

GET OUT OF THE BOAT

A few weeks ago I heard Holy Spirit say to me, "*Peter got out of the boat.*" I asked, "Yes, Lord??" and I didn't hear Him speak another word. While it may sound strange, this is how the Father often chooses to speak to me. He will drop a phrase or a sentence on me out of nowhere...when I'm least expecting it...and then be silent. I know that when He does this, He's calling me to stop what I'm doing and press in to what He's saying. When I get quiet and begin to listen, He will finish the story. As I sat down before Him that day, He showed me a picture of what it must have been like in the boat that night. I saw it played out like a movie. I could see the darkness and the rough water. I could hear the noise and feel the chaos. As Peter began to step out I saw the disciples reaching for him, grabbing him and pulling at his robe trying desperately to hold him in the boat. In this 'movie', they didn't understand what he was doing and thought he'd gone crazy! Now, I realize you won't see that part specifically in scripture but it is possible that it happened that way. Remember that these guys were human just like you and me. They experienced the same emotions and reactions that you and I experience. I believe Holy Spirit allowed me to see that picture in order to bring a fresh revelation from a very familiar story.

A Summary of Matthew 14 – Jesus and His disciples had had a very busy day or two. At the beginning of the chapter, John the Baptist had been beheaded and John's disciples had come to tell Jesus the news. Upon hearing this, Jesus tried to retreat to a remote, quiet place but was faced, yet again, with a crowd following Him. He had compassion on the crowd, healed the sick and ministered there all day. Later in the day, the disciples urged Jesus to send the crowd on back to town because they were in a desert with nothing to eat. Jesus said, "No, we'll feed them here." He performed a miracle by feeding 5000 men (plus women and children) with only a few pieces of bread and a few fishes. When all had eaten and were filled, Jesus told His disciples to get in the boat and go on ahead of Him to the other side. He still needed to be alone with the Father. The disciples were obedient to the command and they left. They had traveled a good distance into the water when the wind arose and began to toss the boat violently. Jesus, walking on the water and saw them. When they saw Him they were terrified, cried out and said, "Look, a ghost!!!" He told them, "Take courage. Do not fear. It is I." Peter said, "If it's you, Lord, tell me to come to you" and Jesus said, "Come". Peter stepped out of the boat and onto the crashing waves.

The whole chapter paints a picture of the fact that the men in this boat were all followers of Christ. They had been through a lot in one day and they had not left His side. They had just seen what it could cost them to be associated with this Jesus. It had cost John the Baptist his head. They had seen the healing miracles in the crowd that day. Then they witnessed the grand finale of feeding literally thousands with less food than it would take to fill a grown man's stomach. At the conclusion of the evening, they obeyed when they didn't want to. Scripture says that Jesus 'constrained' them to go. Maybe the news of John the Baptist still had them shaken or maybe they could tell there was a storm brewing. For whatever reason, they didn't want to go ahead of Him but He gave the word and they obeyed His command. They were Jesus followers!!!! They had left all to be His disciples. Yet, when He appeared to them that night on the water, they mistook Him for a ghost...a

spirit. (That word 'ghost' in the original language is "phantasma". It is where we get the word phantom today.) Jesus identified Himself and Peter was the only one that listened and responded to His voice above the chaos of the storm. Not only did he respond verbally, but he wanted to do what Jesus was doing. The others weren't too sure. With the winds blowing violently and the waves crashing, as Peter began to crawl out of the boat, do you really think the other disciples just sat there and let him go? Put yourself in their place. Don't you think they *might* have shouted, "Peter you're crazy! Get back in here!" I believe they must have been afraid for Peter in the natural and in the spiritual....a storm and a ghost. Isn't it possible that the picture I saw of them grabbing at him to keep him in the boat could have really happened?

How is this relevant to us? You see, in our walk with Christ we are called to be extreme and many times it will be the well meaning church folks, family members and friends, some of whom really love us, that will tell us it is better if we stay safe in the boat. They try to hold on to us and pull us back into mediocrity instead of encouraging the radical. People are terrified of the extreme...both in the physical and the spiritual. There is a fear of a physical cost in that "what will people think" or "what if they don't agree?" or "how will this change my lifestyle?". There is a fear of getting "too far out there" on the spiritual side of things, too. You see, the god of this world has twisted the spiritual side terribly and the world has run with it. The world has become fascinated with the spirit realm from the dark side. Just look at the books that are popular and what is flooding the television channels. It's everywhere. This has caused the 'church' to be afraid of any of it so we avoid it at all cost and in doing so, we've missed the power and glory that we were created to carry. It should be the 'church', the Body of Christ that is demonstrating this supernatural power that a supernatural God created and intended us to carry. Because we have failed to step up to the plate, the enemy has taken what God created, has imitated it and now the world is eating it up. The problem is they are eating from the wrong source. Here is a picture of how that looked back then. The disciples had been with Jesus all day and weren't afraid or offended. Yet, when He appeared to them in a supernatural way instead of the natural way they were accustomed to, they thought He was from the dark side. Can you see the parallel? When the church hears about Him from the pulpit, in a way that they're accustomed to, it's all good but when they hear of someone encountering Him in a supernatural way like in a dream or a vision, they freak and call it new age! When they hear of someone releasing angels, seeing angels, etc. they immediately call it false. When they hear of a place that casts out demons, they call it extreme even though we are commanded to do it. People, it's time the church got out of the boat but they just aren't convinced that what they are seeing and hearing is Jesus. They still believe it's a ghost and they are terrified. Jesus recognized the terror that was on the disciples that night. Notice the first words He spoke to them were 'take courage'. He released courage to every disciple in the boat. Peter was the only one that 'took it' or as we would say, received it. He's offering and releasing courage to every born again believer in the world today and only a few are taking it.

Even with courage being given from the mouth of the Master Himself, it seems that the other disciples trusted in the structure of the boat that night to protect them from the storm more than the very One that could calm the storm. That is a picture of much of the body of Christ. They are depending on the physical structure (religion and tradition) of the

church / denomination to protect them instead of 'taking courage' and moving out to the One who provides the victory in the storm. For the record, let me say that I do not believe we are to be extreme just for the sake of being extreme! We read and hear about those things all the time and they are not of the Lord. Peter could be extreme this night because He had heard Jesus say 'Come'. If Peter had crawled out of the ship during a storm by his own strength on any other night, he would likely have been fish bait. It is so critical that we are in tune to the voice of the Lord...the Spirit of Truth...that we hear His voice above the crowd and above the storm and move only when He says to move.

There is a personal invitation being offered to you. You see, the disciples had been with Jesus for a while. Every one of them had heard the word "come" from Jesus' mouth before. Remember some dropped their fishing nets and left their boats where they sat to follow Jesus. They all had answered that *first call* to come. Because of that, they had observed all He had said and done and oh, the things they had seen. But this night, there was another call to 'come'. It was a call for more. Peter wanted more. He wanted to *participate* and Jesus issued the invitation. No longer just a spectator, Peter got out of the boat to join Jesus in what He was doing. Many are born again because they heard the first call to come and said 'yes'. But just like in this story, only a few are answering the call to 'come' and be extreme. When we hear that voice, that invitation, it's time to step out into whatever He calls us to do and participate with Him. It takes faith and faith is beyond our understanding. Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and *lean not to your own understanding.*" Keep in mind that when you hear that Voice of Truth tell you to step out, there will always be those well meaning folks that want to keep you safe in the boat, in the church, in your 'ministry', in tradition, in religion. You may be the only one willing to step out of the boat. You may have to take a stand against those whom you've walked with a long time. You may have to leave them behind. The invitation to the supernatural way we were meant to live has been given. "Come", He says. The 'voice of reason' and the 'Voice of Truth' will always be around opposing each other. The question is: whose voice will you listen to and obey?