

Getting Out of the Boat

Franklin Church of Christ
Edwin Crozier
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AM Worship

Introduction:

Have you seen the bumper sticker, “The next time you think you’re perfect, try walking on water.” No doubt, the point is only Jesus walked on water because He is God and therefore perfect. However, **Matthew 14:22-33** demonstrates we do not, in fact, have to be perfect to walk on water. Can anyone be more imperfect than Peter? We want to do something more difficult than walking on water; we want to overcome Satan. Examine Peter’s story and see what we can learn about doing the impossible.

Discussion:

- I. Get out of the boat.
 - A. The disciples were struggling to cross the Sea of Galilee. It was the fourth watch of the night (between 3 and 6 am). They had been rowing all night against the wind and, according to **John 6:19**, had only made it three or four miles of their approximately six mile journey. The disciples were tired, no doubt, and scared. They saw something approaching. They thought they were seeing a ghost. But the apparition spoke in a familiar voice, saying, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.” Peter responded, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”
 - B. Think about this, the wind was causing so much disturbance 12 men could not get the boat to land. They were fighting to stay afloat. The wind is still going on, but above the noise they hear Jesus’ voice and Peter cries out, “Tell me to get out of the boat.” Was he crazy? What kind of faith would it take to get out of the boat in the middle of a windstorm at sea? When Peter got out, how do you think he did it? Did he slowly and cautiously lower himself over edge, testing to see if the water would hold him? Or did he jump out of the boat, landing on the water’s surface? What was going through his mind as he walked toward Jesus on the top of the water? Why did Peter get out of that boat? He got out of the boat because he believed it was safer in the middle of the stormy sea with Jesus, than in the middle of the boat without Him.
 - C. Understand this. Satan wants us to get hung up on the “if” part of Peter’s question—“If it is you...” We are not trying to walk on water, we are striving to overcome sin and Satan. Satan doesn’t want us getting out of the boat. He wants us believing it is safest in the boat of man’s making. He wants us believing Jesus is not real, His word is not real, He is not calling to us. He wants us to believe nothing can protect us from the storms like our own wisdom and our society’s intelligence. He doesn’t care what makes us stay in the boat as long as we stay there. His biggest tool is doubt.
 - D. Here is what we must understand—coming to Jesus means getting out of the boat. Others will think we are crazy (**I Corinthians 2:14-15**). Others may try to stop us. Others will explain away. There are times when we might think we are crazy; trusting Jesus to overcome sin is like getting out of the boat. It is, however, safer to be in the middle of the storm with Jesus than struggling and straining in the boat alone. If we want to walk with Jesus, we have to get out of the boat.
- II. The storms continue when we get out of the boat.
 - A. What do you think Peter expected when he got out of the boat? I imagine he thought things would get easier, expecting Jesus to calm the water as He did in **Matthew 8:26**. But Jesus didn’t. Peter got out, but the wind continued. Imagine how shocked Peter was? I am positive Peter expected some kind of change. After all, he had enough faith to get out of the boat in the wind. It was only when the wind continued that his faith wavered.
 - B. How many of us entered Christ with excitement, thinking life would be easy after that? How many expected God to remove all doubts and make it the easiest thing to believe in Jesus? How many expected temptation to disappear? How many expected God to remove all oppression, hardship and persecution? I know many have felt that way because many justify disobeying God saying they know God would never expect them to endure what they are enduring.
 - C. In **Acts 14:22**, Paul summed it up. We do not enter the kingdom of God through a rose garden. We enter it through tribulation. We still get sick, get laid off, lose friends and family (sometimes horrible heart-wrenching deaths), trudge through the doubts skeptics bring up, endure temptation and get hammered by Satan and sin. The storms continue when we get out of the boat.

- III. We must keep our faith when we see the wind and waves.
- A. When Peter sank, Jesus rebuked him saying, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" Jesus' rebuke cuts to the heart of the problem. There was no excuse from the wind and the waves. There was no legitimate reason for the weakness in faith. It was simply a weakness in faith.
 - B. However, with this rebuke, Jesus was providing the solution to Peter's problem. Peter did not have to be perfect to walk on water. He had to have faith in Jesus to walk on water. When he let his faith weaken, he began to sink. Again, the interesting point to note is that the same storm was going on when he got out of the boat as when he was walking on the water.
 - C. As we walk on the water with Jesus, our strongest asset is faith. We must constantly do what it takes to keep our faith. Doubts will attack us, but we must not let them have their way. We must maintain our faith. **Romans 10:17** says, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." The Bible is not our homework assignment, it is our lifeline. When we have faith in Jesus Christ, we are unstoppable (**Philippians 4:13**). See **Hebrews 11** for examples of this.
- IV. Sinks will happen.
- A. Peter sank. It wasn't an issue of his faith when he got out of the boat. It happened after that. Walking on water was a process, it was not an event. Overcoming sin and Satan is not an event, it is a process. In that process, sinks will happen. I am not saying they are absolute. Certainly, if we always make the right choices, we will not sink. However, on a real and practical level, I think we all know it will happen at some point. In the battle against sin, the apostle John said even he would be a liar if he said he never sinned (**I John 1:8**).
 - B. When we sink, we should not think we have somehow made all our brethren look bad. We should not think we are not allowed to be a part of God's people. We must not start worrying about what others think about us. Instead, we need to simply turn back to Jesus.
 - C. Did you gossip, lie, cheat or steal again? Did you lust, covet or commit immorality again? Did you use foul language, get caught up in coarse jesting or explode with anger again? Did you drink, gamble or get high again? I don't want to minimize how serious each and every one of these sins have been in your life. However, I do want you to understand walking on water is a process, not an event. Growing in Christ is a process, not an event. You did not conquer sin merely because you were baptized or went forward. Further, your life with Christ is not over simply because your faith wavered and you sank. Turn back to Jesus.
- V. When we turn back to Jesus, He will lift us up.
- A. Here is the most amazing part of this whole story. As Peter foundered in the water, splashing and thrashing, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" What might we expect Jesus to do? Do we expect Jesus to say, "Peter, if you don't have enough faith to cut it, too bad"? Do we expect Jesus to step over Peter on His way into the boat and say, "You should have thought of this before you got out of the boat pal"? Maybe we expect Jesus to let Peter founder there for a few minutes to think about his presumption and then grab Peter at the last possible minute.
 - B. But Jesus didn't do or say those things. Instead, He immediately reached out and took hold of Peter. Sadly, what we most remember about this whole event is Peter lost faith and sank. I imagine what Peter most remembered was when he needed saving, he cried out to the Savior and the Savior was right there to do so.
 - C. Please remember that. No matter how far you sink, when you turn back to Jesus, He will respond immediately. Jesus does not want us foundering in the water of our sin and guilt. He wants to save us. He does want us to realize we can only be saved by Him. Therefore, He will wait until we turn to Him, but when we turn, He will act immediately (**cf. I John 1:8-10**).
 - D. Many times the people around us will remember we had a lack of faith. We need to do quit gaining our feeling of worth and value from those around us. Instead, let us remember no matter how far we went, Jesus was there to pick us up when we asked.

Conclusion:

We are not walking on water. We are doing something more difficult. We are striving to overcome Satan and sin. How are we going to do it? There is only one way. We must get out of the boat. We must maintain our faith. We must rely on Jesus. Where are you? In the boat? Or with Jesus?