



“NEVERTHELESS, AT YOUR WORD”

Kevin Presley

Welcome to Let the Bible Speak. It's a privilege to speak to you today about the word of God. The gospels tell us of how Jesus sought and found 12 men to follow Him and to later become His apostles. They came from every walk of life but primarily they were common men who lived ordinary, peasant lives. Many of them worked with their hands and toiled long hours to make a living before they met the Lord. When Jesus called them to be His disciples, they had to leave those things behind which required faith on their part. Peter became one of the most outspoken and influential of all the disciples and when the Lord called Peter to follow Him, He performed a great miracle that reinforced Peter's faith in trust.

I'm reading today from Luke 5:1-6. The record says: *"So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking."*

Here is a moving scene on the shores of the lake of Gennesaret, more commonly known as the Sea of Galilee. Two empty boats have returned from a fruitless night of fishing. One of the boats belonged to Simon. All night long, the weary fishermen have been drifting on the surface of the dark waters and have over and over dropped their nets overboard and drew them in empty. Now, it is morning. They have given up and are washing their nets. But Jesus comes upon the scene and wonderful things happened that forever changed their lives. I wish to borrow Peter's words for the subject of our sermon today: "Nevertheless, at Your word." And I'll return with the lesson after a song from the congregation.

Jesus' ministry was just beginning. John, the immerser, had pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God, who came to take away the sin of the world. Andrew heard John's announcement and followed after Jesus to

learn more about Him. After spending the day with the Lord, Andrew was convinced that He was the promised Messiah, and he excitedly went and found his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus saying, "we have found the Christ." It was not until the event we read about a few moments ago that Peter fully surrendered to Jesus and became His devoted disciple.

Jesus was already attracting crowds of people and on this day, a multitude has gathered on the sandy shore of the Sea of Galilee to listen to Jesus teach. Simon along with others have just returned from a long and disappointing night of fishing and are cleaning up and putting away their nets as Jesus is about to teach. To avoid the press of the multitude, Jesus stepped aboard Simon's boat and asked him to thrust out a little way from the land. Then, with the boat as his pulpit, Jesus began to teach the crowd assembled on the seashore. The acoustics of the water would likely help Jesus be heard by the multitude, but Jesus had other reasons for commandeering Simon's boat. The bible doesn't tell us what Jesus preached about that day but I'm confident the greatest sermon that generated the greatest response was the one He was about to deliver to Simon and the other fishermen on the boats. Simon's whole perception of Christ and his disposition toward Him changed because of the great miracle that Jesus was orchestrating. When Jesus was concluding His lesson to the multitude, He then turned to Simon with a strange demand. "*When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."*" This simple command seemed to frustrate Simon Peter for he remonstrated: "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." This command of Jesus was not easy to accept on several accounts.

Let's think, for a moment, about how this would have sounded to Simon, the seasoned fisherman. First, Jesus' demand went against Simon's pride. First, you have a carpenter giving a professional fisherman advice on when, where, and how to catch fish. Simon was no stranger to the sea. He made his living on Lake Galilee. He had spent untold years fishing the sea, learning the depths of those waters, discerning the fishing patterns and influences of things like time of day and weather upon the fish; and he had honed his skill in finding and catching fish. If a man like Simon, not to mention the others there such as Zebedee and James and John could spend all night casting out nets and come up empty, who did this carpenter and itinerant preacher think he was telling them to keep working? I had a dear, older friend, who passed away a year or so ago who was one of the best bass fishermen I have ever known. I enjoy bass fishing but have nowhere near the skill or instinct that Howard possessed. When I would visit California where he lived, we fished together numerous times day and night in the lakes of the Sierra foothills. We would sometimes fish during the day and oftentimes we would go out and fish all night until after sun came up in the morning. Now, some trips were more successful than others, but it was very, very rare to ever go fishing with Howard without him at least catching a few fish. Hot, cold, clear, cloudy, low water, high water, windy, or calm, you could just about count on the fact that Howard would get a fish to bite. I don't have that kind of track record and compared to him, am quite the amateur. I would have felt foolish to try to give him lessons in fishing. He was a humble, kind, and patient man but I have little doubt that he would have laughed had I tried to school him in the art of catching fish. Well, imagine how hot-headed Simon must have felt when Jesus, whom He knew little about except that He was a teacher and perhaps that He was a carpenter, told him to go out again and cast his nets after already trying so hard all night. And so, Jesus' command went against Simon's pride.

But then, it conflicted with Simon's logic. The Lord's instruction went AGAINST everything Peter knew from experience about fishing. It simply wasn't a good time to fish. The time when fish would be caught in such a manner had passed. Peter knew that and knew that going out that time of day was an exercise in futility. As the sun's rays began glinting on the rippling water, Simon looked out and knew that it would be a waste of time to go out into the deep and begin casting nets. It would be a lot of work for

nothing and only Jesus would have ever suggested that they should go out that time of day and resume fishing. I think that is sometimes how we look at Jesus and His teaching. Jesus has His place. He has some wise things to say and some good moral philosophies to live by, but who is He to tell me how to conduct my own life? How would He know the burdens and struggles I must contend with and so therefore why should I defy what I can see with my own eyes and obey someone I cannot see? It seems to be implied that Peter was ready for Jesus to teach him something about God or about the Law of Moses but what would He know about fishing?

But not only did it go up against Simon's pride and his logic, but it also went against his comfort and convenience. How exhausted Simon and the others must have been! Most of us today see fishing as a time of rest and relaxation. Not so in this case. Fishing was their trade, and it was done much differently than most of us fish today. There was no sitting back on the deck of a boat and casting out a line and waiting for a bite. You didn't ease down the bank and flip a jig into the cover or through a spinnerbait up next to a log. No, it was hard work. Fishermen had to be strong and tough. They fished with dragnets that had to be spread out and dropped into the sea and then brought up by hand. Imagine at the end of a sleepless night, out over and over and over casting a net and pulling it up from the depths and you don't even have the adrenaline of a successful catch to keep you going. No, these men were tired, sleepy, discouraged and I would imagine that Jesus' demand caused them to groan at very thought of rowing back out to the middle of the lake and going through all of that again especially when the night had not yielded a single fish. When you've been driving or out hunting or fishing or working all night and the sun starts to rise, for many people, that's when the real feeling of exhaustion sets in. Simon probably longed for his bed and his pillow but here Jesus was sending him back out to sea to go back to work.

Nothing about Jesus' command made sense to Simon or to the others and Simon's response was anything but enthusiastic. "...Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing..." But despite Simon's reasoning and his own experience and his own intuition, to his credit, he amended his reply with a grudging concession of obedience. Knowing Simon's rough and hot-headed nature, he might have refused the Lord. He didn't know the Lord very well at this point and he could have written Him off and refused the Lord's order to launch out into the deep. But no, surprisingly, He said, "nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."

I don't know what Simon was thinking when he acquiesced to Jesus' request. He might have thought, "well, alright, we'll just show Him how little He knows about this. We'll just prove the point..." He certainly didn't expect what was about to happen. They launched their boats out into the deep water, let down the nets, and lo and behold, the nets began to stretch and strain, the water began to boil, the boat began to creak under the weight, for the bible says: "And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink." Simon could hardly believe what he witnessed. If his eyes were heavy before they were as big as saucers now. It was the greatest thing Simon had ever seen in his life up unto that point and it caused him to immediately fall down at the feet of Jesus. "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon." One thing you could say about Simon, he could admit when he was wrong. He had a conscience, and he could be swayed by the facts and as he falls at the feet of Jesus, he confesses how foolish and sinful it was for him to doubt the Lord. He now saw (and it would not be the last time in his life with Jesus that he would have this miraculously demonstrated to him) he now saw that Jesus was the Lord of creation; that He had command of even the fish of the sea, and he now beheld Jesus in a

whole new light and fell down and worshipped Him as His Lord. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." So, when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him."

Oh, that we had the faith to simply take Jesus at His word! When it goes against our pride, if we would only be willing to humbly say "it may not be the way I want to do it or it may not be popular or it may appear foolish to others but nevertheless, at Your word..." When it defies our logic and it is contrary to human wisdom and human experience, that we would have the faith and trust to say "Lord, I may not understand it and I don't know why it has to be that way but nevertheless, at Your word." When it challenges our stamina and it encroaches upon our comfort or our convenience, if only we had the courage to bravely say, "Lord, this may be hard and this may demand much and this may bring pain and difficulty, but nevertheless, at Your word, I'll bear it. I'll go the extra mile. I'll wear myself out in Your service and I'll follow You to the end of the earth..." And only when we're willing to take Christ at His word and unconditionally submit to His commandments will we realize the blessings He has in store and will we ever truly be His disciple.

There are many things I don't understand, and you don't either about the Lord's way. There are many things that Christ has taught us to do in our daily life, our dealings with others, and even in our service to Him in the church, in His plan of salvation and in the things which He has instructed us to do in our worship that defy human wisdom. If it were up to us, we wouldn't have decreed it to be so. And the temptation is to do what seems right instead of simply submitting to what we can read in the New Testament. But Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1, beginning in the eighteenth verse: "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND BRING TO NOTHING THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PRUDENT." Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" And continuing in verse 26: "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence."

There are many things in God's economy that men today deem foolish. It doesn't fit inside their box. It doesn't line up with their liberal and naturalistic theology and their secular worldview. Or it seems like another way would be more attractive, more expedient, more sanitary, more effective... And so, wouldn't it be better if we did it that way? But God uses the things men see as foolish to not only test the faith of man but to destroy the wisdom of men so that all of the glory might go to God and not to man, you see.

In the Old Testament, when Naaman was stricken with leprosy and went to see Elisha the prophet to be healed, Elisha's messenger came to Naaman with a strange message: "Go and dip seven times in the Jordan and your flesh will be restored and you will be clean." That wasn't what Naaman expected to hear. That wasn't what he thought should happen. HE thought the prophet would come and perform a spectacular ceremony and heal him there on the spot. Who in the world ever heard of going to the muddy, stinking, rolling Jordan river and sticking your head under the water seven times to cure leprosy? And he got angry and nearly went home to die a leper but his servants reasoned with him and said you would have believed the prophet if he had told you what you wanted to hear so, why won't you listen to him when he says go dip in the Jordan River. Do you know what Naaman finally said?

“Nevertheless, at Your word.” The bible says he went down and dipped seven times (not once, not twice, not eight or ten times) but SEVEN times in the Jordan River (not the Abana river, not Pharpar, not some other stream) but the Jordan River and he was healed.

Friend, if you would be healed of your sin-sickness today as Naaman was his leprosy; if you would become the disciple of Christ as Peter did that day long ago, you too must be willing to say “Nevertheless, at Your word” and unconditionally submit to the commands of the Lord. The Savior said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16) Will you resist? Will you argue? Or will you today say “nevertheless, at Your word” and submit to the will of Jesus? I hope we’ll learn from the experience of Peter that Jesus is the Lord and to follow Him means to obey Him.

©2022 BibleWay Media. All rights reserved.
BibleWay Media grants permission to copy this material for personal use. Permission is also granted to distribute this transcript as long as it is reproduced in its entirety, used solely for its original purpose of spreading the gospel, and attribution is given to the author and Let the Bible Speak.