

# Expository Thoughts On Matthew - Matthew

## 14:22-36

by J.C. Ryle

### Transcript

The history contained in these verses is one of singular interest. The miracle here recorded brings out in strong light the character both of Christ and his people. The power and mercy of the Lord Jesus, and the mixture of faith and unbelief in his best disciples, are beautifully illustrated. We learn in the first place, from this miracle what absolute dominion our Saviour has over all created things. We see him walking on the sea as if it was dry land. Those angry waves, which tossed the ship of his disciples to and fro, obey the Son of God and become a solid floor under his feet. That liquid surface, which was agitated by the least breath of wind, bears up the feet of our Redeemer like a rock. To our poor, weak minds, the whole event is utterly incomprehensible. The picture of two feet walking on the sea is said by Doddridge to have been the Egyptian emblem of an impossible thing; the man of science will tell us that for material flesh and blood to walk on water is a physical impossibility. Even for us to know that it was done. Enough for us to remember that to him who created the seas at the beginning, it must have been perfectly easy to walk over their waves when he pleased. There is encouragement here for all true Christians. Let them know that there is nothing created which is not under Christ's control: all things serve him. He may allow his people to be tried for a season, and to be tossed to and fro by storms of trouble; he may be later than they wish in coming to their aid, and not draw near till the fourth watch of the night; but never let them forget that winds, and waves and storms are all Christ's servants. They cannot move without Christ's permission. The Lord on high is mightier than the voice of many waters, yea than the mighty waves of the sea. (Psalm 93:4). Are we ever tempted to cry with Jonah, The floods compass me about: all thy billows and thy waves pass over me? (Jonah 2:3)? Let us remember they are his billows. Let us wait patiently. We may yet see Jesus coming to us, and walking on the sea. We learn in the second place, from this miracle what power Jesus can bestow on those who believe in him. We see Simon Peter coming down out of the ship and walking on the water, like his Lord. What a wonderful proof was this of our Lord's divinity! To walk on the sea himself was a mighty miracle; but to enable a poor weak disciple to do the same, was a mightier miracle still. There is a deep meaning in this part of the history: it shows us what great things our Lord can do for those that hear his voice and follow him. He can enable them to do things which at one time they would have thought impossible. He can carry them through difficulties and trials which, without him, they would never have dared to face; he can give them strength to walk through fire and water unharmed, and to get the better of every foe. Moses in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, the saints in Nero's household, are all examples of his mighty power. Let us fear nothing, if we are in the path of duty. The waters may seem deep; but if Jesus says, Come, we have no cause to be afraid. He that believeth on

me the works that I do shall he do also and greater works than these shall he do" (John 14:12). Let us learn in the third place, from this miracle how much trouble disciples bring upon themselves by unbelief. We see Peter walking boldly on the water for a little way; but by and by when he sees the wind boisterous he is afraid, and begins to sink. The weak flesh gets the better of the willing spirit. He forgets the wonderful proofs of his Lord's goodness and power, which he had just received. He considers not that the same Saviour who had enabled him to walk one step, must be able to hold him up forever; he did not reflect that he was nearer to Christ when once on the water, than he was when he first left the ship. Fear took away his memory, alarm confused his reason. He thought of nothing but the winds and waves and his immediate danger, and his faith gave way. "Lord, I am afraid, save me!" What a lively picture we have here of the experience of many a believer! How many there are who have faith enough to take the first step in following Christ, but not faith enough to go on as they began. They take fright at the trials and dangers which seem to be in their way. They look at the enemies that surround them, and the difficulties that seem likely to beset their path: they look at them more than at Jesus, and at once their feet begin to sink, their hearts faint within them, their hope vanishes away: their comforts disappear. And why is all this? Christ is not altered: their enemies are not greater than they were. It is just because, like Peter, they have ceased to look to Jesus, and have given way to unbelief. They are taken up with thinking about their enemies, instead of thinking about Christ. May we lay this to heart, and learn wisdom! Let us learn in the last place, from this miracle how merciful our Lord Jesus Christ is to weak believers. We see him stretching forth his hand immediately to save Peter, as soon as Peter cried to him. He does not leave him to reap the fruit of his own unbelief, and to sink in the deep waters: he only seems to consider his trouble, and to think of nothing so much as delivering him from it. The only word he utters is the gentle reproof, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" We should mark, in this concluding part of the miracle, the exceeding gentleness of Christ. He can bear with much, and forgive much when he sees true grace in a man's heart. As a mother deals gently with her infant, and does not cast it away because it is waywardness and frowardness, so does the Lord Jesus deal gently with his people. He loved and pitied them before conversion, and after conversion he loves and pities them still more. He knows their feebleness, and bears long with them. He would have us know that doubting does not prove that a man has no faith, but only that his faith is small; and even when our faith is small, the Lord is ready to help us. "When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy O Lord held me up." (Psalm 94:18). How much there is in all this to encourage men to serve Christ! Where is the man who ought to be afraid to begin running the Christian race, with such a Saviour as Jesus? If we fall, he will raise us again. If we err, he will bring us back. But his mercy shall never be altogether taken from us. He has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee", and he will keep his word. (Heb. 12:5) May we only remember that while we do not despise little faith we must not sit down content with it. Our prayer must ever be, "Lord, increase our faith."

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jc-ryle/expository-thoughts-on-matthew-matthew-1422-36/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**