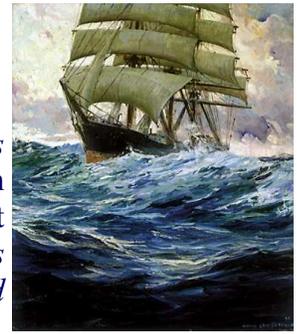


# *The Risk Factor of Faith*

By Ben Godwin



A wise man once wrote, “*A ship in the harbor is safe but that’s not what ships are made for.*” Ships are made to challenge the open sea. Without question, faith involves risk. Yet it is that willingness to take a daring step and trust God that pleases Him. God honors and rewards bold, aggressive faith. “*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*” (Heb. 11:6)

## • *Step Out On A Limb*

When God called Abraham to separate from his father’s house and leave the land of Ur for Canaan, he “*went out, not knowing where he was going.*” (Heb. 11:8) Talk about stepping out on a limb! It was risky to sever ties with his friends and family to venture out in a hostile world, but his faith and obedience paid off. Abraham willingly traded the known for the unknown and, as a result, became the “Father of the Faith.” As one author put it, “Don’t be afraid to step out on a limb—That’s where the fruit is!”

Zacchaeus is literally a lasting reminder of what can happen when you’re willing to step out on a limb. He was vertically challenged, not to mention a wealthy, corrupt tax collector. Too short to see Jesus through the crowd, he ran ahead and climbed a tree for a better view. Surprisingly, as Jesus walked by He stopped, look up at Zacchaeus and invited Himself to his house. “*Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.*” (Lk. 19:5) While the crowd complained that Jesus was going to have dinner with a notorious sinner, conviction gripped the publican’s heart. Generosity overcame his greed. He promised to pay restitution to those he defrauded and donated half of his ill-gotten wealth to the poor. Jesus observed, “*Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham...*” (Lk. 19:9) The man’s life was totally revolutionized all because he dared to step out on a limb.

## • *Go Overboard*

When Jesus walked on the stormy Sea of Galilee, His disciples first feared that He was a ghost. After Jesus reassured them that He was real, Peter asked if he could join Him walking on the water. Usually we focus on how Peter sank when he took his eyes off the Master. We often overlook the fact that no one else had the guts to try what Peter tried. The rest of the disciples opted for the security of the ship. It is easy to sit in our comfort zones and criticize those who attempt (and sometimes fail) to do great things for God. The timid say it’s too risky to venture past the confines of tradition and the status quo. After all, conventional wisdom states, you shouldn’t go overboard. Why Not? Peter had the experience of his life when he dared to go overboard. Jesus enabled him to do something no other human being has ever done—walk on water. Remember, Jonah had the ride of his life when he went overboard too. Maybe we should go overboard more often.

## • *Don’t Play It Safe*

Caleb was eighty-five years old. You’d think he’d retire, settle down in a corner of Canaan and tell war stories to his grandchildren. Why not leave the giants for younger men to handle? After all, it’s too risky to fight giants, especially at that age. But Caleb realized God wasn’t finished with him yet and boldly declared, “*Give me this mountain...It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the Lord said.*” (Josh. 14:12) A recent survey of senior citizens revealed that, if they could relive their lives, the overwhelming majority said they would take more risks and be less conservative. In baseball terms, you can’t steal second base with your foot on first!

- *Roll The Dice*

Wicked Haman despised Mordecai so much that only the extermination of his entire race (the Jews) would satisfy his lust for power. When Haman bribed Ahasuerus, King of Babylon, with 10,000 talents of silver (equivalent to over 16 million dollars) for permission to execute his plan, neither of them knew queen Esther was a Jew herself. Haman cast lots (similar to rolling dice) to determine which day the genocide would be enacted. The lots fell on the twelfth Month (Adar on the Jewish Calendar). Meanwhile, Mordecai sent word to Esther and warned her not to presume that she was exempt. Her life was also in jeopardy even though her ethnicity had been kept secret.



Babylonian Law forbade a queen to enter the King’s presence without being summoned. Esther asked her people to fast and pray with her for three days before she rolled her own proverbial dice. It’s risky to approach a king without a summons. With total disregard for her crown and the head it sat upon, she appealed to the king on her people’s behalf. God granted her favor with him and exposed Haman’s heinous plot. In a remarkably ironic twist, not only was Haman hung on the gallows he built for Mordecai, but the Jews held and instituted a two-day feast on the 14th and 15th day of Adar—the very month Haman intended to annihilate them. The Feast of Purim (meaning lots or dice) has been celebrated annually for centuries by the Jews to commemorate how God used Esther’s risky faith to thwart Haman’s sinister scheme.

- *Learn To Soar*

In the following verse, God compared His care for Israel with a mother eagle’s oversight of her young. *“As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings. So the Lord alone led him...”* (Dt. 32:11-12) An eagle’s nest is heavily insulated with the fur of eaten prey. But underneath the soft, fuzzy fur is a prickly layer of thorns. Baby eaglets basically have it made—they live in a cozy nest and are practically spoon-fed by their mother. All they have to do is open their mouths and squawk and mom drops in a savory morsel. Eventually, there comes a time when the eaglet must learn to fly and fend for itself. Then mother eagle flutters over the nest with her mighty wings and blows all the fluff out, exposing the sharp thorns. The eaglets can no longer be comfortable and complacent. They perch on their mother’s wings as she glides through the air. Then, abruptly, she flips them off in mid air, where they desperately flap their wings as they tumble in a free fall. Mother eagle then swoops under them and catches them on her wings. The process is repeated until their wings develop and they can soar on their own.

I think it’s safe to say that all Christians undergo a similar process. Though unpleasant, it is necessary for our maturity to learn to “fly” on our own. We enjoy staying in the comfort and safety of the nest, but God challenges us to get out in the real world where the real work of the church is done. Have you felt the pricking thorns lately? Maybe God’s telling you it’s time to fly. We weren’t saved to become spectators. No eagle learns to soar sitting in the nest.

- *It’s Your Move*

I’m convinced that often when we think we’re waiting on God, He’s actually waiting on us. Have you ever played checkers or some other board game and waited on your opponent to move only to find out it was your turn all along. God might be saying to us, “It’s *your* move.” In other words, God expects us to do the possible while we are waiting on Him to do the impossible.

Noah didn't wait for the rain to start before he built the ark. Nor did the Israelites wait until after the walls of Jericho fell to shout. Neither did the widow wait to make Elijah a cake until her meal barrel was full. Notice when Jesus told the Ten Lepers to go show themselves to the priests, "**as they went, they were cleansed.**" They acted in faith on His Word. When we move in obedience to God's Word, He moves supernaturally.

Again, God honors bold faith. When Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, God responded to his bold faith and delayed the sunset. God rewards those who take that first, sometimes risky step of faith at His bidding. If we wait for ideal conditions to do something significant for God, we'll never do much of anything. Solomon wrote, "*He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap.*" (Ec. 11:4) We would all do well to heed Mary's wise counsel, "*Whatever He says to you, **do it.***" (Jn. 2:5) Do it in faith, even if it means taking a risk. By the way, it's *your* move!

Note: This article was adopted from a message Ben preaches with the same title—*The Risk Factor of Faith*.

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