

# Reaping the Harvest of Christ's Miracle



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## **Luke 5:1-11**

Now it came about that while the multitude were pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them, and were washing their nets. And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the multitudes from the boat. And when He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but at Your bidding I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish; and their nets began to break; and they signaled to their partners in the other boat, for them to come and help them. And they came, and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

## Introduction

On an autumn morning in Galilee the Lord Jesus Christ came to men who had already become His disciples. They had already come to believe in Him as the Messiah sent to Israel and had heard Him teach. These men were destined to follow Him full time and become apostles of Christ to the church. However, on this day, on the Sea of Galilee, they had not yet been called to this and had no idea of their destiny; on this day, they were back at fishing as they had been doing all their lives, a lucrative and reputable profession. These men were two sets of brothers: Peter and Andrew, and John and James. The world would come to know them as four of the twelve apostles of Christ. All four of them were students of John the Baptist, and some time prior to this they had each come to discover that Jesus was the promised Messiah to Israel. They spent time with Him, listened to Him, but were not yet asked to follow Him. In a short time after their introduction to Jesus, they returned to Galilee to continue their fishing enterprise.

By the time Jesus returned to Galilee Himself, He had become quite popular. His words were the words of eternal life, of the Father and Himself, and salvation to all mankind through Him. He spoke with authority, not quoting other great rabbis, which was the norm, but rather stating that His word came from the Father, from heaven itself. No one had heard anything like this. Added to that were the many miracles that He was performing. This day was about a year after His baptism, the beginning of His public ministry. He had already turned water to wine at Cana in Galilee and taught for a short time in the area. He then went back to Judea (the southern province that includes Jerusalem) for a few months before he returned to Galilee where, around the shores of the Sea of Galilee, He began to preach. His fame had spread all over, and there were many gathered to hear Him teach; so many in fact that He decided to get into a boat and teach the crowd from just off the shore. The boat would become His stage and pulpit.

Working at their nets in the morning, it wouldn't have been likely that the busy fishermen would have noticed the crowds that followed Jesus along the shore. The night before must have been a stormy night since the experienced fishermen, who had been out all night, caught nothing. The job was tedious and physically challenging to clean the nets and repair any tears. Pebbles and debris got caught in the nets and had to be

washed off in the surf. While fishing they would not anchor the nets in the sea but kept them moving along with the boats. This would frequently cause tears that would have to be repaired once pulled on shore. Up all night, exhausted from the labor, and one group of many on the busy shore would have been just another morning in the life of a fisherman. But the lives of one group of them was about to become nothing like normal, but extraordinary.

Fish were an important part of the economy in the east, which was now a part of the Roman Empire under the provinces of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. Tradition had it that since the days of Joshua, fishing on the lake, or Sea of Galilee was free to all. Fish was one of their favorite articles of diet. They were eaten fresh, dried, or pickled; a kind of 'relish' or sauce was made of them, and the roe was also prepared.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, a fishing company, like the one Peter, Andrew, John, and James formed together would be important to their lives, their families, and their financial stability. The market constantly had a high demand and they worked long hours to provide for their families. Yet on this autumn morning, Peter notices the Lord coming towards him being followed by a multitude of people, and Jesus asks him to use his boat so that He may pull off shore a ways and teach. Peter, already a disciple of Jesus and believing Him to be the Messiah complies instantly, and quickly the scene unfolds that will change forever Peter's life as well as his partners in fishing.

### **'Busy about the Father's business' or 'Let go and let God?'**

How much does God do and how much does man do? I think this is a pertinent question for Christianity today, just as it has always been. There are so many forms of teaching on grace and works. While some denominations seem to stress one or the other, the pendulum swings from one end of the spectrum where Christians have a 'let go and let God' attitude claiming grace as their mantra and calling all others legalists, and then it swings to the other end of the spectrum where Christians are hustling and serving as fast and as vigorously as they can, claiming results as their mantra and calling all others licentious fools. Yet we find in the Bible, in the New Testament, both grace and works. In fact, they are put one after the other in one of the most popular verses in the Bible.

Eph 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

So we find that we are saved by grace and that God has made us His workmanship for the purpose of good works. This has led some to believe that salvation is by grace but the life of the Christian is based upon works. This teaching unfortunately builds a gulf between salvation and the Christian way of life and so it is false since at salvation we were given the life of Christ. How could that life be one thing at salvation and another after salvation?

It seems to me that Christians get on opposite sides of this spectrum and then draw up battle lines. They entrench themselves in one camp or the other and then fight, argue, and criticize the other side. The solution is not to lay aside differences and just get along. The solution is always the same and it is always from God - the truth in love. That truth is found in the Bible and nowhere else. Commentaries and remarks on the Bible can be determined to be true if they are in line with the Bible. The Bible is our one standard (canon) of truth. It's right there in the scriptures and God is not trying to confuse us. But we must be humble and go to the scriptures. You may have been brought up on the legalistic side or the licentious side, but you must realize that you cannot bend God to your particular flavor. He is unchanging, since eternity, and so it would be of great arrogance for any of us to come along and think we know better. In my 49 years of existence, I'm certain I cannot come up with a plan that is better than His, in fact, if I were alive for a million years I still couldn't do it because I'm not Him. I'm not eternal, but created; I'm not perfect, but flawed; and I'm not omniscient, but quite limited and finite.

If it is I who determines where God is to be found, then I shall always find a God who corresponds to me in some way, who is obliging, who is connected to my own nature. But if God determines where He is to be found, then it will be in a place which is not immediately pleasing to my nature and which is not at all congenial to me. This place is the

Cross of Christ. And whoever would find Him must go to the foot of the Cross...<sup>2</sup>

Bonhoeffer was a man who lost his life teaching Christianity in Nazi occupied Germany during the Third Reich. Compromise of the truth for him would have saved his life and allowed him to marry his lover and live on after the war, but he chose the truth alone and lost his sweetheart and his life. Would we compromise the truth just to be accepted amongst our peers or our family if they disagree? Is it more important to believe what we were raised to believe if it doesn't agree with the truth from God? If so, then it is not the Son of God whom you worship but something or someone else, even yourself.

Mat 10:34-39 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. "For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it."

We work in grace. We are saved by grace and we walk by grace in this life. Grace is a tremendous word that covers all the things that God has freely given us. He has freely given us His Son, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who came to Earth as a man and who paid for the sins of the entire world, all mankind. All who believe in Him are given gifts that astound the imagination. This is without works. God does not ask us to do anything, give up anything, promise to do anything, but just believe in Him. He has also given us a free-will and we can say no to the gift of His Son. But if we believe in Him we are given more than we could have ever imagined, including eternal life, justification, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God's very righteousness - just to name a few. We are proclaimed in the eyes of God as being holy, righteous, and blameless. These are all gifts and none of them can be taken away, nor can they change. We are told in the scriptures that God the Father loves the believer just as He loves Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> All of these, and much more, are

given freely to any person who believes in Christ as their Savior.

Rom 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Gal 2:16 nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.

So if this is our introduction to God, His grace, when we were His enemies and alienated from Him <sup>4</sup>, how could His plan for our lives, now that we have become His children, fail to be entirely about His grace?

Col 2:6-7 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

Yet, God commands us to produce works. So the question must be, how do we produce good works under the grace of God? And that is a great question. To answer that question and to be convinced in our souls we must be students of the word of God and not just superficial readers of the Bible like we might read a magazine in the doctor's office. We must read the word of God from the standpoint as God is instructing us. We must read the same passages over and over. We must contemplate them in order to get the full meaning. We must become knowledgeable of all the word of God so that we can compare the parts of it that coincide and then make a panoramic view of the plans and purposes of God in our own hearts so that we can see what God is doing from the beginning to the end and so that we can see our very place in that magnificent plan. Be sure that the works that God commands of the believer are not for God's sake, as if He needs anything, but for the believer's sake and the glorification of God in the eyes of others. Whether they recognize what they see is not the issue for us, that is between them and God, but our

production of works, or what is also called 'fruit' under the grace of God is in itself the greatest reward of being a Christian in this life. To see these works as burdens is not to see them at all. You might not see it now, but this question is beautifully pictured in the miracle of the bursting nets on the Sea of Galilee. If you complete this booklet, you will see it, and you will be blessed.

1Jo 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

### **Following Commands and Directions**

We shall look at the sequence of events that occurred on this morning. The first thing the disciples were given were instructions.

Luk 5:1-3 Now it came about that while the multitude were pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret [Sea of Galilee]; and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them, and were washing their nets. And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the multitudes from the boat.

The first instruction is for Peter to put out a little off shore so that He could teach the large crowd. We don't read of any hesitation on his part because he is already a disciple of the Lord. We are not told what Christ taught but we can assume it was about His coming from the Father and bringing the kingdom of God to the earth and that all who believed in Him would have eternal life. He may have spoke of the things that He said on the mount which is recorded in the next chapter. Peter and probably his brother Andrew are in the boat with Him, listening, marveling at His words, mesmerized at the authority with which He spoke and the fact that the Messiah Himself was in their boat speaking such words of good news to all men. And then after some time the Lord gives Peter a command to launch out deeper and lower the just cleaned nets into the sea for a catch. This is the last thing that Peter would have expected. He

had been fishing all night and was exhausted. He was likely looking forward to some breakfast and some sleep, but now the Lord commands him to launch out a mile or so, raising the small sail and pulling oars, and fishing all over again with the not too distant memory of empty nets.

### **Not what you expected?**

Was your understanding of Christ and His word what you expected before you came to believe in Him as your Savior and God? How could it have been? You didn't know Him at all. Sure you heard of Him, but outside of faith in Him and learning His word, one cannot really know Him. Was what He called you to do and commanded you to follow always what you expected? I certainly heard of the ten commandments and a few other precepts like it while I was growing up, but of the breadth of commands in the New Testament I had no idea and was certainly shocked to find out what God had done for me in the person of Christ and what He desired for my life. Shocked, but quite joyful when I decided to follow, not perfectly mind you, but turning that rudder and following Him led me to a place that both surprised me and delighted me. Peter now has to either say no or yes to the command and he makes a great decision. Despite his fatigue, despite the fact that he would much rather do something else, he raises the sail, engages the oars, and starts heading out to the deep part of the sea to fish. Imagine if Peter said no. If he refused he would have never seen this miracle and likely wouldn't have been called to be an apostle. We always miss out on opportunities when we fail to follow the instructions of our Lord.

Eph 5:15-16 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil [i.e. there is evil opposition to God's plan every day].

1Pe 5:6-11 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you. Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the

same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1Th 5:4-6 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.

Christ has paid with His life for the mistakes that we make in failing to keep God's commands, so we need not feel guilty or condemned (Rom 8:1), but to not be determined to follow His instructions is to miss out on almost all of the life that He has graciously planned for us in this life. Remember, we cannot lose the next life, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ you are saved forever, but to miss out on such opportunities in time is to forever miss them, for they are not given again in eternity. Knowing we have eternal life should give us the boldness to follow, without fear of failure, for we can pick ourselves up again and follow, thanking our Savior for His finished work. When the Lord says to head out into the deep can there be anything other than greatness awaiting? After a weak protest from Peter, he sets out into the deep.

Luk 5:4-5 And when He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but at Your bidding I will let down the nets."

You can almost feel the exhaustion in his voice. They worked hard all night and caught nothing, but this is the Lord after all. I doubt that Peter would have done this for anyone else at this particular time. He shows here that he recognizes the authority of Christ and so does what he was commanded to do.

## Always feel like following?

Peter states in the original Greek writing of the gospel "but at Your *rhe-ma* (word or statement)!" In essence he is stating that, "because it is Your word Lord, I will do it ... but I don't feel like it." I was asked once by a young teenage girl if it was wrong to not want to go to Bible class and to go anyway. I immediately thought how beautiful it was for such young person to go anyway, despite not wanting to. Most young people need only the slightest excuse not to go, but this person loved the Lord and His word. We don't always feel like following or going or obeying. I know that the more we obey, even when we don't want to, the more joy we will find in obeying. This is spiritual growth and it only happens for those who are dedicated to an in depth understanding of the word of God and dedicated to following God's plan in fellowship with Him. They press on in these things even though the flesh says it doesn't want to. This is the divine quality of perseverance. And with perseverance there is the discovery of the miracles in your life. Being holy as God is, loving as God loves, showing mercy as God shows, are the ultimate miracles in this life. God took a sinner who was born into this world as His enemy, totally depraved, and transformed him into the image of Himself. This is a far greater miracle than splitting the Red Sea or raising the dead. The miracles that Christ performed on earth are actually a type of this greatest of miracles. Healing the lame, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, casting out burdensome demons, and raising the dead all speak of what He has done for each of us spiritually. We were lame, and I do mean that literally and figuratively. Some people have fooled themselves by comparing themselves with others who seem more lame and concluding that they are not lame. All are lame.

Rom 3:10-12

"There is none righteous, not even one;  
There is none who understands,  
There is none who seeks for God;  
All have turned aside, together  
they have become useless;  
There is none who does good,  
There is not even one."

Christ has made those who are lame, who are unable to walk with Him, to be able to walk with Him in such a manner that they are conformed to His image. He has made those who are blind to the mind of God able

to see it. Those who could not hear God can now hear Him. He has taken all of their personal demons, their sins and failures, and addictions and died for them so that they may walk free of them in this life. Those who were spiritually dead before God are made alive with the very life of Christ. These are the true miracles in life, and when we follow Him, even when we don't want to, we will witness them in ourselves and then our fatigue and crummy attitude will turn to divine energy and motivation.

Nothing takes away mental or physical fatigue like a miracle. Peter wasn't tired anymore when the nets were bursting with fish. You may be thinking that nothing like that happens to you, but do you realize that every time you follow Christ in whatever endeavor He has called you to that you are experiencing a miracle? To be new creatures in Christ through our faith in Him and to understand His perfect word and His perfect plan so as to walk in them is a miracle that only God could have done. To see the fruit of walking this plan by means of the Spirit is a miracle.

Gal 5:22-24 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

That's God's love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control being produced in you, the one who was once an enemy of God. That is a miracle. Who wouldn't want to have God's joy? That is a joy that doesn't depend on circumstances, whether they are good or bad, adversity or prosperity. Who wouldn't want to love as God loves and experience peace as only God has? These things are more precious than a large batch of fish.

So, no, we don't always feel like following the plan of God, but in the times that we don't, when we do, we reveal just how much we desire His plan over our own needs and comforts. Then, when we see the fruit of that plan in our lives, our fatigue will be turned to tremendous energy.

Rom 15:1-3 Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached Thee fell upon Me."

Peter obeyed the command because it was a word from His Lord. Peter and the other disciples and the church would receive many, many more words containing promises and instructions that are gifted to us for our benefit. It is the mind of Christ (1Co 2:14) that we have, and through the ministry of God the Holy Spirit within we can hear, see, behold, and touch our Lord as if He were here with each of us physically. He is indwelling you (Col 1:27) and through His word you can behold Him as your hope of glory. Once we see the word of God as this, and not anything else that other false teachers have claimed it to be, then we will desire to put our faith in it and follow it more than anything else in life.

Joh 1:1-2 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

### **The Miracle and the Work**

Luk 5:6-7 And when they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish; and their nets began to break; and they signaled to their partners in the other boat, for them to come and help them. And they came, and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink.

Whether Christ knew where the fish were or that He called them into the nets are basically the same thing since He is God in the flesh. He sees the production that we will harvest ages before we do. He is overjoyed to see us reap the harvest of His work and He knows exactly

when and where that harvest is. Every believer has a tailor fit plan just for them based on the same word and Spirit, but unique in subtle ways to each individual. What a precious thing it is to know that a billion years ago God thought just about me and designed a plan just for me. Like my fingerprint it is unique to me, all of us have the same basic body parts, ten fingers, two eyes, but with subtle uniqueness's. Our fingerprints are unique and the iris' of our eyes are unique. We each have the same general plan but with differences that the love of God chose just for each of us. How could an infinite and perfect God go wrong? And if He can't, how can we say that we have a better plan? Miracles abound in God's plan and there are none in our own plans. Too many believers want to meet God on their terms. They want a God of their own design, a God that corresponds to them in some way. If we look for God to be obliging to our own nature then we will not find Him but some false image of Him. God must be followed on His terms and these terms are clearly recorded in the scripture.

Every believer has a right to discover the plan of God for his own life from the scripture and under the teaching and guiding ministry of God the Holy Spirit, but he must do so with humility before the word of God and not predetermining it based on some bias he has accumulated. If we want to see His miracles in our life we must follow Him and lay down our nets when He says to and in the place that He says to and we must not pretend that we know of a better fishing spot. God did not give any creature his own independent steering mechanism. God is the only eternal One and so only He can determine direction and purpose with perfect accuracy. All of His creatures are dependent upon Him. If we were not we would be Gods like He is, but that is a huge overestimation of our abilities. Gods cannot be created, but only One true God is self-existent. We are rudderless creatures, and Christ, who became a Man and died for us, became our Perfect Rudder. With Him we will chart the course of miracles. Not the miracles of changing matter, healing the sick, or raising the dead, but miracles within our souls in the form of the fruit of the Spirit.

I wondered for the first time in studying this event why they had to lift the nets into the boat. Christ could have done anything He wanted. He could have had the fish jump into the boat like flying fish or those crazy jumping carp. He could have lifted the nets into the boat with a wave of His hand. It was this thought that caused me to want to write this; He

gave them the joy of lifting in the harvest. Yes, they had to do some work, but what joyous work it was. Do you think that any of them thought they were too tired? They had been out all night and caught nothing, and now the biggest catch of their lives was in their grasp. Christ didn't even have to command that they pull it in. They went at it with vigor.

### **The Miracle of Position**

Christ performs the miracle. He, God, became a man. He humbled Himself under the Father's plan to the point of death, even death on a cross, Php 2:5-8. In darkness on Calvary He paid for the sins of the whole world. When it was finished He bowed His head and breathed His last. He went into the grave for three days and then rose again alive, right through the death clothes He was wrapped in, right through the stone door of the tomb, and never to return to the grave again. He rose bodily. The same body that was placed in the tomb came out, but it came out alive in a resurrection body, an eternal body, a body that could never die, immortal. It was a body that could never be beaten or scourged again. It is the same body that every believer will have in eternity.

Php 3:20-21 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

1Jo 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.

All who believe upon Him are eternally saved. They are delivered from the power of sin and death. They are placed into union with Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They are made the bride of Christ and placed in the body of Christ in which Christ is the head. They are made the holy temple of God in which Christ dwells forever.

They are imputed with the righteousness of God. They are justified before God, meaning that God is perfectly satisfied with them and nothing more needs to be added or done. The certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us is taken out of the way, having been nailed to the cross, Col 2:13-15. They are sanctified, meaning set apart unto God as His forever. They become sons of God, brothers of Christ, and are given the same inheritance that was given to Christ when He ascended to heaven and sat at the right hand of God, Rom 8:16-17. They are given the word of God and the filling of the Holy Spirit. They are loved by God the Father in the same manner that He loves the person of Christ, the Son of God. I'd say these are miracles. All of this, and more could be listed, were graciously and freely given to every believer at the moment of salvation with no strings attached. Christ has performed the miracle through His own sacrifice and we each possess the harvest of that miracle.

Rom 8:37-39 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **The Miracle of Application**

By having the entire canon of scripture we have all the instructions. Just like Peter, we can follow them and then see the miracle of application. The word of God is not to be read like any other book. We are not to read it as we would a novel. We are not to read it to criticize it either. We are to read it as a message unto us from a Father that loves us, so much so that He, the Son of God, would condescend to become a man and die for us. We are to hear it from our pastor again and again and contemplate it. This contemplation, deep reflection, and thought as to its meaning and truth is what is meant by beholding Christ. And as we do we are to apply its truths to our lives. We are not only to know grace but apply that grace to ourselves and others. The same goes for every attribute and virtue that God has purposed to share and reveal to us.

God has given us His love, Joh 13:34; 1Jo 4:19; Rom 5:5. He has given us His forgiveness and we are to forgive ourselves and others, Eph 1:7; Col 1:14, 2:13. He has given us His virtues so that we may apply them and practice them by means of the word of God and the teaching, guiding, and empowering ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

Php 4:8-9 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.

Christ performed the miracle of position on Calvary and He continues to perform the miracle of application while He indwells you. He is your hope of glory and He has given His Spirit, God the Holy Spirit, to lead you into all truth and to give you the power to walk in that truth. Both of them as deity indwell every believer so that he may learn the word of God and apply it. To experience God's fruit flowing through yourself is the miracle of application. And it is in this miracle that we work the works of God.

Joh 7:37-39 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

2Co 4:7-10 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

Pulling in the net is akin to applying what God has filled you with. This is to be the joy of the harvest and not a burden. Christ did all the work, but your choices and your determination are always involved. He doesn't force you to do anything. Your effort by means of your own volition is to be motivated by your love for Him, and His word and His power. These are always involved. We don't become robots that God inputs directions to. He is at work within us and we can say no or yes to that work. We can say no or yes to the application of that work in our lives. These works always begin in the soul. If we look again at the fruit of the Spirit we see the things of the soul. They are the product of thinking and faith. They can manifest themselves in words or actions. We could list examples but we are not to operate on lists but on the virtues being produced in us. Each of us determine through our own choices when to speak or act or when to say or do nothing, and all in the production of divine good works. For instance, not judging another or maligning or slandering another is an operation of divine virtue. That work was produced by what you did not do. In application and practice in our daily lives we are to become experts at divine good. These will not be accomplished in a day or in one try no more than Peter, Andrew, James, and John became expert fishermen in one day or in one try. Not only did Jesus allow them to pull in the nets but they expertly knew how to pull in the nets, which takes skill, and as we'll see coming up, teamwork. We are not going to read the wonderful and descriptive definition of God's love in the Bible and then perfectly perform it. We need to practice it on those around us, those we like and don't like, when we feel like it and when we don't, and come back to it in the scripture and learn of it again and again and again, under the teaching ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

1Co 13:4-8 Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails [i.e. is eternal]

By trusting the Spirit to teach us and empower us to apply this entire definition of virtue love to our lives as well as to others, we grow in

grace and knowledge and come to understand it more and more. We perceive the words of it and then we apply it to our lives. Christ stated that the house built upon the sand was the one who heard His words and did not act upon them and then when the storms came that house fell and great was its fall, but the one who heard His words and acted upon them was the house built upon the rock that stood firm in the midst of the great storm (Mat 7:26-27). By doing both we will come to a full understanding and like pulling in the fishing nets for the thousandth time, we will expertly wield this ultimate virtue, and never from human power but from relying on the fullness of the miracle within - Christ in you, the Holy Spirit in you, and the word of God in you. Christ has filled the net of every believer and is desiring to fill it more, to the point of bursting, by the believer's desire to apply the miracle of the position. The New Testament has much to say about the believer's fullness.

Rom 15:14 And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another.

Eph 3:19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

Eph 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit

Php 1:11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Col 1:9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding

Luk 11:34 "The lamp of your body is your eye; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness.

Joh 17:13 "But now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

Heb 10:22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

1Pe 1:8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory

### **Sometimes We Need Help from Other Believers**

Luke 5:6-7 And when they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish; and their nets *began* to break; and they signaled to their partners in the other boat, for them to come and help them. And they came, and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink.

The quantity of fish was enough to begin to tear the fabric of the nets. God gives us so many gifts that they overflow and bless others when we put them to use. Not only did Peter's boat experience the joy of the catch but his partners' boat did as well. God's gifts are too abundant to be limited to the sphere of our individual lives alone.

The word "partners" is used quite a bit in the teaching of the New Testament. First and foremost the Bible states that the believer is to partner with God by walking with God in this life. This is what is known in most Christian circles as fellowship. Those who fellowship with God will fellowship with one another in the work that God has graciously given for the church to accomplish. Yet this goes far beyond friendships and gatherings. It is the work that believers are to pursue together.

Php 2:1-2 If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

The conditional clauses in the first part of the verse all demand a positive answer. And since they are yes, the second part should be a reality. As believers we are to be of the same mind, love (God's love), spirit, and intention, which is God's purpose. For Peter and his partners' boat it is to get the fish in the boat without tearing the nets and doing so without losing one fish. For the church, which is a term that refers to all believers on planet earth at any given time, it is to spread the gospel and the truth to the world while being united in the love of God. The people who hear the gospel and believe are the fish. It is an amazing thing to think that Christ has ascended to heaven and has left the church on earth to carry out this mission. Unfortunately there are those within the church who have another purpose, something selfish, and this mission is hindered in their own lives. That is not to say that God is hindered, but they themselves muddy the water and do not see the catch and miss out on the joy of God's harvest. We must clearly understand that none of us can hinder God's plans and purposes. We can be a part of them and enjoy them but they will never be compromised in any way.

Mat 13:47-50 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering *fish* of every kind; and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good *fish* into containers, but the bad they threw away. So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The good are the believers who have accepted Christ's offer of salvation by faith and the bad are those who rejected it. All will receive the gospel and all will have that choice. To think that we could hinder God's catch is great arrogance, as if God was dependent upon us. God has given us the opportunity and privilege to become a part of this purpose and to do so effectively we each must walk in fellowship with Him and then we can walk in fellowship with our fellow believers.

I am the pastor of a small church in Salem, OR. Though it is small it is not a church of one. The word of God and the gospel would not be offered to the world through this ministry without many other believers

who are of the same mind, love, spirit, and intention of purpose. All of the teaching is offered without cost to anyone who wants it, but that is not to say that it is produced without cost. The materials, like this booklet for example, cost money, time, effort, prayer, faith, work, etc. and that from many people. The product is the truth, but it is not our truth. It is God's truth and if this ministry doesn't produce it, there are thousands more that will, and if they don't, God will raise up thousands more that will. In 1Ki 19 Elijah had the audacity to tell God that he was the only one left who had been zealous for the Lord and God replied to him that He had 7,000 more in Israel.

This group called the church, comprised of all believers in the world, whether they attend churches or not, and no matter what denomination, if they are believers they are all in union with Christ and members of His body. The body of Christ is to follow the Head, who is Christ, just as the physical head gives instruction to the physical body. Within this body there are many spiritual gifts and one spiritual gift has been given to each member of the body of Christ from God the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. A believer does not have to identify his spiritual gift to begin to work together with the other members of the body. In time he will identify the gift that God has given him. No one can tell him what that gift is. He must identify it for himself through his own growth and personal relationship with God. Some of the gifts are listed in the New Testament (Rom 12:6-8; 1Co 12:8-10, 28; Eph 4:11) and I personally believe that not every one that exists is listed since not one of the lists is identical with another. It must be noted that many on these lists are temporary gifts given to the early church so that its foundation throughout the world could be established rapidly since there are many dark forces against it. When Paul set out to spread the gospel throughout the Roman Empire he was not alone. Men like Luke, Timothy, Barnabas, Silas, and John-Mark were with him. They assisted him and enhanced his ministry. Our Lord during His earthly ministry was not alone. He had His disciples, the twelve and many more, as well as the women who supported His ministry and traveled with Him all over Judaea, Samaria, and Galilee.

Luk 8:1-3 And it came about soon afterwards, that He *began* going about from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God; and the twelve were with Him, and *also* some women who had been healed of evil spirits and

sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.

Do you think that these men and women saw their service of Him as a joy or a burden? And what if they saw their opportunity to serve Him and said, "No, I'm too busy." If they didn't go along would Christ not have saved the world? Would the plan of God in saving mankind been defeated by a few men and women? Do you honestly think that God needs you or His plans will be caput? God knows those who are His and He will rise up thousands to take our place if we decide to quit. Therefore, the work is not a burden to the one who understands the truth, but a joy, a privilege, and the grandest opportunity in life. And not only this, but the believer doesn't have to sit around waiting for everyone to get involved. It is the norm and not the exception that a small percentage of those in each church actually do the work of that church. Most of the giving and the serving come from the minority and not the majority. While they are pulling the fish into the two boats, both boats began to sink. Maybe a third boat would have been helpful but maybe a third boat wasn't available. If Peter only had two boats in his fishing business but another boat nearby witnessed what was going on and they had the chance to help, would they have? Or would they have offered their help for a certain percentage of the profits and negotiated for a higher percentage while the boats are sinking. A lack of more help did not prevent them from hauling in every fish. Unfortunately many Christians retain a "What's in it for me?" attitude when it comes to serving and giving. This is why the minority complete the work and why it takes some spiritual growth to even begin to be a part of the work. We cannot work the works of God in the wrong motivation. Wrong motivation is not fellowship with God as fellowship or partnership is sharing in common His mind, His love, His spirit, and His purpose. In Christianity, the ends in no way justify the means as it so often does in the world.

For those who walk with God there are many scriptures that speak to them of the fellowship or partnership we are to have with one another as we complete the work that God has given us to do.

Eph 4:1-7 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Gal 2:9 and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *might go* to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.

Heb 10:23-25 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*, and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.

1Co 12:4-7 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1Co 12:20-21 But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

Rom 12:4-13 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *let each exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his

faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

Eph 4:11-13 And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith,

While Christ, the Head, sits at the right hand of God; the church, His body, represents Him on earth. Each individual is to first and foremost walk in partnership with Christ in this life, and then those who do can together accomplish the work that Christ has graciously given to the church. We each obey commands as individuals and accomplish the work that God has allotted to us as individuals as well accomplishing the work that God has allotted to us as a body. No one is their own rock or island. While it is true that sometimes we must go it alone and may find no one to help, such times are precious times of great spiritual growth, but they are less common for the majority of the members of the body. More often, the members are in a group called a local assembly and if there are enough that determine fellowship with the Father and with the Son by means of the Holy Spirit to be their top priority then they will work together in the tasks that the Father has decreed for the group, and they will do so with vigor and with joy and without a trace of the “What’s in this for me?” attitude. They will accomplish the work in divine love and not in competition, or bickering, or judging those who refuse to work in love. This unity of love is the key to our revelation of Christ to the world.

Joh 13:34-35 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Joh 17:18-21 "As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, *art* in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.

So they hauled in the nets with joy and they accomplished the work together as they each followed the instructions of the Lord, but the boats began to sink. Would they haul in this enormous amount of fish only to sink to the bottom of the Sea of Galilee?

**There are times we will foresee certain dangers when following Christ, should we fear?**

Luk 5:7 And they came, and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink.

First, Jesus is about to call these men to be apostles. The twelve were chosen from the foundation of the world. It would be quite an embarrassment to God if they drowned before they could even begin, and that with Jesus Himself in the boat! I mean, sure, Christ can walk on water, but they're of the earth, should they have feared their doom? The scripture doesn't tell us if they began to fear on this occasion, but in two other occasions later on, on this same sea, they greatly feared. On one occasion Jesus was asleep in the boat and on the other Jesus was walking past them on the water, but on both occasions there was a fierce wind and high seas and they feared for their lives. Sometimes, in the pursuit of God's plan, things look bleak and dangerous. This happens because we do not yet live in heaven. The world is full of sin and evil and great opposition to God's plan. To the natural minded man these times are times to be feared and the world would agree with such a man and

claim that his fear is justified, but not so for the believer in Jesus Christ.

When the truth about the believer's relationship with God is known and believed, all fear is chased out of his heart<sup>7</sup>. This does not mean that he will never be gripped with fear again, but it will be momentary and light as he claims the promises of God and removes the fear. If Christ is in the boat, is it going to perish? If Christ is in you, are you going to perish? Even in physical death, does the believer perish or is he absent from the body and face to face with the Lord? We are not to fear death or any other thing. The only One that we are to fear is God, and even that is not being afraid of Him, for He is our loving Father, loving Savior, and loving Teacher, but a reverent fear of Him, trepid awe of His power, and a fear of not pleasing Him. The fear that God removes from us is the fear of torment and punishment.

Luk 12:4-5 "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

No believer, no matter what he does, can be cast into hell. For the believer it is the power of God and the plan of God that should be held in highest respect. We are to fear the effects of living a lifestyle in darkness and missing out on the great life beyond dreams that is the life of Christ. Again, this is not being afraid but having great respect for the purposes of God. God loves each one but He is not a respecter of one above another. If we fail to execute the plan of God for our lives we will reap what we sow and if we sow darkness we will reap the effects of that darkness. There is not one of us that can say that we are the exception to the rule and the effects of darkness will not come upon us when we walk in it. So in that, there is the one and only reverent fear, other than that, we should fear nothing else. For the believer in the church age, Christ isn't in your boat, He's in your body. You have nothing to fear in this world.

Col 1:27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

God loves every believer just as much as He loves Jesus Christ, Rom 1:7. Walking in the sphere of that love removes all fear. If God is for us, who can be against us, Rom 8:31? If I am beloved of God what can mere man do to me? If I look around myself and find that God takes care of the birds, the flowers, the grass, etc. then will He not always do so for me? And if He will do so, then should I be afraid of what may come upon me today or tomorrow?

Psa 56:4 In God, whose word I praise,  
In God I have put my trust;  
I shall not be afraid.  
What can *mere* man do to me?

Mat 6:26 "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?

Mat 6:33-34 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. *Each* day has enough trouble of its own.

1Jo 4:18-19 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us.

It only "looked like" the boats was going to sink. They didn't sink. There is only the appearance of complete disaster at times, but even if you were to lose everything, what would you be losing besides earthly goods, earthly health, or your earthly body? Can you lose the things that God has freely given to you that are the prosperity of your position in Christ? Can anyone and anything take these things from you? Absolutely not! Who will undo what God has done? Who will say to God that He must remove what He has established?

Isa 45:9 "Woe to *the one* who quarrels with his Maker —

An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth!

Will the clay say to the potter, 'What are you doing?'

Or the thing you are making *say*, 'He has no hands'?

Isa 46:9-10

For I am God, and there is no other;

*I am* God, and there is no one like Me,

Declaring the end from the beginning

And from ancient times things which have not been done,

Saying, 'My purpose will be established,

And I will accomplish all My good pleasure!';

So then, we should not fear the loss of anything, nor shall we fear any circumstance we are about to face. Sometimes it may “appear” that a circumstance is too hard for us. While we all have limitations that we cannot surpass, when in the work that God has foreordained us to walk in, they may only seem too hard but they are not. That is not to say that there will not be some work that is hard, but God promises that He will not give us more than we are able to bear. Don't confuse being uncomfortable with being too hard or impossible. The work is not impossible with God. We are creatures of habit and love to stay in our comfort zones. If we are going to grow to maturity we must have the faith to step out of those zones and step forward, but not all in one day mind you. What if Paul had stayed in his comfort zone and didn't take on the danger of land and sea in order to spread the gospel and establish the foundation of the Gentile churches?

2Co 11:23-28 in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers

from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure upon me *of* concern for all the churches.

One might imagine Paul on his third shipwreck – “This is old hat, nothing I’m not used to.” While most of us will not be lashed, we will face unfamiliar territory that God determines us to bear up under using His power, His word, and His Spirit. It must be repeated that we can in no way do any of this in the power of our flesh. It is the truth and dependence on God the Holy Spirit that are going to give us the power to patiently persevere. As we face these circumstances with faith they will become more familiar, and we may honestly say to ourselves that we have grown spiritually, but then be prepared: what has become a comfort zone with growth will lead to other unfamiliar territory, but the process of growth will become familiar and so even the unfamiliar territories of the future will not be feared. And then the believer can claim with confidence in the face of the most unfamiliar thing:

1Co 10:13 No temptation has overtaken [Greek *lambano*: come upon or found] you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.

Overtaken does not mean sin, it means that the temptation has found you just as it has found everyone else, it is not unique to you. The way of escape does not at all mean that God takes away the temptation. It means that God has provided a solution through His word by means of the Holy Spirit for you to endure in peace while in the midst of the temptation. This must be believed that God is able, powerful, to do so. If there is any doubt, the temptation will eventually overtake you and the result will be that you will fear temptations. If you fear your enemy you have been defeated by him before the battle even begins.

## Can I be in the same boat as the Lord of Glory?

Luk 5:8-11 But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

We finish this day with a promise of more miracles to come. Peter rightly states that he is a sinful man, but that is not the issue. Christ will pay for all of his sins very soon. After witnessing this miracle and reaffirming in his heart that in his own boat with him is the Lord of glory, the perfect One, unblemished and without sin, Peter even more glaringly perceives his own sin. Peter has committed thousands of sin in this very boat. He resisted going fishing. He falls at Jesus' feet and bids Him to go. One wonders, where would Jesus go, aren't they in the middle of the Sea? This may seem like humility but it's not. It's simply ignorance. Because of the miracle of position, Christ is going to make it so that Peter is fully worthy to be in the boat with Him, and not just in the boat, but an apostle to Him, in heaven with Him, and most intimately, in Him and He in Peter. As always, Christ is gentle. He does not admonish Peter for his false humility or his ignorance. He simply encourages him.

Christ is not in your boat but in you. He has made this possible by His finished work through simple faith in Him. Most people have an easier time believing in a judgmental, tyrannical God who is far off. They find it much harder to believe in a loving, gracious, and merciful God. Jesus Christ is His manifestation as God Himself in the flesh. He didn't come to condemn us but to save us. God loves the world, and because of that He sent His son. This love is not found anywhere else in the world. It is only in God and the world has a hard time believing it. In that same love the Lord called Peter. Peter doesn't deserve any of this. What qualifications does he have to be an apostle for Christ? Is catching fish the same as catching men, i.e. bringing salvation to them by the gospel of Christ? He hasn't gone to a university, has no degrees in public speaking, and he hasn't attended any seminary. We would say that he's com-

pletely unqualified, but Christ will qualify him, as so often, defend and vouch for him. He does this for us all.

Luke 22:31-32 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

The Bible states that the resurrected Christ is right now at the right hand of God praying for you and advocating for you. None of us deserve any of it, and none of us have any prior qualifications for the work of God. God works the miracles and we reap the harvest. Some people think that a certain unbeliever would make a great believer because of their background. Nothing we possess or who we are before salvation will have any impact on the spiritual life. This insults the arrogant but it gives joy to the humble. All things needed to do the work and reap the harvest come from God and nothing comes from Him spiritually until we believe in Christ and He regenerates us into new creatures in Christ. So through Christ, as new creatures, we are perfectly accepted in Him and qualified to be with Him. In fact, being in us, He is closer to us than anyone else.

2Co 5:17 Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

### **One Miracle Witnessed Means There are Many More to Come**

Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." As a full time disciple, Peter will witness many more miracles, and in his time as an apostle to Christ after the Lord's death and resurrection, he will witness many more, both external to him and in his inner man. Peter is going to grow spiritually and become a tremendous worker for the gospel of Christ. He will establish the church in Jerusalem, he will write books of the Bible, and through his ministry countless people will be saved. Here it is almost 2,000 years later and we are still learning from him.

One day, in this same area, about a year later, Peter and the others

heard Jesus teach some things that were difficult to understand and hard to hear. Because of the teaching about His blood and flesh many in the crowd that were following Him up to that point had left. The Lord turned to the disciples, un-phased by the desertion, and asked them if they were going to leave as well.

Joh 6:67-70 Jesus said therefore to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. "And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

What a great answer. "Where are we going to go? Only You have the words of eternal life." By this perseverance more and more miracles are revealed to Peter as well as all who follow Christ. What does the Lord have in store for you? Actually that is an impossible question to answer, but know that it is beyond what you can think or imagine. As you press on the in the plan of God, basing all truth on the Bible as the standard of truth, trusting in God the Holy Spirit to teach, guide, and empower you, you will witness your first miracle. Maybe it will be a manifestation of His love in you. Maybe it will be a moment of faith that leads to tranquility in a situation that normally would have caused anxiety and worry. Whatever it may be, the first miracle only means that there are many, many more to come. The believer who recognizes this gains an excitement about the Christian way of life - the life that is Christ - that so fills him that the Lord's miracles overflow to all that are around him. Only the eternal God could conceive such a plan and actually make it work perfectly, and that, for sinners. I hope that you witness your first miracle and if you have, I pray that you will witness many, many more. Worthy is our God to receive glory and honor and power.

1Co 2:9 "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And which have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him."

## Endnotes

1. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 1, p. 473
2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in a letter to his brother-in-law
3. Jesus Christ is deity, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Together they make up the holy Trinity. Jesus Christ is unique in that He took upon Himself true humanity, yet without sin, so that He could pay for the sins of the entire world on the cross.
4. Through the fall of Adam, all of the human race are born spiritually dead, separated from God, and condemned. This happens at birth and not at our first personal sin, Rom 5:12; Eph 2:1-2.
5. Fellowship with God is co-participating with Him in His mind (Php 2:5), His mercy (Luk 6:36), His holiness (1Pe 1:15), His love (Joh 13:34), and His sufferings (1Pe 4:13) as we walk in the light by means of God the Holy Spirit.
6. The one true baptism is the baptism of the Spirit who, at the moment of salvation, regenerated us, entered us into union with Christ, in dwelt us, and made us the holy temple of God.
7. The heart in the Bible refers to that part of the soul which is the center of the real person. It is his true personality, his true beliefs, his true norms and standards, i.e. the seat or core of the real person.



**Pastor Joseph Sugrue** employs a scientific approach to the study of the word of God. Science is simply the natural born man's discovery of God's physical laws; doctrine is the born again man's discovery of God's spiritual laws. Our God is not a God of confusion, and Pastor Sugrue wishes to dispel any of that confusion from the tremendous grace that began God's plan for the Church Age. It is Pastor Sugrue's intent and

desire to open the grace of God to every man that has been fooled into the lie that it doesn't exist.



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