

Trust God – He’s on Your Side

By Bobby Schuller

Today we’re continuing a series on my book, which is also on this creed we just said. And today, I’m going to talk about what it means to trust in Jesus in terms of doing great things for God. In a way we sort of already talked about this in not worrying, but today I want to talk about it in our actions. In stepping out of the boat, as Peter did. To walk on water. To do something amazing for the Lord.

I think the number one thing the enemy wants you to think when God asks you do to something, is to think that’s impossible. I think that the enemy wants you to think that God doesn’t want to do a work in your life, or he wants to fill your heart with shame and point out your past, and he likes to do all these things to distract you from fulfilling what God has called you to do.

But today, I want you to learn that you can trust in Jesus truly, and you can approach God’s throne boldly. God’s not going to keep you from doing great things for Him because you’ve messed up in your life, or you’ve made mistakes. That’s the great thing about Christ crucified and the resurrection is that we can come boldly before the throne of God. He doesn’t see our works, He sees the works of Christ on the cross, and

Christ raised from the dead. Isn't that good news? That as we develop and as we grow in life, we don't have to be worrying constantly about all of our mistakes and flaws; we just do our best and forget the rest.

And so today we're going to talk about trust and what it means to trust in the Lord and to step forward and to step out in faith. You know faith is pretty simple, it just means trust. That's all it is. Faith is trust. We try and make it mystic. It's really all it is. It means trusting that the Lord is good, and that He's going to do what He said He would do.

It reminds me a lot of flying on an airplane. Any of you afraid of flying just a little bit? Okay a couple. I'm going to make fun of you now. Look, we all get the jitters sometimes when we fly because we're on a giant multi ton thing made of metal flying through the sky at hundreds of miles an hour, and we're not in control. We just have to go along for the ride, so I grant you that flying is scary.

But being afraid of flying isn't rational. Your chances of getting in an airplane crash are one out of eleven million. That is very low. All the math people are like yes. If you die in a plane crash, friend, it is your time to go. It is your time. That is how rare it is. You are more likely to be struck by lightning twice than to get in a plane crash once. You're more likely to die in a car accident eleven thousand times before you get in a plane crash once. Right? So the list goes on and on. In fact there's one study that makes the claim that you are safer in a plane in flight than you are sitting on your couch in your living room.

So it is incredibly safe to be on a plane. But you don't care. A hundred percent. Once the engines start revving and that thing starts taking off, and it's going hundreds of miles an hour, and it starts shaking, and there's trembling, and you're wondering why isn't anybody freaking out. This is scary. It doesn't matter. All the math goes out the window.

And yet you still got on the plane, and yet you still put your seatbelt on because you had a destination. You had somewhere you needed to be. You had to get there and you needed to get there now. And that's what faith is. Faith is not the absence of fear. Faith is moving forward in spite of your fears.

When Jesus tells us to fear not, He means don't act according to your fear. When Jesus tells us, and when the gospels command us to be brave, that doesn't mean we don't feel fear, it means we go in the direction of the thing that we're afraid of because God called us to. It means we trust God.

And so when you're afraid of flying but you still get on a plane because you've got somewhere to go, even though you're scared, that is faith. It's okay to be afraid. It's okay to be scared. It's okay to white knuckle your way to wherever it is that you're going on that plane. It's not okay to not get on the plane, and that's what we're talking about today. When we don't trust God enough, when those things keep us from acting in faith and doing great things for God, that's when we're really

missing out on one of the greatest things about being in the kingdom of God. And that is in the kingdom of God anything is possible. And it's amazing when we live in the reality in a life of daily trust in the Lord, and we begin to take steps of faith towards our dreams and towards the things God's called us to do, it's amazing the things we can accomplish, and how much we even grow personally. It's a good, good thing.

Sometimes it's good to just not know what's possible or impossible. I remember this story about this guy George Dantzig, famous mathematician, when he was in college, he was running late to class and he came into class and there was a math problem on the board, and he assumed it was the homework for the night. And so the lecture went on and he wrote down the math problem and took it home with him and started working on it. And he was like man this math problem was hard, and he had a week to get it done, kept working on it, and finally after a week of late nights, he thought he was so bad at math, he finally sorted out the math problem.

And he went to his professor's office and brought him the solved math problem, and he said here's my homework. Sorry it's late. And he said just put it on the desk. And he said he didn't really want to just put it on the desk, because there were papers everywhere and stuff. There were piles of books, and he was really afraid it was going to get lost. So he put it squarely on top.

And several weeks went by and one morning, he heard this pounding on the door early, early in the morning. BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM. BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM. He went to the door, who is there. And he answered the door, it was his professor. He said George, you did it. He said what do you mean? He goes I didn't tell you because you got to class late, but that was an unsolved math problem that I put on the board. We thought it was unsolvable! And you solved it!

And of course the moral of the story is that the benefit that George Dantzig had was not knowing that it was impossible to solve that problem, and so he did. And very often, as people of the world, we get stuck here, don't we. We think it's impossible, we can't do it. God's never done it before in my life. I've never done anything like that. It's impossible. It's too hard. I can't imagine getting there.

Friend, let me just tell you, you don't have to solve the whole thing and figure it all out before you start a journey with the Lord. Just take the first step. Just do the first thing. Just pull out your pencil and start working on that problem. Just take a step and get out of the boat. You can trust in the Lord.

And maybe you're here today, and God's wanting to do something in your life. You feel God calling you to do something. And maybe this message is for you – that today you need to step out in faith and trust. You might fail a couple of times, but that's okay. Failing is a part of the

process. You might have set backs, you might experience some pain or loneliness, you might even get some rejection from people who don't want you to do whatever it is you're supposed to do. But if it's the Lord calling you to do it, it's the best thing to do, friend. Listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and go where He's calling you to go. You can trust in Him.

Did you know everything that God is doing in your life is for your benefit? Everything I do in my kids lives, even when I put them in time out, it's for their benefit. And everything that God is doing in your life will benefit you in the long run. Anything that God is doing in your life is the best thing that could happen to you. And if you were to watch the whole scene play out, you too would agree that was the best thing that could have ever happened to me.

And so friends, I want to tell you that what God is doing in your life is good. We say that Jesus is perfect theology. If you want a perfect description of what God is like, look at Jesus. Look at how He acted and how He preached and how He ministered to people and how He loved people. If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. Jesus shows us what the Father is like. You look at John chapter 9, for example, the blind man when he said, 'rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he should be born blind.' Jesus says 'neither. He was born blind so that the glory of God could be revealed in his life.' And it was, when Jesus healed him.

Jesus does not go around making people sick to teach them a lesson. He goes around healing people, loving people, guiding people, encouraging people. And yes, He speaks truth to power, but He still doesn't harm the people that He's talking to.

So Jesus, who shows us what God is like, He doesn't go around harming people, but there are times He disappoints people; there are times where He allows people to struggle on their own, yes. But in the end, He does it for their benefit. We're going to see that in a minute here.

But I want you to know that you can trust Jesus. He's not going to let you sink. Maybe you're going through something right now and you're like I don't know how I'm going to get through this. He's not going to let you sink. He's going to get you through it. Just trust that whatever stress you're going through, challenges you're going through, keep your faith alive and God's going to turn it around for your benefit. He's going to work it for your favor. Just keep your eyes fixed on Him and good will come, in Jesus' name.

So today, the scripture we're going to read is the famous story of Peter getting out of the boat and walking on water towards Jesus. But before we get there, I want you to understand some context. First of all, Peter was a disciple of Jesus, and that is a big, big deal because in Jesus' day, when a rabbi called a young man to be a disciple, he was literally trying to create a clone. There was a system in place in which those who were called to be disciples of the rabbi would literally mimic everything

the rabbi did. So they would, if you were in those days, and you'd see a rabbi walking along, and you'd see teenage boys and men in their 20's walking behind him, they would literally walk in the same footprints that the rabbi was walking in. If the rabbi was left-handed, they would learn how to write left handed because they, too, wanted to be like the rabbi. They would tell all of his same jokes. They would dress like him. They would try and look like him. And this is not just fawning over a personality. This is what they're supposed to do. They're supposed to become disciplined in the way that they act, look, preach, think, everything like the rabbi. And this is the understanding when a rabbi calls a disciple to be like them.

In other words, the calling to be a disciple is the calling to do certain things, much more than it is to not do things. When Jesus calls His disciples, they have an understanding that whatever Jesus does, we should do. And listen, the word is should, not can. It's not only that you can do what Christ did, it's that you should do what Christ did.

That's why in John chapter 14, Jesus says to His disciples, 'anyone who believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things.' Everyone say greater things. 'Even greater things than these because I'm going to my Father.' What does He mean by that? He needs us because He's going to His Father, He needs to us to do Jesus kind of great things to reveal the Father to a fallen, hopeless world. He needs you. It's not that you can do great things it's that you

should do great things. It's that you're supposed to be a clone of the rabbi. You're supposed to do what Jesus did, and this is why in Luke 9 and 10, for example, Jesus sends out His disciples to go perform miracles, and they do.

Okay, all this set up. So the disciples, this whole time, have been doing things that Jesus did, and every time they're amazed that the Lord does a work through them in the same way He does it through His Son Jesus. So in this story, Jesus' cousin and perhaps best friend John the Baptist has died, and He's really grieving and hurting. So He gets on a boat and He's a mega celebrity now, right? He's a prophet; people are saying everybody who has a problem is trying to get Him to solve it. And all you introverts out there are going to empathize with Jesus here. He just gets on a boat and He sails to a lonely place, it says, to just get away from the crowds. And He gets a few moments to Himself, and then finally news gets out that Jesus is in this weird, secluded place on this beach and so mobs start coming. The Bible actually says its five thousand men, not counting women and children. So a literal amphitheater of people come to Jesus and all of them have needs. And Jesus is just trying to grieve the loss of John the Baptist and spend some time with the Father.

But in His compassion and mercy, He just begins to heal people. And it starts to get dark outside and His disciples say all these people are hungry, what are we going to do, and so then the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand happens. And now everyone is losing their mind

because this incredible thing has happened. And so in the chaos, Jesus tells His disciples, get back on the boat, go to the other side and I'm going to go up on this hill and spend some time with the Lord.

The crowd disperses, could be because it was raining, we don't know, but we know that it starts to rain, probably. There's big howling winds. And Jesus is just sitting up on the mountain in the middle of just like bad weather, just like, I picture like just so calm and serene and peaceful and focusing on the Lord.

And the disciples are on a boat losing their minds. The waves are howling, the wind is blowing, they're trying to get to the coast, trying to get back to shore to safety and they can't. They keep paddling towards the shore, and it says the wind just keeps pushing them away from the shore. The sun is setting, it's now getting dark, and they still can't get to shore. It's now midnight and they still can't get to shore, and they're really scared, and now it's two, three, four in the morning. The Bible says by the fourth watch of the night, which is between three am and six am, they're still out there in the middle of a storm, freaking out, trying to get to the shore, and Jesus is just up on the hill watching them. Why?

It says immediately Jesus made the disciples.. so I already said this, but I'm going to read it again.. go on ahead of Him to the other side while He dismissed the crowd, and after He dismissed them, He went up on a mountainside Himself to pray, and later that night, He was there

alone and the boat was already a considerable distance from the land buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

Something else about them being out on the water, by the way, is that in a Jewish worldview, water was the thing that divided.. it was kind of like they believed the universe was like a sandwich, where heaven was above, and Sheol, which was like their version of hell. Not fire and brimstone but the land of the dead. That was below them. And the thing that parted it was water, so you had the water above the clouds and stuff, parted heaven and earth, and then the water below parted hell and earth. So large bodies of water like the sea and big lakes, those were scary to first century middle eastern people, because they believe if you went deep enough, you would sort of fall through into Sheol, into hell.

So when the water starts churning and the waves start breaking, it's like something is happening under them. To add insult to injury, they also believed in this thing called the Leviathan, which is like a Loch Ness Monster. They believed there were these legends about this sea monster in the Genesera, as well. So there's like it could be like a sea monster, and like there's all this stuff going on. They probably can't swim, as crazy as that sounds. Most people couldn't swim back then. And so now it's four in the morning and they've been trying to get to shore and the wind won't let them go, and there's all this stuff going on, and you know how it gets at four, five in the morning, and if you've ever sailed, you know this is super dangerous, and then all of a sudden they see Jesus walking

on the water, and they don't know its Him, and they all completely lose their minds. And they shout it's a ghost!

And Jesus looks at them and He says take courage. It is I. Don't be afraid. You know it's amazing to me because the minute they know it's Jesus, I wonder what they feel in their heart and in their mind. Why did He leave them out there for so long? Why does He leave us when we're going through difficult trials and challenges and setbacks at work or in the family? Why does He let us keep paddling towards the shore, caught up in our fear. Why did He keep them in their fear? Why do you think?

Look my belief is that it was training. He knew that those men on that boat were going to have to face a lot more than water in their life. And that they needed to see that no matter how scary things got in their life that Jesus would come to them. In their view, Jesus was literally walking on hell to save them. The belief was that that struggle, that stress, that challenge, because Christ was with them would only make them tougher, stronger, smarter and less afraid.

Maybe you're going through something today, and I want you know that you can trust in Jesus. He's going to save you. And you'll see time and again victory after victory, that the Lord won't abandon you.

So finally, Peter says Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water. Come, He said. Then Peter got down out of the boat and walked on water and came towards Jesus. But when He saw the wind, He was afraid, and beginning to sink, cried out Lord, save me. Immediately,

Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. You of little faith, why did you doubt? And they climbed into the boat, the wind died down, then those who were in the boat worshipped Him, saying, truly you are the son of God.

When Jesus says why did you doubt, what did He mean? Did He mean why did you doubt me? I believe that in the rabbinic system, when Jesus was saying why did you doubt, He was saying why did you doubt you could do what I could do? And the answer is because he looked at the things he was afraid of, rather than looking to the Lord.

Don't be afraid. No matter how much fear you have in your life, walking in faith with the Lord is like what Peter did here. You think Peter was not afraid? Peter was still freaking out, I think, when he walked on the water. I think Peter had all sorts of emotions going on in his body, and in his mind, and he was scared of the water, and he didn't know if there was some demon dragon Loch Ness Monster under his boat. He didn't know. But all he knew was Jesus was on the water, and if he could walk to Him, he would be okay, and so he does.

And that's what living a life of faith; living a life of possibility, of power, of doing things for God is like. It's not about not feeling emotions, it's not about not feeling fear, it's about taking just one simple step out of the boat, even though you're scared. Is anyone here scared today? You don't have to be afraid. You can step out on the water, and even if you sink, He'll save you. Isn't that good news? That's good news. We can

smile today, understanding that even when we sink, even when Peter sank, that was a lesson for him that helped him grow, it helped him learn. We're so afraid of failure. But why? You have to fail a hundred times before you succeed even once. Failure is good for you! Did you know that? What's not good for you is going all through life super safe and never failing because you never tried something interesting. I believe that God is the kind of God who stretches us. He makes us do the things that are not traumatic necessarily, but they're super stretchy and uncomfortable. And if you've been a believer for a long time, you've probably had some of those experiences. And so friend, whatever you're going through, God's going to get you through.

I think many of us, we came from traditions and world views that maybe if you grew up in a church, it was not about doing things for God, it was about not doing things for God. Or because of God. Because you're afraid of Him. It was like don't smoke, don't drink, don't chew, don't go with girls who do. Anybody? It was like the ideal believer was the one who didn't do anything. Didn't do anything.

It would be like I need something really boring and inanimate. I guess I'll have to use my pulpit. I actually think it's a beautiful pulpit so I hate to use it. So maybe you grew up in a church where it was about not doing things, then this music stand would be like the perfect Christian. Not smoking, not drinking, definitely not overeating, not jealous, not angry, right? And look at that – he's at church. Perfect Christian. Perfect

Christian. And I remember when I was first saved, I was attending churches where all the sermons were about what you don't do. And there was no explanation as to why you wouldn't do them. The reason you don't do them is because you're not supposed to. When you're a teenager, in fact, if you have a big heart, I think all of us have big hearts, right? Being told not to do something and not knowing why doesn't help. It just makes you want to do it more, kind of.

And the reason God tells us to do some of the things we're not supposed to do is so that we can do the things we're supposed to do. And you look at what Jesus teaches, He's telling people to do things: to live a life of miracles, power, love, passion. And that's a good thing, and that's what God's calling us to do.

So don't be afraid of failing. Failing is a part of winning. Don't be afraid of stress. You know stress is good for you? If you read like magazines and stuff, they might say oh stress is bad for you, but actually clinical psychology, there's a lot of significant evidence that shows that not enough stress is one of the leading causes of depression and anxiety in the world. You're like Bobby, I got plenty of stress in my life.

Look there's a type of stress called EU stress, and it's the kind of stress that you get when you're doing new things. So very often when we stay in the same sort of cycle of this thing, in and out every single day that actually can create.. that safety can create a sense of depression or

even anxiety in people. But there's a EU stress, E-U, that's the Greek word for good, good stress that causes you to grow, that stretches you. And in fact even having a positive view of stress makes stress healthier for you. Take breaks from stress and stuff, but trust me, guys, the stress that you face when you do good things and big things for the Lord, and the failure that you face when you do big things for the Lord, it's all part of the process of living a life of victory.

And finally, let me tell you, that God is a God of what Tolkien called eucatastrophe. That he's an 11th hour kind of God. That He loves to do the types of things, when you think everything is falling in around you, and the last second something great breaks through for a major victory, this is something God does in people's lives all the time. And it's something you can hope for. Maybe you're sick today and you don't know how you're going to get over a disease. Maybe you've completely lost your business. Maybe you feel like your marriage is caving in on you. Don't lose hope because God is the kind of God that in the last minute, loves to do these great finishing things for whatever reason.

And I remember a great story like this, this exact thing happened to me. I wanted to go on a missionary trip to Russia for the summer to go to a camp with orphans and I was 17, I was graduating high school, and the cost of going on the trip was \$3,700. Now for most 17-year-olds, \$3,700, you might as well just say a bazillion dollars. You might make up some number, because it truly sounded impossible. To make it worse, I

only had like three weeks to get the money. And so I said Lord, if this is from you, I'm going to just take that first step of faith out of the boat. I don't know how this is going to work, but I'm just going to try.

And so I started asking people in my church for money. Nobody gave me anything. And I started working and I started washing cars, and there was this fundraiser for missionaries where you could lay railroad ties, and so I'm breaking my fingers and cutting my hands and working hard. And I've only got a few days left to raise this money, and you know how much I had? \$67. I like had nothing. I was like I.. I guess I.. and they needed the money in a few days, and I didn't know what was going to happen.

And the next day, I got an envelope in the mail and it had no note, nothing, and it was from somebody I didn't even know, and it was a check for \$300. And I thought what is this? And all of a sudden, non-descript envelopes with money in them, with my name on them, with no notes, start showing up in the mail. A hundred dollars, fifty dollars, three hundred dollars. I'm like what is going on? And I'm like this is just manna from heaven. Thank you, God. This is amazing. And they're coming from all over the country. People I didn't know. I'm like what is going on? With no explanation. Some of them were saying congratulations. And I was like what the heck is this?

Come to find out that my mom had done this thing I'd never heard of, where she sent out graduation announcements without even telling

me. She sent out like five hundred cards with my picture with blonde spiky tips and barefoot in my cool.. and she sent these out to hundreds of people, saying Bobby's graduating high school, and all these people starting sending back money. And I raised like over.. I got basically about \$4,000 in this eucatastrophe event from people all over the world, and it was a sign for me.

This is how God does things. He just loves.. I don't know why, it's so weird. And it's annoying, isn't it? It's annoying, but faith pleases God. God said go to Russia, and I said okay Lord, I'll take the first step. If you have the vision, God has the money. If you have the vision, God has the time. If you have the vision, God has the power. God will do it. And just listen and trust that He's calling you to great, great things.

Lord, you want us to live lives that others would say is impossible. Not for our glory, but for yours, Lord. And you said greater things than this will you do because I'm going to my Father. Lord, you need us to live like you, to reveal your love and your power to a hurting world. Lord, we love you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.