



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 14:22-33

“The Supernatural Life of the Redeemed”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Tonight our subject is “The Supernatural Life of the Redeemed.” And I want you if you will to turn to Matthew chapter 14. Just one or two words of review, we reviewed a good bit last time, so I just want to remind you that we have passed from the beginning of the Bible and the announcement of redemption down through the ministry of Jesus Christ and the salvation that he has procured in his saving work of dying for us upon the cross at Calvary. And then last time, we looked at the subject of assurance of salvation. How we might know that we have this lift that Christ has provided. And I suggested that there were three ways we can know from the evidence of the life within, the good works, which we do, not that we do too many or that they always give a clear sound. Sometimes Christians, because they do possess the old nature, give an uncertain sound. But nevertheless there are some things in the Christian’s life that can be traced to the fact that there has been a new birth.

We can also know from the witness of the Holy Spirit within us or the moment that we believe in Jesus Christ the third person of the trinity comes to dwell in us. And he himself testifies to the fact that having believed in Jesus Christ we have everlasting life. And finally, and perhaps most important of all, the testimony of the word of God, which is to the effect, that if you believe in Jesus Christ then you do have everlasting life. And

we have that on the testimony of God himself. Therefore, our assurance rests ultimately upon the word of God. So the good works, the witness of the spirit, and the word of God. These are the means of assurance, so that we can know that we have everlasting life.

Now then I also discussed the question, very briefly, how we can know that we have life forever, or the security of the believer. And we turn to John chapter 10, verse 27, 28 and 29. And we looked at those verses in which the Lord giving the promise of John chapter 10, verse 28 says, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand, nor shall anyone pluck them out of my Father's hand,” and the other promises that pertain to our security in Christ. So we have the assurance of life now. And we have the assurance of life forever.

Now tonight we want to consider just exactly what is this Christian life that we receive when we receive Jesus Christ as personal savior? So turn with me to Matthew chapter 14 and in a few moments we'll read beginning at verse 22.

Now this is the great incident in which Jesus walks upon the water. But like so many of the miracles which our Lord performs, the miracles are in a sense parables of teaching. They are designed to set forth for us, not only the fact that Jesus Christ is a supernatural person and can perform mighty feats, but they are usually designed to illustrate the manner in which he ministers to us in the spiritual sphere. So that it is as if God were to say to us, “Look at this natural sphere, this material sphere, this creation in which we are, and see what Jesus Christ can do.”

Now transfer that to the spiritual realm and he can do in the spiritual realm what he does in the natural realm. He can do in the realm of the new creation and the spiritual creation what he does in the realm of the old creation, the material creation.

So tonight I want to ask you a question as we begin. And it's a very simple question which you can easily answer. Can you walk on the land? “Oh well, of course, yes. I can walk on the land. That's easy, for that's my natural element,” we say. The real

test of your metal, however, is this. Can you walk on the sea? Can you walk on the water?

Two years ago I read in the Dallas paper an exponent of yoga in Bombay in India who announced that he was going to walk on the water. And for prices that ranged from twenty dollars to a hundred dollars people bought tickets to watch this noted exponent of yoga walk on the water. When the time came he warmed up by eating some tacks and swallowing some nitric acid. And then he walked on some red hot embers. And then he scaled a little ladder and the pool was ready and he put one foot out upon the water and sank immediately to the bottom. [Laughter]

Now there was a great outcry among the spectators demanding their money back, naturally. He apologized. He said he had had an accident over the weekend and had hurt his back. And consequently, he could not obtain levitation. But he invited them to come back the next week and he would try it again. And I'm sure that there were very few back to see him try it the next week. Well, of course, it's impossible. It is beyond us to walk upon the water.

Now I am not concerned, particularly, about your walking upon H₂O. The thing that I want to ask you as those who have come this far with me in the study assuming that you have followed me not only in your ears, but you have also followed me in your heart, that is you have believed in Jesus Christ as your personal savior. Can you walk on the sea of the troubles and the trials and the perplexities and problems of life as they face you, a believer in Jesus Christ? For you see the Christian life is really just as impossible as walking upon the water is in the natural sphere. It is the impossible life. And yet the striking thing about this incident is that Peter did walk upon the sea. And so while it is just as impossible as walking upon the sea naturally, it is just as possible as Peter's great feat. For he, a human being, did the impossible. He walked upon the water.

Now, true, he did sink. But you must not forget that after Jesus rescued him out of his unbelief, apparently he and our Lord walked back to that boat. So you see it is

possible for a man to do the impossible. And I have no doubt but that the reason this incident is given us in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of John is because he wishes us to understand that we can do the impossible just as Peter walked upon that sea.

When we think about the Christian life as the impossible life we must remember, of course, that men have ways of reducing the Christian life to the insipidly possible. And unfortunately that has happened in our Christian churches. For example, we have in our professing Christian churches what I would like to call the religious life. That is, it is a life that is characterized by prayer, at least outward prayer. We come together on Sundays. Our ministers pray. We pray in our Sunday school classes. We attend our churches. We engage in the meetings that are scheduled for the week. We do good works. We are kind to our neighbors and to our friends or sickeningly sweet at least. We give.

Now, of course, giving may make your minister or your Board of Elders turn handsprings. But if all you do in your giving is satisfy your own ego or think that you gain some merit before God by doing it, it is almost worthless. We teach Sunday school. And one doesn't have to be a Christian to teach Sunday school. We usher in our churches. And many of these things we do. But surprisingly today in the twentieth century every one of these things that I have mentioned can be done without a change of heart at all. In other words, these things make up the religious life. Anyone can do them. And unfortunately in the twentieth century, and particularly in the United States, this type of life is thought to be the Christian life.

Now the very fact that anyone can do it is evidence that it is not the Christian life. Or if it is the Christian life, then there is no need to become a Christian.

Now that is one competitor with the impossible life set forth in the New Testament. I presume that every one of you in this class have already said, “Yes, Dr. Johnson. I agree with you in almost everything you said because I have seen this about me.” But there is a second competitor with the genuine Christian life, which is an even more deadly competitor. And that is the legalistic Christian life.

Now in the legalistic Christian life we have our negatives. That is, one must become a Christian and one believes in Jesus Christ and one has been born again and therefore we have a new life. But in order to live the Christian life, well then, we must not smoke, we must not drink, we must not dance, we must not engage in mixed bathing, we must not wear lipstick, and by all means we must not watch the football game on Sunday, or we shouldn't go out to the Cotton Bowl to see it, of all things. And so on.

Now I travel a lot and I notice that these negatives vary in various parts of the country. In the South, some of the things that I have mentioned, well they don't really pertain to us. In the West or North or East, however, they may. You see there is something in human nature that likes to set up a human standard in order that we might attain to it. And we say, “Don't do this, don't do that, don't do the other thing,” because we can live up to these things. And when we do then we think that we are pretty good Christians. And consequently, we develop a good case of pride in the fact that we have obtained to our own standards which we have set up.

Now I'm not suggesting necessarily that you go out and do all of these things. Frankly, it doesn't really make a whole lot of difference to me, some of these things. And I'm not because I mentioned these things as being negatives want to be quoted as saying that I am on a platform saying that you should do every one of these things. I don't know. And I don't want to get into any discussion of that because, as far as I read the New Testament, most of these things are not even mentioned at all. And so it's best to just leave it that way. And furthermore, I like Sunday football myself. And so I don't want you to step on my toes about that too. [Laughter]

Now seriously, what I'm getting at is this, that there has grown up in Christianity this legalistic type of negativism, which has reduced the Christian life again to something which we can do. It acknowledges that one must be born again in order to become a Christian. But that the Christian life will become simply a series of negatives.

Now then, that is our second competitor. But I want to say a word now about what is something very similar to the second, but which is actually a more deadly competitor than that. And this is the positive legalistic life, if I may just say that and then describe it to you. What I mean is this. The Christian life is lived in this way. First of all, we must be born again. We must receive Jesus Christ as our savior. And in this, this type of life is in thorough harmony with our negative Christian life. But then, of course, these negatives are not necessarily biblical. And we should forget about these negatives. The way to become a spiritual Christian is to be born again and read your Bible; read your Bible everyday or to be born again and have a regular prayer life. Be sure and devote some time to prayer because after all, didn't John Wesley pray? And didn't Martin Luther pray? And didn't John Calvin pray? And doesn't Billy Graham pray? And doesn't every good Christian that you know pray? So the way to become a spiritual Christian is to be sure to pray and preferably in the morning. Or the way to become a good Christian and live a Christian life is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and witness to all of your friends. Tell them about Jesus Christ. And, if possible, lead them to Jesus Christ.

So that the Christian life becomes believing in Jesus Christ plus Bible study plus prayer plus witnessing. And if you study the Bible everyday, attend the Bible classes in the morning if you're a woman and have nothing to do, attend those Bible classes [Laughter]. And then also if you pray once a day and if you try your best to give testimony to others, give them a book or bring them to a Bible class or hand them a tract, or say something to them personally. Then by that you make points with God. And in making points with God, of course, you become a spiritual Christian.

Now I want to say too that I am not really against reading the Bible. I'm not against praying. And I'm surely not against witnessing. If I were against witnessing, I would not be here tonight. I wouldn't bother with you. I would imagine there's something good on TV tonight, although I'm usually out on Friday nights and don't know. So I'm sure that you yourself would agree with me. It's a good thing to share your faith

in Jesus Christ. And it's surely the normal thing for a Christian to want to know more about the one who has loved him and given himself for him, Jesus Christ. And it certainly is a normal thing to want to speak with him and to listen to his voice too and to have communion with him in prayer. But why do you do that? Do you do this because of your spontaneous love for Jesus Christ? Or do you do this in order to make points with God? Do you do this in order to become spiritual? Or do you do this because this is the not natural outflow of a right relationship to our Lord Jesus Christ? In other words, are you again trying to gain favor with God by what you do thinking that he is impressed by these things? Or is it that you do these things because you are in touch with him and you want to please him?

Now this type of life, I must say, passes for Christian life in the highest of Christian circles today. But I want to say, and I want to say very emphatically, that I do not think that either of these three types of lives is the Christian life. The Christian life is the impossible life. It is, of course, religious in the sense that it is characterized by prayer, characterized by fellowship with the saints. It is of course, in some sense, characterized by certain negatives because there are negatives in the New Testament. “We are not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed,” Paul says.

Now he does not spell out the details of what it is to be conformed to this world. And I am personally of the opinion that Paul is not nearly so much interested in some thing in your life as what place any thing has in it. In other words, it's possible for the most harmless thing in itself to become the center of our lives. And that's become a wrong thing for us.

Now most of you men are working. You're not like me. And I used to work. And it's necessary that you work. In fact, where would your family be if you didn't work? And it's certainly necessary for you to do a good job in your work. Frankly, I think it's honoring to the Lord when you do, if you're a Christian. And you do a good job. But it is possible to put one's business before God.

Now some of you women are very much interested in your children. You're interested in their present and in their future. You're concerned about their life, about their friends, about the college or high school that you wish them to attend or that they are attending. You're thinking about their future. In fact, you are very good mothers, some of you at least. And that surely is honoring to God. You ought to be a good mother. And you ought to have your children's welfare upon your heart. But you know it's possible for even children to come between you and God, possible for your husband to come between yourself and God. In other words, it's possible for even the best of things to become things that hinder us in our spiritual life.

So there is that negative side in the Christian life. But essentially, the Christian life is a positive impossible life. And tonight as we look at this story of our Lord walking upon the water I want to try to impress that thing upon you more than anything else. The Christian life has a distinctive element about it that no other life has. And that element is the element of the supernatural. It's the life of the risen Christ. It's the sharing in him. It is the personal relationship with him that reflects itself in the daily experiences of our lives. It's something that in your life your business friends will notice. Or for you ladies, your neighbor across the fence will notice. Or all of your friends and your family will notice. It's something that you cannot put your finger on naturally, but it's different. And it has the mark of God about it.

Now it's that thing that made, for example, a man like Jacob who was a crook. That's really what he was, a schemer and a crook. It's that that made Jacob the man of trust that he became near the end of his life. It's the thing that brought Lazarus from the dead so that people, as they looked at Lazarus, they said, "That man was dead. But now he's alive. Something supernatural has happened to him." It's the life that transformed John. John, remember, was a son of thunder. A man apparently who had a very, very hot temper, a low boiling point. But nevertheless he became the Apostle of Love in the New Testament. It's the thing that one sees in Paul who was a religious man who

believed in the negatives, who was one of the leaders in the religious life of his day and yet was not a Christian at all. As a matter of fact, persecuted the church of Jesus Christ, but something happened that transformed him into a proclaimer of the faith that he had once persecuted.

Now that element of the supernatural is the Christian life. And if we don't know what it is, the chances are we have not even lived the Christian life very thoroughly since we have become a Christian.

Now some of this, of course, has to manifest itself in every Christian. And so I am not suggesting because you do not have remarkable experiences everyday that you're not a Christian. Don't misunderstand me. But it is probable for most of us that we have not yet, in a very large measure at all, realized the possibilities that God has for us in the Christian life.

Now it was the day of the feeding of the five thousand. And at the end of the feeding of the five thousand Jesus sent the apostles across the lake and he himself went up into a mountain to pray. Let's read verses 22 and 23 of Matthew chapter 14.

“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. 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.”

Now at the end of the feeding of the five thousand John tells us that the people became very much affected by what Jesus Christ had done. After all, there had been probably fifteen thousand people there that day. The text states, as you compare the gospel accounts, that there were five thousand men, beside the women and children. And so our Lord probably fed at least fifteen thousand that day with a few loaves and fishes. And it was a remarkable miracle. And when the people saw this some of them

who had understanding of the Old Testament and also knew something of the things that Judaism was saying and knew that they thought that God had promised a great king who would come and establish a kingdom upon the earth, which would be like a banquet likened to that in the Old Testament, they looked at this man and saw this feeding of five thousand or fifteen thousand people with just a few loaves and a few fishes and said, and probably rightly, “Isn't this something like that which the Messiah is going to do? Can it not possibly be that he is the King?” But you see they did not understand that the king must suffer before he enters into his kingdom.

Now Jesus does not rebuke their hopes of a kingdom. He never does that. But he wants us to understand that this kingdom – and we're going to talk about this ultimately – that this kingdom is a kingdom that follows and does not pay seed the sufferings of the cross. In other words, there can come no kingdom for men until men have been redeemed. And therefore he must die, and must be buried, and must rise again from the dead. And the good news of the kingdom must be preached before that kingdom comes. But the Jews had the idea that the King was coming and he would establish a kingdom upon the earth and they would be the chief nation upon the earth. And therefore they were under the Roman heel at this time. And so naturally they were interested in this kingdom. But having no spiritual perception of their sin and of their need, they thereby had a false conception of the kingdom. And so our Lord apparently desires that the apostles not catch the contagion of this false idea of the kingdom since “they wish to make him a king as he fed the five thousand,” John says, “sent them across the Sea of Galilee and he himself went up into the mountain to pray.”

Now let's read on, as we read of the storm. By the way, you will notice that our Lord went up into the mountain to pray. And he was a man who witnessed, he was a man who prayed and he was a man who studied the word of God. But he didn't do it to make points with God. He did it because he was in touch with his father and he loved his father. And so he prayed. And one other thing, have you ever noticed that Jesus

Christ never prays with the apostles? Have you ever noticed that? Did you ever notice that Jesus never said, “Now, let’s have a prayer meeting and let’s get on our knees and pray together.” Have you ever noticed that? That seems rather strange. Doesn’t it? Well, it’s not really so strange when you reflect upon the fact that the Lord Jesus gave the apostles the so called Lord’s Prayer. But he, of course, never prayed it himself. He never prayed with them much as he prayed for them and much as he exhorted them to pray to God. But he never prayed with them.

Now the reason, of course, that Jesus never prayed with them is because he wanted to impress upon them the fact that while he was a man and they were men. Nevertheless, there was a difference between him and them. If someone has said this difference between our Lord and the disciples, it’s often as fine as a hair, but it is always as hard as a diamond. He is the Son of God. And they are the sons of men. And while he is one of them, he is more than simply a son of man. So he prays.

No great discovery is ever made on a crowded street someone has said. And our Lord is the perfect exemplar of that. If you’re ever going to amount to anything in the Christian life, there must be those times when you draw apart and spend some time with the Lord. Not to gain points. Not to make points, but because you want to get to know him better.

Now verse 24, “But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.” Well, this often happened on the Sea of Galilee. The disciples went up forth in that boat, Peter and the rest.

Now one of the accounts tells us that there was another little group with them. So they began to make their way across the Sea of Galilee. And the day had been a long day. And now nightfall had come. And as they went across that little sea, as I say so often happens, the soft breezes became a blow. And they frequently became a blow in just a matter of a few moments. And finally, Mark says they were purling and rowing and

rowing. And now as it comes to the early morning they've been fighting this storm for a longtime.

“They are tossed with the way the sea is tossed with waves and the wind is contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night. (We go on and read in verse 25 and 26), 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; and they cried out for fear.”

Now the fourth watch of the night is from three in the morning until six in the morning. So you see they've been struggling for quite a while with that storm on the Sea of Galilee. They had started out in calm, but now everything is confusion. And I think I can just imagine Peter, he must have been the tiller. And you can see him fighting that storm and his long beard is probably now anointed with the foam of the waves. And he's very much afraid. And so are the rest of them. And at the fourth watch of the night, and it must have been very dark, they looked out and they saw a specter making its way across the water.

Now the Jews have a lot of stories about water demons, just as the Scots talk about the Loch Ness Monster. So the Jews, after all, they were land lovers. They never did like the sea. They were people of the land. And so there had grown up all sorts of stories about monsters in the water. And so you can just see these men as they look out, and they're just ordinary men and they're young men at that and they haven't had a whole lot of experience. And one of them sees this specter coming and he cries out for Peter and asks, “What in the world is that?” And someone said, “It's a ghost.” Well, that's the meaning of the word spirit, it's a ghost. And they cried out for fear.

Now you can fight a storm, particularly if you're acquainted with the lake. But what can you do with a water demon? Well, there's nothing much you can do. And so I'm sure they were thinking, “It won't be long before we're in Davy Jones' locker.”

[Laughter] So our Lord speaks in verse 27 and we read, “But straightway Jesus spake unto them (and like all good sermons this has three points), Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”

Now I want to stop for a moment and try to analyze this because I am persuaded that this misses most of us who read the Bible.

Now, of course, you can see its three points. And, of course, no doubt you have already seen that the central point is the second one. “Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid.” But as I’ve said so often in this class, you see the apostles were acquainted not with the New Testament, but with the Old Testament. And therefore the expressions that are found in the gospels find their truest interpretation in the Old Testament.

Now when the Lord Jesus walked on that water and cried out to these men and said to them, “I am he. For it is I.” The Greek text may be rendered either way Ego Ami; I am. He was saying something that any good Hebrew would recognize immediately had the accents of deity about it. So you see they knew that the God who had led Israel out of the land of Egypt through the Red Sea and those remarkable experiences that they had, and finally through the Jordan, miraculously, supernaturally into the promised land. They knew that that God was a God who spoke of himself as “I am.”

As a matter of fact, when he met Moses at the burning bush and Moses asked his name he said, “I am that I am,” or “I am who I am.” You cannot define this God. There’s no way to define him. The moment we define God we limit him by our definition. The only way in which he may be defined is relationally. He may say, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.” But you cannot define God. And even the best definitions of God such as that contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith, one of the best, is nevertheless an inaccurate one because it cannot express the infinite. We can never define the infinite by finite things, finite concepts. And so when God is asked what his name is he just says, “I am. I am. I am he. I am God.” How can you define God?

Now when the Lord Jesus, as he answered these men and their cry, said, “Be of good cheer; I am; be not afraid,” he was making an obvious claim which anyone should have been able to understand. “I am the I am of the Old Testament.”

Now when you remember that this was Passover time for John tells us the feeding of the five thousand occurred at Passover time. And if you, and perhaps you don't know this, but some of you do perhaps, if you will remember that at the Passover time the Jews engaged in a ritual of their Passover service, which by the time of the New Testament times had gathered about it certain texts from the Old Testament as part of that ritual. And if you knew what these texts were you could see what our Lord was trying to say to them. For you see one of the great passages which was used in the Passover ritual at the time that our Lord was here was the passage from Isaiah chapter 43. And in this 43rd chapter of Isaiah he says over and again, “I am he.” I'm going to read verse 10. This was part of that ritual.

“Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he (That is, as the Hebrew puts it, anywho. And that is the equivalent of the Greek Ego Ami. I am. And he continued): before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God. Yea, before the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it? Thus saith the LORD, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. I am the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King. Thus saith the Lord (now will you notice these words), which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters. (And so), I am he. I am he that maketh a way in the say, and a path in the mighty waters.”

Jesus wanted the apostles to identify him as the God who led Israel out of the land of Egypt through the midst of the waters, brought them into the promised land, was their covenant keeping God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. “It is I; be not afraid.”

Now at this point I think you can see that this is a tremendous claim on our Lord’s part. What it means really is that where I am there God is. And when I act, God acts.

Now Peter, he’s the American in the crowd, remember. “Peter answered and said Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.” And our Lord answers, “Come.” Can you not see Peter, “John, hold this.” And you can see Peter clambering over the side of that boat, mind you, a storm is still on. The lightening is flashing. The thunder is crashing. The waves are high. Because it’s not until Jesus gets in the boat that there comes the calm. And so in the midst of the storm, Peter clammers outside the boat and he walked on the water to go to Jesus.

Now think about that for a moment. This is an amazing thing. Peter walked on the water. You let that sink in? Peter walked on the water. That’s right. That’s what he did.

Now if you read some of the liberal commentaries at this point you have some interesting explanation. Some say the disciples were confused because of the storm. That Jesus was really walking on the land, or at least wading in the water. But they thought he was walking on the water. And so Peter, when he walked on the water, was really doing nothing more than wading by the shore. Of course, I want to know into what then did he sink [Laughter] when he began to sink? And, of course, why did not our Lord let them be delivered from this confusion? How would he let them write texts like this which are so capable of being misunderstood? Because it does seem as if this is a miraculous thing.

You know I’ve often said this and I believe it with all my heart. That the Bible is written, or lets take a step back. The events of the New Testament have so occurred and

the word of God has so described them that if the word of God is carefully studied and the events are carefully understood, you will see that every human explanation is ultimately ridiculous. In fact, it takes far more faith to believe the explanations of the critics than it does the simple statement of God's word. And all these, they are theories, are shown to be foolish. Just take the resurrection for example. The Jews said as they got some Roman soldiers say that someone came and stole him away while he was sleeping. Can you not imagine one of those soldiers on the stand in a trial? “What's your testimony, Mr. Centurion?” “Well, someone came and stole the body away while we were sleeping.” “While you were sleeping? How do you know then someone came to steal him away if you were asleep?” It's ridiculous on the face of it. Are sleeping witnesses good witnesses? Ask any lawyer. Well, Peter walked on the water.

Now I want to stop for just a moment and remind you of how impossible this is. Not only was this not a calm, but this was a storm.

Now, of course, we know that if you step out on the water you have no equilibrium. There is no stability. And immediately you sink. My last house, we had a swimming pool in the backyard. And we frequently had a family of friends come over to swim and there were four children. And at that time one of the children was three years of age. And she was really a cute little girl and very determined. She didn't know how to swim yet. But she didn't mind diving in at the deep end. Consequently, mother was disturbed and my wife was disturbed. And if I was out there, I was disturbed too [Laughter] because she didn't hesitate at any moment diving right in. And, of course, we were just busy taking her out. And she became very exasperated that she was sinking. And finally she got out and we were watching her and you could see what was going on. She thought she was going to remedy the sinking. So she went over by the side of the pool where she had her shoes, which were just flats and they were rubber. And so she went over and she put her feet in those little shoes. And you could see exactly what was in her mind. “If I just can get these shoes on and step out on that water, I'll be able to

stay up.” And so she put them on, very determinately, and she walked over and we all stood there and just watched her and she put one foot out right on top of that water and sank right to the bottom with the strangest look on her face. [Laughter] You cannot gain equilibrium on the water. And yet, Peter did it.

Now I want to say something. And I want you to be sure to get this. Holy living, the spiritual life of a Christian, is just as impossible as Peter walking upon the water. And yet, it is just as possible as Peter’s great feat.

Now how is it that Peter was enabled to walk on the water? “By faith.” Alright, I’ll accept that. But I think in the story there’s something more than that. Look. Verse 30, “But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.”

Now I love that prayer. Do you notice it? It’s three words. Do you know how long it takes to say it? Hardly two seconds. “Lord, save me.” Peter did not pray like we pray in our churches on Sunday morning. Do you know how we begin? “Oh, Thou great eternal God Thou that dwellest in the midst of the cherubim, etc., etc., etc.”

I have a good friend. He loves to say, “If Peter had prayed like we pray in our churches on Sunday morning, he would have been six feet under before he ever got out his petition, Lord, save me.” [Laughter] You know I am very much convinced that our prayers as a general rule should be brief and to the point, particularly in public. So he said, ‘Lord, save me.’”

I have a good friend in the city. He’s a psychiatrist. And they have two children, interesting children. And one of the children was about five years old, I think he’s about six or seven now, but one day as he did something bad at home his mother was a professing Christian urged John that he should go to his room and pray over the matter. And so he took off for his room and he shut the door and the mother did as mothers sometimes do, she immediately rushed over and stood by the door and tried to listen to hear what he was saying. Mothers are really, really mean. Aren’t they? But anyway, she

was there and she was listening and she said afterwards all she could hear was just some confused mumbling she couldn't quite make out what he was saying. But finally she heard him say, “Help!” And she threw open the door and she rushed in and she said, “John, what in the world is the matter?” He said, “I don't know Mommy, but I just couldn't seem to get through to God.” [Laughter] Well, I think that those little prayers that we pray when we say “Help,” those are the prayers that do get through to God because very often they are the ones that are sincere. But Peter prayed, “Lord, save me.”

Now I want you to notice that apparently Peter had walked a considerable distance on the water because he had thought that this person approaching was a ghost. He was far enough away so that he could not see Jesus. But it is not until he is in the very presence of the Lord that he begins to sink because as he sinks all our Lord must do is reach for his hand and grab it. So apparently, what happened to Peter was this. That he walked right into the presence of the Lord and he thought to himself, “My, I have really done something.” Just think of this. In the midst of all of this storm. And he took his eyes off the Lord Jesus and he looked at the lightning and the thunder and the waves and the water and for the first time he became afraid.

As you know, there are so many lessons here. I wish we had the time to talk about all of them, but there's one I just want to mention. Peter had already won the battle of the waves and the wind. But now he loses that same battle. Have you ever had that experience as a Christian? You've already won a certain battle, but if you don't watch out that very same thing over which you gained the victory will be the thing that will cause your downfall if you get too confident about it. So apparently, he got a little confident and he took his eyes off of our Lord. And he looked at the wind and the waves. Because it says, “And when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, Lord, save me.” In other words, if we were to describe this from the natural sphere, the reason that Peter walked upon the water was this. As he kept his eyes upon our Lord Jesus Christ, something of the power of our Lord, for he had

walked on the water and he didn't sink, something of the power of Jesus Christ came out of him and entered into Peter. In other words, it was the look which Peter gave our Lord as he came out of that boat that drew virtue out of Jesus Christ for himself. In other words, Peter became like our Lord by that look which united him to his Lord. By looking at him, Peter became like him. His power was in Peter. And he walked on the water. The moment he looked away, that connection of the look, which of course was in the physical sphere, that look which was severed meant the loss of his power to stay on the water. And he began to sink.

Now all of this is designed to be an illustration, you see, in the physical sphere. It was the physical look that enabled Peter to stay on the water. But when that was severed, he sank.

You know the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews states that we are to live, we are to run the race of the Christian life looking off unto Jesus who is the file leader, the leader and the completer, not of our faith, but of faith; the perfect example of faith. In other words, the Christian life is a life in which we look at him. And when we look at him, that look of faith in the spiritual sphere draws virtue out of Jesus Christ so that we are able to do the impossible. In other words, the very thing that happened in the physical sphere is designed to illustrate what may happen in the spiritual sphere as the look of the physical becomes the look of the spiritual, the look of trust in Jesus Christ, the counting upon him.

Now I often hear people talk about the spiritual life, but I want to say to you that the spiritual life is just as simple as trusting Christ. That's all there is to it.

Now I attend Keswick conferences and speak in Keswick conferences around the country. I'll be in one this July in Los Angeles. And we talk about the spiritual life. And when we get through a Keswick conference, as a rule, people are so confused that they don't know what to do because they've heard all of these messages about the Christian life and wonder how in the world they can ever live the Christian life. And I want to just

say to you, you can reduce all Keswick conferences to two things. Number one, you must be born again by faith in Jesus Christ. Number two, the Christian life is a life of trust in Jesus Christ. That's all. That's all there is to it. And if you have trusted him who died for you, you have new life. And if you trust him moment by moment during the day, you'll have these supernatural experiences that make up the Christian life that characterizes it. It's as simple as that.

Now, of course, there are many things in the Bible beyond that. But that is in essence what it is. And so Peter now is caught by our Lord. And let's just wind it up. We have just a few minutes. We read in verse 31, “And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of no faith.” No. Peter had faith, but he just had a little faith. [Laughter] As a matter of fact, as our Lord once said, “According to your faith so be it unto you.” If you can believe Jesus Christ is your savior, you'll have salvation. If you can believe that he will save you from the guilt of sin, that's what you'll have because he's made provision for it in his death. If you can believe that he is the savior from the power of sin in your daily life and if you've reached the place where you're miserable in your Christian life and you turn to him, he'll give you that salvation too. Of course, he won't give it to you completely in this life because we still have the old nature with us. And even the best of us, like Peter, look aside every now and then and begin to sink.

But anyway, “He said to him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” By the way, Peter didn't sink because he lost his faith either. Jesus reached out and grasped him. You see, when our faith fails, now that does not mean that he abandons us. As a matter of fact, I'm sure it was he who brought Peter to the place where he could cry for deliverance. And he was delivered.

Now we read in verse 32, “And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.” As a matter of fact, the solution to all life's riddles and problems is our Lord's entry into the boat. “And so the wind ceased.” And one of the texts says, “There was a

great calm.” And now notice how the apostles respond. “Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.”

Now you know I think this is so wonderful as a description of the Christian life that I do not know of anything in the New Testament that best sets forth this Christian life in illustrative form. And that’s why I chose this to express the Christian life. Because, you see, what this really says is that the Christian life is a relationship to a person, which through supernatural experiences leads to the worship of him. Will you let me say that again? The Christian life is a relationship to a person, which through supernatural experiences leads to the worship of him.

In other words, the aim of the Christian life is not that we witness, not that we pray, not that we study our Bibles. The aim of the Christian life is the worship of Jesus Christ. And that worship comes as we experience his supernatural deliverance, his salvation in our life, in our business, in our home, in our friends, in our tragedies, in our trials, in our perplexities. It is as we trust him and the supernatural deliverances come that they lead us to get down on our knees and say, “Thank you Lord for being what you are to me.” That’s the Christian life. It’s not the subscription to a creed. It’s not joining a church. It’s not being active in the Sunday school. It’s not being a Sunday school superintendent. It’s not being one of the offices of the church. It’s not being a preacher. The Christian life is a relationship to a person, Jesus Christ, which through the supernatural experiences that come from trust in him leads back to the worship of him. That’s what God is interested in, people to worship him. He wants that relationship. He loves us. He wants to share life with us. And we’re so stupid that we’re not willing to share this supernatural thrilling exciting Christian life, which God is so anxious for us to have. As a matter of fact, he’d given his son, that we might have it. They said, “Of a truth Thou art the Son of God.” There was something about this incident that convinced them. I think this, by the way, is the first time in the Gospel of Matthew that they call him the

Son of God. The deity of Jesus Christ is a great doctrine. But I want you to notice that they came to this confession of faith here out of an experience of his deliverance.

Now I teach in a theological seminary as you know. And all day long I'm engaged in theological quarrels and arguments and discussions, friendly, with my students. And everything I present to them they want to check and question and criticize. And that's perfectly legitimate because they know they're going to have to get out and meet some of you folks. And you're going to ask them those questions and so they want to try to get all the answers while they're at seminary. And so we construct out of the study of the word of God the doctrines of the deity of Christ, the doctrine of the atonement, the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures. And sometimes, particularly if you're a young Christian you learn the doctrines when you haven't really known the person yet in that way, the way of which the doctrines speak. And so we say the doctrine of the deity of Christ means that Christ is God. And we can often express it, but we really don't know out of our experience what it means. And I love a definition that someone has given of the deity of Christ. Someone has said, “The deity of Jesus Christ is the theological expression of the experience of Evangelical conversion.” In other words, it is because Jesus Christ saves that we know that he's God.

Now that's not the only way, that's the confirmation of the Scriptures. But the Scriptures say he's God. And out of the experiences of life I come to know he's God in my experience. And so here when they saw this remarkable thing they came to the conviction that he was the Son of God.

Now I don't have time to talk – you know believe it or not I could talk for another hour on this incident because it is so full of truth. I could talk to you about the history involved in it and what it means, the prophetic revelation that is involved in this, the fact that he was on the mountain praying while they were struggling in the sea, or the present application of how storms often meet us in the path of duty, for it was Jesus who told them to go over to the other side. But storms are not meant by God to send us to the

bottom of the lake. They are meant to refine us so that we come to know him as the one who delivers in the storms. When trouble comes to your life, don't think that God's trying to overthrow you by it. He's not trying to defeat you; he's trying to give you a little spiritual growth by it. You should always ask yourself the question when a trial comes. “Now Lord, what am I to learn by this trial?” That's what the Bible means when it speaks about being exercised by it. Can you walk on the water? Well, I imagine when I asked you that question as we began, you said, “No, I cannot.” So I'll ask you again. Can you walk on the water spiritually? Can you? Well, the answer's plain. You can, if you wish. Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for this wonderful passage from holy Scripture and for the great lessons that it teaches. We thank Thee most of all for him who is the Son of God. And we pray Lord that our Christian life may not be a negativistic or even a positive legalistic type of life, but may be this supernatural impossible life that is set forth for us in holy Scripture. May our own life be a relationship to him, which through supernatural experiences brings us to the worship of him. And Lord we do...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]