



A Spiritual Encouragement Message

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If You Want to Walk on Water, You Have to Get Out of the Boat #3

By Randall Jarrell

In my opinion, it is impossible to make Peter look bad for getting out of the boat. All he did was to obey the words of Jesus. How can you criticize a man for a thing like that?

So Peter gets up from his seat in the boat and makes his way to the side. The waves are rolling, the wind is howling about him, and the rain is coming down in buckets. Carefully he throws one foot over the railing, and with his toes tests the water to see if it will hold him up. Meanwhile one of the other disciples yells, "Sit down, man. Are you crazy? You'll drown out there." It is the voice of caution seeking to overrule the voice of faith.

When Peter gingerly sticks his toes down to the water, he makes an amazing discovery. The water is as hard as a concrete playground. It's so solid that he couldn't put his foot into the water even if he wanted to. He taps the surface to be sure. No problem. Something has happened so that the surface of the water is like a rock.

Peter can't believe it. The other guys are looking over the edge waiting for him to start sinking. Once he's entirely certain the water will hold him, he lets go of the railing. Unbelievable! Peter is standing on the surface of the water. Not far away Jesus stands on the water watching this entire scene. What do you think Peter did once he let go of the boat? I think maybe he did a little tap dance on the Sea of Galilee. Or maybe he yelled to one of the other guys to follow him. "What do you say, boys?"

Look at me. I'm walking on water?" Or maybe he jumped up and down to see if the water would really hold him. The text is fairly clear about what happened next. Once Peter was fully on the water, he turns to walk toward Jesus. As he walks toward Jesus, his Master walks toward him. Everything is going okay, until a mighty wind started blowing. Remember, the storm has never stopped. During all this commotion, the rain has been coming down in sheets. It's still about 4:30 A.M. At that exact moment, a mighty wind blows across the lake, a wind stronger than anything before it, a wind so strong that it distracts Peter. And for an instant, he forgets about Jesus and remembers who he is and where he is. He is Peter, a Galilean fisherman who belongs back in the boat. In that instant he looks down at his feet and sees nothing but water underneath. His mind comes to a quick conclusion: "I'm not supposed to be walking on water. This is impossible."

Before we go any farther, let's analyze that thought. From one point of view, Peter was entirely correct. Looked at from the purely human perspective, what Peter was doing was indeed impossible. Walking on water is contrary to all the known laws of science. It contradicts scientific theory and the history of human experience. "People Just Don't Walk on Water." In all of human history, no one (except Jesus) had ever walked on water before. You can hardly blame Peter for coming to that conclusion. There was only one thing wrong with his logic. Peter was walking on water. Therefore, it couldn't be impossible. Unlikely, yes. So rare as to be unheard of, yes. But impossible? No.

Walking on water was not impossible because Peter himself was doing it.

But Peter hardly had time to think the matter through logically. He saw the wind blowing, he panicked, and in that split second, he came to the wrong conclusion. That's when he began to sink. As he goes down into the water, he prays what is perhaps the shortest prayer in all the Bible: "Lord, save me." In this case, brevity was the course of wisdom. After all, when you are sinking you don't have time to pray a long prayer. If you aren't quick about it, you'll drown before you get to the point. Peter shouts "Lord, save me" as he is going under. The Bible says that immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. That means that Jesus caught him as he was going under. His words to Peter are very important. "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matthew 13:31) In our English version, "You of little faith" comes out to four words. But in the Greek Jesus only used one word—"Little- faith." It's a title or a nickname. Jesus called Peter "Little-Faith." "Little-faith, why did you doubt?"

By the way, where did this conversation take place? It took place out in the middle of the lake. It's still pitch dark. The wind is still howling. The rain is still beating down. And the boat with the other disciples is rocking up and down a few yards away. Peter is sopping wet and scared to death. Jesus is standing on the water and Peter is grabbing his arm for dear life. After the Lord pulls Peter up from the drink, he decides that this is what the educators call a "teachable moment." So while they are out on the lake, Jesus shares a few things that will help Peter in his spiritual life. No doubt Peter is muttering under his breath, "Get me back to the boat. I promise I'll never pull a stunt like this again."