of Jordan. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" This covers everything, whatever you have from God and God is the Author of. If the matter is of God this applies. God will be with you and stand by you. We pleaded at the Throne of Grace, "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." So, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" I should say, are there any able to produce evidence that the Lord has neglected or forsaken them? Could you bring evidence confirmed in one thing that the Lord has neglected or forsaken you? He has never left you: it has always been goodness and mercy. The Text will carry you to Heaven.

"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Those who have good <sup>cheer</sup> have a secret: they have seen Christ before they have seen death. They have seen what He did with death and the grave. He took all the terror and the curse and changed death and made it for the people of God



victorious, triumphant. The place of death is transformed: it is not ferocious, a terrible enemy armed with eternal vengeance; it is the kindest friend. I confess I am speaking in a way I had not anticipated, I say to you dear ones, bring it forth whatever it is you are sinking under, and He says, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" What a word for the ministry, beginning, continuing and ending! "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" It is not a matter of seeing or hearing the words, but hearing them from His mouth with power, and there will be a transformation in you: the Lord will strengthen your faith. You will go on your knees and ask the Lord to forgive you for your doubts and fears. "Wherefore didst thou doubt?" It is the height of folly and God-dishonouring after all He has spoken and done. It spells ~~spells~~ out for you that the Lord will be so loving and gracious and faithful to you all through and take you to Heaven. Why doubt? We alternate: we rise high and sink low. This word teaches and reproves us.

✓ Jesus constrained them to get into the ship. 'Constrain' is a word that belongs to the Church of God, to the election of grace. The Lord must constrain. He does not drive, - He chastens; He does not drive and use the sheer weight of omnipotence to compel His people to do this or that. Nothing that is done unwillingly is acceptable: it is that which is done willingly. A powerful, heavenly influence permeates, envelops and fills <sup>the</sup> spirit, and influences the whole behaviour and attitude to the Lord. "Love brings to compliance the will, and causes the deed to be done."....Those who fear God seek to be constrained in all things of life in marriage, following the Lord in His holy ordinances, in all the steps of providence and spiritually. They are moved by eternal grace and power and it is sweet to comply. It is a great help to you when you are able to look back and see how the Lord constrained you concerning your habitation, His Church, the ministry, or serving Him in the diaconate. "The love of Christ constraineth us." to take up our cross and tread the rough and thorny path: it is not easy. Once the Lord constrains you you put your hand to the plough and you never remove it: it is there until you die.

"Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship," and two things happened. The Lord Jesus went into a mountain to pray and they were



alone. "and when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea." Christ loved to be alone with His Father. We shall not get anything unless we are alone with Him. "But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, - half way." Some of you are in the midst of the sea. They were tossed with waves: you will be, and it will increase. Those who have come into a deeper path and close to the time of their departing may tell you as to what they have come into. "tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary." The wind was opposite to them. It will make a sailor of you, and what renown belongs to such! "The Christian navigates a sea" with a secret. They were in the midst of the sea, - are you? And the wind was contrary. I get concentrated seasons when it seems impossible to go on. Do you know it? Jesus was up there praying for them, - He is for you. He was once crucified, dead and buried; He is now risen, ascended and enthroned and interceding for you. When you realise it you will have joy. The Lord Jesus is in Heaven interceding for you and it will be well. In all your concerns and responsibilities, in the family, in business the Lord is interceding for you. He comes in the fourth <sup>walk</sup> of the night, that is the last watch between 3 and 6 am. Sometimes you wonder if the Lord is coming at all. May it be so for some who feel they are nearing Jordan, He will come in the fourth watch and give the great joy of answered prayer.

"He tarries oft till men are faint,  
And comes at evening late."

Faith is tried and it is strengthened.....There are times when the people of God are so agitated and perplexed their poor minds hardly know how to stand the strain: it is nothing new. "They were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear." You will understand if you are in it. Poor soul, the Lord knows how low His people come: the richest of Hymnwriters had these times. "But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer." Satan soon disappears: he skulks off. "Be of good cheer," and he is gone.

There were those in the Scriptures who knew good cheer. Hannah did. Eli said to her, "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her

countenance was no more sad." She was delivered from Peninnah and her reproach was removed. That is a great thing: and she had the sure knowledge of what the Lord would give her. "Be of good cheer." Sara had it. She laughed in unbelief because the natural powers had failed in her body. The Lord gave her "strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised." She laughed again, a laugh of rejoicing, happiness and peace at the wonder of it. The Lord's people know what it is to have good cheer. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." You precious ones who live near the Lord, "Be of good cheer; it is I. You know Me, My voice. It is My hand. I am here with you." And what is the blessed result? "Be not afraid, - be not afraid of anything." Why? Because you are as Ruth, she knew the secrets. One was, "A full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." Ruth knew this through her journey: she ran under His wings. That is the place: no one can touch you there; no devil, no creature. You are under the wings of the Almighty. Blessed be God.