



A Spiritual Encouragement Message

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If You Want to Walk on Water, You Have to Get Out of the Boat #4

By Randall Jarrell

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.”

Meanwhile back at the boat, the other fellows are watching this whole scene, their mouths wide open, their eyes as big as saucers. They never dreamed such a thing was possible. The story is almost over for now. Verses 32-33 wrap up this little episode: “And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’”

Let me make two observations about Peter:

1. You must give Peter credit because he was willing to do what no one else was willing to do. Before you come down too hard on Peter for taking his eyes off Jesus, just remember that there were 11 other guys back in the boat watching this whole affair. Before you sink, you’ve got to be out on the water. As long as you stay in the boat, you’ll never sink; but you’ll never walk on water either.

This is not the story of Bartholomew walking on the water ... because Bartholomew stayed in the boat.

This is not the story of Matthew walking on the water ... because Matthew stayed in the boat.

This is not the story of James walking on the water ... because James stayed in the boat.

This is about Peter walking on the water ... because he was the only one with the courage to get out of the boat.

Maybe some of the others wanted to, maybe they would have if Peter had stayed out there longer. But give the man credit. He did it, and they didn’t. That’s why this story is about him and the other 11 aren’t even mentioned. Before you criticize Peter for having “little faith,” you’d better remember that “little faith” is better than “no faith,” because that’s what those others guys had who stayed behind.

2. When Jesus called Peter “Little-Faith,” he was not rebuking Peter for attempting too much, but for trusting too little and missing a miracle. Jesus is not saying, “Peter, you should have stayed in the boat.”

Jesus did not rebuke Peter for getting out of the boat. There is not one single hint in the text that Jesus was displeased with what Peter had done. To the contrary, Jesus is really saying, "Peter, if you had just kept your eyes on me, you could have kept walking right on across the Atlantic Ocean."

We live in a world that encourages us to stay in the boat. The message we hear over and over again is, "Stay in the boat. Play it safe. Be careful. Don't take any chances." The government actually promotes a stay in the boat mentality. The desire for a risk-free society is one of the debilitating influences in America today, enfeebling the economy with a mass of safety regulations and a fear of liability rulings.

Of course there is such a thing as a level of risk that is unacceptable. But in America the threshold of tolerable risk has now been set so low that the nation is refusing to pay the inevitable cost of human endeavor. And the end result of all that is a citizenship of passive people who don't know how to deal with the world as it really is. If America's new timorousness had prevailed among the Vikings, their ships with the bold prows but frail hulls would have been judged unseaworthy. The Norsemen would have stayed home and jogged.

Do you remember the words of Jesus? "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34) Those are radical words. They call us away from a life of safety and caution. They call us to get out of the boat of our own security.

"Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it." What do these words mean? If you want to play it safe in order to conserve what you have, Jesus says you will be sadly disappointed in the end. By trying to "save" it all, you end up "losing" it all. Playing it safe doesn't work in the spiritual realm.. The people who dare to lose their lives for the sake of Jesus Christ—although they have "lost" something—in the end they will discover that they have "saved" it after all. When we get to heaven, we'll discover that the values of this world have been totally reversed. Many of the things that we thought to be so important will turn out not to have been important at all from God's point of view. And many of the things that seemed so trivial to us will turn out to have mattered greatly to him.