



# CAPITOL COMMISSION

## Falling On Our Knees (Luke 5:1-11)

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*Luke 5:1-11 - (1) On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, (2) and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. (3) Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. (4) And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." (5) And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." (6) And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. (7) 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. (8) But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (9) For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, (10) and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." (11) And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.*

Luke recounts the events surrounding Jesus' calling of Peter and his companions to follow him. Scholars consider this to be the second time Peter had been called by Jesus. While Luke's account does contain some similarities to an earlier calling recorded in the gospel of Matthew and Mark, there are significant differences to separate these events. Along with additional details, Luke also includes a different timeline leading up to this calling. As is typical in the gospel of Luke, he stresses people; this provides us with a glimpse into Peter's heart during the time of his calling. After this incident, there is no recorded account of Peter leaving Jesus and his calling of being a fisher of men, to be only a fisherman. While Peter does leave this calling after the death of his master, he returned permanently upon the validation of his resurrected Lord, Jesus the Christ.

The ministry of Jesus in Galilee is launched as seen in Luke 4:16. He initiates this ministry by proclaiming to be the one through whom the good news from God is spoken as foretold by Isaiah the prophet. The gospel is good news for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind. In his ministry, he will release the oppressed and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. As he continued his message, the people in the synagogue became furious. They drove him out of the town to the edge of a cliff in hopes to throw him over, in this they were unsuccessful. Hence, Jesus ministry begins with the proclamation of the gospel. Next, in Luke 4:31 we find Jesus performing multiple miracles, these serve as the validation of this ministry that he proclaimed in the synagogue in Capernaum. For God's kingdom was

being established because King Jesus was revealing himself through his message and miracles.

This context lays the foundation for the calling of Peter and his companions. What we will see in our text is the same pattern. First, there is the proclamation of the Word that comes from God by Jesus. Next, we see Jesus validate this message through the revealing of His majesty. And finally, we will learn of the expected response require by those who would come after Jesus.

### THE WORD THAT COMES FROM GOD

With a crowd gathering, we find Jesus standing by the Lake of Gennesaret teaching the word of God. The term Gennesaret refers to the fertile, populated area on the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee. The city of Capernaum is at the lake's northern tip. The district's name was at times extended to the sea so that the Sea of Galilee in that region would be called the Lake of Gennesaret.<sup>1</sup> This region included the areas that belonged to the tribe of Naphtali, including the eastern portion of the tribe of Asher and the northern portion of Zebulun and Issachar. The demise of the Northern Kingdom, Israel (722/721 B.C.), brought destruction to the Jewish population and the immigration of pagan foreigners; thus, the name "region of the Gentiles" came into use (Is 8:23).<sup>2</sup>

Luke uses for the first time in his gospel the phrase "Word of God." The syntax in the Greek requires one to interpret this expression as a subjective genitive, i.e., as the word that comes from God. This "word of God" is the gospel message. As in the passage in Luke 4:16ff, Jesus' message to the crowd at the water's edge is one of freedom for the oppressed and favor from the Lord through the means that God provides, Jesus the Messiah. We find Peter who at one point had followed Jesus and was a part of his ministry, and yet now, he appears to be on the outside looking in. Yet, while Jesus was ministering to the crowd he had his sights set on Peter. He used Peter's boat to continue his teaching of the "Word of God," but now he had a captive audience, one of his own choosing.

### APPLICATION:

Jesus brings us the word that comes from God, and the Christian believes that the message of the gospel is the foundation of the Christian faith and of His Church. And so, hearing the word of God is not an option among many that may help, but an absolute imperative. In this, we see that Peter needed to be in the boat, it was necessary for him to be confronted once again with the truth of the good news. It is not the miraculous alone that will bring us to Christ or establish us in the faith. We must sit at the master's

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feet and drink in deep the words that truly give life. May we constantly recommit ourselves to be students of the word, those who correctly handle the word of truth? If we rely upon anything else, we are building for ourselves cisterns that do not hold water.

### I AM A SINFUL MAN

The narrative now shifts; in a moment Peter will no longer be listening to the word of God, but will realize that he is standing before the Word that became flesh. This will happen not easily or without dramatic repercussions for Peter's life. Jesus begins by calling Peter to do something that on face value is foolish. As an experienced fisherman, Peter was sure they would not catch anything at that time of day when the fish were in deeper water, yet he obeyed Jesus' word.<sup>7</sup> In this response, he calls Jesus "Master," in Greek this word is *epistates*. In Luke, this word is used only by Jesus' followers and reveals his authority and might while the title, "teacher" was used in Luke's gospel only by strangers. Peter's willingness to lower the nets after a futile night of fishing seems to be based on his previous relationship with Jesus. He is willing to do what Jesus asks, even though it appears that he expects very little from this endeavor.

Upon the miraculous catch of fish, we find two responses by Peter. The first is that of astonishment; Peter and all those with him were utterly unprepared for the amount of fish they caught through the command of Jesus. His second response after bringing the fish on-board is the realization of his own sinfulness. Peter falls on his knees surrounded by fish and worships the one he thought he knew. When confronted with the holiness of God, man sees his own sinfulness and responds in fearful worship of God. Again, we find Jesus bringing Peter to a place he had no intention of going. Yet, this was exactly where he needed to be. Until he saw his utter desperation before Jesus, he was unable to serve the Lord in a right and fitting manner.

### APPLICATION:

Why is a constant reminder of our brokenness needed? Is it not as Calvin said, we can only see the truth when contrasting ourselves with the majesty of God. We never see this when comparing ourselves with the failures and faults of others. We must be willing to shine the light of God's word into our lives and take heart that our brokenness before God is needed to bring us to him, and only then can we be used by him. It is through our brokenness that the treasure we possess in these jars of clay is able to display this all surpassing power that comes from God.

### THE EXPECTED RESPONSE

In fear Peter responds to Jesus. He acknowledges his sinfulness and realizes he has no claim upon his Master and does not deserve to be in His presence. However, the Lord does not leave him in despair. He encourages him not to be afraid and now as Peter's Lord, he charges him with what his future holds. The result was that Jesus made the fishermen fishers of men. Jesus' teaching, combined with His miraculous acts, showed that He had the authority to call the men and have them respond by leaving everything.<sup>4</sup> The future for Peter would now be defined on what Jesus desired. This is the appropriate respond for all who would come after Him and acknowledge him as Lord.

### APPLICATION:

Do we view Jesus as our co-pilot or partner, one who helps us in our undertakings? These concepts never enter Peter's mind. While Peter was welcomed into a relationship with Jesus, when he said, "do not be afraid," the tenor of their relationship was now on the basis of the Lordship of Jesus. In this account, Luke is pointing out the expected response for those who hear the proclamation of the Gospel and are confronted with the reality of Jesus' majesty. This response is a heart of brokenness. By becoming aware of our sinful condition, we willingly leave all to follow our Lord. With this disposition, Jesus is now the one who determines our steps and equips us for the work prepared in advance for us to do.

- 1 - Robert H. Stein, Luke, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001). 166.
- 2 - Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall, Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992). 252.
- 3 - John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).
- 4 - John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-). Lk 5:8-11.

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**WHEN WE SEE THOSE WHO PREVIOUSLY STOOD FIRM AND SECURE SO  
QUAKING WITH TERROR, THAT THE FEAR OF DEATH TAKES HOLD OF THEM,  
NAY, THEY ARE, IN A MANNER, SWALLOWED UP AND ANNIHILATED, THE  
INFERENCE TO BE DRAWN IS THAT MEN ARE NEVER DULY TOUCHED AND  
IMPRESSED WITH A CONVICTION OF THEIR INSIGNIFICANCE, UNTIL THEY  
HAVE CONTRASTED THEMSELVES WITH THE MAJESTY OF GOD.**

**CALVIN, INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION<sup>3</sup>**

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