

Getting Out Of The Boat

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Preacher: Wallace Watkins

[0 : 00] Well, good morning, First Baptist Church family. My, what a privilege and a joy it is to be back here.

Thank you, choir, so much for your leadership and worship this morning. And thank you, Pastor Sam, for the invitation to come back, for Susie and I to be with you today.

I keep hearing good things about you as far as some conversations that we would have with First One and then another. And, of course, I'm glad to hear those things.

I particularly have been pleased to hear about the election of several young deacons. I'm grateful for those veteran deacons, as I know you are within the church that has served the church for many years.

But what a joy to hear about the election and the ordination of these young men. And that's going to be something that I'm convinced will make First Baptist Church a better church and speaks well of the future.

[1 : 05] And I'm also so pleased to hear how the church is following the example of the pastor and moving outside the church to minister to those within this community.

I truly believe, as I spent some time with you, that I could see that the brightness of your future as a church family would be tied in so much with the relationship that you would have with the schools, with other organizations within the city, with coming to know and minister to the people that are truly outside the walls of this church, some of which need to be in some of our churches.

But right now, they're different from us. They don't all look like you do or smell like you do or act like you do. But that's our field of service, isn't it?

That's our target group. And we need to certainly be engaged in those ways in which we can that would move us outside the walls of the church and beyond ministering just to each other.

And I commend you in that. Thank you so much for the way in which you were so gracious and good to Susie and I.

[2 : 21] During the months that we were here, we have such fond memories, and we'll have those all the rest of our life. And thank you for the way you treated us so graciously.

At the present time, we have been called to serve as the interim pastor up at First Baptist Church Bonham. If you know where Bonham is, up there between Sherman and Paris, had our first Sunday there last Sunday.

And I kind of apologized last Sunday to say, I'm sorry to be here one Sunday and go on the next, but we promised the people up at First Baptist Henrietta that we would be there next Sunday.

And they understood that. But every time you can think about it, my, how we would appreciate your prayers for us as we come to deal with a church that, folks, let me say to you straight out, is a very different church in many ways from the one here in Henrietta.

They're facing some really difficult challenges right now, and only the work of God is going to be able to really make a difference. Hey, we brought help this morning.

- [3 : 26] James and Wanda Nichols are with us as our guests. They're neighbors to us there in McKinney, and we're going to head on up into Oklahoma for a couple of days and aggravate one another up there.
- But if you've not met the Nichols, well, I hope you'd feel free to introduce yourself after the amen or maybe during our potluck lunch today. Well, on this Sunday preceding Thanksgiving, I am reminded of one of the things for which I am most grateful.
- I'm referring to the thing that helps me perhaps more than anything else when I find my back against the wall, when I find myself facing a difficult and trying situation.
- Folks, I am so thankful for the character and the nature of the God we call our Savior.
- That is such a source of a resource of strength and help to me when I face trying times to remind myself of the kind of God that we serve.
- [4 : 39] One of the places that we see God's character expressing itself is there on the Sea of Galilee when Simon Peter decided that he would walk on the water.
- Remember? I'm sure you do remember, and I want us to go there this morning. There's a man by the name of John Ortberg who has written a book entitled *If You Want to Walk on the Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat*.
- And I want to springboard off of some of the things that John said about this passage that's found in Matthew chapter 14. So if you have your Bible, and I hope that you do, turn with me this morning to Matthew and chapter 14.
- And you follow along with me in whatever translation that you have with you. I'll be reading out of the English Standard Version this morning, or you can follow along there on the screen to these verses 22 through 33 in Matthew chapter 14.
- The Bible speaks to us there to say immediately. He made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side while he dismissed the crowds.
- [5 : 50] And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on a mountain by himself to pray. When the evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, and then beaten by the waves for the wind was against them.
- And in the fourth watch of the night, that would be between 3 and 6 a.m., in the fourth watch of the night, he came to them walking on the water.
- And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and said, it is a ghost. And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them saying, Take heart.
- It is I. Do not be afraid. And Peter answered him, Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water. He said, Come.
- So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid. And beginning to sink, he cried out, Lord, save me.
- [6 : 56] Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, Oh, you of little faith, why did you doubt? And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.
- And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, Truly, you are the Son of God. Well, we were approaching Denver at about 20,000 feet.
- It was a rough day. And I was thinking I might just fill up one of those little bags that they place in the seat in front of you, you know, with my motion sickness.
- However, more importantly, I was concerned as to whether or not we were in some serious trouble. I was flying Frontier Airlines for the first time.
- Any of you remember Frontier out of Denver? Well, my questions were things like, Can this pilot be trusted? Was he or she of sufficient competence that I can place my destiny in his or her hands?

[8 : 04] Well, it was too little late for those kind of questions. You know, I was simply going to have to have faith that they knew what they were doing. Have you found yourself in those situations from time to time in life where matters very important to you or in the hands of somebody else?

That requires faith, doesn't it? And intimately connected to faith is risk. Where there can be no faith without risk.

And risk is intimately connected to fear. There can be no faith without risk and sometimes failure.

Faith requires risking failure. And that brings us to the story of Peter here in the boat. According to verse 24 there, a storm comes along so rough that the disciples can't be able to make it across this body of water.

And these, I would remind you, are professional sailors. Several of them are. Verse 25 tells us that Jesus came there between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m.

[9 : 19] in the fourth watch of the night. Now picture in your mind, if you will, the size of the waves, the strength of the wind. Picture the darkness of the night and this little boat struggling to avoid being capsized.

Picture in your mind, I say, this little boat. Well, Matthew says the boat was tormented by the waves. That's the Greek word that he uses, tormented by the waves.

So here they are. Cold, wet, exhausted, terrified. Those are the conditions under which Peter is going to get out of the boat.

I spent a little time on Lake Texhoma and Ray Roberts, Sam Rayburn, some of those reservoirs around our state. When the waves were high and the wind had gotten up and I was glad to be in a large bass boat, you know, we negotiated those waves carefully as we would make our way to safety.

I can hardly imagine someone suggesting that I would step out of the boat under those kind of conditions trying to stay upright in that kind of weather.

[10 : 39] I would think that it would be difficult enough to get out of a boat and try to walk on the water when it's calm in the daylight. I mean, good night. How much courage would it take to average person could be able to do what Simon Peter did that night?

Imagine doing it with the waves crashing, with the wind at gale force and three o'clock in the morning. Well, Peter gets out and he falls.

He doesn't make it. It's a story of failure. Or is it? Is it a story of failure?

failure. Include yourself if you've ever flunked a test. If you've ever been cut from a team.

If you ever didn't get that job or that promotion that you wanted. Include yourself if you've ever been impatient with a three-year-old. If you've ever said the wrong thing or eaten with the wrong fork.

[11 : 49] Oh my lens, if you've ever experienced failure of any kind, I say to you, all of us are would-be water walkers. All of us.

And God did not intend for human beings His children that are created in His divine image to go through life in a desperate effort to avoid failure.

The Lord never intended that for us. But the boat is so safe and so comfortable.

The waves are high. The night is dark and a storm is out there. And if you get out of the boat, you very likely are going to sink.

But if you don't get out of the boat, you're never going to walk on water. Duh. You know? God, yeah, there's something inside of us, folks.

[12 : 51] Wouldn't you agree? There's something inside of us that tells us that our lives are about more than just sitting in the boat. Something that wants to walk on the water.

Something that calls us to leave the routine of a comfortable existence and abandon ourselves to the adventure of following Christ.

Yeah, there's something inside of us that tells us now that's the right thing to do. Jesus comes to his disciples here and the disciples see him walking on the sea and they are terrified.

You can imagine. Put yourself you ever seen anybody walk on? Of course they were afraid. Terrified. Jesus says have no fear.

It's me. He says you can he's saying in so many words is he not? You can trust my character. You can trust my confidence.

[13 : 55] You can safely without reservation with no hesitation you can place your hands in my hands and your life in mine.

You have this storm? you have me. Now decide which is more powerful. And so Simon Peter says all right Lord if it's you then command me to come to you on the water.

And as we read Jesus said all right Peter come on. And now can't you just see it? Picture it in your mind. as Peter throws one leg over the side of the boat and then he lifts up the other leg and puts it over the side of the boat and puts both feet down in the water and then he lets go.

And he's still standing. And he turns and he takes a step toward the Lord Jesus and then he takes another step. And folks for the first time in human history the first time in the history of the human race an ordinary mortal man is walking on the water.

And for just a moment it's Peter and Jesus. and then all of a sudden Peter realizes what he's doing.

[15 : 30] He sees the waves. He feels the sting of the water and his faith gives way. He is afraid again and he sinks.

Some people say he took his eyes off Jesus. The Bible says he was afraid. He was afraid and he sank. So my question for you this morning is well did Peter fail?

I mean really did he fail? This text I believe radically defines failure in the life of a follower of Christ.

Failure is not so much of an event. It is a way that we interpret and judge that event. It's a label that we might attach to it. Jonah saw I understand attempted 200 unsuccessful vaccines before he found the vaccine that would take care of polio.

Somebody asked how did it feel to fail 200 times trying to invent a vaccine for polio. His response was I've never failed 200 times at anything in my life.

[16 : 44] My family taught me never to use that word. He said I simply discovered 200 ways how not to make a vaccine for polio. Somebody asked Winston Churchill one time said what most prepared you to lead Great Britain through World War II?

As most of you know for a period of time Great Britain stood virtually alone against Nazi Germany as it dominated the western world. Here was Churchill's response.

It was the time I repeated the class in grade school he said and the questioner said you mean you flunked a grade? Churchill said well let me just say I was given a second opportunity to get it right he said yeah did Peter fail?

Well yes in one way he did fail his faith gave way he could not stay locked in to Jesus he sank he failed his faith gave way I say but now listen to me this morning folks there were eleven other men who were bigger failures I would suggest to you in that boat yeah they failed privately they failed quietly their failure was safe and unnoticed and uncriticized only Peter experienced the shame of public failure but then only Peter knew the glory of walking on the water amen only Peter knew the glory of walking on the water only Peter knew in a way that others would never perhaps know that when he sank

Jesus would be there he knew that Jesus is wholly adequate to save and Peter he had a shared moment a connection like nobody else could have and that could not have happened if he had never thrown that leg over the side of the boat and gotten out on the water faith means choosing to follow Jesus perhaps you're wondering this morning what it means to get out of the boat you say brother Wallace that sounds exciting I'm all for it but I'm wondering what you do at the heart of it I'm convinced is the choice to become a disciple of Christ Jesus the disciple is not simply someone who believes in certain things so they'll go to heaven when they die a disciple is someone who says it is my ultimately my ultimate goal in life to allow Jesus to live as if he were in my body it is to live and love like Jesus a non-disciple is somebody who has no other goal you're not likely to drift into discipleship you have to choose you have to decide to step out on the water some of you this morning who sit here first baptist church henrietta

[20 : 08] I dare say some of you need to do what you need to do in conjunction with your marriage in relationship perhaps with your children or for some of you perhaps in relationship to your parents some of you need to pull the trigger and throw your legs over the side of the boat in connection with your addiction God knows your alcohol addiction or other drug your pornography some of you regarding your job your future God's calling in your life some of you need to let go and let God have his way in relationship to your boyfriend or your girlfriend or perhaps your health all you thought about it and for some of you it's about all you think about anymore you've examined that thing from all the angles and now it's time to do something about it you need to quit talking about it and begin to do something about it

God said to Peter come and he says to us this morning trust me depend upon me in this thing this is something that you cannot do on your own and I am worthy of your trust well what about it this morning this day in which our world and our country in particular is talking about thanksgiving I'm wondering if you are allowing the God of your salvation to really be the Lord of your life in such a way that you are willing to give him the circumstances some of you to give to him the difficult circumstances within your life and that is the great need this morning you do need to come out of the closet so to speak as far as some of those areas or that area in your life in which you need to trust him and realize as the choir sang it so well this morning to recognize that he does walk on water and that he'll give us the opportunity to do what for otherwise would have been impossible for us to do except for his strength his courage his presence within our lives

I think about a seamstress a member of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church devoted Christ follower who believed that Jesus had something to teach a segregated world about love and justice and community and so one morning in the December of 1955 it was a bus driver told her she must vacate her seat and move to the back of the bus because she was an African American and a white person needed the seat and in one of the most courageous choices of the 20th century she did not move and she started the revolution the next Monday night 10,000 followers of Christ gathered together at her church to pray and to ask God so now what do we do next because of that choice a revolution started that was not easy it had a high cost many were beaten some were imprisoned some even died but it changed the conscience of a nation it didn't change it enough but it changed it all because a mild mannered soft spoken

Christ follower a seamstress got out of the boat and that brings us to an aspect of discipleship that a lot of people don't like I don't like it much myself I mean a commitment to a life of following Christ is a commitment to the constant experience of fear did you hear me I say a commitment to a life of following Christ is a commitment to a constant reoccurrence of the experience of fear it'll happen over and over again Jesus commands the disciples to get into the boat they do a terrific storm comes up and they're afraid Jesus comes on them by walking on the water and when they see him they're terrified he says take heart don't be afraid Peter asked what he's supposed to do Jesus tells him the next step Peter gets out of the boat walks and then sinks what does he experience more fear but

Jesus rescues him once again and of course that won't be the last time that Peter is going to experience panic or fear is it not at all oh to a disciple it's to be a learner and a student it's to choose to grow in Christ and growth means entering new territory getting out of the boat and every time you do that I say every time you do that you're going to experience fear do you realize that you are going to here is the amazing thing about discipleship or one of those amazing things about discipleship you will always experience fear it will never go away every time you get out of the boat every time you enter a new challenge area to be every time you you're going to experience discipleship is always a choice between comfort and fear to be a disciple is to renounce comfort you found that out haven't you

[26 : 51] I say to be a disciple is to renounce comfort that's bad news for many of us because our society is heavy duty into comfort aren't we oh we like to come home and say I just want to veg out you know usually in front of the television set and people that do that we call them couch potatoes don't we yeah not good training for discipleship may I suggest to you that eleven other disciples were boat potatoes yeah they didn't want to run the risk they didn't want to experience the fear churches are full of folks that we might well call pew potatoes yeah people who's who do not want to run the risk churches are full of folks like that their religious faith amounts to little more than spiritual padding that will comfort the rest of their lives oh you've got such a really nice boat here you you you you haven't been out of in a long long time maybe there was a time earlier in your life in which you stepped out of the boat some of you maybe even on a regular basis

Jesus just give me the word and I'll come maybe you now however gotten really comfortable in your boat where you are and for some of you maybe you're just flat out afraid I know that feeling I've stepped out of the boat a few times and getting out of the boat for me was not just taking a risk it was dying to this crazy obsession of needing to appear successful sometimes I wanted to walk on the water to impress the boat potatoes you know that's not what walking on the water is about walking on the water is about coming to the Lord Jesus and if you try that you very well may sink but I've got a secret for you it doesn't matter it really doesn't matter because Jesus is adequate to save sinking people huh and he does

Peter got out of the boat he noticed that strong wind became frightened and beginning to sink he cried out what Lord save me Lord save me did you notice he didn't go in our heavenly father majestic above creator he said Lord save me it was a pretty simple prayer wasn't it it was a pretty strong and we become desperate as we find ourselves in those kind of situations we don't try to become creative we just simply want to call on his name and that's exactly it's a confession of the lordship of Christ and a plea for deliverance and Jesus immediately reached out his right hand and caught him the point is not that Jesus will constantly bail us out it is that he is always ready to respond however there is no failure that can place you beyond the length of his arm is it not a thing you could do ah

Jesus as he reached out to Simon Peter that night was able to say what the scripture says casting all of your cares upon him because he cares for you I wanted to ask you this morning what about that kind of faith in your life is it a faith that you recognize requires a risk if it is then it's a risk that will be characterized by fear faith can result in some remarkable things but we've got to move through that area of having both a confidence and a faith in God being willing to take that risk and being willing to declare ourselves as uncomfortable and at times quite fearful as a result of Peter's having gotten out of the boat and as a result of his failure and the redeeming hand of

Christ that entire boat began to worship Jesus when people get out of the boat when people get out of the boat the power of God is put into play and some remarkable things can happen I wanted to close the message this morning by telling you about a man by the name of Bob Bob I learned about Bob from a man whose name was Doug Cole he had a ministry in Washington D.C.

[32 : 03] mostly to the political types Bob became a Christian though he wasn't involved in politics as a matter of fact he sold insurance he didn't have any church background he really didn't know very much at all about Christianity Bob did not Doug was teaching him some of the basics and he was teaching him some things about prayer Doug told him for instance that Jesus said ask whatever you will in my name and it will be yours Bob was amazed at that Doug told him that he would have to understand it with some common sense but Jesus was ready to respond Bob decided he wanted to pray for a certain country in Africa and so Doug said alright you pray for a month for this country and if at the end of the month nothing happens

I'll give you \$500 but if something remarkable happens then you give me \$500 he said if you don't pray every day though all bets are off well Bob agreed to that and he started to pray and it was getting on toward the end of the month and nothing had happened he was at a dinner people at his table were saying what they did for a living and one of the women said that she worked for a medical facility a kind of a hospital orphanage in the very country that Bob had been praying for well boy did he set up and began to pay attention and he started pumping her with questions and she asked him why are you so interested in calling the country by name why are you so interested in this country and he told her about this strange prayer arrangement that he had with Doug Cole well she said would you be interested in visiting this country and seeing these folks and Bob said yes

I would he had plenty of money and he could do that so he flew there and he toured the facility and as you might imagine in a third world country those people were quite desperate they were short on supplies and medicine and so when Bob came back to the states he started writing and calling some pharmaceutical companies and they ended up raising over one million dollars worth of medicines to be sent back to this place in Africa afterwards this woman phoned him and she invited him to a big celebration over in that country and Bob went and while he was there he met the president actually the president of the country who had heard about the story and had come to the celebration it was a relatively small African country and this was the largest medical facility in the country at that time he met Bob the president did and he invited him to the capital to give him a tour so Bob went with the president of his country and toured the capital they went past a prison facility and Bob said what are the prisoners in there for and the president said those are political prisoners and Bob said you know that's not a good idea you should let them out well they finished their tour and Bob flew back to the

United States and a few days later I understand he got a phone call two o'clock in the morning he got a phone call from the state department of the United States government the official said when you were in recently in and he called the country by name that Bob had visited were you recently in that country and Bob said yes did you say anything to the president of that country about political prisoners prisoners and Bob said that he had and the fellow from the state department said well I don't know what you said but they've been released we've been trying in the state department for years to get those prisoners released and now they've been released what did you say and Bob said well I told him it was a bad idea to have political prisoners folks when people get out of the boat there are some amazing things that can happen

I wonder what would happen in Henrietta and in Clay County and in this part of God's world if the very people who are sitting here this morning were to actually get out of their boat and be able to give God their tomorrows be able to give God their circumstances what if everybody in this room were to say Jesus command me I'm yours can you imagine the kind of power that God could release in our communities and within our nation if our people would take him seriously at his word at this point all Jesus is still looking for people who are willing to get out of the boat but let me tell you something now with that if you go you're going to face problems a storm is out there your faith and mine will not be perfect we'll be afraid and it's very probable that we're going to sink but I know two things out of this story when you fail and sometimes you will the Lord

[38 : 09] Jesus is going to be there to read out his hand to you and to pick you up and the second thing that I know is that every once in a while folks you're going to walk on the water yeah you're going to walk on the water for you see when God made us and saved us and called us he intended for us to have that kind of an adventure in our faith this thanksgiving season as we thank him for who he is and for what he means in our life for the very presence that he presents to us would you have the faith would you take the risk would you become uncomfortable would you face the fear that will be necessary for you to walk on water

God help us to say Lord allow me to come to you and then do it would you stand with me please and let's pray our father we live in a generation of people that they're not going to give us much attention if it's just business as usual we can't just have church and expect to make a difference in the lives of the people that we can influence the folks that live right here in Henrietta most of them have decided whether or not they're going to go to church many of them have decided whether or not they're going to pay much attention to the word of God but Lord what not a one of them can deny is that water walking experience that can happen in the life of your children so I pray this morning for this thy people I pray for them one by one and

I pray for them corporately that oh God people might be able to see that miraculous yes miraculous power of God that can happen when we give ourselves without reservation to you Lord there very likely are a number of people this morning who stand here that they need the greatest need right now their life is to let go and to let you have your wonderful way within their lives I pray for them as I pray for myself I lift them up to you this morning that they might know the victory that comes in complete surrender I pray for some God who face some very trying and difficult a storm right now and they do need so much to allow you to perform a miracle like only you can do may they oh God this day place their hands in confidence in yours draw us unto thyself and use this time to bring honor to thee for this is our prayer in Jesus name amen as we often did when I was here as the interim pastor

I invite you this morning some of you to come here to the front to kneel and pray you don't need to talk to brother Sam you don't need to talk to me you need to talk to God huh and some of you perhaps God's impressed you this morning that you need come here to pray if not for yourself for someone that's on your heart and then there are others of you here this morning and you need to talk with the pastor to say to him what you have really said to God sharing that decision that the Lord's placed in your life some of you need to join this church you need to join hands with the people here in first baptist and that faces such a bright future and be able to move into that future as one of God's children with them my lands you've moved your furniture and your suitcase and your kids why not move your letter if God's led you here to first baptist and you know it you're convinced of it now don't wait until he's preaching do it today if God's in it it'll be exactly right the thing that you ought to do as the Lord would speak to you this morning you come on as we sing together brother Greg pastors here at the front you come ahead as we sing