

SERIES ON THE APOSTLE PETER  
**SERMON #1: PETER'S FIRST TEST**  
by Mark Aites  
(based on material by Hobbs)

**TEXT: LUKE 5:1-11**

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. This series is a wonderful study as Peter provides us with a degree of comfort and hope.
  - 1) I more easily identify myself with Peter than Paul.
  - 2) Paul was more refined and educated, whereas Peter is more like someone starting from the ground up.
2. There are several reasons why Peter can provide us with comfort and hope.
  - 1) Peter had many shortcomings; perhaps some of us can readily identify ourselves with him.
  - 2) I facetiously can say he had the makings of a preacher from the beginning: he had the tendency to "open mouth and insert his foot."
  - 3) He was impulsive early on and struggled with his faith, like so many of us do.
  - 4) But despite his imperfections, he went on to be a wonderful preacher of the gospel of Christ.
3. Prayerfully this series will provide you with a few things:
  - 1) The ability to identify with a man and his weaknesses.
  - 2) Seeing someone with a love for Christ, like yours, who was willing to try to be a good disciple.
  - 3) Studying about someone who was willing to be in the forefront of the battle for Christ.
  - 4) I hope and pray that this series will encourage and strengthen your faith.
4. By way of introduction, we are introduced to Peter in **John 1:40-42**.
  - 1) When Peter appeared before the Lord, the Lord "looked at him," from a word which means "to gaze intently or searchingly into someone."
  - 2) One writer said of this occasion: "Jesus saw a man with a great heart but an impulsive nature. He was one who was prone to make mistakes. But they were mistakes of the head and not of the heart." (Hobbs)
5. Our first encounter with Peter for this series will come from **Luke 5:1-11**; and the first of these lessons, "Peter's First Test."

**DISCUSSION:**

**I. THE BACKGROUND.**

- A. Peter was a fisherman. Along with his brother Andrew, and James and John the sons of Zebedee, fishing was their life.
  1. They knew how to cast the nets and handle the boats; they were experienced in the water.
  2. Several of us enjoy fishing in recreation, but for them it was their job, their source of food and income.
- B. On this occasion they were fishing in the lake of Genesaret, also called the Sea of Galilee.
- C. The text indicates that it was a discouraging occasion.
  1. In **vs 5** we learn they had been fishing all night and had caught nothing.
  2. When the Lord comes to them, the fishing is over and the nets are being washed.
  3. They were no doubt exhausted, completing their task so they could go and rest.
  4. The word *toiled* in **vs 5** literally means, "suffering and weariness."
- D. Jesus pressed by the multitudes gets into one of the boats and asks Peter to move

out a little from the shore.

1. In essence the boat was the Lord's pulpit, enabling the multitudes to see him better than he might address them.
2. The custom of the time was the rabbis to sit and teach. Somehow we have gotten this reversed.

## **II. THE REQUEST (LUKE 5:4-5).**

- A. Pay particular attention to those last words of **vs 5**: "At thy word I will let down the net."
  1. "At thy word" means "relying on, or on the ground only of thy word I will do as you command." (H.L.Boles, *Gospel Advocate Commentary*)
  2. While we commend Peter for his obedience to the Lord's request, it appears it was more an act of politeness.
  3. It is obvious that he wasn't expecting anything, or perhaps some small catch.
  4. The modern vernacular might well have been, "I don't think it will work."
- B. One writer noted: "Here is a danger of discipleship. Do not set aside divine teaching by human wisdom." (F. Camp, *E.T.S.O.P.M. Lectureship*)
  1. **1 Cor. 1:21**
  2. How common it is for man to take pride in his thoughts and efforts; to glory in himself. Faith in God truly is contrary to the way that man thinks. (Ibid.)
  3. **Isa. 55:8-9**
- C. We must remember also that Peter was an experienced fisherman, and the command given of Christ ran contrary to what he knew. (Ibid.)
  1. Experience can also be detrimental to one's faith and obedience.
  2. We begin to rely upon ourselves and our own feelings.
  3. Experience can lead to a subjective religion; one based upon feelings, which can lead men to using their experience as a substitute for obedience. (Ibid.)
- D. Although the boat belonged to Peter, the Lord was the captain of the boat. (Ibid.)
  1. Although they were not on dry ground, they were on "holy ground."
  2. Peter was not the captain, but was in the presence of The Captain (**Josh. 5:13-15**).
  3. Peter was learning of the True Captain; of whom the Hebrew writer declares is the Captain of Salvation (**Heb. 2:10**). (Ibid.)
- E. **Luke 5:6-7**
  1. Luke provides us with words which paint a vivid picture in our minds: when the nets are let down & pulled up, they are overflowing with fish.
  2. The nets were breaking, fish even falling through the tears in the net.
  3. It was a situation which required help -- signaling to Peter's partners that there was a need for help.
  4. It is clear that the amount of fish in this catch goes far beyond their expectations, even on a good fishing day.
  5. It was such a catch that even both boats were sinking under the weight of the fish.

## **III. THE REACTION (LUKE 5:8-10).**

- A. Peter appears to have been an impulsive man by nature; quick to speak what was in his heart.
  1. He was overwhelmed by what he had witnessed, and realized the great difference between himself and Jesus.
  2. He knew what had happened could not have taken place in the presence of a mere man.

3. Peter realized that he was in the presence of deity.
- B. To be in the presence of deity would be an overwhelming experience.
  1. Long ago, Isaiah had a similar experience in a vision (**Isa. 6:1-5**).
- C. The first lesson for Peter, like Isaiah, was necessary for him to be a disciple of the Lord.
  1. Notice that two things stand out with both of these men.
  2. As brother Camp put it: "A confession of Christ's deity and one's sinfulness leads to worship and service." (Ibid.)
- D. Without a confession of deity, and one's own sinfulness there cannot be a true conversion to Christ.
  1. The events of **Isa. 6** and **Luke 5** record for us two men whose lives were changed when confronted with sinless perfection.
  2. In the presence of deity one cannot defend his righteousness. Every sin is amplified in the presence of holiness.
- E. In **Acts 9** Saul of Tarsus was traveling the road to Damascus and encountered the Lord in a blinding light.
  1. His sins, like those of Isaiah and Peter, were amplified in the presence of the holiness of the Lord.
  2. **Acts 9:9**
  3. And upon his obedience to the gospel...(**Acts 9:20-21**).
- F. Peter, in our story, faced with his glaring sins, drops to his knees, and says, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (**5:8**).
- G. **5:10** "...And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men."
  1. The word *fear* in this passage means "to be frightened or alarmed."
  2. To an extent there needs to be a degree of fear, in the sense of a healthy reverence and respect (cf. **Prov. 1:7; 9:10**).
  3. But a fear that prevents discipleship can be detrimental in many ways:
    - 1) It prevents people from obeying the gospel; being afraid of what others may say or think.
    - 2) Fear prevents one from taking that first step of commitment to Christ. (Ibid.)
    - 3) We read the story in **Dan. 3** of three men who let a king know they would not bow before an idol. (Ibid.)
    - 4) But when one is faced by deity, is aware of his sins, and won't let fear stand in the way, service will follow.
- H. Returning briefly to the account of Isaiah, note **Isa. 6:6-8**.
- I. We find the same kind of situation with Peter.
  1. Jesus told him he would catch men.
  2. **Luke 5:11**
- J. Here we see another essential element in discipleship, as the late Franklin Camp expressed so well: "The consecration of all that we are and all that we have."
  1. In the Songs of the Church song book, #501, we note the song: "*Take my life, and let it be consecrated Lord, to Thee.*"
  2. Each verse then opens with that which is consecrated to the Lord.
  3. "*Take my hands and let them move...take my voice and let me sing... take my silver and my gold...take my will and make it Thine...take my love, my Lord.*"
  4. **Matt. 16:24; Luke 14:26**

- K. And with that consecration comes a transformed life (**Rom. 6:6; Col. 3:10**). (Ibid.)
  - 1. The gospel has the power to change us (**Rom. 1:16**).
  - 2. **Rom. 12:1-2**
  - 3. Christ so transforms our lives that we leave our worldly cares to catch men.

#### **IV. THE APPLICATION.**

- A. In this text Peter's faith has been challenged; also his experience contradicted, his authority superseded, and his own sinfulness brought to light.
- B. Peter needed to change, and that change began as he was confronted by deity.
- C. Discipleship begins with that confrontation.
  - 1. And God confronts us today through His Holy Word.
  - 2. The same type of confrontation that was experienced on the day of Pentecost (**Acts 2:36-38,41**).
- D. Even today we stand confronted, as the song says, "*in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene.*"
  - 1. And with the word which is sharper than any two-edged sword the Lord convicts us of our sins and shortcomings (**Heb. 4:12**).
  - 2. And like Peter, when we realize that we are in the presence of deity, as His Word reveals His presence to us, and our life is not in harmony with His will, we are convicted of our sins.
  - 3. It is then that we drop to our knees and confess that we are sinful and in need of His saving grace.
  - 4. We become like the publican who "beat his breast..." (**Luke 18:13**).
- E. So often people have disagreements about various things relative to doctrine.
  - 1. They will say "I think it should be this way," and someone else will say, "I think it should be that way."
  - 2. But when we are truly convicted of our sins, and look to Jesus, it is not what I think that matters, it's WHAT DOES THE LORD SAY!
  - 3. Saul asked the right question (**Acts 9:6**).
  - 4. On the day of Pentecost, those Jews and proselytes assembled; when they heard the message that they had been crucified asked: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (**Acts 2:37**).

#### **CONCLUSION:**

- 1. My friends, today we stand "*in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, and truly wonder how He could love us, sinners, condemned and unclean.*" (Songs of the Church, #114, "I Stand Amazed")
- 2. Peter responded to deity with humbleness of heart, and a willingness to repent.
- 3. He had a deep sense of the sin that had filled his life.
- 4. Imagine for a moment that you are standing in the presence of Jesus Christ. As you reflect upon this, perhaps you too have a deep sense of sin in your life.
- 5. Even now He can see and hear all that you say; see all that you do; is even aware of your thoughts.
- 6. If you truly want to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, turn from your sins and ask the question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"
- 7. Plan of salvation (Believe, **John 8:24**; repent, **Luke 13:3,5**, confess Christ, **Rom. 10:9-10**, be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins, **Acts 2:38**).