

“GET OUT OF THE BOAT!”
by Rom A. Pegram (3/25/18)

WHAT IS THE GREATEST FEAR YOU CAN THINK OF? In my experience, it would have to be ... ‘fear of failure.’ Have any of you ever experienced that kind of fear? Failure is a funny thing. It can be one of our greatest fears; it’s also one of our greatest teachers in life, depending on what we do with it. So, what are you willing to *risk* in order to learn and grow—to allow God to *help* you learn and grow in life?

Author John Ortberg says *failure does not shape a person. It’s the way we respond to failure that shapes us as human beings.* In a recent book, Ortberg says Jesus is still looking for people who will ‘get out of the boat’ (Matthew 14). *Why should we risk it—doing something different than we’ve ever done before?* Because it’s the only way to *real growth* in life. Taking risks—risking failure in life—is part of the process of discovering and obeying God’s call on your life—of growing in that relationship...

Ortberg goes on to tell us there are many reasons to ‘get out of the boat,’ but there is one that tops them all: *The water is where Jesus is.* The water may be dark and wet and dangerous, but *Jesus is not in the boat!* Yes, the call to ‘get out of the boat’ involves crisis, opportunity, often failure, generally fear, sometimes suffering, and usually a task that seems too big for us ... but there’s no other way to grow in our faith or partner with God...

Do you remember Peter ... when he asked Jesus to call him out of the boat? What happened? Peter began to sink, didn’t he? But, eventually, his faith in Jesus (who was out on the water with him) saved him. I don’t believe Peter would’ve learned to trust Jesus like he did if it had not been for this faith-stretching experience on the water...

Folks, there’s an absolutely amazing story in the Old Testament of a woman who, from the world’s point-of-view, had no business being written about in the Bible ... but she was willing to ‘get out of the boat,’ so to speak. And, because she was willing to step out and risk everything for God and his people, God blessed her and we can read about her awesome life today. Her name was Ruth ... and she’s our Bible teacher for today. She’s going to teach us how to be more than survivors—how to thrive spiritually. She’s going to teach us how and when to step out & risk everything for God & God’s people. Listen (Ruth 1:1-18, NLT)...

In the days when the judges ruled in Israel, a severe famine came upon the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah left his home and went to live in the country of Moab, taking his wife and two sons with him. ² The man’s name was Elimelech, and his wife was Naomi. Their two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in the land of Judah. And when they reached Moab, they settled there.

³ Then Elimelech died, and Naomi was left with her two sons. ⁴ The two sons married Moabite women. One married a woman named Orpah, and the other a woman named Ruth. But about ten years later, ⁵ both Mahlon and Kilion died. This left Naomi alone, without her two sons or her husband.

⁶ Then Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had blessed his people in Judah by giving them good crops again. So Naomi and her daughters-in-law got ready to leave Moab to return to her homeland. ⁷ With her two daughters-in-law she set out from the place

where she had been living, and they took the road that would lead them back to Judah.

⁸ But on the way, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go back to your mothers’ homes. And may the LORD reward you for your kindness to your husbands and to me.” ⁹ May the LORD bless you with the security of another marriage.” Then she kissed them good-bye, and they all broke down and wept.

¹⁰ “No,” they said. “We want to go with you to your people.”

¹¹ But Naomi replied, “Why should you go on with me? Can I still give birth to other sons who could grow up to be your husbands?” ¹² No, my daughters, return to your parents’ homes, for I am too old to marry again. And even if it were possible, and I were to get married tonight and bear sons, then what? ¹³ Would you wait for them to grow up and refuse to marry someone else? No, of course not, my daughters! Things are far more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD himself has raised his fist against me.”

¹⁴ And again they wept together, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye. But Ruth clung tightly to Naomi. ¹⁵ “Look,” Naomi said to her, “your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. You should do the same.”

¹⁶ But Ruth replied, “Don’t ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. ¹⁷ Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!” ¹⁸ When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said nothing more. – Ruth 1:1-18 (NLT)

I’m convinced the only thing that can overcome fear of any kind—even fear of failure—is a little thing called ... ‘LOVE.’ I’m talking about the power of LOVE that’s a gift that comes from God’s Holy Spirit. When we ask, God imparts his LOVE into our lives. And that *powerful love—genuine love for God and others*, is our motivator in a life of *freedom from fear*. Think what this weekend is about for Christians; would Jesus have entered Jerusalem as he did—on the way to the greatest victory of his life—if he were motivated by fear? No. He knew this freedom; *God’s love for him drowned out all fear...*

Folks, when ‘fear of failure’ gets the best of us ... sometimes we need a nudge, don’t we? And *Ruth’s* the one giving us the nudge today. *Her story is one of love—a life motivated by genuine love for God and others*. And, she would be the first to tell you to ‘get out of your boat.’ *Don’t let fear—especially fear of failure—rob you from the life God wants you to have*. So, what would Ruth tell us, in light of what we’ve already heard today? First she’d tell us *we have a choice...*

YOU CAN LIVE YOUR LIFE OUT OF FEAR, IF YOU WANT TO... And *this, you can do on your own...* Folks, what drives your life? What motivates the way you live? Ruth could’ve lived a life motivated out of fear, but she chose not to... How would her story have been different—how would our world be different, if she’d chosen to listen to fear ... instead of ‘getting out of the boat?’

Some people think depression is one of the worst ‘conditions’ a person can have today. But, what causes depression in people? Many times it’s *fear*. If you read current psychology periodicals today, you’ll discover that *fear* seems to be what drives most people’s lives today. And please understand, as we’re talking about choices in the way we live this morning, that *there are consequences to every action we take ...* including

actions motivated by fear. You can see what I'm talking about without having to look too far...

- **Fear of commitment to people ...** can be seen in what's been happening to the whole institution of marriage in our country today. People are too busy living their lives, motivated out of a fear of commitment. That's *not* God's idea!
- **Fear of commitment to God ...** can be seen in the lack of God's being involved in the lives of individuals and families today. For instance, where are folks when opportunities arise to spend time with God?
- **Fear of commitment to the Church ...** is an obvious one. People today shun the 'Bride of Christ'—the Church. Look at the latest statistics in our country regarding who goes to church and who doesn't. It's all part of a societal phenomena that is a 'fear of commitment' in general.
- **Fear of what others are going to think ...** can be seen in the way many people live today. Ask them why they do many of the things they do. The answer is, "Well if I didn't, so-and-so wouldn't think much of me." What about what God thinks?
- **Fear of poverty or of being in need ...** stems from many folks' childhoods. This fear drives us to live for 'stuff' ... and causes a *fear of being generous*, especially to the Church.

Fear seems to be one of the worst 'conditions' of our post-modern society. But folks, just like with Ruth, *the choice is ours!* When all the stuff of life comes flying our way, we can choose to either stay in the boat—motivated by fear ... or get out of the boat—*where Jesus is*—and begin to take risks for both God and his people. Ruth decided to do just that, in our story for today. But, *if you want to live your life out of fear, go on and do it. You don't need anyone's help doing that*—especially God's. Or...

YOU CAN LIVE YOUR LIFE OUT OF LOVE, IF YOU WANT TO. *This, however, you need God desperately for...* God is the author of love, the very source of the *kind* of love it takes to drive out fear in our lives. Look with me, if you would at 1 John 4:18 (NLT) for a moment...

Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.

This, folks, is the kind of love I'm talking about this morning—the kind John describes here ... And with that scripture in mind, let me say a couple more things about Ruth. What made her give up all that she knew and follow Naomi, her mother-in-law, to a new land where everything in *that* world was strange to her? Love. It's that simple. Because she was allowing love to rule and motivate her life, instead of fear, she had what it took to 'step out of the boat' and follow Naomi into a life and a future that were a bit uncertain. The bottom-line? She knew she could trust the God of Naomi ... and she knew she could trust God's people (Naomi for one). And, just look what an awesome future she had! She became the great-grandmother of King David, whose lineage can be traced forward to our Savior, Jesus!

When love drives our lives, we're able to make a total commitment to God. We'll reach out and take risks for God ... without fear! So, depending on which kind of life you choose today, here's what you finally need to know: if you choose a life motivated by love, instead of the one motivated by fear...

TOTAL COMMITMENT IS THE KEY TO WALKING ON WATER! *Total commitment is the name of the game!* I'm here to tell you today *those who are more than survivors are those willing to risk everything for God and God's people ... and God is a risk you can count on—a good risk, a sure ride!* But, to experience the motivation of God's love in your life, you have to be totally committed to Christ—no halfway! Who is Lord of your life? If Jesus is, you're on your way to a life driven NOT by fear, but by love ... and what a healthy way to live!

Folks, I'd mentioned before that no matter what choices we make in life, there are always consequences. Let me briefly describe to you today, some of the eternal consequences I've seen in people's lives who've made either a choice to embrace fear as their god, or Love as their God ... and the end of life (which I've shared in) usually tells the tale. For instance, when a life is lived motivated out of fear...

- ...people die lonely...
- ...people die afraid...
- ...people die miserable...
- ...people die eternally lost...

But, when a life is lived motivated out of love...

- ...people die content...
- ...people die happy...
- ...people die with confidence...
- ...people die with a great anticipation of eternal life full of joy and peace...

Please know this, today, folks: THE CHOICE IS OURS. God has given us the gift of this choice. *We cannot blame anyone else for the life we live ... or the death we face ... because the choice is ours.* It's either going to be God's way ... or the world's way! Ruth decided on God's way; she 'got out of the boat.' How about you?

As I close, let me ask you another important question today ... one that demands an answer: WHAT IS YOUR BOAT? What keeps you so comfortable that you don't want to give it up ... even if it keeps you from joining Jesus on the water?

For some of you, maybe it's been awhile since you've been out of your boat. You may have a very nice boat ... with padded deck chairs ... and stabilizers so you don't get seasick in the storms of life. You may have gotten quite comfortable sitting in your boat ... *but* Jesus is passing by. Do you see him? And he's *still* looking for people who're willing to come to him, to get out of the boat ... and take a risk...

Folks, remember this: if you get out of your boat, *two things just might happen:*

1. When you fail—and you will fail sometimes, Jesus'll be there to pick you up; *you will not fail alone!* You'll find Jesus is still perfectly capable of saving you, just like Peter found out ... just like Ruth found out ... and secondly...
2. Every once in awhile, *you just may find yourself walking on water!*

Folks, dare to risk for God and his people today! Let *love* motivate you out of your boat of comfort ... to walk on new waters! DARE to get out of the boat for the sake of God's Kingdom. Like Peter ... and like Ruth ... you may find that, with God's help, you too can walk on water ... and be a spiritual survivor... LET GOD'S LOVE MOTIVATE YOU!