

## PETER: EXPERT FISHER OF SOULS *Luke 5:1-11*

by Francis Dixon

Jesus said to Peter, "From now on you will catch men" (verse 10), or (as the word really means), "You will take men alive". This striking phrase occurs twice only in the New Testament, here and in 2 Timothy 2:26. Everyone is caught by someone – either by Christ or by Satan; and this passage of scripture provides some most valuable lessons on the business of bringing men and women to know our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We are to be fishers of men.

### THE MOST UNLIKELY PEOPLE

When Jesus wanted men to preach and to become the pioneers of the gospel He went to the seashore and found humble and, in some cases, ignorant and uneducated men. This is not to say that the Lord puts a premium upon ignorance, but it does emphasise the principle outlined in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, and this should be a great encouragement to every Christian. The Lord delights to use ordinary people, those who at first sight seem quite unlikely.

### ALL OUR NATURAL GIFTS, BACKGROUND, CIRCUMSTANCES, EXPERIENCES OF LIFE ARE USED BY HIM

After all, what better preparation could there be for fishing for men than fishing for fish! These men whom the Lord called were trained in patience, watchfulness, perseverance and courage, all of which qualities are needed by successful soul-winners. When we enter into His service the Lord uses all that we are and all that we have for the prosecution of His business. When He chose these tough men, though they became gentle and gracious through their union with Him and later by the infilling of the Holy Spirit, they were still men of grit and were qualified in the art of fishing because of what they had learned in the hard school of experience.

### IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO WIN SOULS APART FROM THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF CHRIST HIMSELF

The words in verse 5 are significant, for without Him the result must always be "we haven't caught anything", but see what happens "with Him" – "a large number of fish" (verse 6), and they "filled both boats" (verse 7) – look up John 15:5. How slow we are to learn the lesson in Hosea 14:8! We may mend our nets and use all our skill and knowledge of fishing, but these on their own can only fail. Brilliant sermons or clever arguments will not win souls; it must be the word spoken by one who is in touch with the Lord Himself.

### UNQUESTIONING OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD OF THE LORD

Peter thought he knew more about fishing than Jesus did. What was the use of letting

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down “nets” when they had tried to catch fish all night and had failed? (verse 5). “But because you say so, I will...” Look up 1 Samuel 15:13-14, and compare John 2:5. One of the first secrets of success in Christian service is utter obedience to the Lord at all times.

**THE LORD WANTS US TO AIM AT LARGE RESULTS**

Verse 4. Very often God’s servants fish in the shallows where it is not possible to secure a large haul – for the big fish are further out! Jesus once said, “According to your faith will it be done to you” (Matthew 9:29), and the principle operates in the Christian life that we get what we go in for – look up Psalm 81:10. The more we have faith to expect and receive the more God will give, so long as it really is faith and not presumption. Christian men and women are needed to do mighty exploits

for the Lord and should be launching out into the deep – look up Daniel 11:32. Is there something more, greater that you can do for the Lord and for the salvation of souls? – look up John 14:12.

**FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS**

Verses 6 and 7. After all, the people in the other boat were also fishing. We too should have fellowship with every born again person who is seeking to please the Lord and is basing his faith and method of working upon the authority of Scripture. Prejudices, jealousies, pride of denomination ... these things should not be, for if we are Christians we are members of the same family (Ephesians 3:14-15), children of the same Heavenly Father (Matthew 6:9), and servants of the same Lord and Master (Matthew 23:8). This is not a day for uniformity or any man-made (or Devil-inspired) unity, but it is a day for true union on the part of all who stand upon the inspiration and authority of the Bible, and who honour our Lord Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God, the substitutionary Saviour and the risen, exalted and soon-coming Lord.

**THERE IS ONLY ONE PLACE FOR US TO TAKE**

Verse 8 is very challenging, for here we see Peter down “at Jesus’ knees” – and that is the place for us. However much we have served, loved and obeyed our Lord, there is only one place for us – down at His feet; here there is no room for pride or self-congratulation, and here we are conscious of our own utter unworthiness, as Peter was – look up Luke 17:10.

How wonderful it is that to such unprofitable servants the Lord says, “from now on you will catch men” (verse 10), and how challenging it is that when the Lord said this to Peter, Andrew, James and John, “they left everything and followed him” (verse 11)!

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★ Our board who have a very responsible position in overseeing what is an expanding work. They need wisdom and insight in directing and leading this work

★ Our regular writers that they will be refreshed each month as they prepare articles and that what they write will really speak to the readers and draw them to the Lord

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