

PETER ... who had the shock of his life
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(LUKE 5: 1 -1 1)

Simon Peter's second meeting with Christ was momentous. And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Christ to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship" (vv. 1-3). This was to become a day of shocks for Simon Peter.

Peter Listening

Gently, the small ship rose and fell on the bosom of the ocean; and slowly, with skill born of long practice, the fisherman moved his oars backward and forward. The stillness was broken only by the musical waves on the beach, the creaking of the oars in the rowlocks, and the sweet notes of the Teacher's voice. Sometimes He lifted His hand to add emphasis to a part of His message ; sometimes His voice lowered to a whisper ; but even then, His audience seated on the rising beachhead heard every word. And time stood still! The people could have listened for ever. The oars gently dipped in the water; the boat rose and fell; the Teacher contentedly sat in the stern. Charming eloquence ; challenging thought ; compassionate entreaty ; irresistible winsomeness: these were the characteristics of His message, and as Simon listened he almost forgot he was controlling the floating pulpit. His movements were automatic.

Peter Learning

A subdued murmur arose from the congregation. The service had ended. People were beginning to stand, and smiles of appreciation were on many faces. The Preacher was turning around on His seat in the stern- "Thank you very much, Mr. Fisherman." His eyes were alight with pleasure. "Now launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. I always like to compensate people who help me in my work, and your willingness to lend me this boat meant a great deal to me. Let us move into deeper water, and let down the nets. " And poor Simon frowned. The Teacher was so appreciative, but-" Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net" (vv. 4, 5). Surely the Lord had difficulty in hiding His smile, for He knew Simon was due for a shock. The ship was heading for deep water. One net was made ready and allowed to trail as Andrew rowed the boat around in a wide arc. And Jesus watched the entire operation. How delightful! " And when they had done this, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake." " O Simon Peter, what a shame, your good net is breaking. I told you to put down the nets." Silvery wonders were still coming up from the deep; the bottoms of the boats were covered ; the piles of flopping fish were getting larger-" And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink." " Quick, brother Andrew, I'm getting wet ; bale water, throw the fish out, row back to the shore."

Peter Languishing

" When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

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]For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the
draught of the fishes which they had taken" (v. 9). Poor
Peter! He had lost his morning ; he had lost some of his
remarkable catch ; he had damaged his net ; his self-confid-
ence had been shattered. The sermon had weakened his
resistance ; the fish had destroyed it. This was indeed the
Christ, and as Simon looked into the face of the Master his
knees gave way, and he cried, " I am a sinful man, O Lord."
And Christ gravely watched him. It had taken a great deal
of careful planning, much patience, a sermon, a sinking ship,
and a shoal of fish, to bring Peter to his knees. Some legs
are very stiff !

Peter Leaving

" And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not ; from henceforth
thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their
ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him " (vv. 10,
I 1). Their business went into voluntary liquidation. Did
they stay long enough to dispose of their fish? What hap-
pened to the boat? What did their families say when they
went off on what appeared to be a wild goose chase? Peter
and his companions never regretted their decision. At
Pentecost their net enclosed a very great multitude of fishes-
even three thousand, " and for all there were so many, yet
was not the net broken." This was the glorious fulfilment
of an old promise. "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt
catch men."

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