

=LIFE OF PETER=

Lesson 8

Peter the Fisherman Becomes Peter the Under-Shepherd

AIM: to teach my pupils that love is required of a person who would serve Jesus, and that if a person truly loves Jesus, he will serve Him.

POINT OF CONTACT: Discuss with your class what duties are required of a shepherd. What are the feelings of a shepherd for his sheep? A shepherd lovingly provides shelter for his sheep; he leads them out from shelter so that they might feed and drink; he leads them back to shelter where they might rest and enjoy comfort; he watches over his sheep in order to protect them from snakes and wild animals; he brings back the one that has wandered away from the fold.

INTRODUCTION: Peter is about to be called by Jesus to become a pastor. (In order to lead into the lesson, the teacher might give a review of Peter's life thus far. The review could be given as if the teacher is speaking to Peter.)

“You're about to change vocations, Peter. You left your fishing business once to follow Jesus. In fact, when Jesus said, ‘Come follow Me,’ you left your nets straightway. You were obedient to Jesus' call. You followed Jesus and learned of His power and His identity. Your earthly father, Jonas, did not tell you—it was our Heavenly Father Who told you that Jesus is the Son of God. You saw for yourself Jesus' majesty on the Mount of Transfiguration. You grew to love Jesus very dearly; you were willing to lay down your life for Him. You did not understand all that there was to understand about the work that Jesus had come to earth to do, and, if you had your way, the purpose for which Jesus came to earth would have been thwarted. Jesus assured you that you would understand afterwards.

“The time has come now to understand the events of the past few days; in fact, the events of the past three years will become clear to you. There is the memory of one event which causes you untold agony and distress. During the night of Jesus' trial in the palace of the high priest you denied three times that you knew Jesus. You then realized what you had done, and you saw that Jesus knew what you had done. Your heart was broken. You were crushed as the wonderful days of fellowship and instruction with Jesus were coming to a seemingly tragic end in the events of His crucifixion.

“Then the triumphant day of resurrection came! Jesus sent word to you that He was still considering you to be the leader of the disciples. Jesus has appeared to the company of disciples on two different occasions after the resurrection. Peter, you did not have opportunity to talk face-to-face with Jesus on either of these two occasions. Are you waiting for a chance to tell Jesus that you really do love Him?”

I. PETER'S DECISION TO GO FISHING AGAIN. See John 21:1-14.

1. Peter and six other disciples were on the Sea of Galilee. We can tell by the Scripture account who five of the disciples were; two are unidentified.
  - 1) The disciples were in Galilee as Jesus had instructed them to be. Matthew 28:10, Mark 16:7.
  - 2) Peter said, “I go a fishing.” No doubt this return to his former occupation was decided as a matter of necessity. Fishing had been his business, the means of his livelihood. The other disciples with him said, “We also go with thee.”
  - 3) They fished all night from a small fishing boat. They caught nothing in their net.
  - 4) They returned to shore when daylight came. On shore stood Jesus, but the disciples did not recognize Him immediately. Jesus called to them, “Did you catch anything?” (Jesus was getting them to express their need to Him.) They called back, “No.”
2. Then Peter and the other disciples caught a miraculous number of fish.
  - 1) It was in obedience to His command. Jesus told them, “Cast the net on the right side of the ship.” They did this, and as a result, they caught 153 large fish. The net was too heavy for them to bring it into the boat. They were able to bring the fish to shore; they dragged the net with the ship.

- 2) John recognized Jesus. He told Peter Who it was that was on the shore. Peter covered himself with his fishing coat, tying it about him. He jumped into the water to swim to shore.
- 3) The boat was about one hundred yards from shore. The disciples saw that breakfast was being cooked for them. A fire had been built, and fish and bread were cooking on the coals. Jesus said, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." Peter drew the net to land. Even though the net was full and the fish very heavy, still the net did not break. (The act which Jesus commanded the disciples to perform was met with success because it was His plan, and His plan was followed exactly.)
- 4) Jesus served breakfast to His disciples. While they were eating, they knew that it was Jesus. John 21:12, "...And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord." The verb "ask" implies "to question or to prove." Thomas had proven His identity on one occasion by examining His scarred hands and side. John 20:26-29.

## II. PETER'S HEART EXAMINATION. See John 21:15-17.

1. Jesus then spoke privately to Peter. The meal was ended.
  - 1) He addressed Himself to Peter only, calling him by name. It was the name by which he was known before he met Jesus—Simon, son of Jonas. Jesus was causing Peter to remember that there was a time that he was just a lost sinner. He was reminding him of his natural weakness, which is common to all.
  - 2) He said, "Simon, do you love Me?" Peter said, "Yes, I am deeply fond of you, Jesus." Peter can remember the time when he was saved. Even though his love, compared with the love of Jesus, was imperfect, yet he knew that he loved Him. (In the Greek, two different words were used here for "love." They were "agape" and "phileo." Two times Jesus used "agape"; the third time He changed His verb to the same word which Peter had used three times—"phileo." "Agape" is the more exalted word for "love"—a deep, divine love. "Phileo" is the warm kind of love that one friend has for another, but it is a less perfect love than "agape.") Jesus said, "Simon, is your love a greater love than the love which all these have for Me?" On one occasion Peter had compared himself with others, coming to the conclusion that if all others failed Jesus, still he himself would not. (Matthew 26:33.) In the meantime, Peter learned not to judge others' hearts, but to speak concerning his own heart: "You know, Lord, that I love You, even though my love may be imperfect."
2. Three times Jesus put the question of Peter's love to him. Remember, it was three times that Peter had denied Christ. Three times Peter told Jesus that he loved Him, even though he recognized that it was an imperfect love. Jesus could still use him, even with this imperfect love.

## III. PETER'S CALL INTO THE PASTORATE. See John 21:15-17.

1. Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Jesus is the Good Shepherd. John 10:1-18.
  - 1) Jesus had called Peter to be a "fisher of men." Matthew 4:19. He was to seek the lost and lead them to know Jesus as their Saviour. (Note: Think of the net that did not break under the strain of its heavy catch of fish. No matter how many people get saved, the Gospel net will still hold them—there is always strength; there is always room for more to come into the family of God.)
  - 2) Jesus is now going a step further. He is saying, "Give nourishment to these new Christians." Jesus had called new Christians "little ones" and "little children," like lambs in a flock of sheep. Matthew 10:42; John 13:33.
  - 3) Peter would feed them the "sincere milk of the word." I Peter 2:2.
2. Jesus said again, "Feed my sheep." "Take care of those who have grown in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus." They need the "meat" of the Word.
3. Jesus said the second time, "Feed my sheep." Peter was to see that the people who had been Christians long enough to mature would be grounded in doctrine so that they would not ever stray. It is interesting to note that the word "pastor" means "shepherd, feeder." Jesus is the Chief Shepherd; the pastor of the local flock is the under-shepherd. Peter was being appointed to this

position by Jesus. See I Peter 5:1-4. A man is not a pastor unless God calls him to this position. Young men should be listening for His call, if it should come. If Jesus is not calling to the ministry, He has another purpose for life. All girls and boys, men and women, teenagers have a place that God wants them to fill. Romans 12:1, 2.

CONCLUSION: Jesus wants our love before we can serve Him. Our love, like Peter's love, is imperfect, but love is all that Jesus needs in order to empower us to serve Him. If we serve Him—if we keep His commandments—we are showing our love for Him.