

JESUS CHRIST: THE ALL-SUFFICIENT SAVIOR

6 ³⁰The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported everything to him, all that they had done and all that they had taught ³¹Then he said to them, Come [with me] to a remote place, and rest for a while. Because there were [so] many people coming and going, they had no leisure [time], not even enough [time] to eat. ³²So they went away in a boat to a remote place, apart [from the crowds]. ³³But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and arrived there ahead of them.

³⁴When [Jesus] came ashore and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; so he began to teach them many things. ³⁵When the day was almost over, his disciples came to him and said, This is a remote area, and the day is now almost over; ³⁶send them away, so that they may go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat. ³⁷But he replied, You give them something to eat. They said to him, Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give them [something] to eat? ³⁸Then he said to them, How many loaves [of bread] do you have? Go and see. When they found out, they said, Five [loaves], and two [small] fish. ³⁹Then he commanded everyone to sit down in groups upon the green grass. ⁴⁰So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks. Then he broke the loaves [into pieces] and gave it to the disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴²They all ate, and were filled. ⁴³They collected twelve basketfuls of broken pieces [of bread], and also [scraps] of fish. ⁴⁴The number of men who ate of the bread was five thousand.

⁴⁵Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat, in order to go on ahead [of him] to [the village of] Bethsaida, while he sent the crowd away. ⁴⁶After he had left them, he went up into the mountains to pray. ⁴⁷When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, while [Jesus] was alone on the land. ⁴⁸Seeing them straining at the oars, because the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night* he came to them, walking on the water. He desired to pass by them, ⁴⁹but when they saw him walking on the water, assuming that it was a ghost, they cried out; ⁵⁰for they all saw him and were terrified. But he immediately spoke to them, saying, Take courage. It is I; do not be afraid. ⁵¹Then he climbed into the boat with them; and the wind died down. They were completely amazed; ⁵²for they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened. (Mk. 6:30-52)

*about three a.m.

Introduction

Glenn Hack still remembers the winter in Milwaukee when his family ran out of food. He was five years old that morning in 1930 when his mother set out bowls of cold oatmeal and a pitcher of hot water to pour over it because there was no milk in the house. After breakfast Glenn's father announced, "We're out of food. Now we are going to pray for lunch."

Even at five years old, Glenn remembers thinking, “How is Dad going to get food by praying in the middle of the living room floor?” Glenn was given the assignment of watching his younger brother while his father and mother and four older siblings knelt in prayer.

As Glenn watched his younger brother, he also watched the hands of the clock. To his astonishment, when the hands of the clock reached noon, two men appeared at the front door. Between them they held a big washtub filled with sacks of groceries. On their faces was a bewildered look as they inquired, “Does anyone here need food?” In a matter of fact manner, Glenn’s dad answered, “We were just praying for lunch.”

Then the two men told their story. They worked for a Milwaukee rescue agency. Three nights ago one of them had a dream in which he saw a building with a number on it, but not the name of the street. The next night he had the same dream. Since that time they had been driving the city for twenty-four hours, looking for that building; the very place where they now stood! (*POWER*, 8/11/91; pp.2-ff.)

Once again, our Lord Jesus Christ proved Himself to be an all-sufficient Savior. The Lord Jesus Christ, who demonstrated His sufficiency to the hungry multitude beside the Sea of Galilee, and to a needy Milwaukee family in 1930, is the same today and forever: the all-sufficient Savior. Because Jesus is the all-sufficient Savior, we should trust in Him with confidence at all times and under all circumstances.

I. Trust the Lord Jesus to Meet the Needs of Your Life (Mk. 6:30-44)

Suppose you received five thousand unexpected guests for dinner; furthermore, suppose you were out of money and all you had left in the house were five loaves of bread and two frozen fish. What would you do? That scenario pretty much corresponds to the situation we find before us here in the sixth chapter of Mark. Jesus and His disciples have crossed the Sea of Galilee to a remote desolate region in order to provide rest for His weary disciples (vs. 31.) But it proves to be impossible for Jesus to escape the multitudes. When they learn of His whereabouts they flock to Him, even to the desolate region on the far side of the Sea of Galilee. According to John 6:3, Jesus and His disciples had ascended a grassy hillside for some much needed rest and refreshment. But when He sees the crowds gathering, *“he had compassion on them”* (Mk. 6:34,) and *“he welcomed them”* (Lk. 9:11.)

As evening approaches, the question arises, “How are all these people going to be fed?” The disciples’ suggestion is that Jesus should send them away, let them go to the surrounding villages and fend for themselves (vs. 36.) Jesus replies, *“There is no need to send them away; you give them something to eat”* (Matt. 14:16.)

Having indicated that they can handle the situation themselves, Jesus now instructs His disciples to take stock of their resources. He asks Phillip, “Where can

we buy bread for these people?" Phillip replies that two hundred denarii (equivalent to about eight months wages) would not be enough money to purchase enough food for this great multitude (Jn. 6:5-7.) Phillip is emphasizing the fact that even if there were some place to purchase food, they lacked the money to do so. Jesus now instructs Andrew to scout around and report back with his findings. Upon returning, Andrew informs Jesus that all that is available is five loaves of bread (the size of small biscuits) and two small fish.

Having effectively demonstrated the complete lack of human resources and the inability of His disciples to personally handle this situation, Jesus now personally addresses the situation. Jesus is in complete control. John 6:6 informs us that Jesus knew all along what He was going to do; there are no surprises, no dilemmas, no crises for the Lord. Jesus takes charge of the situation. Mark 6:39-40 states that Jesus commanded the multitude to recline on the grassy hillside in an orderly fashion—He stills the crowd so that they will not panic and reassures them with His presence and commanding word. Jesus provides for the need of these people. Sometimes He does so miraculously, as in this present instance. Sometimes He does so in a more providential manner, as in the case of the Milwaukee family referred to in the Introduction.

When you look closely at this incident, this is what you find: Jesus demonstrates that He is the Good Shepherd who is both willing and able to care for His sheep. In Mark 6:34 the people are identified as "sheep;" and out of compassion for them Jesus becomes their Shepherd. In Mark 6:39 we read that Jesus commands the people to recline upon *"the green grass,"* where He feeds them; this brings to mind the words of Psalm 23:1-2a, *"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not be in need. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures."*

Because Jesus is the all-sufficient Savior, we can trust Him to meet the needs of our life. As a Christian, this is our confession: *"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not be in need"* (Psl. 23:1.) As a Christian, this is our confidence: *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God"* (Phil. 4:6.) As a Christian, this is our privilege:

... we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses ... ¹⁶Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Heb. 4:15-16)

II. Trust the Lord Jesus to Combat the Stratagems of the Devil (Mk. 6:45-46)

Following this miraculous provision of bread for the multitude, Jesus immediately compelled His disciples to get into the boat and depart. Upon giving them this command, He personally dispersed the crowd and retreated up into the mountainside to pray.

We often times fail to perceive the devil's subtle stratagems and consequently we fall prey to them; but not so with the Lord Jesus. Jesus saw what was developing in the minds of the multitude. Jesus' miraculous provision of bread in this desolate place reminded the people of the bread miraculously provided for Israel in the wilderness. John records that shortly after this incident of the feeding of the five thousand in the wilderness, the people remind Jesus, *"Our forefathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat'"* (Jn. 6:31.) The people are further reminded of God's prophecy through Moses that the LORD will raise up a prophet like Moses: *"I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him"* (Deut.18:18.) They correctly identify Jesus as the prophet who is coming into the world: *"After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, 'Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world'"* (Jn. 6:14.) But they mistakenly think that He will deliver them from the military and political power of Rome in the same way Moses was used by the LORD to deliver Old Testament Israel from Egypt. Jesus discerned that they *"were about to come and take him by force, to make him king"* (Jn. 6:15.) No doubt their intention was to march Him into Jerusalem at the time of the Passover, which, John informs us (Jn. 6:4), was approaching, in order that He might lead a glorious insurrection against King Herod and the Roman authorities.

Furthermore, Jesus recognizes who was seeking to employ all of this for his own diabolical purpose. Here was another effort of the devil to seduce Jesus from following the course His Father had assigned to Him. Here was another effort to seduce Jesus into becoming a popular military and political leader, saving His people from the tyranny of Rome, rather than enduring the cross in order to save His people from the tyranny of the devil and the righteous judgment of God. Here was another effort of the devil to foil God's plan to redeem His people from their real enemy (the devil) and their real plight (their sins and the judgment to come.) Note Luke 4:13, which informs us that following the three temptations in the wilderness, *"the devil ... left him until an opportune time."* This present instance following the feeding of the five thousand proved to be such an opportune time. But the Lord Jesus is able to discern the stratagem of the devil, and He does not succumb to his evil wiles. He turns His back on the multitude and their ill-conceived plan to make Him king, resorting to His Father in prayer alone on the mountain top.

Because Jesus is the all-sufficient Savior, we may trust Him to combat the stratagems of the devil as he seeks to short circuit and defeat God's good purpose for us. We must be alert to the spiritual dimension of life and the spiritual conflict taking place in this present world, as the Apostle Paul informs us, *"our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"* (Eph. 6:12.) We must be faithful and wise to seek the Lord's counsel in the decisions and the living of life: *"Trust in the LORD with*

all your heart, and do not lean upon your own understanding. ⁶In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths" (Prov. 3:5-6.) We may always be assured of our Lord's intercession on our behalf: "My prayer is not that you would take them out of the world but that you will protect them from the evil one" (Jn. 17:15.) May we be diligent to personally petition the Lord for His protection and deliverance, in accordance with the way in which He teaches us to pray: "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matt. 6:13.)

III. Trust the Lord Jesus to Sustain You in Times of Crisis (Mk. 6:47-52)

When we left the disciples they were bewildered and confused. Only with great reluctance and after considerable hesitation, did they finally respond to Christ's command to launch their boat.

Their instructions were to sail to Bethsaida (Mk. 6:45,) which was a short distance up the coast; there they were to pick up Jesus and then cross the sea back to Capernaum.

But by now darkness has fallen and Jesus has not yet arrived, so the disciples decide to head straight for Capernaum, as we learn from John 6:16-17, "*When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, ¹⁷ where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them" (Jn. 6:16-17.)*

As they do so, they once again find themselves in a crisis situation. It was now dark, the sea was rising because of a strong wind, and they were heading directly into the gale—and this time Jesus was not with them. They did not know where He was or what was happening.

But Jesus again proves Himself to be the all-sufficient Savior. Mark 6:48a informs us that He saw them in their distress. From the mountain, through the darkness, He saw them in the midst of the windy sea; note Psalm 139:11-12, "*If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you" (Psl. 139:11-12.)* Then Jesus came to them, walking on the water (Mk. 6:48b.) There is no obstacle or circumstance that can separate us from our Savior or cut us off from His presence, as the Apostle Paul testifies to the church at Rome:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... ³⁸I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:35,38-39)

Mark goes on to report that Jesus desired to pass by them (Mk. 6:48c.) What Mark means is that the Lord Jesus desired to pass by His disciples in the same way that He passed by Moses when He hid him in the cleft of the rock:

Then Jehovah said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. ²²When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen." (Ex. 33:21-23)

As was the present case with His disciples, the Lord desires to use times of crisis to show us His glory, if we will trust Him to do so.

Because Jesus is the all-sufficient Savior, we may trust Him to sustain us in times of crisis. Consider the testimony of a Christian couple who went through the trial of the death of their daughter:

We ... thank God for making His loving presence known to us in unmistakable ways during the hardest week of our lives. He was there in the midst of our pain and fear. He was there as we prayed and wept. And He was there to welcome Katherine into heaven.

He upheld us through His Word, providing just the right Scripture at the right time. He was present in the lives of friends and family who called, visited, prayed, sent meals and cards and money, and ran errands. He showed His love through doctors and nurses who went beyond ordinary care to grant us compassion.

He gave us the strength to go on—a step at a time. He gave us the joy of our daughter and the love of a Heavenly Father. And He continues to give us the certainty of seeing Katherine when we too enter the place He has prepared for us.

In spite of our time of crisis, fear, and pain, *"because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed"* (Lam. 3:22). (*POWER*, 3/18/90, pp.4-5)

Conclusion

Oftentimes we fail to appreciate the sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ; the fact that He is able to meet our every need and care for us in every situation. May the Lord grant us to increasingly learn this blessed truth: Jesus is the all-sufficient Savior upon whom we can rely with confidence at all times and under all circumstances.