

Doing the Impossible

by Major Ian Thomas

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living the Christian life by faith, not by human effort or willpower, and encourages believers to reckon with Jesus Christ in their daily lives.

Duration: 1:15:04

Scripture: Matthew 14:14, Matthew 14:24, Mark 6:21-45, John 5:19, Hebrews 1:3

Topics: "Impossibilities"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses two miracles performed by Jesus - walking on water and feeding the 5,000. The disciples initially thought it was impossible for Jesus to walk on water, but he demonstrated his power by doing so. Similarly, feeding such a large crowd with only 5 loaves and 2 fishes seemed impossible, but Jesus performed a notable miracle. The preacher emphasizes the importance of being obedient and submissive to God, as Jesus was, and encourages the audience to observe Jesus' behavior as a model for their own.

Transcript

I'd like you to turn with me tonight to the sixth chapter of Mark's Gospel. Mark's Gospel, chapter six. And we're going to turn to this passage as commencing with the thirty-fourth verse, which records a very familiar incident.

We shall commence to consider this story in Mark's Gospel, chapter six. We shall probably continue our exploration in the same story, but recounted in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel. And we'll conclude our exploration of the story in the fourteenth chapter of Matthew's Gospel.

The three Gospels recording the same incident, but giving us, as it were, a three-dimensional view of what happened and the purpose that the Lord Jesus was seeking to fulfill. Mark's Gospel, chapter six, and verse thirty-four. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were a sheep not having a shepherd.

And he began to teach them many things. Literally, translated, it says, he preached a long sermon. And I always find that a great encouragement.

It was a long sermon. It had lasted almost all day. And the evening was closing in upon them.

The folk were tired and hungry. And the disciples could see that very fast there was approaching in a situation that was calculated to be very embarrassing. And so when the day was now far spent, verse thirty-five, his disciples came unto him and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far past.

Send them away, that they may go out into the country round about and into the villages, and buy themselves bread, for they have nothing to eat. Taking the three relevant sentences out of those two verses, verses thirty-five and thirty-six, what they said to the Lord Jesus was this, This is a desert place, send them away. They have nothing to eat.

We must get them off our hands, and quick. We have nothing with which to feed this great multitude. And the record says that there were five hundred men.

And Matthew adds that apart from the men, there were the women and the children. And if meetings in those days were anything like meetings in these days, and there were five thousand men plus the women and the children, it was a big meeting. Well, that was a perfectly reasonable conclusion to come to, don't you think? Here was this vast concourse of people, already tired and hungry.

The only reasonable, obvious, sensible thing to do would be to get rid of them, send them home. But the Lord Jesus answered and said to them, verse thirty-seven, Give you them to eat. You don't send hungry people away, you feed them.

But immediately they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred penny worth of bread and give them to eat? Master, they said, this is a sheer impossibility. All that we have is barely sufficient for our own modest needs, let alone for this great company of people. It's impossible, we can't.

And in so many words, the Lord Jesus said to them, You're right, it's impossible. That's precisely why we're going to feed them. And I'm going to show you how to do the impossible.

And that really is the object of the exercise. From now on, the Lord Jesus Christ is going to demonstrate to his disciples how to live a quality of life that cannot be explained except in terms of God. Are you a Christian? I think most of you will understand what I mean by that question.

You know I'm not asking whether you're a church member of some particular religious organization. You know that I'm not asking you whether you were born in the United States as opposed to the heart of Africa. I think you understand what I mean when I say, are you a Christian? What I mean is this, are you converted? Have you repented toward God and humbly received Jesus Christ as your Redeemer? Do you know that though you never deserved it, your sins are forgiven because he died for you upon the cross? And are you fully convinced by the witness of God's Holy Spirit to your spirit that he, God the Holy Ghost, has come back to indwell your redeemed humanity as the seal of your redemption? To demonstrate the fact that for his dear sake, Christ who died for you, your name has been recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life and numbered amongst those for whom Christ died and who has been accepted in the blood.

I think you understand what I mean when I ask you, are you a Christian? May I assume that you are? It isn't a safe assumption. Almost certainly in such a gathering as this there are folk who are not Christians. And in saying that I don't challenge their sincerity nor the zeal and earnestness with which maybe some of them go to church regularly, even read their Bibles and pray.

But maybe you're still hunting, seeking, questing to come to that joyful place of assurance that enables you to partake of all the good of that for which Christ died upon the cross and rose again from the dead.

So although it wouldn't be a safe assumption that all here tonight are Christians, may I assume it for the moment? Then as a Christian, what quality of life are you living? Is it a quality of life that can be explained in terms of you? Or is it a quality of life that can only be explained in terms of God? Somebody has rightly said that for you and for me to live the Christian life is not difficult. It's a sheer impossibility.

Have you found that out yet? If you haven't yet discovered that for you to live the Christian life is a sheer impossibility, although you may be converted, really regenerate, it's absolutely certain that you haven't yet begun to live the Christian life. Did you know that it's possible to have the Christian life without living it? The majority of Christians, real Christians, who have received the Christian life haven't begun to live it because they've never really grasped what the Christian life is. But of this you can be certain tonight, that if the quality of life that you are living as a Christian can be explained in terms of your enthusiasm, your sense of devotion, your sense of loyalty to Christ, your dedication, your effort, your willpower, then you're not living the Christian life.

And the best that you can produce is just a well-meaning but shabby imitation of the real thing. Because the real Christian life is impossible to you and impossible to me, apart from the one who is that life, Jesus Christ himself. For the Christian life is Christ.

And that's exactly what it takes to be a Christian. Christ. Nothing more, nothing less.

And that's exactly why he died upon the cross, to make this kind of life possible for you and for me. Supposing the quality of life that you're living as a Christian can be explained in terms of you, what have you got to offer to the neighbours next door? Maybe they're not Christians and don't profess to be. And they would say to you, the quality of life that we are living is explained in terms of us, and the quality of life that you're living is explained in terms of you.

You happen to be religiously inclined and we don't. So what? That happens to be your particular hobby, it doesn't happen to be ours. The club you go to is the church, the club that we go to is another kind of institution.

But within your religious context, the church you go to, the professed faith that you have, the ecclesiastical, theological concept of life, the philosophy upon which you base your activities, happens to be in a religious circumference. And you live your life explicable in terms of you within that context. We live our lives explicable in terms of us within our context.

What's the difference between you and us? You go your way, we'll go our way. That by and large is why the public in general is not terribly interested in the faith that we profess. Because as far as they're concerned, it's simply a choice of context.

Not a difference in nature of life. Now the Lord Jesus was going to show his disciples what it really means to live a life healthily related to God. Now how did he do it? Let's turn now to John's Gospel, Chapter 6. John's Gospel, Chapter 6. And in this record, John takes, as it were, a magnifying glass and looks at the incident and enlarges it.

And we can examine it in greater detail. Verse 5 of Chapter 6 of Gospel of John. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes and saw great company come unto him, he said unto Philip, When shall we buy bread that these may eat? And this the Lord Jesus said to prove him, for he himself knew what he would do.

This he said to prove him, for he himself knew what he would do. When the Lord Jesus asked this question to Philip, was he seeking counsel? Was he at a loss? Was he embarrassed? Was his back against the wall? Was he found on the wrong foot? Was he trying to find a way out of an awkward and difficult situation? No, he knew what he was going to do. Exactly.

Have you really discovered that the Lord Jesus who has redeemed you and now lives within you always knows what he's going to do? Have you discovered that? Are you living in the good of it? Rejoicing in that wonderful fact and experiencing it daily, vindicated by his overwhelming all-sufficiency for every situation, for every contingency as it arises. Are you living in the good of that? The Lord Jesus who always knows what he is going to do, the God who knows the end from the beginning, who's never found at a loss, who is completely panic-proof. Are you? Have you been panic-proof all day? Are you quite sure you were when you came down to breakfast this morning? If you come down to breakfast.

Most of your homes are on one floor, so you'd have to be in a balloon or something to come down, but we have an upstairs normally. Are you sure that you've been panic-proof? In the office? Did your secretary think so? Your business associates? Are you a schoolteacher? Are you quite sure your class thought you were panic-proof just a few hours ago? The Lord Jesus was panic-proof always. Unhurried.

Never in a stampede. Because, you see, if you know exactly what you're going to do, you never panic. And the measure in which you are enjoying the life of Jesus Christ will be the measure in which you never panic.

Remain inwardly utterly unhurried. Oh, you may have to run sometimes if you're nearly going to miss it. But inwardly you're unhurried.

What's the quality of life that you're living? No, Jesus Christ wasn't at a loss. Then why did he ask this question? Maybe he wanted to know something about Philip. No, he didn't.

He didn't want to know a thing about Philip, for one good reason. He knew all there was to know. And he knows all there is to know about you.

Everything. Constantly in the Gospels we read that the Lord Jesus answered the unspoken thoughts of friend and foe. He knows every thought.

Who discerns every thought and intent of the heart. There's nothing that's passed through your mind while I've been talking to you for the last few moments that hasn't been read and recorded. By God.

Incidentally, what have you been thinking about since I've been talking to you? Where have you been? I know your body's been sitting there propped up against the back of the bench, but where have you been? I've long since ceased to be deceived as a preacher that Soko sitting in front of me is still there. It's amazing how far you can travel and still be sitting in the same bench and looking in the same direction and appear just as intelligent. I wonder where you've been.

Wouldn't it be interesting to know where everybody's been in the last ten minutes? Who you've been talking to, with what situations you've been grappling, what conversations you were engaged with, how many other people you've met who are not in this building at the moment. Where have you been? Well, I want you to know this, that wherever you have been and whatever situation you may have grappled with in your mind and whoever you may have met and whatever you may have been doing in your thoughts has been known and recorded. Something of which we should remind ourselves from time to time.

And the Lord Jesus Christ did not need to ask Philip one single question to know anything about Philip. He knew the whole story. Then why did Jesus Christ ask Philip this question? Because he wanted Philip to know something about himself.

And maybe that's why the Lord Jesus Christ has brought you here tonight, to meet with you and talk to you, so that you tonight may discover something about yourself and about the quality of the life that you have been living as a Christian. The Lord Jesus Christ wanted Philip, as an apostle, one of the devotees of Jesus Christ, one of his most loyal and earnest followers, he wanted Philip to discover the sheer bankruptcy of his experience of God. He wanted Philip, as an apostle, to discover how pathetically, tragically low was the level of his relationship to Jesus Christ.

For Philip answered him, verse 7, 200 penny worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. When personally challenged by the Lord Jesus how he was going to measure up to this particular situation, 5,000 men plus women and children, all hungry and all tired, what are you going to do, Philip? What was the criteria, so far as Philip was concerned? What really mattered in this situation? All that mattered, so far as Philip was concerned, was how much money they had in the bank. So with what, or with whom, was Philip reckoning? Jesus Christ? No.

So far as Philip was concerned, in this particular situation, Jesus Christ might just as well have been dead, or never existed. Supposing we suddenly notice somebody in the crowd whom he recognized to be completely atheistic in outlook, a complete infidel, utterly materialistic in all his calculations, a down-to-earth, brass-tacks individual who would consider anything beyond the context of human endeavor totally irrelevant to any possible situation. And we say, Excuse me, would you mind coming over a moment? We'd like to ask you for your advice.

We've got 5,000 men here, plus their women and their children, and we're in a bit of a quandary because they're all very hungry and we'd like to feed them. Have you any suggestions? What do you think the first question that individual would ask, out of the background of his infidelity, his unbelief, his materialistic philosophy of life, what would be the first question? How much money have you got? So how different, actually, was Philip from that man, in terms of behavior, in the way he faced the situation? No different at all. And if that man had been asked his opinion of Philip, and Philip's attitude in this situation, he would have said he is reacting purely in terms of himself.

His attitude, behavior, and reaction to this situation is explicable in terms of Philip as a man, in the context of human resources. And whether God is alive or dead, exists or doesn't, it wouldn't make any difference whatever to Philip. And he would be right.

Well, you profess to be a Christian. You say that the God you serve and love is an almighty God, that he indwells your humanity, that you have dwelling within you the Holy Spirit of the Living Triune Deity, who created the universes, threw them into space, and holds them there by the word of his power. Would you tell me today, as you think back, even over the past few hours alone, the past 24 hours, at most the past 7 days, just how far, in the various situations that have pressed in upon you, circumstances that have pressed in upon you, just how far have you reckoned with Jesus Christ? How far haven't you reckoned with Jesus Christ? How far have you grappled with those situations on the basis of what you are and what you have? The material resources, the friends, circumstances, all explicable apart from God, apart from Jesus Christ.

Let's all examine our own hearts tonight. Just how far have I, individually, reckoned with Christ? In the constant sequence of events that constitute my life. Because this will give you a reasonable estimate of your knowledge of Jesus Christ.

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, there's a lad here which has five barley loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many? Andrew was the next on the list, and he came up and apologized to the Lord Jesus, introducing to him a small boy who insisted that with five loaves and two fishes he could feed five thousand men, plus the women and the children. Could anything be more stupid than that? Then why did Andrew bring the boy? Well, because I think Andrew was a warm-hearted individual. I think he had tried desperately hard to dissuade the boy.

But the boy refused to be dissuaded. And there are few people that can be more persuasive than a small boy. I've got three of my own.

And I know. I can imagine Andrew having tried very, very hard to say to that small boy, look here son, five loaves and two fishes, just have a look, just have a look round. Five thousand men it might go round, but plus the women and the children.

If the children there had any kind of appetite commensurate with some of the young folk I've been staying with recently, that's a problem. I think the boy came to Andrew because Andrew was one of the friendliest of the disciples. There's no recorded miracle that he wrought, there's no recorded sermon that he preached, but he did have a reputation for bringing people and things to Jesus Christ.

It seems that folk could come easily to Andrew, sometimes I say he must have had a face like a doormat that said welcome on it. Some folk go around and wonder why nobody ever comes to him, because they've got faces like a notice on the door, beware of the dog. But Andrew was friendly, and it may be he just smiled at the kid, or punched him in the tummy as he put, you know, to show he was friendly.

Best way to make friends with a boy is always to hit him. He understands the language. He became an apologist.

I can almost imagine the kind of conversation that went on between that boy and Andrew. Andrew would explain to him that it was utterly inadequate. About your size, son, you wrap yourself around it.

I'll tell the master, he'll be pleased, I'm sure he'll appreciate it, but I don't think we ought to disturb him, because he's preaching. Five loaves, you see, son. And that boy, maybe it looked almost indignantly into Andrew's face, and he'd say something like this.

He said, I don't mind whether it's five loaves, or fifty loaves, or five hundred loaves, or five thousand loaves. That's not the point. Take me to that man.

He'd learned the principle of living a life utterly inexplicable, without explanation, except in terms of God. You see, because Philip, the two hundred pennies were all-important, Jesus Christ was completely unimportant. Because to Andrew, the five loaves and the two fishes were all-important, Jesus Christ was totally unimportant.

Because to that small boy, Jesus Christ was all-important, the five loaves and the two fishes were totally unimportant. That's why the Lord Jesus knew what he was going to do. Because he knew that in that great crowd, unsung, unrecognized, there was one small boy, who in the simplicity of his heart, he was no

theologian, he didn't claim any scholarship, he didn't pretend to be a great philosopher, but in the simplicity of his heart, he had entered into a faith relationship to Jesus Christ that made everything possible.

Through the God of the impossible. And Jesus Christ could accomplish, with what that small boy could present to him, in that attitude of mind towards Jesus Christ, what he couldn't possibly begin to accomplish through his own disciples. That's why they were in such sore need of this instruction.

But he knew what he was going to do. And what did he do? He took that boy's loaves and fishes and brought them here. It's always a thrilling story, this one to me, because it means that he knew what he was going to do.

That boy was known to Jesus Christ long ever before Andrew spoke to him. And almost certainly in every meeting of such a character as this, tucked away somewhere, a person, maybe just a small boy or girl or man or woman, utterly unrecognized, unknown, nobody's ever credited them with any particular capacity or any particular promise, but Jesus Christ knows that boy. He knows that girl or that man or that woman.

He's got the whole glorious program already mapped out in his mind, what's going to be accomplished, because that unknown individual has already begun to grasp the principles of a life that defies explanation, except in terms of God, which is the normal Christian life. Well, how did the Lord Jesus do the miracles? Because remember, he's trying to teach his disciples how to do the impossible. Verse 11, Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples and the disciples to them that were set down, and likewise to the fishes as much as they would.

When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore, notice very carefully the wording, they gathered them together and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves. There's no question of doubt left to us in the record that the twelve baskets were filled with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

I simply mention that in passing because there are some very, very, very, very, very clever people, you see, who would explain to you that there's no miracle involved here, it was simply that the boy shamed everybody else, and when he stuck his hand in his shirt and pulled out his own packed lunch, everybody else was so ashamed of being so selfish that they hadn't shared theirs, that they all put their hands under their shirt and they all pulled out their packed lunch, you see. Everybody shared everybody else's sandwiches and everything in the garden was lovely, and all they had to do was to go up and pick the sandwich bags up and put them in the basket. That's called scholarship.

And you get a PhD for that. It's the key to the pulpit. But folk who happened to be there at the time weren't so easily convinced of such a simple solution.

Verse fourteen, those men, the five thousand of them, plus their women and their children, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, this is of a truth, that prophet that should come into the world. This is something that cannot be explained except in terms of God. And this obviously, manifestly determines who this person is.

There was a notable miracle wrought. The impossible was accomplished. But how? It's tucked away in verse eleven, you'd hardly notice it.

We get accustomed to reading our Bibles without really thinking sometimes of the significance of what we are reading. You might imagine when it says Jesus took the loaves and when he had given thanks, that all he did was bow his head and say grace. That wasn't it.

Jesus took the loaves and when he had said thank you, given thanks, who did he thank? Himself? Wasn't he God? Well, then who was he thanking? The Father. Why did Jesus Christ thank the Father? Wasn't he a member of the triune deity? Doesn't John record in the same gospel, chapter one and verse one, that in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and was God and by him this Word all things were made? That without him was not anything made that was made and that in him the creative Word was life and this life was the very light of man and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth? Then why should the creator God, who was manifest in the flesh and walked this earth and at this moment was about to feed five thousand hungry people, why ever should he thank anybody but himself? For a very good reason. When the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world, he made himself of no reputation.

He humbled himself. He took upon himself the form of a servant. He became a man and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

This is a mystery. There is absolutely no doubt left to us in the Bible that the Lord Jesus Christ is completely one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, in deity, always God, utter God. He never once repudiated the fact that he and his Father were one.

But although the Lord Jesus Christ is God, was God and always will be God, when he came to this world, he didn't come into this world to be God. Had he done so, nobody would ever have seen him because John's Gospel, chapter 1, verse 18, says no man has seen God at any time. The only begotten of the Father, he hath declared him.

If Jesus Christ had simply come into this world as God, to behave as God, nobody would have seen him. God is a spirit. They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

But when the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world, although he was God, he came to be man. And so was God and was man at one and the same time. But although he could be God and be man at one and the same time, he could not behave as God and behave as man at one and the same time.

Have you ever grasped that fact? For a very good reason. God is the only person who has the right to be self-sufficient. God is the only person who has the right always to be independent.

God is the only person who has the right never to obey anybody. God is the only person who has the right at any time to please himself. But God, the triune deity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, created man to be dependent upon the Creator.

And that man as the creature can only function as the creature as the Creator intended the creature to function, so long as he, the creature, is totally, relentlessly, moment by moment, step by step, dependent upon the Creator. So that if the Lord Jesus Christ was to behave as man, and as man was intended by God to behave in dependence, he could not be dependent and independent at one and the same time. That would be a sheer impossibility.

The amazing thing is this, that the Bible teaches us again and again, and from the lips of the Lord Jesus again and again, and particularly in John's Gospel where he claims total equality with the Father, he

constantly places himself in total submission to the Father. Just look back just one chapter, chapter five and verse nineteen. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing.

How much? Nothing. Of himself. Wasn't he God? Didn't he create the universes? Yes.

Didn't he throw them into space? Yes. Isn't he the one of whom it is said in Hebrews chapter one, that now returned to share with the Father the glory that he had with the Father before ever the world was? Isn't it said of him that he upholds them at this moment by the word of his power? Yes. While you and I are sitting here at this very moment, there's only one person who is upholding all things by the word of his power.

It's the Son. And yet when he was here on earth, he said the Son can do nothing of himself. Verse thirty of John five.

I can of mine own self do nothing. Nothing. Look in Romans chapter fifteen, verse three.

Romans fifteen, verse three. Even Christ pleased not himself. So, God has a right to please himself.

But the moment the Lord Jesus deliberately of his own free volition, and he need never have done so, but the moment in fulfillment of the plan that had been agreed as between himself, the Father and the Holy Spirit before ever the world was, he came out of eternity into time, stepped from heaven to earth, he placed himself as man in that relationship to the Father that left him no option whatever to be, but to be totally dependent in complete and unquestioning obedience. And that's why it says in Hebrews chapter five that he learned obedience. Even God had to go to school.

You see, God had never obeyed before. God had to become a man to learn to obey. It's one of the characteristics of true manhood.

Obedience. Submission. Availability.

To God. And the Lord Jesus Christ has, had come into the world to demonstrate to man, man's true relationship to God. For he says, as my Father sent me, I'm going to send you.

If the Father had sent the Son to be God and behave as God, that wouldn't have helped you and me very much, would it? Could Jesus Christ ever have sent you and me to be and behave as God, as the Father sent him to be and behave as God? The Father sent him to be and behave as man, so that he, thirty-three years later, restored to his position with the Father, could send you and send me to be and behave as man. And what he's saying is this, I'm going to show you how you're going to behave, behave later in your relationship to me. It'll be the way that I now, as man, am behaving in my relationship to my Father.

And I want you to know this, that the office of man is to be totally available, completely submissive and obedient to his God. And I agreed with my Father and I agreed with the Holy Spirit that I should come to this world, and though I am in complete equality with the Father and the Holy Spirit, I'm going to behave in your presence as though I were a perfect man. And I want you to watch me very closely.

I want you to keep your eyes glued on me and see how I behave, because the way I behave is the way you're going to behave. As my Father sent me, I'm going to send you. See? So what did he do? He said, Father, there are five thousand men here, plus the women and the children.

They're all very hungry. We've got five loaves and we've got two fishes. Thank you, Father.

Then he began to break. Who did the miracle? Who did the miracle? Look in John 14 and verse 10. Notice the relationship.

Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me. He doeth the works. Who? The Father.

He doeth the works. So who fed the five thousand? The Father. To the Son.

Because the Lord Jesus was demonstrating how a man can do the impossible. How a man can be so available to God, that God in that man can accomplish only what God can accomplish. Jesus Christ could have fed the five thousand himself as God.

He had the right to do it. He was God. But he refused it.

It says in Philippians chapter 2 that he humbled himself. And that's why it says in Philippians 2, let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus. You are to adopt this attitude towards the Lord Jesus that he deliberately for your sake and mine adopted towards the Father.

And if you'll do that, he says, in the same 14th chapter of John, when I have gone back to be my Father, to be to you as men what my Father is to me now, as man, you'll do the things that I do and greater works than these. Simple, isn't it? He said, soon I'm going back to my Father. When my job's done, I'm going back.

And I shall share with my Father again the glory that I had with him before ever the world was. Then what my Father is to me now, I'm going to be to you then. That what I now am to my Father, you will then be to me.

It's a thrilling and a wonderful thing. It's tremendously comforting. It'd be no comfort to me if I, if I simply had to gaze upon Jesus Christ living and behaving as God and try to be like him.

That would be a message of despair. But the thrilling and the wonderful thing is this. The Lord Jesus says, I'm teaching you to live on a basis that will make possible to you, by virtue of your relationship to me, what is possible to me now by virtue of my relationship to the Father.

You see, all the limitable resources of deity are available to the man who is available to all the illimitable resources of deity. Everything that God is, is available to the man who is available to everything that God is. Understand? That's what Hebrews 11, 6 says, He that cometh to God must first believe that God is, and that he's a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

All that God is, is available to the man who diligently seeks God, who is. You see, the Lord Jesus, as utter man, was completely available to the utter availability of the Father to the Son. The Father was as available to the Son as the Son was available to the Father.

There was complete identity. I'm in my Father, available to him, my Father's in me, he's available to me. And my Father is completely available to me because I am completely available to my Father.

So I enjoy the Father and the Father enjoys me. And that's why in the activity of Jesus Christ, there was absolutely no margin of difference between what the Father did as God and the Son did as man. So every act of Jesus Christ was an act of deity clothed with his humanity.

How much are you enjoying Jesus Christ? How much is Jesus Christ enjoying you? You will enjoy as much of him and he will enjoy as much of you as you are available to his availability to you. There's no question about his availability to you. There is a question about your availability to him.

There was no question about the Father's availability to the Son. The nature of Christ's perfection as man was the utterness of his availability as man to the Father. And that's the measure of your perfection and mine.

The measure of our availability to Jesus Christ. Not our skills. Not our strong personalities.

Not the money we've got in the bank. Not our scholarship. All these things may be used in God's good purpose.

He has the right to use all those things. But that doesn't mark our spirituality. I can have all the skills and all the money and all the scholarship and all the personality in the world, but if I'm not available to Jesus Christ, the flash profit is nothing.

Because there's no content spiritually that is recognized in heaven. To all my skills, to all my gifts, to all my position, to all my influence, to all my personality, I'm tinkling cymbal and sounding brass. Spiritually destitute.

And you can build up a whole fabric of Christian structure and behavior in terms of human ability that excludes the necessity of God. That's how Jesus Christ fed the 5,000. One other illustration, briefly, without dwelling upon it, turn to John 11.

Lazarus was dead. John 11, verse 39, Jesus said, Take you away this stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh.

He has been dead four days. You can't do that. That's impossible.

He stings. The Lord Jesus said, Haven't you been learning anything? That I'm teaching you a quality of life that is inexplicable in terms of man, explainable only in terms of God. Jesus said to her, Martha, said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe, if you would enter into this dependence relationship, you'd see the glory of God.

You'd see something that could not be explained except in terms of God. Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus, verse 41, lifted up his eyes and said, Father, he's dead.

He's been dead four days. He's stinking. Thank you, Father.

Simple, isn't it? Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. Why did he thank the Father? Well, because he says, The Father that dwelleth in me, he does the work. If anybody's going to raise Lazarus from the dead, it's my Father.

This isn't my situation. It's my Father's situation. Of course, it could be my situation as God, because I am God.

But I haven't come to behave as God. I've come to behave as man. And as man, it isn't my situation.

It's my Father's situation. And it isn't, therefore, my worry. I don't have the right to worry about situations that are my Father's situations, you see.

And my Father never worries. Thank you, Father. Now, isn't that simple? Are you living this kind of life? Because the Lord Jesus says, As my Father sent me, I'm going to send you.

You have the right to talk to me, says the Lord Jesus, the way I talk to my Father. If you are as available to me as I am to my Father. That's why the whole secret of the Christian life is not knowledge in the head.

It's the relationship of your heart. And the greatest service that you can render to your church, to your family, to your community, to your nation, to God Himself, is your relationship. Not your money, or your time, or your gifts, or your talents.

It's your availability. The greatest service that these lamps can render to the darkness of this room without light is their availability to the electricity. Isn't that right? Supposing these lamps, beautiful as they are, wonderfully fashioned, fascinating to look at, supposing they all decided to be unavailable to the electricity.

Would their beautiful presence help us very much? No, they'd just hang beautifully useless from the ceiling. And the churches of our lands are cluttered up with beautifully useless Christians. Because they're rendering everything except their availability to Jesus Christ.

They're simply demonstrating what wonderful lamps they are. But there isn't any light. Because lamps don't produce light.

All that lamps can do is receive that upon which they must constantly be dependent to produce light. The electricity. So the Lord Jesus looked up into His Father's face and said, Father, I thank that thou hast heard me.

I knew that thou hearest me always. Because I'm always available to you and therefore you're always available to me. But because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

That I'm the sent one and you're the sender. They will believe that I'm the sent one and you're the sender when they see the activity of you the sender through me the sent one. When they see me doing things that can only be explained, Father, in terms of what you are, though they think me to be a contemporary man born in Nazareth, just a carpenter at the bench.

When they see you behaving through me, they'll know that you sent me. And when will your neighbors be convinced that you're a sent one? For Jesus said, as my Father sent me, I'm going to send you. He was the sent one of the Father, the sender.

You and I are the sent ones of the sent one. Jesus Christ. When will the world be convinced of the sender, Jesus Christ, in terms of us the sent ones? When it's as easy for Jesus Christ to act and behave through us as it was easy for the Father to act and behave through the Son.

This is called the mystery of godliness. The mystery of godliness. It isn't imitation.

It's impartation and release of that which is imparted. And, of course, the moment the Lord Jesus looked up into his Father and said, Thank you. The relationship between Father and Son was reaffirmed.

He said, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth. And who raised Lazarus from the dead? Thank you, Father.

Is the principle a little clearer? How much did the disciples learn from this wonderful illustration? Do you know how much? Nothing. I wonder how much you've learned tonight. Look back in Mark 6. Verse 44.

They that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men, and straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he alone sent away the people. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.

And he saw them, the disciples, toiling and rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them. Having fed the five thousand, having done the impossible, having demonstrated precisely what he set out to demonstrate, what do you think he did? The disciples had come to him before the demonstration and said, We're embarrassed. We've got this great company of people on our hands.

They're hungry and we don't know how to feed them. Get them off our hands. And the Lord Jesus said, No.

Fed them and then got his disciples off his hands. I wonder why. Not only did he get them off his hands, he dumped them right in the middle of a storm.

Specially prepared. Verse 52 tells you why. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened.

Didn't learn a thing. Literally what it says, they were not one with the wiser. They hadn't learned a thing.

They considered not the miracle of the loaves. Didn't mean a thing to them. Didn't explain anything.

Their hearts were hardened. Wasn't that they hadn't seen it with their eyes. Wasn't that they couldn't recount it with their lips.

It wasn't that it wasn't imprinted upon their memories. They had it all there intellectually, academically. But their hearts were hardened.

Apostles. Big names with hard hearts. What does this teach you? That it isn't office that makes you spiritual.

These were called to be apostles. And they were disqualified for service because they had hard hearts. Don't imagine that because you're a Sunday school teacher, or a Sunday school superintendent, or a preacher, or a pastor, or a missionary, or an evangelist, or an elder of a church, please don't imagine that that makes you spiritual.

Office never made anybody spiritual. Sometimes very unspiritual people fight their way into office. But office never makes anybody spiritual.

It's your heart relationship to Jesus Christ. And the church is weighted down with big names who've got hard hearts. So the Lord Jesus had to begin all over again.

What a patient teacher he was. If any of you think you ought to be discouraged at the kind of Bible class you've got, just think what kind of a Bible class he had. Three solid years, never... never began to trickle in what he was at.

Gave them a preview again and again, a panoramic foreshadowing of all that was to happen, delivered into the hands of wicked men in Jerusalem, to be delivered and done to death and raised again the third day. And they never grasped it until after the resurrection. When it all happened, it broke on their heads like a terrible calamity, like an awful nightmare.

They ran for their lives, and the first to deny him, almost within touching distance, at the jibe of a servant girl, just a slip of a girl, with Peter, with curses and with oaths, denying that he ever knew him, like the Galilean fisherman he was. What a good thing it is that the Lord Jesus loves us, not for what we are, but for the end product. That's why we have to turn, to complete our study tonight, to Matthew 14.

And we've nearly finished, you've been wonderfully patient. I only wish I had five loaves and two fishes. At the end of the address.

Verse 21. And they that were eaten were about five thousand men, beside the women and the children. And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship and to go before him into the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

And when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray, and when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, the wind was contrary. There they were, backs bent every mile, the muscle aching, the wind whistling round their ears, and the great mountainous waves pounding and thudding into the little boat, threatening to send them to bottom.

Everything threatened to be over their heads. They hardly dared that he even gained their destination. They'd lost all sight of land.

It was dark and perilous and threatening. And in the fourth watch of the night, verse 25, Jesus went unto them doing what? The impossible. Walking on the sea.

A man can't walk on the sea, that's ridiculous. That's what the disciples thought anyway. It says, when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, it's a spirit.

Only a ghost could do that. No man could do that. That's impossible.

Just as impossible to feed five thousand. Hadn't learned too much. And the Lord Jesus went to them, walking on the sea.

What was he demonstrating? Oh, it was wonderful. He was demonstrating that everything that threatened to be over their heads was already under his feet. You found that out yet? Are all the neighbors convinced that you've discovered the secret? Are your children convinced that you've discovered the secret of somebody who has under his feet anything that ever could threaten to be over your heads? If not, don't be surprised if they're not terribly impressed with your testimony.

And they cried out for fear. They shrieked for terror, literally. Straightway, Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer.

It is I. I am. Be not afraid. Stop being frightened.

How was Jesus Christ walking on the water? Very simply. The Father that dwelleth in me, he says, he does the work. It doesn't mean that I'm inactive, passive, flabby.

No, no. My whole humanity, body, soul, spirit, mind, emotion, and will is gloriously available to my Father, and he keeps my whole humanity constantly busy. But it's always directed by my Father.

I do always those things that please him. And if you want to know how I walk on the water as a man, of course, I could easily walk on the water as God. I created water.

But as man, behaving as man, this is how I do it, one step at a time. That's how most people walk. Simple, isn't it? Relationship.

And to his baffled and bewildered disciples, the Lord Jesus says, I am. I am. Can you have any more than that? Do you need to have less? I am.

Not I was. Not I was. Don't try to bolster up your spirits by thinking what God did in the past.

No, no. I am. Present tense.

Not I will be. Don't just hope against hope something will turn up and God will rise to the emergency. No, no, no.

I am. The eternal present tense. I am.

For this very situation, now, at this moment, for the thing that baffles you at this moment, for the thing that threatens you at this moment, for the responsibility that is imposed upon you at this moment, for this problem, now, this perplexity, now, I am all that you could ever need in whom all the fullness of the Godhead bodily dwells. I am. Stop being frightened.

That's the Christian life. The Lord Jesus in the mighty, glorious power of his resurrection life indwelling your humanity and presenting you at this moment with all that he is. Does Jesus Christ live within you? Are you a real Christian? If I were to say to you, does Christ live in your heart? And you'd say, yes, indeed, he does.

Well, then, how much have you got if Jesus Christ lives in your heart? Everything. Can you have more? No. Do you need to have less? No.

Well, stop being frightened. Seems to be the obvious thing, doesn't it? If you have in the person of the Lord Jesus living in you at this moment, what are you going to be frightened about? I am. Just stop being frightened.

And verse 28, Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, if you are, bid me come unto thee on the water. Master, if this is true, that if you are, then put under my feet what is already under your feet. And I can see the smile breaking on the face of the Lord Jesus.

And he'd say, Peter, that's all I've been waiting for. It's just beginning to twig. In other words, the pen is dropping.

Come. That's all I've been waiting for. I've just been waiting for you to reckon with me as I always reckon with my Father.

Come on. He said, come, verse 29. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, what do you think he did? The impossible.

He walked on the water to go to Jesus, just one step at a time. How did he do it? Well, he wasn't reckoning with Peter. Peter knew perfectly well he couldn't do this.

This cannot be explained in terms of man. It could only be explained in terms of Jesus Christ. And so he walked one step at a time.

Thank you, Lord. This is tremendous. I've never walked on water before.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you. Thank you.

Was that explained in terms of Peter? Oh, no. Anything but Peter. Because after he had walked halfway there, suddenly a very incurteous, a discourteous wave slapped him on one side and another discourteous wave slapped him on the other side, distracted his attention from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Immediately he began to hear the howl of the wind about his ears again. Immediately he focused his attention upon the great mountainous waves and the dull, dark, leaden waters and immediately he began to say, I can't do this. I can't.

No, and he couldn't. He was quite right. Down he went.

Because he could only live a life that's explicable only in terms of Jesus Christ when he's reckoning with Jesus Christ. It's a moment-by-moment appropriation of what he is. And down he went and began to cry out for fear.

Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him, recaptured his attention so that once more Peter could reckon with Christ. And they continued the journey together on the water.

And what do you think the Lord Jesus Christ said to Peter? Do you think he went up to him and slapped him on the back and said, My boy, Peter, Peter, this is tremendous. I want to congratulate you. I want to tell you I've never seen a demonstration of faith like that anywhere, anytime.

That's what he'd have done today if he'd been on the platform somewhere. We've just run out of it. We've run out of superlatives nowadays when we introduce each other.

That's a fact. I never recognize myself normally. I sort of I like to turn around and shake hands with me because I must be worth meeting.

We've lost all sense of reality. Peter didn't come the Lord Jesus Christ didn't come to Peter and congratulate him on his great faith because the very first person who'd ever done it he stepped out of the boat and walked on the water. Jesus Christ didn't congratulate him.

He rebuked him. He said, O thou of little faith wherefore didst thou die? There was nothing clever about walking on the water, Peter. All you had to do was to reckon with me.

The strength of your faith, Peter is the object of your faith. It's always the strength of your faith. You can have all the faith in the world in a chair with a broken leg but you'll still end on the floor.

You can believe a man and he'll rob you of your last penny if he's a thief. The object of your faith is the strength of your faith. O thou of little faith what's wrong with me, Peter? How you downgraded me.

Aren't I adequate? I don't congratulate you. It's the easiest thing in the world for any boy, man or woman to walk on the water if I tell them to come. And they'll reckon with me but at least, Peter you've made a beginning.

And when they were coming to the ship the wind ceased and they that were in the ship came and worshipped him saying of a truth thou art the son of God If you forget everything else that I've said to you tonight will you remember this very simple thing? With all that threatened to be over their heads already under his feet the Lord Jesus came on the water to his disciples and he said, I am. Now stop being frightened. Enter into all the good of what I am.

And they learned at least to begin to say thou art that's all I need to know. That's what it means to live the Christian life. For every new situation to which every new step takes you no matter how threatening that situation may be no matter how promising or baffling or perplexing for every new situation for every new step the Lord Jesus says to you in the mighty overwhelming power of deity in all the mighty triumphs of his resurrection life he says, I am.

And all you've got to do is look up into his face and from your heart say, thou art it's all that I need. Now thank you Lord. And the next step takes you into a new situation immediately he says to your heart I am.

Stop being frightened. And you say, thank you Lord I'm not frightened. You're all that I need.

Thank you so much. And the next step he says, don't be frightened I am. And you say, thou art it's all that I need Lord thank you so much.

And you've learned to live a quality of life that is utterly without explanation except in terms of Jesus Christ. You have within your heart a poise a peace that is past understanding staggers the neighbours. This is the life to which Christ has called you.

This is the life which he's redeemed you. Walking through time thank you Lord. Until one day almost without noticing it you step out of time into eternity from earth to heaven.

And it's only an incident change of geographical location and suitings. Because you've learned on earth in time already to enjoy the life that you'll go on living for eternity. For to me to live is Christ in time or eternity.

It's only a question of where I'm going to enjoy it down here or up there. And Paul says it doesn't really matter to me. To me to live is Christ down here and die is gain.

It's going on enjoying Christ up there. Now isn't that thrilling? Isn't that wonderful? This is why the Lord Jesus shed his precious blood. This is why he died on the cross.

Not just to get you out of hell and get you to heaven. No, no. That was simply the means to this end.

I am come said the Lord Jesus. You might have life and have it superlatively more abundantly right now in time on the way to eternity. Just this one last thing before we pray.

You're not a Christian yet? You don't even know your sins are beginning. You're some bored girl and you've been brought up with Christian parents and you know the gospel inside out. You can recite John 3, 16 and 50 other texts but you're not a Christian.

And if something in your heart says I need to be a Christian. Do you know what the Lord Jesus said to his disciples after he was risen from the dead and appeared to them as frightened men and women in that upper room? He said, behold my hands and my feet. That it is I. I am.

Myself. Handle me. Handle me and see.

And they touched him and they could hardly believe the joy. And if you aren't yet conscious that you're a forgiven sinner the Lord Jesus stands in your midst at night and he says, behold my hands and my feet. You need forgiveness.

You need cleansing. Well, I am. Stop being frightened.

I'm all that you need. All a guilty sinner needs. Because the sinless savior died my sinful soul is counted free and God the just is satisfied to look on him condemned.

And pardon me. And all you have to do tonight to be redeemed and to receive life and to begin this wonderful walk in Christ all you need to do tonight is to look humbly into his face and say, Lord Jesus, thou art for me. Thank you for those wounds.

Thank you for your death. Thank you for your blood. Thank you.

You're all that I need. All that a guilty sinner needs. Thank you so much.

And you can go home tonight knowing that you're a child of God. Forgiven. You don't deserve it.

It's God's good gift. And you've taken it. And you've learned to say thank you.

Which is the beginning of faith and the beginning of wisdom. I'm going to make this very simple suggestion. I don't indulge too much in sort of invitations and altar calls.

They have their place. They can prove useful sometimes. But it is wonderful sometimes also to close just like a big family.

I often find folk come to me afterwards and I say, Did you receive Jesus Christ? And they say, No, I didn't. Don't you want to? And I say, Yes, with all my heart. And you just wonder why ever they didn't.

Because they know everything and understand everything. So I'm going to suggest this. That we pray together just like a big family.

In two different senses. In the first instance, I'm going to lead you all in prayer, sentence by sentence. And I'm going to invite every single Christian who already knows with assurance that sin has been forgiven for his dear sake.

And I'm going to ask you to help me help some boy or girl or man or woman deliberately receive Christ tonight without any embarrassment to them. Because I'm going to invite you to pray and you're going to pray just aloud after me sentence by sentence. Then if you're a boy or a girl or a man or a woman and you've never really entered by faith into the good of what Christ did for you when he died, you mingle your

voice with ours as though nobody were here but just you and the Lord Jesus.

Will you do that? And he'll receive you and he'll save you and you can go home and rejoice. I'm not going to ask you to do anything more than that. When you get home just get by your bedside and say, Thank you, Lord Jesus.

At that meeting I deliberately I joined my voice with the others and I received you. And I want to thank you before I sleep tonight that you've redeemed me. Would you do that? Then we'll pause just for a few seconds and then we're all going to pray because lots of us have something to say to the Lord Jesus because lots of us have discovered something about ourselves as Philip and the other apostles had to learn something about themselves.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. I'm going to pray sentence by sentence. Every Christian who is willing to help me help some boy or girl or man or woman come to Christ tonight you pray after me in the same words, will you? Sentence by sentence.

And if you're that boy or girl or man or woman add your voice to ours. Just alone in your heart with Him who loved you and gave Himself to you. Let's pray.

Dear Lord Jesus Christ, I know that I'm a sinner cut off from God, spiritually dead, by nature at last. And guilty, I thank You for dying for me, for paying my debt forever. This I do not deserve, but I gladly receive Thee now as my Redeemer.

I rest the whole weight of my need upon Thee. And I believe Thou hast received me because Thou hast promised. And Thy word is enough for me.

Now I know I am redeemed, cleansed in Thy blood, born of God. And Thy Holy Spirit has come to live within me to give me Thy wonderful life. I thank Thee so much.

I'm simply going to add these few sentences now. It may be that you'd like to echo them as we all pray, embracing those who may be at this very moment in their hearts have received Christ. And so, make articulate what may be as the language of our hearts.

Let us pray. Dear Lord Jesus Christ, would You pray after me? I have received Thee as my Savior. I know that Thou dost live in me.

And I see now, if never before, that I cannot live Thy life. Only Thou art able to live Thy life in and through me. All Thou dost expect of me is failure.

I thank You for this discovery. But because of what Thou art, I have all that I need at any time, for every circumstance. From my heart tonight, for me personally, and for all my future, I look into Thy face and I say, Thou art.

It's all I need to know. I'm gladly available to Thy availability to me. Thou wilt live Thy life in blessing to others and in glory to God through me.

And I'm glad. And I thank You for Thy name's sake. Amen.

And now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect to do His will. God Himself working in

us. That which is well-pleasing in His sight and through Jesus Christ, our Lord, to whom be glory forever and forever.

Amen. I'd like to thank you for your great patience tonight. It's been a great joy to be amongst you.

I haven't spared you in time or substance. We had just this one opportunity. Maybe God has given us at least some view of what glorious prospect lies ahead for each and every one of us.

If you mingled your voice with ours for the first time tonight in receiving the Lord Jesus, you'll say, will you go home glad? Never doubt. Never allow Satan to raise the question again. Keep saying, thank you, Lord.

You died for me. It's all that I need. I'm resting the full weight of my needs as a guilty sinner upon your adequacy in death.

And from that moment, will the rest of us step out in all the full adequacy of His life. Reconciled to God by His death. Once and for all.

Moment by moment. Day by day. Situation by situation.

Saved by His life. By the faith that takes what He is as once you took what He did. And says, thank you.

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