And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side while he sent the multitude away.” This is most surprising – His own into the storm, the world into the sunshine the one into peril and the other into peace! Are not Christ’s disciples called the “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God?” Elect for what? Elected for trial, as the finest gold goes into the hottest fire: elected for use, and therefore to be tested and proved. “God had one Son without sin, but has no son with out sorrow,” “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” In other words worlds than this, God may have some method of making saints without suffering, but we know of no such process in this world. Therefore all sickness and pain and disappointment and poverty and self-denial and cross-bearing, are belted on to the one great complicated machine which we call discipline, to furnish motive-power for driving it: and when the Lord would prepare his servants for any great work he grinds them on this machine till they are polished for his use. He does not seem to have any other methods of manufacturing saints than this. Show me a man who has never known a sick day, never failed in business, never lost a child, never been in distressed in conscience, or tried by disappointment; show me a man who is consecrated devoted and thorough-going for God, and I will show you a loaf of bread baked without fire, and a keen-edged knife-blade sharpened without a file or grindstone. Go around among the friends of Jesus and ask them how the Master has dealt with them: and they will all tell the same story. “Now Jesus loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus,” says he Scripture. Therefore when he heard that Lazarus was sick he made all haste to go to him.” No! Strange logic of divine affection! “When he had heard that he was, sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.” Two days for tears which he might have quieted: two days two days which might have staunched: two days for heart-ache which he might have quieted: two days for death and burial which he might have prevented! Is this the privilege of the elect: of the inner circle of Christ’s beloved? To be left alone and without help when he who is “the Resurrection and the Life” is within a few hours’ journey of them. Yes, truly! The discipline of tears before the resurrection triumph. Such a sunrise of gladness was to dawn upon that home as has never been know in the history of the race; but it must come according to the divine order. And that order is this -- “Weeping may endure for a night; but joy cometh in the morning.” Well then, deliberately, purposely with the full knowledge of the storm that was to break upon them, Jesus sent these disciples into the ship. And there they were toiling and rowing in the midst of the sea. The wind shrieks through the cordage; the timbers of the little bark groan and bend under the strain; the waves rise higher and higher and the wind gets more and more boisterous; it looks as though they would go to the bottom in spite of everything. “John do you know of any promise of scripture which we can plead in our distress?” I seem to hear Peter asking of the beloved disciple. “Yes says John after a moment’s reflection; yes there is one which is just to the point. Don’t you remember what the prophet Esias says: “When thou
passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel thy Saviour." And they begin to pray between the howlings of the tempest hear them cry out in supplication, "Oh Lord remember thy word in which thou hast caused thy servants to hope." And when there is a promise involved God has no alternative he must give ear. But verily he hath heard. For observe the second feature of this story.

"And when he had sent the multitude away" says the narrative, "he went up into a mountain to pray." Christ toils above while his church toils below. For more than eighteen hundred years he has been in the mountain-top praying for his people while they have toiled and battled amid the waves and winds of time. It is a most comforting fact that Christ's relation to us as intercessor has not been changed since his ascension to God's right hand; only whereas he once looked upward in behalf of his church, he now looks downward. /with upturned face we are required to watch for his appearing; but meanwhile with downward turned face he is watching over our destiny. I remember of reading that the mother of the famous painter Leach sent him away to a boarding school when he was a lad. After he had been placed in the school she learned that the rules forbade her visiting him, except once a year. When the desire became irresistible she took her boy, she took lodging in the upper story of a house which overlooked the play-ground of the school and there she stayed for days. She could, see her dear child as he went in and out of school; she could observe him play I the yard morning and evening, and learn whether he was well-treated. Or ill-treated. He, the boy, was watching for his mother to come and take him home. Counting the days: and all the time, though he knew it not, he was watched by that same mother. "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching." But let such servants rejoice that they are also watched; each peril distinctly seen by the glorified Lord; each snare set for our feet observed. Each storm of trouble known. Oh, believer, rejoice in this reciprocal relationship with your Lord. Confessing him before men, you are confessed by him before the Holy Angels; watching for his appearance in glory, you are watched by him from out the glory.

How beautifully this idea is brought out in that saying of the apostle Peter, "For ye were as sheep going astray but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls." Bishop means "overseer," one who "watches over," The church in its pride has invented the ambitious offices of Archbishop and Metropolitan Bishop. We want no other superior but Christ "the Bishop of our souls." He ordains ministers as the true episcopos. He cares for the flock of God.

And now observe the issue; "And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." Don't you remember how the Lord said unto his disciples, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come; that whether he shall come at the second watch or at the third watch he may find you ready." But the second watch has passed, and still he tarryes in the mountain-top: and the third watch comes and goes, and still he returneth not. Has he forgotten his people? Cares him naught for the storms and tempests that threaten to wreck them? Nay! Behold in the fourth watch just before the dawn he appears walking over the waves, "Oh Lord" says the Psalmist, "the floods have lifted up: the floods have lifted up their voice: but the Lord on high is mightier than the sound of many waters." How quickly earth's tumult will be quelled at the coming of the Lord! Old King Canute, intoxicated by the flattery of his courtiers,
came to believe that even the sea would obey him, and he had his royal chair carried to
the sea-beach; and seating him therein, e bade the rising sea to stop, and come no further.
But the tide paid no more regard to his word than to the chattering of the sea-fowl that
fluttered about the shore. But here comes one who speaks to the elements and there is a
grate calm. And they ask in astonishment: “What manner of man is this, that even the
winds and the sea obey him?” No man at all. He is the Lord from heaven by whom all
things were made, and without whom anything was made that was made. He commands
the stormy sea and it obeys his as readily as the docile horse obeys his rider. Here is a
prophecy for us. The earth is full of trouble and turmoil and our Lord predicts that it will
be so till he returns. “The waves and the sea are roaring and mens’ hearts failing them
for fear” is the figurative description of the scene. But the Lord on high is mightier than
the sound of many waters. And when he comes walking over the sea of our trouble there
will be an end of trial. No more red-handed war, leaving myriads of wailing orphans and
widows in his train; no more funeral processions winding down into the valley of the
shadow of death, at the tolling of the solemn bell: any more staggering armies of
drunkards, sixty thousand a year, making the dead march to perdition. No more pain, no
more tears, no more curse. Oh Beloved, make haste, come down from the mountain-top.
Be as a roc or as a hart upon hills of spices. For thy weary, long-suffering church is
ready for thine appearing.

The reassuring word. “It is I, be not afraid.” Christ has transfigured sorrow. Midas
is fabled to have turned stones in gold by his touch; but lo! A greater than Midas is here.
He turns sorrow into joy: tears into triumphs: death into life: a curse into beatitude. You
were looking at some black clouds of sorrow hanging on your horizon, wondering what
portended who lo, a voice was heard from out of it blackness saying, “It is I, be not
afraid, ye fearful souls.”

End