



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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Luke 5:8 *“But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus’ feet, saying, ‘Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.’”*

The occasion for our verse today is most interesting. A large crowd had gathered at the shore line at lake Gennesaret. Jesus got in a boat and went out a little bit in the lake, sat down and taught the people. Jesus sat down often when He taught. Today, it's just the opposite. The preacher stands and the audience sits. It was not the presence of Jesus that was commanding over the people, but rather His words. When He finished speaking, Jesus told Peter to cast out into the deep and lower his nets. Here came a clash of wills. Jesus was the rabbi, the teacher. Jesus was a carpenter. The water was Peter's world. He was a commercial fisherman. He understood, water, fish, nets and when and where those three work together the best. They had just finished fishing. They had spent the night throwing and pulling heavy nets. Nothing. No fish. That meant, no profit, no money. It had been a long night. Peter reminds the Lord that they had "worked hard all night." We didn't give it a little try. We worked hard. We didn't try for a couple of hours. We worked all night. Nothing. Bad time to fish. And now, the teacher, the former carpenter, was telling the fisherman to go out into the deep and to lower their nets. Really? What does He know about fishing? Had he ever been fishing before?

One translation uses the expression, "Nevertheless, at your bidding, I will." I will do what you say. It probably won't work, but I'll make you happy. We will show you that this isn't a good idea. Stick to teaching, Jesus, and we'll stick to the fishing. Peter, tired as he was, wet and dirty as he was, pulling in heavy wet nets isn't easy nor clean work, did what the Lord said. This was a test. This was a trust issue. The Lord could have filled the boats up with the fish right then. He didn't do that. They had to row out into the deep. They had to lower the nets. This all took some time.

And what happened, is something that fishermen only dream about. It was the catch of a lifetime. Others would be talking about this for years and years. They brought in so many fish, that those thick, heavy nets started to break. Can you imagine how heavy those nets would be filled with fish? They filled up two boats with fish, so many fish that the boats started to sink. How would they get back to shore. The calculator in their heads was spinning. They got more fish right then than they would have gotten all year. Unbelievable.

It is here, that in all of this amazement, excitement, joy that Peter remembered that it was Jesus who made all of this possible. It was at Jesus' command that they launched out into the deep. It was at Jesus' command that they lowered their nets. All of this was possible because of Jesus. Our verse quotes Peter. He asks the Lord to "go away from me...for I am a sinful man." What a statement! What a revelation! Peter was right. He was sinful. He was sinful, and Jesus was not. What Peter didn't get is that Jesus came for that very purpose. He came to seek and to save the lost. He came for sinners.

There are a few things we ought to see here:

First, Peter recognized the reality of their differences. Peter was sinful and Jesus was not. The Lord was holy and Peter was not. Peter did not say, "I'm as good as most people are." No. Instead, "I am a sinful man." Many do not see this in themselves. In the parable of the two men praying in the Temple, the tax collector asked God for mercy because, like Peter, he saw himself honestly. He knew that he was sinful. The Pharisee, never admitted wrong. He was pretty good guy in his own estimation. Good enough for Heaven. Good enough to bypass what the tax collector needed to do.

Herein, lies a perception problem that some have. We see ourselves as much better than we really are. It's like being on the selling end of a car or house. We think the value is much more than what it is worth. We think we are pretty good people, so good, that we only need Jesus now and then. Like a band aide, you only need Jesus when you are hurt and bleeding, but most times, you get along fine without Him. Peter knew better. The sinner intersected with the Holy One. The Perfect One. The Sinless One. It is interesting that there wasn't any immediate conversation taking place between Peter and Jesus about sin, value, salvation. He was pulling in nets and he said this on His own. The Lord knew fishing. He knew it better than Peter did. The Lord saw things Peter never saw. If He could see fish in the sea, then He certainly could see sin in Peter's heart. There is nothing that the Lord did not know.

Second, Peter felt that their spiritual differences was enough reason for a separation between them. He didn't come running to Jesus, saying, "Save me." Rather, "Go away from me, Lord..." This was the concept of the Temple worship. Unclean could not enter the Temple. Here, the greatest Temple, Jesus, was next to unholy Peter. There must be a separation. Leave me. Go away from me. I'm not good enough. I don't deserve to be around you. Peter's words, are the thoughts of many concerning worship today. They have been away from worship for some time. They have engaged in many wrong choices. They have made some serious mistakes. Someone invites them to come to worship. Their immediate thought is, "I'm not good enough." Some carry that thought even further and believe that God cannot forgive them. I've done too many wrong things for too long. Even God can't or won't forgive me.

What would have happened had the Lord listened to Peter? What if Jesus, right then, got out of the boat, walked across the water and left and never saw Peter again? Peter could have lived well on that massive catch of fish, but Peter, sinful and honest as he was, would have continued that way and died that way. Jesus didn't look for the few, the good and the strong, like the Marines are. He came to seek and save that which was lost. That lost included Peter.

If a sinful person cannot be around Jesus, when can they? The church must stop acting as if we are too good for others. We must stop staring at the guy who comes in with tattoos. We must stop whispering about the girl who has pink hair. We must not avoid those who look "rough." Peter said, "Get away from me, Lord," but Jesus wouldn't. At the end of the story, they leave all those fish and follow Jesus. Shutting doors on those who are different won't turn them around.

Third, Peter fell down at Jesus' feet. He would do that often. When Jesus calmed the storm, he did that. Bowing was more than a sign of respect, position and manners. It was a sign of worship. You are the Lord. We bow our heads when we pray, but like the little boy who got in trouble one day, he was told to sit in the corner. He told his mother that he was sitting on the outside, but he was standing on the inside. I wonder if we bow our heads in prayer on the outside, but on the inside, our hearts are still standing. We still fight the Lord about who is in charge. We still fuss with the Lord about this and that. We whine about what He demands. We complain. We pout. We demand. We want. We haven't denied self. We haven't crucified self. We remain standing on the inside. Peter bowed. Peter was changed. Peter knew.

We might say, "well, if that happened to me, I'd do the same thing." Well, it did. This is why God has this story here. It happens to everyone that reads this story. It is told so you will see. It is told so that you will recognize God's holiness and your sinfulness. It is told so that you, too, will bow before Jesus. We want a miracle before our eyes. Jesus has given us these words. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. That's us.

The next verse says, "Amazement had seized him." Amazement. Astonished. Stunned. Marvelous. Nothing like this. Amazing grace-Amazing Jesus.

I hope you see yourself in this story. I hope you see Jesus through this story.

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