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At Thy Word We Will

by Bill Lockwood

Luke 5:1-11 records the call of the disciples to the fellowship of Jesus. Simon Peter plays a prominent role in the episode in which Jesus, having preached from the floating pulpit of Simon Peter's boat to the pressing crowds on the shoreline, now commands Peter to put out his boat into the "deep" and "let down your nets for a catching." Several important lessons here come to light, particularly Peter's response to Jesus: "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing; but at thy word we will." Consider:

First, the scene is marked by exactness of accurate detail. Fishing on the Sea of Galilee is normally done at night. Peter and Andrew cooperated with partners (Gr. 'metochos') James and John. The Greek word is a precise term referring to partners in business. Luke, being a doctor, is always more exact in his terminology than other writers and refers to the Sea of Galilee with its technical word, "limne" (Greek) as opposed to "thalassa" (sea). The type of net utilized by these partners was a "dragnet" —maneuvered between two boats—as opposed to a "casting net" that was thrown by hand into the shallows during the daytime.

Second, Luke notes the childlike obedience of Peter. At the Lord's command to enter into deep water and let down the nets for a large catching, Peter responded, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing ... but at thy word I will let down the nets." So important to the modern world is the lesson here. The paradox was that experienced fishermen knew that fishing in deep water is unlikely to produce a good catch during the daytime. It was, to say the least, very unlikely. "But at thy word I will let down the nets." Peter's obedience was therefore CONTRARY to what humans know to be the case. Nevertheless, because the Master commanded it, compliance was necessary.

Exactly so regarding BAPTISM. Jesus commands it as necessary to salvation ("He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" Mark 16:16). What is required is NOT an understanding on how WATER can "wash away" sins (Acts 22:16), but OBEDIENCE. But modern-day pulpit doctors tell us that water baptism can have nothing to do with salvation! They know better! They cannot understand how WATER can have anything to do with salvation. Their "experiences" tell them that they get "saving power" by prayer. Well might Peter have argued. He could not understand HOW fishing during the day in deep water would secure a catching. His "experience" told him that a letting down of the nets at this time would be fruitless. He knew how to fish!!

What is the key ingredient? OBEDIENCE to the Lord's commands. Oh, that the religious world would lay aside their error of "faith only" and adopt the attitude of Peter: "At thy word we will."