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Walking on Water, Bread of Life (Part 1)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg delves into John chapter 6, focusing on the walking on water and bread of life stories. He clarifies the context of these stories, noting the eyewitness account of John and dispelling misconceptions such as the idea that Jesus was walking along the seashore instead of on water. Steve emphasizes the importance of faith in the trials of life and highlights how the message of the bread of life is much deeper than simply physical nourishment.

Transcript

Today, my intention is to take what remains of John chapter 6. Now, we weren't looking at John chapter 6 in our last session, but the first 14 verses or 15 verses of John chapter 6 are parallel to what we were looking at. We were actually in Mark last time and talking about the feeding of the 5,000. And the reason we turn to John now is because John gives us the most comprehensive account of what followed.

In fact, whereas the other Gospels, which all record the feeding of the 5,000, they do tell us that at the end of this day and this miracle, Jesus had the disciples get into a boat and cross back over to Capernaum. Now, you might recall that before he fed the multitudes, he had been trying to escape them. His disciples had come back from their outreach.

News had come to them that John the Baptist had been imprisoned. There were many people coming and going, probably trying to get Jesus' opinion about what should be done about Herod. The disciples were fairly exhausted.

They were probably scared because of what had happened to John, wondering if Jesus would be the next target. Jesus just felt that it would be good to get the disciples off by themselves for some rest and relaxation, so he said, let's go across the sea and got in the boat with them. And the people on shore saw where they were going and ran ahead around the top of the lake, not on the water, but around the edge there, and anticipated them.

And when they got out of the boat, they found that the crowds were already there. And Jesus, although he had sought some rest, it seems, went ahead and healed them and

taught them many things about the kingdom of God, and then fed them. Now, we were talking about the feeding of the multitudes along with some of the other issues, like the death of John the Baptist last time, and I thought I would get more into the feeding of the 5,000, but I must confess I don't have much heart to get into it, but rather to continue on from there, partly because, although I didn't make all the comments I would perhaps like to make on it, I've said enough of the things I want to say that it would be fairly redundant to go back into it.

I could make a few other points, but it would hardly be worth the time, especially in view of how much else needs to be covered. So, I'd like to pick up at the end of that story, and we'll go to John, because only John tells us after, well, I should say this, the other Gospels and John all tell us that Jesus told the disciples to get into a boat and go alone back to Capernaum. And he remained on the shore where he was, and he set off the multitudes.

And then he came walking on the water to them. When he got in the boat, they came to Capernaum, and we have the next day a dialogue, mostly a discourse, but there was some dialogue involved, which is found only in John, and that was what we might call the bread of life discourse. That is what I hope to actually get into today.

We do need to read about the walking on the water. We'll start, actually, let's look at verse 14 of John 6. And those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, this is after he fed the multitudes, the five thousand, said, This is truly the prophet who is to come into the world. Now, the reference to the prophet is a reference back to a prediction that Moses had made back in the 18th chapter of Deuteronomy, when he said, The Lord your God will raise up a prophet like unto me when I'm gone.

In Deuteronomy 18.15, Moses had said this, and then a few verses later, God is speaking and says, I will raise up, and he's speaking to Moses, I will send another prophet like you, and all the people shall hearken unto him. Well, the disciples came to understand that that prophet was one and the same as the promised Messiah. The Jews didn't have that all that clear in their mind.

They knew there was a Messiah supposed to come. They knew there was a prophet like Moses was supposed to come. They believed Elijah was supposed to come.

Some of them even believed that Jeremiah was supposed to come. There was a lot of traditional ideas, a lot of confusion. But they did know there was this unfulfilled promise that God would send a prophet like unto Moses.

And apparently, many of the people were saying, Well, this Jesus is that prophet. Now, whether those same people who made that observation identified that prophet with the Messiah or thought of the prophet as someone other than the Messiah, I cannot say. We don't have enough information.

But it does seem that some of them may have, or at least some of the people felt he ought to be the Messiah. Because it says in verse 15, Therefore, when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take him by force to make him a king, which would obviously be an attempt to fulfill their messianic expectations, making him the king, he departed again to a mountain by himself alone. And when evening came, his disciples went down to the sea.

They got into the boat and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them. Now, it doesn't seem to say in John that Jesus sent them across the sea, though the other Gospels tell us the reason the disciples got in the boat without Jesus is because he sent them.

There was a great deal of excitement in the crowd, a great huge crowd who had been fed. And now we read they were about ready to make Jesus a king by force, which was not what he had come to be, at least not the kind of king they were anticipating. And therefore, he sent the disciples off, lest they themselves might get caught up in that messianic fervor.

I mean, remember, the disciples were not altogether free from political aspirations. They themselves thought the Messiah was going to be political. They saw themselves as sort of the cabinet of the Messiah of the future.

And we remember that at a later date, even James and John hoped to be right and left-hand ministers in the kingdom. And so they didn't really have a real grasp of what the kingdom of God was supposed to be, nor did the multitudes. And so lest the disciples would get caught up and say, wow, this is the time.

These people are ready to follow you wherever you go, Jesus. Let's do it. I mean, not only these thousands who are here who see you as their leader, but a crowd draws a crowd.

And right now, at this particular time, the dissatisfaction for the Romans among the general populace of the Jews must have been at a peak because of the recent death of John the Baptist. And, you know, the atrocity of that story reaching the ears of everybody that John had been beheaded by Herod, the Roman official, would have been just the kind of thing that if there were already 5,000 people ready to take up arms, the other peasants and citizens would say, well, this is the best chance we're going to get and we're going to move now. And so the disciples, with their own political aspirations, could easily have been swept away with this feeling.

And so Jesus sends them away from the crowd by boat. He himself sends the crowd away and goes up into a mountain to pray. And I want to say this, that we from time to time contrast what dispensationalism teaches with what the Bible teaches.

One of the major affirmations of the dispensational scheme of things is that Jesus, in

fact, did come to set up a political kingdom exactly in the manner that the Jews expected. And they say the reason that Jesus did not do so is because the Jews rejected his offer of such a kingdom. They rejected him as a Davidic Messiah.

And therefore he took the kingdom away with him when he left and he'll set up just such a political Davidic kingdom at his return in the millennium. This is essentially the dispensational proposition. It's one of the major points in dispensationalism.

However, where do we ever find in the Gospels Jesus ever showing an interest in setting up a political kingdom and that being rejected by the people? We find the opposite. The people were interested in him setting up a political kingdom. He rejected that.

He would not do it. They, in fact, rejected him not because they were rejecting a physical kingdom. They rejected him because he wouldn't accept their agenda of a political kingdom.

And so this, I mean, the Scripture just says the exact opposite of what dispensationalism affirms on points like this. Well, so the disciples go down to the sea. Jesus stays on the shore.

He's praying. And it says, verse 18, then the sea arose because of the great wind. A great wind was blowing.

We've seen many times storms at sea in the Gospel already. But Jesus was not with them in the boat this time. Last time the sea was threatening to capsize the boat and fill it up, but Jesus was in the boat, so there was hope.

But Jesus wasn't in the boat this time. And we're not told that the sea was about ready to sink the boat, but it was certainly impeding the progress of the disciples. By the middle of the night, they had not rowed any further than about three or four miles.

And the suggestion is that they set to sea when it became dark, and Jesus had not joined them. So at dark, they started across. But by the middle of the night, some hours later, they had gotten no further than three or four miles.

So they were moving pretty slow, and that's because the wind was blowing against them. This is one of those eyewitness details that lends credence to the authenticity of John's Gospel. He's full of little details like this that a person who was there would remember, but which are not particularly important to the story.

That it was three or four miles offshore. Now, of course, John didn't write it in miles. He wrote it in stadia, 25 or 30 stadia or furlongs, the King James says.

But it's the equivalent to three or four miles. And so here, as one of the members, one of the riders in the boat, one of the rowers, perhaps, he remembered fairly accurately how

far they were from the shore, a detail that wouldn't have had to be mentioned, if not from an eyewitness who remembered it well. Now, when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat, and they were afraid.

But he said to them, It is I, do not be afraid. Then they willingly received him into the boat, and immediately, the boat was at the land where they were going. Now, when it says immediately, the boat was at land where they were going, this may mean that there was a miracle, that as soon as Jesus was in the boat, the rest of the distance across the lake, which is about another five or so miles, was instantly traversed.

It was like they were translated, you know, from that point, not quite at the midway point in the lake, to the other side. Immediately, they were at the other side. Now, there's every, I mean, there's good reason to see it that way.

The wording can certainly be interpreted that way. It could, on the other hand, suggest that while they had labored many hours to get just to that short distance, once Jesus was in the boat, the wind died, and they quickly made it to the other side. Immediately might be relatively immediately.

In view of how long it had taken them to get as far as they got, they went much faster the rest of the way without the wind resisting them. It doesn't, we don't know, and it doesn't matter much. If he got them there immediately, I can think of a few parallels, it seemed to me, in my own travels.

And I can't really vouch for the miraculous nature of this at all, but I can remember times when I was a teenager, and we were in a Christian band, and we'd play at Christian coffee houses fairly far from home, sometimes, you know, two or three hours' drive from home. And we'd play until late at night, and then after we'd play, we'd tear down the equipment, pack up the vans, and then we'd all go out to Denny's for a few more hours, you know, and drink coffee and talk and laugh and have some food sometimes. And by the time we'd leave Denny's to head for home, which might be two hours or so drive home, it was about one in the morning.

And so many, there were many occasions when it seemed to me like, you know, I was never going to make it home awake, you know. Maybe I didn't, maybe I drove a long time asleep, it's hard to say, but I can remember times when I just said, I mean, I was just a young charismatic at the time, I believed in every kind of miracle there was, so I still do believe in miracles, but I was naive enough to just pray, God, just shorten the distance, shorten the distance from here to home. And it seemed to me like, you know, I'd start recognizing signs on the freeway close to home right away.

Now, I don't know whether God shortened the distance or whether I fell asleep and he'd steered the car for several hours, or, you know, what happened, but I can remember

thinking it was like this, you know, because I can think of more than once when I had a long trip ahead of me, and it seemed like, oh, I was so fatigued and I didn't think I was going to make it. I'd literally pray that God would shorten the distance, and it seemed like he did. You know, I couldn't vouch for it, you know, empirically, I couldn't prove that that happened, but it certainly, it felt sort of like that.

So, I mean, I believe that God could have, you know, as soon as Jesus was in the boat, they were on the other side of the shore instantly, no problem there, but I don't know that that's what it's saying. I will say this, that the walking on the water incident has been, you know, explained away to some extent by liberals in more than one way. William Barclay, who is much loved by evangelicals because of his vigorous and scholarly and entertaining commentaries that he writes, how many of you have read Barclay before? He's an enjoyable commentator, but he's a liberal, and he, you know, he has fascinating stuff in his commentaries as far as background information about what the Talmud said about things and what the culture was, and pretty authoritative in that respect, but he just doubts miracles.

And I remember once reading his treatment of John, or at least the walking on the water incident, and he said that when it says that Jesus came to them walking on the sea, he pointed to another place, I don't remember which passage it was, but there's another place in the Gospels where the same expression in the Greek was used, that someone was walking on the sea, and in the context it clearly meant they were walking along the seashore. On the sea was just an expression that meant, you know, on the edge of the sea, along the seashore. There is, in fact, the same expression found, I don't have, I looked for it just before coming here, but I was short on time and I didn't locate the particular passage I would have.

But there's another place in the Gospels where the exact same expression in the Greek, walking on the sea, was used in a context where there's no doubt about it, the person in question was walking on the seashore, not on the water. And so Barclay says, well, this is not to suggest that the disciples saw Jesus walking actually on top of the water, but rather that he was walking along the seashore. Now, in order to make this meaningful, he suggests that because the wind was contrary to the disciples, they must have feared to go out into the deep, lest they should sink, and so they kept the boat hugging the shore near the, you know, as they moved along the northern shore of the lake, that they were only a short distance out from the shoreline.

So that when Jesus came walking along the sea, they didn't expect to see anyone out so late at night, and it kind of scared them and startled them. They said, don't worry, it's I. And then they either came to shore and picked him up or else he swam to them or something. I don't remember the details, but he removed any vestige of miracle from the story.

The idea was simply that they saw Jesus walking along the seashore, and when he got in the boat, they were much encouraged and so forth. Other liberals have sought to say that Jesus did in fact appear to the disciples to be walking on the water, but unbeknownst to them or anyone else apparently, Jesus knew about a ridge of coral or a barely submerged ridge of rock under the water, and he was able to just walk on these rocks that were not visible from above the water, and he gave the appearance of walking on water, therefore. Now, both of these stories are lame.

Frankly, William Barclay's is the more realistic, since he actually appeals to a Greek parallel in the Gospels and so forth, but his explanation doesn't fit things. First of all, they weren't close to the shore, they were three or four miles out. It's specified they were that far from the shore.

And I think that that's the most important thing to note. Now, to suggest that Jesus was walking on top of rocks under the water, we have to figure that these disciples, some of them had been fishermen on that very lake all their lives, and if there were such ridges under there, which by the way have not been found by modern exploration either, and by the way there's no reason they shouldn't be there now if they were there then, the disciples would not have been unnerved. I wonder if they would have recognized, oh, he's walking on the coral ridge there, of course.

They would have known that end of the lake like they knew their backyard. Furthermore, Matthew, and only Matthew, tells of Peter getting out of the boat and coming to Jesus, at least partway. That story is kind of interesting how that's told.

Let me see if I can, unfortunately I didn't make reference. Okay, Matthew 14. Let's read it here in Matthew 14, 22.

Immediately, Jesus made his disciples get into a boat and go before him to the other side while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went on up a mountain by himself to pray. And when evening had come, he was alone there.

But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now, in the fourth watch of the night, now, when the night was divided into four watches, each watch was three hours, and the night began at six o'clock. So, the first watch was from six to nine, second watch was from nine to midnight, third watch was from midnight to three in the morning, and so the fourth watch was actually from three in the morning to six in the morning.

They'd been rowing all night, past three in the morning now. And they'd only gone three or four miles according to John. So, maybe that would account for why it says they were immediately at the shore when Jesus got in, even if it took an hour to make the rest of the trip.

That would seem awfully rapid compared to rowing for nine hours and getting on three or four miles, which is less than halfway. But it says, in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It's a ghost! Now, why would they say that if he was just walking on the shoreline? You know, I mean, people do walk on shorelines without it being that much of an eerie thing.

It's a ghost, they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I, do not be afraid. Now, here's the part that only Matthew includes.

And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it's you, command me to come to you on the water. So he said, come. And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.

But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid and began to sink. And he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him and said to him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

And those who were in the boat came and worshipped him, saying, Truly you are the Son of God. Now, having introduced Peter here, I don't know whether we will get into the Bread of Life discourse today or not. There are a number of points that preachers could make.

And I have to decide how much preaching I want to do and how much teaching. Preachers would, of course, make all kinds of applications to Jesus being in the boat. It brings calm and brings you to your destination and things like that.

And possibly to the story of Peter walking on the water as well. I'll try to make the points I want to make briefly. If I don't succeed, then we'll have to take another session longer than I thought I would.

Now, let me point out something here. The story about Peter walking on the water is rather interesting. Because, first of all, Peter wanted to walk on the water.

It's clear. Lord, if it's you, command me to walk on the water. But he didn't just presume to walk on the water.

He didn't just say, Well, that looks fun. I think I'll try that. If he can do it, I can do it.

The water must be colder than I thought. The water's got ice on top or something. I think I'll go skating.

That's not what Peter did. He wanted to walk on the water, but he didn't do it initially. He said, Lord, if it's you, command me to come to you on the water.

Now, of course, when Jesus said, Go ahead, come on, Peter did it. Now, it's very important to note that walking on the water is supernatural. People can't do it.

If Peter had wished to do it without any command from Jesus, it would have been presumptuous. But, if Jesus commands it, there is the implicit suggestion that if God commands you to do something that you cannot naturally do, then you'll have to be receiving supernatural power for it, and God's committed to give it to you. If he commands you to do it.

Now, if he doesn't command it, and you just presume to do it, you're on your own. But if you get an order from God, and he says, you know, fly from here to there, slapping your arms, you know you can't do that. But if he commands it, then you can.

He'll let you. God never gives commands that you cannot, with his assistance, keep. Because God's not unreasonable.

And when God commands one to do something that cannot be done, humanly speaking, then we must assume that we're about to see a miracle. And we should proceed joyously and expectantly, say, well, this is one of those rare occasions that we get to actually see God's power as opposed to man's power involved in getting something done. Now, as soon as Jesus said, come, Peter had that command.

He asked for it. He requested it, and Jesus gave it. And therefore, since Jesus said, come on, Peter knew that with that command of Jesus, there's power.

In the word of a king, there's power, I think Ecclesiastes said. And when Jesus gives the word, there's power, an enablement that comes with that supernatural command. So Peter was able to do it.

Now, we're told that when he saw the wind and such, somehow Peter began to sink. It is because he was afraid, apparently. And Jesus rebuked him and said, oh, you have little faith, why did you doubt? So we'd have to assume that it's not only the power of the word of Jesus or the command of Jesus, but also the faith of the individual responding that allows a miracle to take place.

These two things are necessary. Now, the Calvinist, whom I do not agree with, takes stock only of the aspect, I think, of the command of God or the decree of God. Human faith or human choice has very little to do with success or failure in the Calvinist system, because, of course, God's the sovereign.

God gives his sovereign decrees and whatever he decrees happens. However, Jesus decreed that Peter should walk on the water here, and Peter did initially, but without Jesus decreeing that he should sink, he sank. So there must be another factor here besides just the decree of God.

Now, on the other hand, the word of faith people, whom I also disagree with and see as imbalanced, they emphasize the faith, but not the decree of God, not the command of God. They teach, essentially, that if you learn how to master the art of faith, you can have what you want, you can write your own ticket. You can name it and claim it.

Now, that is essentially what is taught. Now, some of the word of faith teachers, because of criticism, have moderated their position a little bit, but basically the pure word of faith teaching, as it comes from the original guys who have been teaching it for years and years, is basically, you don't have to be, it's not contingent on God's will, you can have whatever you want if you have the faith for it. It's just you.

It's your faith. It has all the miraculous power in it. And they eliminate the need for the command of God.

Now, see, a balanced Christianity has to take stock of the fact that there is a supernatural element that Christians can't expect. By the way, Peter was not criticized for wanting to walk on the water. Now, Peter didn't need to walk on the water.

He could have waited a few minutes more and Jesus would have been at the boat. I mean, if he wanted to get close to Jesus, he didn't have to walk on the water for that time. He could have just waited.

He could have been patient. But he wanted to walk on the water, and probably the disciples who had become accustomed to Peter's impetuosity probably thought, oh, there goes Peter again, you know, doing something crazy, you know, wanting to walk on the water. But Jesus didn't criticize him for that.

He didn't say, Peter, what in the heck did you want to walk on the water for? Can't you be content to be like other people? Just stay in the boat and wait for me. Jesus didn't criticize him for having a thirst for participation in the supernatural. He criticized him for having too little faith to carry it out.

Now, what was the faith issue here? Well, it says in Romans chapter 10 and verse 17, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Some manuscripts say by the word of Christ. Faith comes by hearing the word of Christ.

Now, Christ had given his word, come. Therefore, there was something solid for Peter's faith to hang on to, and that was the command of Christ. He should have trusted, as he initially did, he should have trusted that the command of Christ would enable him to fulfill it.

Obviously, he believed that at first, but his eyes were turned from Christ to, as we indicated, the boisterous wind and the waves, the circumstances. Now, it says he was afraid. Nowhere really analyzes this, but I think we can put two and two together and figure that he could trust Christ up to a point, but when he became aware of how

treacherous the situation he was in, once he was out on the tightrope over the Grand Canyon and began to assess his situation, that was stretching his faith a bit more than he was planning on.

He saw the conditions and thought, well, I've really got myself in a spot here. And thinking about the spot he'd gotten himself into, instead of thinking about Jesus, who had given him the command, his faith dislodged from its anchoring, from its mooring on the rock of Jesus' words, and therefore he began to sink. And as I say, Jesus didn't say, Peter, you should have stayed right there in the boat.

He criticized him because he didn't have enough faith to continue walking like that. Now, a lot of things can be said about this. A lot of sermons have been preached about it, about faith and so forth, but I'd like to suggest something to you that has occurred to me.

Look at 1 John 2. In 1 John 2, in verse 6, it says, He who says he abides in him, and this is written by John, who also is a witness of this story, he who says he abides in Christ ought himself also to walk just as he walked. Now, walking, as I've pointed out on many other occasions, and as you've encountered in Romans probably by now, I don't know, well, maybe you haven't, how far have you gotten in Romans? Not too far? Okay, well, you haven't maybe encountered it yet. But walking is a very common, you find it in Ephesians, walking is a very common metaphor for living.

Life is called walking, the Christian life is called the Christian walk. And living is therefore what we're talking about, although we're using the word walking, the reason life is compared with a walk is because, for one thing, it's not static. You're in motion, you're moving toward a destination, there are goals in life.

Furthermore, to reach those goals, there are steps that need to be taken. Those steps would represent individual choices you make, the direction your life takes, and so forth. Now, therefore, walk is really a metaphor we're not uncomfortable with.

In fact, it is so comfortable with us, I suspect that many times we forget that it's a metaphor. When we say, well, how is a Christian walk to someone, we might forget that walk, to the ears of the uninitiated, someone who's not a Christian might say, what do you mean walk? You know, I mean, I saw him driving his car, riding his bicycle, but he doesn't walk very much, you know. Because walking has become very familiar to us as a metaphor for living, and we're not even aware that we're using it sometimes.

However, it is an important and frequent metaphor. In Paul's writings, as we see here in John's writings, by the way, elsewhere in John, he talks, I should say in 2 John and 3 John, he speaks about, in 2 John verse 4, For I rejoice greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. And in 3 John, likewise, he says, in verse 3 in 3 John, For I rejoice greatly when brethren came and

testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth.

Again, walking, the metaphor of walking is used by John just about as much as it is by Paul. Now, this passage in 1 John 2.6 says, Anyone who says he's a Christian, anyone who says he abides in Christ, ought to walk, even as Christ walked. Now, that needs some explanation, and I won't belabor it, because I think I've talked about it on other occasions, so I won't belabor it now, but it does not mean necessarily that every detail of your life has to be an imitation of the details of Jesus' life.

For example, if you had to live exactly in the same circumstances he did, you'd have to dress like him, remain single like he did, gather 12 disciples around yourself like he did, and basically try to imitate the circumstances of your life so that you could be just like him in the way you were living. But that's not what is in view here. The way that Jesus walked was, well, he walked in the truth, he walked in the Spirit, he walked by faith in his Father, he walked in obedience, he walked worthy of his calling, he walked in the light.

Now, all those things I've just said are biblical expressions in the New Testament. They all tell us how to walk. We're told to walk in the light, to walk in the truth, to walk worthy of our calling, to walk in the Spirit, to walk by faith.

But that's how Jesus walked. We are to walk even as he walked. Now, his walk was one of perfection, of perfect obedience to God, but that's an impossible way for a fallen man to walk in the natural.

It's as impossible to live a perfect life in the natural as for a man to walk on water. And I believe that whatever other lessons there may be learned from Jesus walking in the water, and Peter attempting to do so also, there's at least this one, that Peter wanted to walk as Jesus walked, in that sense, literally, not figuratively. But there may be a figurative message there, a lesson that is related to this idea that we need to walk even as Jesus walked.

But Jesus was walking in a way that no man can walk, on top of liquid. Men can't do that. Now, some people walk on burning coals, but I've never seen men walk on water while it was liquid.

And therefore, to walk as Jesus walked required a miracle. It required supernatural assistance. It required, first of all, the command of Christ, and secondarily, the faith of the person who wanted to walk that way.

And so the Christian life can be so defined. If we're going to walk as Jesus walked, we're going to need his commands, and a commitment to obey his commands, I mean, obviously, and faith that he will enable us to keep his commands. This is what walking in the Spirit amounts to.

This is what walking by faith is. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the command of the word of Christ. Therefore, if we have Christ's commands, then all we need is the faith in him enabling us to keep them, and we will walk even as he walked.

So I see an analogy there. The Christian life is an impossible life in the natural, just like walking on water is an impossible way to walk in the natural, but Jesus can do it. And by his command and your faith in his command, you can do it too.

And, of course, when we fall, as Peter began to sink, we may succumb to temptation, we may fall short of keeping Christ's commands, we may sin. It is simply a lack of faith, which means that we are saved, and we walk, and we persevere by faith and by nothing else. To speak of the need for obedience to Jesus Christ is not to transfer from a theology of faith to a theology of works.

It is to put works in its proper place in relationship to faith, because if you have the faith, you will be enabled to do the work. The works will flow. But when you do the wrong kind of works, when you sin, it is a defect not in your morality.

Your morality never was any better. It's a defect in your faith, because your natural moral state is consistently low. Just get Jesus out of your life for a few weeks, and you'll see.

You'll revert to total selfishness, in many cases sensuality and lack of self-control, and a lot of other things. But with faith in Christ, your life undergoes change. You may appear to be supernatural.

You might appear to be holy, just as Peter appeared to be a supernatural being when he was walking on the water. But his continuing to do so was based on his continuing to have faith. And there are challenges to our faith, just like the wind and the waves were challenges to Peter's, so there are temptations and trials and threatenings and so forth that are a temptation to us.

But if our faith is in Christ, we will continue to walk even as he walked. And our holiness of life will not be impaired by such impediments as temptations and fears and things like that. So that is probably more sermon material than teaching material from this story, but I hate to give the story without bringing out that point.

Now, back to John chapter 6 here. When Jesus and the disciples in the boat got to the other side of the lake, they found out that the crowd he had just fed were there. They ran around the lake the first time.

Well, no, I take that back, I take that back. I'm speaking from memory, and my memory is defective. They didn't get there first.

Jesus and the disciples got there first. The crowd quickly discovered that Jesus was no

longer on the side of the lake where they'd last seen him. And so they came around and found him where they thought they'd found him.

They were not there waiting, as in the first case. They had to find him. But it says, verse 22, On the following day, when the people who were standing on the other side of the sea, that is where Jesus had fed the multitudes the night before, saw that there was no other boat there except that one which his disciples had entered, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but his disciples had gone away alone.

However, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks. When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. Now, what it says is that the day before, they'd seen Jesus send off his disciples across the lake in the only boat.

There was only one there. There had come others from Tiberias, but they probably had left prior to the disciples leaving, and therefore there was only one boat there when Jesus sent his disciples off, and Jesus wasn't in it. And so, of course, their natural assumption was that Jesus was still on the same side of the lake, apart from his disciples, but on the same side where he had fed the multitudes.

So that's the first place they looked for him the next day, but he wasn't there. And when their search had yielded no discovery of his presence, they went around the lake again and came to Capernaum, which was his known haunt, his headquarters, and there they came and apparently found him there. They came seeking Jesus.

And when they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, Rabbi, when did you come here? And Jesus didn't answer them. Jesus often doesn't... He just doesn't let others set the agenda for the conversation. People will ask him a question, and he'll go in an entirely different direction, or they'll make a comment, and he'll just decide where this conversation is going.

Nicodemus just comes in and says, Rabbi, we know that you're a teacher sent from God, because no man could do these mighty works unless God were with him. And Jesus says, Unless you're born again, you'll never see the kingdom of God. Well, what in the world has that got to do with anything Nicodemus said? Maybe not much, but that doesn't matter.

Jesus knew what he wanted to talk about. It doesn't matter what Nicodemus wanted to talk about. Jesus is the boss.

He decides what's going to be talked about. Here they come and they say, Hey, Master, when did you get over here? He ignores it as if they hadn't even asked the question and says what he wants to say to them. Jesus answered them and said, Most assuredly I say

to you, you seek me not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.

Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set his seal on him. Then they said to him, What shall we do that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent. Therefore they said to him, What sign will you perform then that we may see it and believe you? What work will you do? Our fathers ate manna in the desert as it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat.

Then Jesus said to them, Most assuredly I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven, for the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Then they said to him, Lord, give us this bread always. And Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life, he who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.

But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.

This is the will of the Father who sent me, that of all he has given me I should lose nothing, but I should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured against him, because he said, I am the bread of life which came down from heaven.

And they said, is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he says I have come down from heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said to them, Do not murmur among yourselves, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught by God. Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.

Not that anyone has seen the Father, except he who is from God, he has seen the Father. Most assuredly I say to you, he who believes in me has everlasting life. I am the bread of life.

Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven.

If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore quarreled among

themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said to them, Most assuredly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven. Not as your fathers ate manna and are dead, he who eats this bread will live forever.

These things he said in the synagogue as he taught in Capernaum. Therefore many of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying. Who can understand it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured about this, he said to them, Does this offend you or stumble you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life.

The flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.

For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray him. And he said, Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to me unless it has been granted to him by my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back and walked with him no more.

Then Jesus said to the twelve, Do you also want to go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray him, being one of the twelve.

I read a great block of material without stopping, and the reason is because there are at least three or four major issues of controversy about this passage, or that this passage addresses, and the only way you can get the full treatment of them is to see the whole passage, because some of them arise early and are not explained until late in it. Corey, did you have a question? I thought your hand was up. All right, let me start out here.

Jesus criticized the people, first of all, because they were just responding to a fleshly urge. They had gotten a free meal the day before, and they thought, Well, we're hungry again. Let's go get another free meal from Jesus.

And he said, You just came to get your bellies full of bread. You didn't even come because of the sign. Now, there's a sense in which feeding them was the sign, of course.

The fact that he broke the bread and gave it as he did was a sign. He called it a sign. It was a miracle.

But in John, the word sign, of course, very frequently refers to not only a miracle, but a miracle that had meaning behind it. Now, what was the meaning behind it? That's what he goes on to explain. What he's saying here is, You ate the bread, but you didn't understand the significance of the sign.

You are attracted because you're hungry again for more bread, but if you had understood the sign, then that would address a hunger that you have that would never again need to be filled. You'd be permanently filled. What is the hunger for? It is a hunger for everlasting life.

You see, when you're hungry for food, you're hungry to sustain your earthly life. It's a hunger of the flesh. It's a hunger that is not of any permanent consequence unless you don't satisfy it ever, and then you'll die, and that'll be a permanent consequence.

But basically, the feeding of your body a given meal is of little consequence when you compare it with partaking of eternal life. Now, he gets into a discussion of how eternal life is obtained, and while there are many other issues that come up during the discussion, I'd like to just survey the passage with you quickly to show how often the issue of life or eternal life comes up. In verse 27, Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life.

Verse 33, For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Verse 40, And this is the will of him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have everlasting life. Now over to verse 47.

It gets thicker here. Verse 47, Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in me has everlasting life. Verse 51, I am the living bread which came down from heaven.

If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. That's eternal life. And it goes on, And the bread of that I shall give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

Verse 53, Jesus said to them, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.