

# A Fisherman's Discovery

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*John 1: 35-42; Luke 5: 1-11.*

## **Seekers for Light.**

*Fourteen Addresses to Edinburgh Students.*

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## **Preface.**

God takes great interest in young men. Life is before them, and He would have that life devoted to Him. It was an angel who first heard the command, "Run, speak to this young man" (Zech. 2: 4), but, since then, He has often stirred His servants to specially seek them. It was an impulse of that sort which led to the delivery of the addresses in this little volume, and the Lord graciously blessed the spoken word to many a youthful heart.

The knowledge of this has led to their publication. That God may deign, by these simple unvarnished words, to win many more hearts for His dear Son, is the fervent desire, and prayer of the Author.

46 Charlotte Square,

Edinburgh, 16th December 1897.

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OR, HOW I FOUND THE LORD

## Chapter 1

### **A Fisherman's Discovery; or, Finding and following.**

I propose, dear friends, with the Lord's help, in this course of meetings to speak a little to you on Light, and to show in the history of the various men that will pass before us, the different ways in which the soul gets into light; because no two persons, I believe, get it by the same road. That is what makes Scripture so interesting. It shows us all kinds and sorts of people, describing them exactly as they are. It shows us different classes, and different conditions of soul, all passing through different exercises, and eventually, it shows us how grace leads each soul into the light.

It is impossible to over-estimate the value of light. It is a wonderful thing light. Scripture says, "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light" (Eph. 5: 13). The light shows exactly what the true state of affairs is; and, therefore, until a man is in the light he does not know what he is; and he does not know God. In fact, until a soul is brought into the light it really does not understand its true state before God.

Now, in the Scripture before us you see this brought out. We have elsewhere the wonderful statement, that, "Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3: 19). Light comes first of all, in the Person of Christ, for, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not" (John 1: 4, 5). Now, that is a very remarkable statement. You see if you bring in what we call natural light, or physical light into darkness, out goes the darkness. If this

room were in darkness at this moment, and some one turned on an electric light, the darkness would vanish at once. If you were in a coal-pit, and your light went out, you would be in darkness, and you could not estimate the relation of things. What would be the natural way of letting you see where you were, and what your surroundings were? Bring in the light; for, when the light comes in, away goes the darkness. That is the truth regarding natural things; but in divine things the solemn thing is this, that although light comes, the darkness remains; for the darkness does not comprehend the light.

But I hear you say, What is the Light? God — "God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1: 5). And what is the darkness? Man. Oh, no! you say; you mean he was in the darkness. No, I do not. Man makes the darkness; the darkness is what his own state as a sinner is. That constitutes the darkness, as we read, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" (Eph. 5: 8). It is a wonderful moment when a man gets into the light, and becomes "light in the Lord." I do not know how many of you have got into the light; but, if you never have got into the light hitherto, remember, you may get into the light tonight, and I will say this to you at the outset, you will never get into the light, until you get to Christ.

Remember, then, the light has come. In the Old Testament, I read, "God said, Let there be light, and there was light" (Gen. 1: 3). And I also read that "God divided the light from the darkness" (Gen. 1: 4). It is a wonderful moment in man's history when God says, "Let there be light." I do not mean to say that every man is groping after light, or that every sinner is creeping towards the light. I wish it were so. When God works in the soul, it is always light that the soul craves for. If there is an anxious man here this evening, he wants light. He is looking for light, and would like to get light. He longs for it then. I am in the dark, he cries; I would like to see. He is just like a young man I saw the other Sunday night, when I came home from a big meeting. When I reached my house, there was a young man waiting for me. He was a most exemplary fellow, so far as walk and conversation went. His greeting was, May I have a word with you?" "Certainly," I said and he came into my private room. A minute afterwards he burst into tears. "Oh, pray to the Lord for me," he said. "What is the matter?" I asked. "Oh! I am just a wicked boy; I am such a wicked lad; pray to the Lord to have mercy on me." Thank God! the Lord did have mercy on him. The Lord saved him, but he said he was afraid he would never be able to confess Christ, yet he made a splendid confession. To the first person he met on Monday morning, he confessed the fact that Christ had saved him; and in the workshop, to a man who was thoroughly godless, the first thing he said was, "I have received Christ." You see, my friends, when the light gets into a man's heart, it is a wonderful thing. Let the light into your hearts!

Well, the light has come, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. "God is light" — bear that in mind — and "in him is no darkness at all." But, since God is light, the light reveals the true relation of things. Light first of all shows where man is, and for that purpose Light came into the world. "That was the true Light, which coming into the world lightens every man" (John 1: 9). You must not understand by that statement that every man was converted. Oh, no! The Light was there, and was for everybody, but alas, nobody had eyes to see it, until God had wrought in the heart and opened the eyes; that is the solemn side of the truth. Sin has plunged us in such a condition of distance from God, that really we do not see who Christ is, or what He is, until God opens our eyes. When Paul appears before Agrippa he says, that the Lord had commissioned him

to go to "the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me" (Acts 26: 17, 18).

Now would you like to have light? Would you like to have peace? Light will discover to you your lost condition; for it exposes you. Yes, but I will tell you what takes place after the light makes manifest to you that you are a poor, wretched, hell-deserving sinner. The next thing that light will do, is to reveal that "God is love," and that He has given His blessed Son for your salvation. Light will reveal your guilt, and love will blot it all out. Light will make manifest your lost condition, and love will meet it. God is light, and God is love. Both are seen in Jesus.

In the Gospel of John of which I have read a few verses, you see that before the Lord Jesus came out in His public ministry, God sent out a man called John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, to bear witness of Him. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe" (John 1: 6, 7). Do you not think it is a wonderful thing that God should send a person to bear witness about light. I think if you will reflect, my friends, you will see what an awful state man was in, when it required that somebody should, so to speak, come and say, "I bare witness to the Light." If a man came into this town, and went down Princes Street, pointing, as he did so, to the sun, and crying, "Look up there!" "What is it, man?" the people would say. "Look," he says, "there is the sun, and light coming from the sun," and he keeps on saying that. Why, you would think the fellow was fit for a lunatic asylum. Yes, I hear everybody say, that man has gone off his head. Think of it! There was the Light in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, "and the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." So God sent a man to bear witness to the Light. "John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This is he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me" (John 1: 15). Further, the One who is the Light is the Son of God, and He is the Lamb of God. He is the One, who alone can meet the needs of man.

That is what came out in John's ministry, as he pointed to Jesus. A remarkable man was John; he was a little bit of the ascetic, a man sojourning in the wilderness, and living simply on locusts and wild honey. He was a downright, sterling, intensely devoted man. From one end of the land to the other he goes; he has but one message, one word to deliver, and he rings it out all over Israel. What is it? Repent! Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 3: 2). I tell you what it is, men, God bids you repent. Ah! sinner! if you have never repented yet, it is high time you did. Why did John say, "Repent"? Because he saw the end of things coming, when "the axe is laid unto the root of the trees" (ver. 10). If you lay an axe at the root of the tree, what is the next thing? Down comes the tree. The tree may have been good to look at outside, but when it comes down, what is often found then — that it is rotten inside.

That is a picture of man, who is very nice outside, but, at heart, he is at enmity to God; he is rotten inside. I tell you what man is like. I have sometimes gone into a shop, and purchased a beautiful pear. I have taken it away, thinking that it was beautiful, and when I got home I began to pare the skin off, and there was a little bit of a spot in it. Paring it still further, the spot got bigger still. I cut another piece off, it was more rotten still. Ah! you say, it is rotten to the core. Yes, and you, sinner, are the pear; you are the man. You are rotten to the very core; there is not a

good thing in you. I know that man says, I will try and do good, but the Holy Ghost says, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. 3: 12). You will have to learn that there is no good thing in you, and that nothing good can come out of you.

It is a grand thing when a man gets down on his knees in real repentance. Some of those who heard John, "were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." Others, self-righteous people, rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. At length, when John was upon the banks of Jordan, one day, he sees Jesus coming towards him, his heart swells, his tongue is loosed, and out comes the blessed truth, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1: 29).

In pressing upon sinners to get down and own their sins, John had never told them how they could get rid of those sins. But when he sees Jesus coming, he proclaims these beautiful words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The first man brought sin into the world, and this man, God's Lamb, was to take away sin. Have you ever had to do with Him? Have you ever come into contact with Him? This was His character; He was the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. And then the Baptist reiterates his witness, "This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me; for he was before me" (John 1: 30). He was an eternal Being; He was the Son of God. "And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1: 31-34). He saw Jesus, and, as we read elsewhere, baptized Him, and then saw the Holy Ghost coming down like a dove, and abiding upon Him.

You remember in the days of Noah, when the flood was upon the earth, Noah sent out a dove in order to see what was the state of matters, and in a short time the dove came back, for she found no resting-place. He sent her out seven days after, and again she came back, but this time with an olive leaf in her mouth. When she was sent forth the third time, she did not return, she had whereon to rest. When the Holy Ghost fell upon the blessed Lord Jesus Christ in the form of a dove, what had happened? For over four thousand years the Holy Ghost had been searching in vain over this earth to find a holy, sinless, spotless man on whom to come and abide. At length here was the One upon whom He could rest. He, so to speak, like the dove, had not found any place whereon to rest. And why did not Noah's dove rest? Were there not plenty of bodies upon which it might alight? Yes, the water was, so to speak, alive with carrion; corpses floated upon the water everywhere, but these afforded no resting-place. And the Holy Ghost had brooded over the world all these years, and had seen but moral carrion — man, a wretched, ruined, godless, sinful creature in himself. True He had come upon men like Balaam or Saul, but He left them. He had come upon men like David and Isaiah, but He left them. But here was a holy, spotless man, and He came and abode upon Him. Because Jesus was perfect, sinless, and holy, the Holy Ghost came and dwelt in Him. He was in His moral perfection the delight of the Father, the Lamb of God, the Son of God; and, more than that, He who received the Holy Ghost would baptize with the Holy Ghost. That is, He takes your sins away and gives you the Holy Ghost. What a wonderful thing! The One who can take away the sins of men can also give them

the Holy Ghost; can give them the needed power for the enjoyment of His life dwelling in their souls.

John gives this testimony to Jesus, and what takes place? Nobody followed Jesus that day, but on the next day John lost two of his disciples. Then, as he contemplated the Lord, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1: 36.) He does not add, "which taketh away the sin of the world." In contemplative delight, as his eyes fell upon Jesus, his heart meditated upon the precious Person of the Lamb of God, and he simply says, "Behold the Lamb of God!" He had learned to look upon the glory of the Lord. And what now? Two of his disciples left John, and began to follow Jesus. It was the right kind of ministry that; what I call the ministry of a Person. It is that which will lead souls to follow Jesus, and Jesus only. The ministry that attracts men to itself is not what is wanted. What is wanted is the ministry that attracts men's hearts to Christ, and Christ only. That is the finest ministry of all, and I have no doubt John was delighted when he saw the disciples leaving him, and following Jesus.

"Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? "Is not that striking? Now, I do not doubt, but that from glory tonight, Jesus is saying to each heart in this hall, "What seek ye?" Come now, answer it! What seek ye? What is your great object in life? Is it money? Is it pleasure? Is it fame, or is it Christ? What seek ye? What were they seeking? It was Jesus, nothing but Jesus. "They said unto him, Master, where dwellest thou?" Think! What is the meaning of that? He said, "What seek ye?" They reply, "Master, where dwellest thou?" Jesus' dwelling-place was at Capernaum, a very ungodly city. It is called "his own city" in the ninth of Matthew. What did they want? They wanted to know the spot where they would be sure of finding Him. What does He say? "Come and see" (ver. 39). "They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour." They spent with Him about two hours. Honestly, now, did ever you spend two solid hours with Jesus? Did you? Then I will guarantee that if you spent two hours with Jesus, when you came out you wanted somebody else to do the same. I never knew a man yet that really enjoyed the presence of the Lord that did not want somebody else to enjoy it as well.

That is the peculiar beauty of Christianity. You want to get others to share in its joy. The more you give away the more you get; the more you scatter, the more you receive. You cannot be large-hearted without gaining. Why, those who do not give, have not got much enjoyment themselves. I find people say to me, We never speak about these things. They have, so to say, got their coats buttoned; I know the reason why. There is nothing inside. If they had plenty inside, it would soon come out. The moment you get your heart full of Christ, you cannot keep it to yourself; you must tell it to every one else. If a man tries to keep lit dark, then be sure the light is very feeble. The man who gets right into contact with Christ goes at once to tell others, his nearest friend perhaps, his father, mother, sister, or brother. It is always the same story. You always find the heart that has got hold of Christ wants other people to know Jesus too. I am not addressing you as a preacher, for I do not profess to be a preacher, but I speak to you because I enjoy the presence and love of the Lord myself, and I want others to enjoy the same privilege. It will do you good and will not do me any harm, but give me great joy, if you get to know the blessed Saviour I know.

What took place in our chapter? "One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon," and what does he say? "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ" (John 1: 41). We have found Him; come along and get to know Him too. I do not know that he got Peter to go right away; how long he took about the job I do not know, but this I know, he never gave it up until he got him. Have you been converted? Yes! Well! have you a brother who is not? Then start tonight to bring him to Jesus, and give him no peace until you bring him to Jesus. "And he brought him to Jesus" (ver. 42) is what we read of Andrew. I never heard of Andrew preaching, and you hear little more of Andrew in the Gospels — he knew the lad who had the five loaves and two fishes (John 6: 9) — but when you get up into the glory by-and-by, and see the Lord giving the rewards, I think you will find that a big reward will be Andrew's. Do you not see that he was the means of the conversion of the man most used of God in those early gospel days, in bringing blessing to others. Look at it! I think I see Andrew on the day of Pentecost, when Peter is preaching, and the Lord using him to the blessing of three thousand souls, and getting them converted to God. I conclude Andrew would be rejoicing that he was the means of bringing Peter to Jesus. I cannot preach, he might say, but Peter can, and I was the means of bringing him to Jesus. Ah! think of that. Fellow-believer, you might be the means of bringing a great preacher to the Saviour. It was the word of a poor old shoemaker that led Spurgeon to Christ.

I was travelling in the West of England last year, and in the corner of the carriage there was a very distinguished looking English clergyman, with a book in his hands. I soon saw that it was the Bible. Presently the train stopped at a station, and the man sitting beside him got out. In a minute, in got a sweep, fresh from his morning's work, with his brush and bag, and as black as a chimney himself He hesitated, as he noticed that there was room only for one, and said he would stand. "Sit down, my friend," said the parson, and the sweep sat down between me and the clergyman. The train went on, and at the next station the sweep got out. A man in the carriage grumbled out that it was a shame to let a man like that into the carriage; it was against the bye-laws and rules of the company, and they ought to be prosecuted for allowing it. "Oh," said I, "there is nothing in a little clean soot; there are worse things in the world than that." "Indeed there are" said the clergyman, "there is far greater dirt and degradation than that." "What may that be?" said I. "It is the degradation of man's state as a sinner." "And how do you propose to meet that?" I asked. "There is only one way in which it can be met; it is by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ." So the poor sweep was the means of bringing the gospel into that carriage, and it came out splendidly. We talked on, and presently the clergyman said: "I will tell you how I was converted. I was a midshipman on board a ship, and when rounding Cape Horn on a very stormy night, a godly mate on board, in the same watch as myself, took me quietly alone, and spoke to me about Jesus. God blessed the words of the mate, and I was turned to the Lord through his testimony to Christ, on board that ship that night." "Thank God!" I said. "What happened then?" "I came home as soon as I could, for I had a brother here. I told him the gospel as clearly as I could, and, thank God! he too was converted. You perhaps would not recognise my brother, but he has been the means of sending eight hundred missionaries to heathen lands since that day."

At the time I thought that was just like Andrew. That is just the way the gospel spreads. If you enjoy Jesus, you will want somebody else to get to know Him. It does not need great preaching, or brilliant eloquent preachers to get people converted. I have heard of an infidel who was converted most simply. Perhaps you have heard of him. He did not believe in the Lord at all;

and he lived in the West Indies. Sunday was a very miserable day with him; it is ever so with the unconverted. It is always a dismal day for them. Why, it is the happiest day of the week for me; the other six days are uncommonly happy, but Sunday beats them all, I find, for one is usually freer to worship, and work for, the Lord. Not so did the infidel find his Sundays, for there was no racing, no theatre, or anything of that kind going on. Now there happened to be a godly minister preaching in a chapel near by, and some of the man's family went there. One Sunday he resolved to go to hear him; not exactly to listen to, but to criticise the preacher. It is the fashion; I do not mind if you do it; you are welcome to criticise me. I am here to warn you to flee from the damnation of hell, and the judgment of God. The infidel came every Sunday afterwards, and the minister thought, I must try to reach him, so he prepared a most wonderful set of sermons. When they were all delivered, lo, and behold! the infidel was converted, and made a happy confession of Christ. Well, thought the minister, he will be sure to come to tell me about it. but day by day went by, and he never came. The parson then resolved to go and see him. He called at the infidel's house, or rather, at the house of the man who had been an infidel, and was received most courteously. "I have heard good news of you," said the preacher. "It is quite true, thank God," was the man's answer, "I have got to know that my sins are forgiven," and he made a most happy confession of Christ. "I am so glad," said the preacher, "pray tell me which of the sermons was instrumental in causing this change?" "The sermons," said the man, "made not a bit of difference. They went over me like water off a duck's back." "Tell me, then, what has wrought the change?" "It happened one night while leaving your chapel. An old negress slipped, and fell upon the steps, and I just put out my hand and picked the old woman up. 'Oh! thank you, Massa,' she said; 'you love Jesus, don't you, my blessed Jesus?' These words went to my heart like an arrow, for I felt that this old black woman knew a Being, a Saviour, of whom I was totally ignorant." "You love Jesus, my blessed Jesus!" was what converted him. That is what will win souls for Christ.

The words, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus," tell us Andrew's sermon, and its effect. What a discovery these fishermen made. Andrew discovered the Messiah, and Simon discovered his Lord. I do not think he was easily brought to Jesus. He was a wonderfully natural man, Peter; and hence it is very likely that he was slow to go to Jesus. The last thing a man does is to go to Jesus. But Andrew somehow constrained him, and "he brought him to Jesus." That is just what I want to do tonight; I want to bring you to Jesus. "And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone" (John 1: 42). Very simple words these! But that change of his name was, I doubt not, the moment of his conversion, the moment of his salvation.

I have no doubt Peter thought it was an extraordinary thing for the Lord to change his name. I have always been known by the name of Simon, and He has taken upon Him to change my name. it Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone." Let us see, then, the Lord's meaning. The changing of a name always implied that the one whose name was changed was subject to him who changed his name (*see* Gen. 17: 5-15, Gen. 32: 28, Gen. 35: 10, Gen. 41: 45; Dan. 1: 7, Dan. 5: 12). At that moment the Lord told Simon, You belong to Me; from this minute you are Mine. I do not think Peter forgot it, though he did not take in the truth fully. It was sovereign love that spoke there; and it was a divine Person who spoke to him. He knew what He was saying, and He changed Peter's name. That is what takes place when the Lord meets the sinner. You pass from being a sinner to being a saint. You pass through a change of

name, just as Jacob, which means "supplanter," had his name changed to Israel, "a prince with God." What does the Lord say here? "Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone." And what is a stone? A bit of a rock! And who was the rock? Christ. Did Peter understand that? Perhaps not then; but you remember afterwards, when Jesus asked, "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" that presently "Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, That thou art Peter" [He confirms his name], "and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16: 13-18).

What is the rock? Peter? Not a bit of it! Christ is the rock, and Peter is the stone put on the rock. That is a very good place to be. I never knew a stone yet that sunk through a rock. And I never knew anybody that was resting on the Rock of Ages, resting on Jesus, that was lost. Have you become a stone? How do you become a stone? Peter tells us: "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious; ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2: 4, 5). From that moment when Simon came to Jesus, and had his name changed to Peter, he became a stone. Though he did not then know what it was to be built in, he learned he was a stone, and soon after he knew what the building was of which he became an integral part. That, he learned, was the house of God, built upon the rock Christ Peter was a stone, and so is every converted soul in this house tonight My brother in Christ, you are a stone; and Christ would like you to know what it is to be a stone in His building. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone . . . ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house."

We become living stones as soon as we come in contact with Christ, who is the Living Stone. This moment the blessed Lord speaks of when He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live" (John 5: 25). The voice of the Son of God went down into the heart of Simon, the son of Bar-jona, quickening him, and I think Peter became acquainted with a change within himself, though I do not judge he quite understood what was wrapped up in the Lord's enigmatic expression. Indeed, he was like many a person whom the gospel reaches. He knows a change has come over him, but he cannot explain it. He becomes an altered man, though he cannot tell what has taken place — I think at that moment when Simon found Jesus, he apprehended that there was a tie between his soul and the Saviour. The voice of the Son of God entered into the heart of Peter, and what he heard was this, "Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone." You and I are stones from the time we derive from Christ. Do you know what a Christian is? He is a little bit of Christ. The Christian derives his life, his righteousness, his grace, and his sanctification from Him. He lives in the life of Christ, before God. I do not think Peter learned all that at that moment, but he learned it afterwards. It was, notwithstanding, a wonderful moment in his history; but he did not follow Jesus straight off.

What we read just now, in the fifth of Luke, showed that the Lord had gone on His way preaching the Word, but I do not think Peter followed Him then. He was like many souls, perhaps there are some here tonight, who though converted have not at once confessed Christ. I

trust God's grace will touch their hearts, and lead them to boldly confess, and then fully follow the Lord.

Six months ago a young man came to me and said, "I want to thank you." "What for?" I said. "For the influence you have had on my life," he rejoined. "My dear fellow," I replied, "I never saw you before." "All the same, you have had an influence on my life. You remember sending me a book six months ago." "Oh," I said, "you are a student, and received my book, 'Young Men of Scripture.' Did you attend the students' meetings?" "Yes." "And were you converted then?" "I believe I was; but I made a great mistake — I did not confess Christ. Last night I heard a servant of God preaching, and he pressed upon us the necessity of confession, and I have come to see you about it." He did not follow outright at first, but now, he is a devoted servant of Christ. There are many cases like that.

But now let us look at the way in which the Lord leads Peter more fully to see the light, as recorded in the fifth of Luke. He was busy ministering the Word of God. "And it came to pass, that as the people pressed round upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret" (Luke 5: 1). Christ was a wonderful minister of the word. He always spoke so that the people could hear Him. He wanted now to address this large company, and He looked round for a place where they could see Him and hear Him; in plain language, He looked for a pulpit. I do not mean a pulpit, as we know such. A platform does as well, so long as the speaker can see the people, and they can hear him. That is the point. And He "saw two ships standing by the lake; but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship" (vers. 2, 3). It was a wonderful scene, by the side of Galilee's blue lake at Bethsaida, "The House of Fish," or as others put it, "The Place of Nets"; where Simon and Andrew resided (John 1: 44), and with their partners James and John, and their father Zebedee, plied their calling along with their hired servants (see Mark 1: 16-20; Luke 5: 10). Evidently, they had a good large fishing business.

They were at that moment mending their nets, when Jesus "entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land" (ver. 3). He does not say, Peter, lend me your boat! He took it. What did He teach by His action? Simon, you and all that you have belong to Me; I taught you in the first of John that you belonged to Me. I changed your name, now I must teach you something else — that all you have belongs to Me. Then, "he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship."

I think, if you take the trouble to trace out the gospel narrative, you will find, that what the Lord ministered, was what we have related in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew; the seven parables, beginning with the sower, who went out to sow his seed. That seed fell, some by the wayside, some on a rock, some among thorns, while other seed fell on good ground, bringing forth fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold. As the Lord poured forth that wonderful ministry, Peter was listening; and doubtless some of that beautiful stream of precious truth went down into the fisherman's heart. It was a lovely scene. Picture the blue waters of the lake of Gennesaret, the surrounding ships, and the "great multitudes who stood on the shore" (Matt. 13: 2), listening eagerly to this Prince of preachers. This was the most populous part of all Israel at the time, and along the western coast of the Sea of Galilee, and specially at Bethsaida,

the fishing population was very large. True, they were a simple people, and I wish you were just as simple in heart as they.

Well, the Lord ministered to these poor simple folk, and when it was all over, He, as it were, said, "I am going to pay you, Peter, for the loan of your boat." "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught" (ver. 4). And what does Simon say? "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing." That was experience speaking, and what would reason add? When no fish could be taken by us in the night-time, it is not likely they will be taken in the daylight. There were no fish taken there in the night, how then could you expect to catch them in broad daylight? That is what reason would say; but do you know what faith said? Faith is always obedient. Peter illustrates faith in his answer: "Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their net brake." Now some of you here tonight may say, I have been letting down the net for a long time, and yet I do not seem to get anything in it; I do not get a blessing. Never mind, let down the net again tonight. And if you let down your net at the voice of Jesus, there will happen in your case just what happened with Simon — you will get such a blessing you will not be able to hold it

But see what happens now in Simon's history. To him this large haul of fish revealed the hand and presence of God. There was no room in Simon's boat for all the fish, and he is about to make another grand discovery as he sees the fish hauled over the boat's side. I think his eye would brighten at the sight, and doubtless his first thought be, What a grand day's fishing is this; this is the best haul we have ever had, for "they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink." Then, as Simon stands in his boat, he forgets all about the fish, and all about his business; he thinks only of Jesus and himself. "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (ver. 8). What a strange scene! What led that man to go down before Jesus in that way? Why fell he at Jesus' knees? I will tell you. It was the light which burst into his soul, the light from God, which entered his heart. As he saw that wonderful catch of fish, the truth flashed into his soul. The light of God went anew into Peter's soul, and the deepest chambers of his heart were made manifest. He learns that he is in the presence of God. He learns his own sinfulness, though not a word was said about it, and he falls at Jesus' knees a repentant, self-judged, self-condemned man; and, I think, above all, self-condemned for this — I heard his voice months ago: He changed my name, but I never began to follow Him. Alas! I have never followed Him. He felt the sin of his soul doubly. He was in the power of real repentance and self-judgment.

Let me ask, Have you ever gone through a crisis like this? Have you ever got down at the feet of Jesus, confessing your guilt? If not, friend, you must. Peter was in his right place. Every Spirit-born soul goes through similar exercises. Scripture abounds in instances. Look at Job. Like all the rest of us, he was self-righteous, and self-complacent, till the light of God shone on him, and then see the change. For the first forty chapters of the book he is as busy as he can be justifying himself, but then he sees God, and collapses, saying, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42: 5, 6). Down comes the patriarch, and down comes this stalwart fisherman. It reminds me of another scene, in Isaiah's history, where he says: "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each

one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6: 1-3), And when Isaiah saw and heard all this, he cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts" (ver. 5). The glory of the Lord's presence broke Isaiah down, even as it did Job, and where the patriarch and the prophet were we now behold Simon, the stalwart Galilean fisherman. Where is he? Down in the dust before Jesus.

My friend, have you ever been brought down there? Thank God if you have. I have been down there, and felt Jesus lift me up. I have known, too, what God said to Job in his day, and what he said to Isaiah. And what was that? just what Jesus says to Simon here — "Fear not!" Jesus said to him, as it were, I am enough for you. That is what Simon got. He found that he could not do without the Lord, all unworthy and sinful, as he learned himself to be. When down in the depths of repentance, and self-judgment, and utterly broken down before the Lord, he learned His grace in a very special way, as Jesus said to him, "Simon, fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men" (Luke 5: 10). In effect He said, "I changed your name last time; I shall change your occupation now." When Simon first met the Lord his name was changed. Before that moment he was a sinner going about in this scene only anxious to catch fish, but now Jesus says to him, "Henceforth thou shalt catch men." Blessed, joyful mission!

But, perhaps you say to me, Have we all to give up our business to become Christians? Certainly not. That is not at all necessary, nor is it the point here. The picture before us here is of one who turns his back upon what was his world. I read now that, "When they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him" (ver. 11). They feel compelled to follow Jesus now. It is not a question of, must I give up my business, nor was it simply a question of turning the back upon the ordinary occupation. Peter, I have no doubt, says, I have done with the fish; I am going to follow the Lord. I am going to catch men. And he began to follow Him, although at that time his trade was more prosperous than ever.

When are you going to begin to follow the Lord? Do I hear you say, I should like to come to Jesus when I am getting near death? You only want to give Him then the remnant of a badly spent life. No, that is not what I care to see; I like when a young man comes to Christ, at the outset of his life, when he is fresh, and when he can give the greater part of his days to the service of the Lord. I sometimes see, as I go down a street, a placard with the words, "Retiring from business." I know what that means. The business is retiring from the man. A man never retires from business when it is prospering. When he thinks of retiring, he sells out. He is not such a fool as to give it up when it is prosperous. If on the wane, most likely he cannot sell it, so he then puts his notice, "Retiring from business," in the window. Business was not retiring from Peter the day he gave it up. Never was it so bright as when he turned his back upon it, and went out to follow the Lord.

There are some here perhaps who have never been the Lord's before Now, I beseech you, yield Him your heart, your life, your whole strength — yourself — spirit, soul, and body. Was it not a proper, and a beautiful thing, in this case that Peter followed Him? I think I can see him go home, and, meeting his wife, tell her, that he means to follow the Master. Possibly she inquired,

Have you caught any fish? Yes! Never had such a catch. And, where are they? I left them on the shore; I am going to follow the Master. And who is to keep us if you do that? How are we to be sustained if you have given up fishing, and are going to follow Him? "Come ye after me," were his words (Mark 1: 17), says Peter; He told me to follow Him, and I am now going to obey Him. It must have been a testing time for Peter as well as his wife, for at this moment in his own house "Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever" (Mark 1: 30). You see Peter was a nice, kind-hearted man; he took his mother-in-law into his house. Not many young men take their mothers-in-law in; they are often regarded as rather a doubtful blessing. That is the way of the world, my friend. But there she was, sick, and Jesus, going in, cured her, so that the fever left her, and she was able to minister unto them. It is wonderful to see the ways the Lord takes of putting the soul right with Him. Do you think that when Peter started to follow Jesus after this, his wife would raise any objections? I trow not. The Lord had by the saving of her mother's life won her heart. I think she would say, It is all right now. Stick to Him, cleave to Him, follow Him; do not keep any distance from Him, for I can trust Him now. He has shown me that He has an interest in me. That is the way God often works. The Lord came into Peter's house, and the wife's, heart became assured of His deep interest in all that concerned the house. This fisherman is called to follow Jesus, and to make his home circumstances easy, confidence is begotten in the wife's heart by His care of those at home.

Friends, He is a wonderful Lord you and I are called to follow. The Lord give you grace to follow Him. Who will start? But to find Him is one thing; to follow Him is another. You learn what it is to become "a living stone" as you come in contact with Christ, and you learn to follow Him when He eclipses everything else in your soul's vision. Possibly you say, If I were in different circumstances I would follow Christ. No, you would not. Your circumstances are the best if only you knew it. You know what reins are for; you know what they are to the horse. They keep the creature in order, and so do your circumstances. They keep you in order. If the banks are broken down, out comes the river, and spoils everything. If the reins break, what happens? There is generally a smash. Do you see? Do not you be troubled about your circumstances. You will find that the Lord will sustain you in any circumstances, and even make them the channels of His grace. Cleave to the Lord, and be devoted to the Lord. Give Him the right place in your heart here, and He will sustain you. "FOLLOW THOU ME" would seem to be His last word to Peter (John 21: 22). Has it no voice to you and me?