

Get Out of Your Boat

Open your Bibles to Matthew 14:22.

“And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

But when he saw the wind boisterous [or strong], he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.”

Some say that was the fastest or quickest prayer in history. He didn't have much time to plead with Jesus to save him. When you sink, you sink fast.

“And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith... [Literally O thou of puny faith. Puny is even less than little.] O thou of puny faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

Then they that were in the ship came and worshiped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.”

Let's look at these verses and put them in the frame of reference of action or inaction. Ask yourself what type of person you are concerning spiritual things, concerning putting your faith in Jesus Christ. The story clearly states here that they were rowing across the Sea of Galilee in the middle of the night. Then at the fourth watch here comes Jesus walking on water. Now, when was the last time you saw anybody walk on water? In hindsight we can find ourselves judging the disciples harshly. Remember it was the middle of the night and they probably didn't have the moon and the stars to give out their illumination. They were in the middle of a storm so there was probably cloud cover and no moonlight or starlight. Talk about being in the dark and here comes someone walking across the Sea of Galilee towards you. Jesus is not sinking, He is walking on water. I don't know about you, but it would scare the bejesus out of me. No one has ever experienced that before to my knowledge. Certainly not these disciples and they thought they were seeing a ghost and they yelled out with fear. Put flesh and blood into this story.

You kind of wonder at times about Jesus' sense of humor. Think about it. He must have known what their reaction would be. Talk about playing a prank on someone. Have you ever hidden from someone and jumped out and scare them? Well, Jesus took that to a new level folks. Look at the Gospel of Mark. Mark 6:48 reads,

“And he saw them toiling in rowing: for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea [Mark adds this to the story], and would have passed by them.”

Just think about it, ***“and would have passed by them.”*** If they didn't cry out with fear Jesus probably would have just kept on going until He reached the other side, but they became very fearful, so He stopped. But think about it, what was Jesus thinking? He must have known what the response would be like. After all, there were 12 disciples on that boat. There would be at least a few, if not all, that would have soiled their pants. Yes, I know, they didn't wear pants more than likely, but you get the idea that I am trying to communicate. What was Jesus thinking? This isn't part of the message. It is just a sidebar, but what was Jesus thinking scaring the bejesus out of them? He did a good job. What a prankster. Jesus has a sense of humor in my opinion. Sometimes we just don't see it, but it is there.

“But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:”

Back to Matthew. The disciples eventually stopped screaming. “What does this have to do with action or inaction?” I am getting to it. You kind of wonder how Jesus said it. Did He chuckle knowing what just transpired? We will never know, but He told them don't be afraid, don't be fearful. And, of course, Peter speaks out, “If it is really you Jesus tell me to come to you, but not just come to you, I want to come to you by walking on the water. So what happens? Peter starts walking on water and when he saw the wind, he became afraid and began to sink and then he cried out, “Lord, save me.” Say what you want about Peter in his puny faith, but he wasn't the only one with puny faith. In fact, the ones that stayed in the boat had punier faith than he did. “What do you mean?” I will get to that. In this story Peter at least stepped out in faith, but what happens.

Just like Peter, what happens to us when we step out in faith? There are times when we step out in faith and start second guessing ourselves. You make the decision to get out of your boat whatever that is for you. It could be your employment, it could be relationships, it could be anything. It could be what I am focusing on this morning, your participation with this ministry to get the rightly divided Word of God out. You start to second guess yourself and start having second thoughts. There have been individuals who started out with this ministry that have come and gone. Why? Because they had second thoughts. They started second guessing whether this is the right place to hear the Word of God. You started having second thoughts because I asked you to start participating in the capacity that you can. This is where the action or inaction comes in. You start wondering if God really told you to get out of your boat and start stepping out in faith and become someone that walks on water, someone that takes the step of faith, provides the action part of faith not just the sitting and listening part, but the participation part.

The problem when you start second guessing, you start wondering if you should get out of the boat. You don't even give yourself the opportunity to figuratively walk on water. I have seen it happen over and over. You stop focusing on Jesus and the commission. In the case concerning participation with this ministry, you put your eyes on everything else and stop focusing on what God has called you to participate in. Those other things are the winds and the waves friend. Too many of you are comfortable in your little Christian community. There is nothing wrong in being in your community as long you have a purpose that goes beyond that. Every church should have a

continuous outreach program where you are actively involved in spreading the good news that leads to salvation. You are not much of a witness to people that already believe in Jesus for the most part. "Well, I like a common denominator." You would rather stay in the comfort of the boat instead of stepping out in faith.

Imagine if Paul or the other apostles only stayed in Jerusalem in the comfort of the community. Even though they were in danger most of the time at least they still had the comfort of their little Christian community group. Do you think that would have changed the world? Do you think that would have turned the world upside down? They would have died out and today we would all either be practicing Judaism, Islam or more than likely be godless heathens. At least Peter got out of the boat. "Well, if I'm going to get out of the boat, I want the absolute certainty before I take that step of faith that I won't sink." Imagine if Peter had that attitude. "Jesus you somehow prove to me before I take a step out of this boat that I am not going to sink." In verse 29 all Jesus said is come.

We live in a society that always wants money back guarantees or a 100% guarantee. Well, before you take a step of faith, before you start getting involved in trusting and having confidence in Jesus Christ, you had better consider the only guarantee that you have is that He will never leave you nor forsake you. He will provide you with eternal life if you trust in what His blood did for you. "Well, if I am looking for a guarantee, if that is what I am truly looking for, then what I have done is take faith out of the equation." My friend, find for me in scripture where any one of these heroes of faith took a step of faith because they knew it was risk-free faith.

At least the world knows that you can't experience success without risking failure. Too many Christians won't. You can apply this principle to your personal life wherever you need it. I am not going to spare my own ego here. I can tell you right now that I have had more failures than successes. I have had both spiritual successes and worldly successes, but in both categories I have had more failures. Why? Well, in the spiritual sense because I put my focus on the winds and the waves after I stepped out of the boat and stopped focusing on Jesus and let the winds and the waves just toss me around where at times I couldn't even see Jesus. "Ah, I can't believe you said that." At least I am honest with you and I don't put myself in some super-spiritual plain that the only thing missing is the halo.

Peter gets a bum rap in my opinion. Not by Jesus; Jesus identified his problem. He had puny faith. Peter is a disciple; the disciple who denied Christ three times before He went to the cross. Nevertheless, he put himself in a position to get close enough to be caught. Where were the other disciples? How about when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus and take Him away. Peter is the one who came to Jesus' defense. He sliced off an ear which is still amazing how he did it and Jesus healed that man and restored his ear, but Peter is the one that acted. I am not saying every action is ordained of God. A lot of our actions are based on our flesh. Those are the ones we probably should be inactive in. The point I am trying to make is the ones that are ordained by God are the ones we must take action in. If you believe this ministry is ordained by God, why are you inactive?

I read a message from someone who has been around for several years, "I don't write as much..." Why not? Is it that difficult to encourage the person that has obviously encouraged you. If anything, just to say keep on preaching! Is it that hard to do it even once a week?

Peter is the disciple who sunk in the Sea of Galilee because he took his eyes off Jesus, but he is the

only disciple that walked on water. Where were the rest!? Where were the rest of the disciples? Jesus is saying come to Peter and you would think there would be at least one more disciple saying, "Lord, can I come too?" That is why I said Peter had puny faith, but the disciples that stayed in the boat were even at that time in worse shape than Peter. And don't give me this nonsense they didn't want to tempt Jesus. Baloney. Their fear was greater than their faith period. Now, it is easy to criticize Peter from the comfortable seat on the boat.

It is amazing, I was telling someone yesterday there are people that are creators and people that are there criticsers. We have creators and criticsers. I am not just talking about creators, people who invent things. I am talking about creation of all kinds of things in a person's life that produces action. The criticsers always produce what? Inaction. They are champions at inaction. There are people that are eventually going to get out of the boat and start walking on water and there are people who will just sit in the boat and criticize the ones who are walking on water. "How do you know that?" Well, all I have to do is read my emails every day.

The truth is when we compare Peter who took that original step of faith and the other disciples that decided to stay put on their seats, on their gluteus maximus, even though Peter sunk—not completely because Jesus did save him—sinking is better than sitting folks. I am sure Jesus was also a little disappointed when He said to Peter to come that others didn't join in and say, "Include me in Jesus." There are the sitters; water walkers rather get wet than have a numb bum. Overall, we won't regret sinking as much as we will regret sitting. I am going slow on purpose, so it can sink in. No pun intended. I repeat it is easy to criticize individuals that walk on water from the confines of the boat and to many Christians are like that. They say they support this ministry, but there is no evidence of it. Why? Because they don't want to get out of their comfortable spot of where they are now that requires very little effort on their part. What they think is effort is not effort at all because it is just more entertainment for Jesus; things you would do anyway in the world.

These disciples could have walked on water, but they chose to stay in the boat. What does that mean? For that opportunity in exercising faith in Christ, they missed a once in a lifetime opportunity. If you don't believe that you are here, or wherever you attend that it is a once in a lifetime opportunity to participate in the ministry, you don't belong here or there. Go somewhere else that will cater to your flesh. This isn't it. Think about it, when Jesus said come it was a God ordained risk; trust and have confidence that it was Jesus and He is telling you to come or stay in the boat. What a missed opportunity those disciples had.

Most of us regret our actions over the short term, especially if they fall short of what we believe was a God ordained step in faith, but over the long haul I think we tend to regret our inaction even more. Most of us regret sins of commission in the short term, but it is the sins of omission. What do I mean by that? All the missed opportunities that will haunt our minds the rest of our lives. I have seen it happen over and over. It doesn't have to be that way friend. You need to get out of this puny faith attitude and start taking a step of faith. Like I said earlier, many of you were doing that and I see it one by one dropping off. Yes, there have been new ones. Hopefully that won't happen to them, but my concern is for the old ones who decided to stop participating. I can think of very faithful people for years that came across some tough times and they disappeared completely or saying how this is the best teaching they have heard. It gets to the point it reaches their heart, their faith is growing, and the tough times came. This hero of faith is overseas, the tough times came, and they had to take additional steps of faith in their personal life over certain things and they

sunk. My guess is they sunk in their personal life regarding their circumstances. My only other guess is that spiritually the wind and the waves overtook them.

Too many Christians don't like the odds if they can walk on water figuratively speaking folks. Think about what the odds would be in Vegas if you could bet that someone could walk on water. One in a gazillion? And that is probably good odds. Too many Christians always want to have the odds in their favor. It doesn't work that way! And we ask God in our prayers, "O Lord Jesus, reduce the odds in our life." Oh boy, do we want everything in our favor. I am just as guilty as anyone else that this applies to, but I have also concluded that God wants to stack the odds against us. "Well, why would He do that?" So, we can experience His miraculous power.

Listen, the odds were stacked against Peter that he would sink if he didn't keep his focus on Jesus. He only sunk because his focus changed; not Jesus, but the circumstances around him. Now Satan is betting against us that our circumstances will cause us to sink and he is hoping we don't reach out and say, "Jesus save me." He is hoping that we say, "Oh Jesus, why in the heck did you get me in this situation to start with? Where are you? Why did you stack the odds against me? This is unfair. I don't deserve this. After all, I was the only disciple to get out of the boat! At least make sure that I get to you no matter what was going through my mind when I lost focus." Well, I am here to tell you that you need to get out of the boat because faith is trusting God no matter how impossible the odds are. If you really think about it, our missed opportunities are nothing more than an opportunity to experience the dimension of God's glory, not just His miraculous power.

"And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of puny faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Why did you start this journey? Why can't you identify what we are doing here? Why did you think it was unbelievable teaching and all this and that? What changed your mind? What took your focus off the truth? Circumstance! Well, there is an easy solution. Take your eyes off your circumstance, take your eyes off the winds and the waves and put it on Jesus. The only reason why we sink is because we take our eyes off Jesus. So, to come full circle, you have the people that act and the people that just sit in the boat and miss the opportunity and become inactive. You are going to participate either way; either by getting out of that boat or by staying in that comfortable seat in the boat. Either way you are going to participate. One brings glory to God, the other does nothing. Even in the Christian world there are people that act, and others will be inactive.

In the email program that we use, there is something that I just despise but you can't really get around it. It shows the active email addresses which means the people that want to be receive emails and the inactive ones. The inactive ones don't get any more emails because they choose not to receive it. I cringe every time I look at it because it reminds me of another boat sitter that would rather sit in the comfortable confines of the boat. May God send active people that will trust and faith that what is preached here. If it has affected your life to have the same opportunity to affect others and you are committed not to miss the opportunity to make an impact to leave Jesus' mark on someone's life, just not your own.

On occasion I must remind us what our commission is. I repeat last Sunday's message, deny yourself is the beginning of understanding God's ordained will for your life. It means you don't put yourself first any longer, you put His purposes first. I am not against any of these things, but what purpose does it have to sit your rear end in a pew every Sunday and do nothing for the rest of the

week? What purpose does it have for you to sing in the choir to the same people in front of you week after week? “Well, it is a television program.” Let me tell you, I have never heard in my lifetime [and I have been around awhile] where people got saved hearing you sing because if they did, it is probably shallow ground their faith is established on and they will probably drift away eventually or are blown away or it won't take root and will dry up and disappear. I am not against choirs or other functions of the church. For God's glory they serve their purpose. However, it does replace the most important function of the church and that is, **Go Make Disciples**. It is the meat of the Word that brings you to Jesus, that keeps you in Jesus, that sustains you for the entire trip which means you must be active and not lumps on a log that like the comforts of the boat.

Those disciples, which eventually became apostles, probably reflected back over of that missed opportunity. Eventually they took advantage of every opportunity including if it cost them their lives. Christianity has been reduced to something that is so soft like marshmallows. I happen to like marshmallows even though I can't eat them anymore. Well, it is not too late to change from being inactive and become an active person of faith understanding what your commission is. We all have it and it includes participation of getting God's Word out, not to mention the things that you do personally in your life that you are involved in.

I will not let us let up because I know the minute that we do we will all start to sink. We might not think our faith has become puny, but if we allow that to happen it is exactly what it has done. Under my watch. I am going to resist all those temptations as much as I can and keep preaching the rightly divided Word of God that will get us home and before we get there remind us of all the opportunities that we have at least as far as this ministry goes. You must decide that in your own life in a personal level but let us not miss any opportunity that we have to bring glory to His name and to snatch more and more individuals away from Satan grip.

The next step is yours. Are you still going to be inactive or are you going to get back on the battlefield? Are you going to step out of the boat and say, “Jesus here I come! I am not sinking.”

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In 2 Corinthians 9:7 it reads, “God loveth a cheerful giver.” The Greek word for cheerful is Hilaros which means when someone is prompt to do something, they are ready in mind, with a joyful heart. In the Septuagint it also means to cause to shine. Today I am looking for Hilaros Givers who are ready and fully of joy for the opportunity to cause others to shine by hearing, learning, and growing in God's Word.

Join with us today and participate as a Hilaros Giver. If you wish to participate use the following

link: <http://www.teachingfaith.com/giving>

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