

“Launch out into the deep...” Luke 5:4

Light on the Rock (this message: 73 mins).

by Philip Shields

Abstract: Peter was told to “launch into the deep” – Luke 5:4. Do we hear King Jesus asking each of us to also launch in His deep? What is “the deep” for you? What does it hold? Where can it take you?

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Greetings, disciples of Jesus Christ. This is your fellow disciple and member of the Body of Christ, Philip Shields, as we study another concept on this holy Sabbath day. Remember on the Sabbath to keep it holy, for as come into the holy presence of God, we are in a sense, in holy *time!* God is with us, His angels are all around, and we should take that time with God as being very special and very holy time. Please turn in your Bibles with me to **Luke 5:1**.

There’s an interesting story early in Jesus’ ministry that many could feel is just another interesting miracle or story, but they miss the *message* from the story. This story is all about what God is saying to you and me – and not just to Peter. Let’s read it in Luke 5.

Luke 5:1-3

“So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, [Sea of Galilee] 2 and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. 3 Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.”

Jesus had something to say to the crowd, and frankly since voice acoustics travel well over still water, Jesus wanted to get into a boat and speak from off shore to the crowd. It would be like having a natural PA system, a natural microphone. I believe Jesus would have known Peter before this and it’s also possible that James and John’s mother – Salome – could have been the sister of Jesus’ mother Mary. It’s not conclusive, but there is some evidence that Jesus could have been cousin to James and John. Look up “Salome” in your Bible dictionary. It’s not my point in today’s sermon, so let’s keep moving. We know from Luke 5:9 that Peter, James and John – and perhaps Andrew, Peter’s brother -- were business partners before they were called by Christ into discipleship.

The various commentaries seem to concur – with 1-2 exceptions – that Peter, James and John probably knew Jesus to some degree, I think they knew Him very well by this time. Let’s continue:

Luke 5:4-5

“When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”

5 But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, **we have toiled all night and caught nothing;** nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."

This is the source of my sermon title: “Launch out into the Deep”.

But first I want you to also remember that there’s almost a replay of this scene in **John 21:1-4**. It was common to fish at night, for it was the *best* time to fish. In John 21, after the resurrection, Peter decides to go back to fishing, and again - at night! And once more, they catch nothing. Perhaps we’ll

look at that story later and tie it back to this one, for indeed I believe that story in John 21 does tie back to this one in Luke 5.

OK – it's a story, but what's it got to do with you and me? I believe you'll soon see, much more than we might at first realize. The Lake, the boat, the night time unsuccessful fishing, the blessing of our Master – all of it has deep spiritual meaning. It's not just a story.

Let's zoom in for a closer look at this scene. **I'm going to focus on the phrase: "Launch out into the DEEP" – and I pray you will hear this same Jesus speaking this same command to YOU, as clearly as Peter heard those words that day, almost 2,000 years ago! I'm asking you today: could Jesus be saying to you and me - -"Launch out into the deep", and if He is, what does that mean? That's what we're covering today. I hope it makes you think.**

But now think about what's happening here: Jesus was a carpenter or house-builder (**Mark 6:3**). He still is a house builder: building the House of God, the church. Peter was a professional fisherman who was willing to let Jesus come on board his boat and use it as a platform/stage and natural microphone. But after Jesus' sermon, Jesus interferes in Peter's career, Peter's life and Peter's expertise. Look at what happens.

Jesus doesn't ask – but orders this professional fisherman to "launch out into the deep and cast down his nets."

I don't know how many of you do any fishing. ***In most cases, the best time to fish is at night or early in the morning – and usually not too far from shore.*** In fact, a lot of the best fishing is near some rocky outcropping near the shore, or where the coastline is irregular. Seldom is the fishing as good "out in the deep", in the *middle* of a significant lake.

Look at what Peter says in verse 5. My paraphrase of it is that "Master, hey – I know fishing. And what's more, my crew and I have fished the best places, at the best time, *all night long*, when the fishing should be good. We went to all the best spots. We've caught nothing. We've been up all night and are dead tired. Now you want us to go out in the *middle* of the day, when fishing is not so good, and go to the deep. The deep part of the lake can be dangerous. Weather and lake conditions can change suddenly. The fish ain't biting and you're asking me to go where they almost never bite – cuz they're not going to be there! But, just to show you - - I'll do what you ask. Just tell me when and where you want me to lower the nets – and I'll do it upon your word."

Peter no doubt would have loved to have been ultra-successful as a fisherman – and probably overall he *was* a successful businessman. I'm sure he would have loved to have bragging rights to being #1 in the fishing business....to have had the biggest haul of fish than anyone around. And Jesus was about to *rock his boat!*

Now get this: Jesus wants to rock *your* boat, too. Now stop and think. How does this have anything to do with you?

What it means to be Toiling all night long – with no results

Peter also said they had toiled all night – with no results. Night time is the spiritual equivalent of the dark times in our lives. They had toiled without the Master's presence or blessing – and so their results were either empty or just the results of just human luck and talent. In this case, they came up zero.

Perhaps we have been toiling “all night” – in the dark, without the Master’s presence, guidance or blessing – in areas we desperately need some results, and we *too* are coming up empty.

Are you toiling on your marriage – and it’s just getting worse? Are you toiling on your efforts to find better work, a better job – and it’s coming up zero? Perhaps the Master isn’t in your boat! And perhaps you’re doing it in the night, instead of in the light of His blessing and His presence. Have you thought of that?

Then comes along King Jesus, who asks to come into our lives (our boat), but we’re tired, we’ve been unsuccessful, and we’re very discouraged - - and He says: “Now, let’s do it my way. In *unfamiliar* waters. In unorthodox ways. Launch into the deep and let down your nets when I say so.”

Have we not at times felt like God’s Spirit, or God’s word, is asking us to do something you’re not comfortable with? It’s something not easy for you to do. Are there not times when we feel we’re being launched out “into the deep” -- areas we don’t really want to go, to do things that aren’t natural for us, to meet people we don’t know at all? Don’t we feel like God is at times asking us -- or *making* us due to circumstances -- stretch beyond our comfort zones?

I want you to really think about this. We’re coming into the most troublesome times this world has ever seen in the next few years. You and I better be getting closer to God than ever before. We better be getting all our relationships closer than ever, if we can – our marriages, our families, our church relationships. Most of all, our relationship with our Lord and our Father, God Almighty. We’re going to have to know God very intimately to get through some humanly terrifying times that could start in even just a few short years.

Or it could be longer – but the point is, if we wait until we see things happening, it will be too late to suddenly be close to God. Closeness takes time. Sure, *forgiveness is instantaneous. But intimacy with God, closeness, knowing God and being IN Christ – these things take a while.*

Let’s continue reading in Luke 5:6. It’s heavily implied that **Peter immediately does Jesus’ bidding** and casts or launches into the deep after his initial raised eyebrow. **How about you and me? Are we quick to respond and launch into the deep upon Jesus’ command? Remember, *what* Jesus told him to do didn’t make sense to a seasoned professional fisherman!**

Luke 5:6-11

“And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and *their net was breaking*. 7 So 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 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

There were so many fish that both boats began to sink from the haul of fish in the nets! Can you picture Peter’s eyes?

What if Peter had refused to do the Lord’s bidding?

What if Peter had said he was too tired? Remember those who were bidden to the wedding supper but had one excuse after another why they couldn’t come?

Are we like that? Do we have one excuse after another why we can't pray today before hurrying off to work? Why we can't study this morning, or this evening – because our favorite TV show is on, or our favorite football team is playing? What's the "deep" for you?

Peter knew something extra-ordinary was happening, and he immediately realizes that Jesus is more than just a mere man. When our eyes are opened to the holiness of God, all people in the Bible react as Peter did: "depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Remember **Isaiah** - he said he was coming unglued, falling apart, for "I am a man of unclean lips" (**Isaiah 6:5**).

Remember **Daniel**: he fainted like into a deep sleep when just a holy angel appeared to him (**Daniel 10:4-9**). Several others felt they would surely die for they had had a revelation of God as well – like Samson's parents, Gideon, as well as Jacob after he wrestled with God all night. (And by the way, I hope there are times WE wrestle with God.)

Also note that **Peter progresses from calling Jesus simply "master" in verse 5 to calling Him "LORD" in verse 8**. The Greek word here for "master" is used only in the book of Luke and means someone appointed over you, perhaps an overseer, or even a teacher. The word for "Lord" in verse 8 is "*kurios*", meaning someone more supreme in authority, though even then sometimes the KJV translates it simply as Master, but in the original Greek, its *kurios*, and not the other word. But it definitely means something more. Much more. This word is used a lot in the New Testament – 751 times. And again, it means more than just "master".

How about you? Have you and I progressed from Jesus being simply our master – to being LORD of our lives? Is He already Lord of lords and King of kings in the way we live? We are being called to be kings and lords in the world tomorrow too. The "lords" that Jesus is "Lord of lords" too, is the body of believers! The kings ruling the cities will be the members of His body. We are the kings that He is the "king of kings" of! Have you thought of that? But He has to be our Lord and King in our lives now. We have to – like Thomas – come to where we see Him as "my Lord and my God" (**John 20:28**).

So, are we living right now, knowing our Lord sees our every action, hears our every word, and knows our every thought? Believe me, as usual, I'm preaching very much to myself too!

What would you change if we knew that for the next two weeks everything we do and say is going to be discussed with King Jesus, your LORD and King in a private, personal one-on-one meeting with Him? What would we do differently in the next two weeks if we knew that meeting was coming up, and everything we do, think and say in the next two weeks will be the topic, will be on the table for discussion?

Then you know what we each need to change! For indeed we shall have our own one-on-one with Christ. And in fact He does know your every thought, every word and every deed, so we might as well start doing and being what God wants us to be. Let's finish this story here in Luke and then come back to a lot more lessons from it:

Luke 5:9-11

"For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; 10 and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "**Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.**" 11 **So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.**"

Did you catch this? These professional fishermen, businessmen, had just hit a home run. They had just caught the haul of a lifetime. The bulging nets ready to burst from the amount of fish represented a windfall of money to them. And Jesus is talking about being fishers of men!

What did they do? “...they forsook ALL and followed Him.”

First note this: most commentators say this was probably not their first call. Jesus had invited them to follow Him before. On your own time, you can read the other times Jesus called them to follow him – see **John 1:35-42**, followed by **Matthew 4:18-22**, and then by this story in **Luke 5**. they are not all the same times and stories.

Sometimes we follow for a time, then lose heart, and go back to fishing – or whatever our comfort zone is. God is – thank God for this – patient and doesn’t give up on us, and He keeps working with us. This encourages me, for I’ve certainly lost heart from time to time and have drifted away from my King at times, just to have him cause circumstances to reel me back in. We’ve all “backslidden” from time to time, but God is gracious who doesn’t give up on His grace for His children as long as there is any hope that we can still respond. He will finish the job He has started in us (**Philippians 1:6**).

Even the great patriarch Abraham seems to have been called twice. Remember His father Terah had begun a trip to Canaan, but then *stopped* in a city called Haran – and died there. It seems Abram waited for his dad Terah to die, and then God told him again, to leave that place and to go to the place God wanted Him to be. Also Abram’s brother Haran had also died by this time. God wants you and – thanks be to God – He doesn’t give up on you as quickly as you might think!

Genesis 11:31-32

“And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram’s wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans **to go to the land of Canaan**; and [or “but”] they came to Haran and dwelt there. 32 So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran”.

So they started toward Canaan – perhaps by a previous call from God? Now notice the next verse:

Genesis 12:1 NKJV

Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family, And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you."

Finally Abram moves. This father of the faithful took a while to learn to live by faith, and that is why I can identify with Abraham so much. We’re all human, even Abraham was, and we can identify with the fear of leaving the known to go to the unknown. **Back to “launch out into the deep”. God may be asking YOU now too to launch into the deep, into the unknown.**

I don’t know what Jesus is going to ask you – or me – to do. But open your eyes, focus your hearing - - so when He does, it will be loud and clear. And when Jesus asks YOU to “launch into the deep” – I hope you’re ready to obey, even sometimes when it just doesn’t make total sense. Now don’t go nuts with what I’ve just said either though. **Be sure your calling to launch is indeed from Christ, and is absolutely clear – as it was to Peter.** And like Peter, worship God and be ready to obey – and then follow Him, even if it means forsaking all.

We're going to explore now what "launching into the deep" can mean for us. But first notice, that when God does the spectacular for us, it can actually mean changing our very direction. **Peter, James and John were being told to focus on a different kind of catch now. Not fish that would be killed, and would die, and then be devoured – but on *human* life that could be converted, preserved, and saved for eternal life!**

What does "launching into the deep" mean for you?

Launching into the deep can take many forms. For my purpose today, I'm identifying "the deep" as anything God is asking us to do that is very difficult for each of us. So what could that be for you?

Perhaps "the deep" for you is to forgive someone from your heart, right now – perhaps even someone in your family. Maybe your dad, your mom. Maybe a minister who deeply hurt you. Maybe a friend who stabbed you in the back. Maybe you're being asked to forgive LIFE itself and how bad you've had it. If that is where you hear God's spirit talking to you - to get out there and forgive someone from the heart, pray for her or him, bless her or him – then don't let another day go by without doing it. Let's be like Peter and immediately launch on out there. If we don't forgive from the heart any we have any ill will towards, we won't be forgiven either and we will have no future either.

Even you children: learn NOW to forgive others. I remember one of our daughters, when she was in kindergarten, had this 5 year old bully whom she said was punching her in the belly. My first reaction was to find out who this bully was and go scare the pants off him. But then I thought about it. So my wife and I talked to Rachel and said, "God's word says to do good to those who hate you. Why don't we bake some fresh chocolate chip cookies and you give him some cookies tomorrow and tell him you forgive him but wish he'd stop punching you?" So she did, and she had also written him a note asking why he was hitting her. This was good: he couldn't read yet! So my 5 year daughter had to read him her own note, as he munched on the cookies. Needless to say, her forgiving of him, and blessing him, turned him right around – and my daughter also learned a neat lesson.

Maybe the "deep" for you is that you're **being asked to step out in faith somehow right now**, or being asked to demonstrate your peace of mind by faith right now. Maybe you've been told you are losing your good paying job in a few months. "The deep" right now for *you* could be to let the peace of God come upon you, and to stand in the faith of God Himself. If you hear God's voice to cast your net where you know there is no job, cast your net at His command and then be ready for the great haul of "fish". You're being asked to demonstrate your faith by not letting your heart be troubled, but being in total peace. For some of you, that's not deep at all – you're so faithful and trusting. But you will have other arenas then that God can tell you to launch into the deep.

Maybe "the deep" for you right now is to tithe, when you can barely make ends meet *now*. I remember counseling with a man who simply could not afford to tithe. There was no leeway in his budget. We were working the calculator and adding up his monthly bills and there was no way. But he decided to tithe in faith anyway. A week later he came to me all smiles, and said, "Guess what? I just got an unexpected 30% pay raise at work". That covered the tithe and then some! He's a believer in tithing now.

Maybe God is asking you to launch into the deep by **being more open** about your testimony of your faith and belief in Jesus and in His word. In fact, I will spend more time on that later, because in Peter's case, that WAS the meaning of the deep: to leave his career and go catch *men*!

It could even be that, like Peter, we're being asked to place God *above* our own family. Perhaps they won't agree with your crazy new doctrines. Perhaps it's tough for you. Are WE willing to "do a Peter" here and forsook ALL and follow the Lord?

Or maybe you have heard that a new convert is ostracized by a certain community for his beliefs.

Maybe your "deep" is to befriend this one that no one else wants around, even if it means you won't be as popular in certain circles because of it. Jesus came to save the lost - - and really, that's everyone! He was a *friend* of society's rejects, remember? And if we're in Him, and part of His body, we'll do what He does: forgive one another, accept one another, love one another – and be members of each other.

A young man in the Body of Christ is a good friend of mine; pretty much like a nephew to me or an adopted son. He calls me "Uncle Philip". Well, he had some issues with his feet. Now when I ask Him about his foot, I say, "how's *our* foot doing?" Why "our" foot? Because I'm in him, and he is in me, and we are "members of one another" (**Romans 12:5**), and it was just my way to hurt a little with him, for when one hurts, we all hurt (**1 Cor. 12:26**). In any case, I wanted to rejoice with him as *our* foot is healing up. By the way, it has everything to do with the message I gave titled "**Christ is Manifested by His body**", especially **part 2** of that message.

Let's move on. Maybe "launching into the deep" is about pitching in to help someone who has been flooded out or who is the victim of some kind of disaster. But you don't feel comfortable around strangers. And you're tight financially this month and on and on.

It could also be that our Lord is telling us to **get our health** into shape. I know – it's hard for some of us. For some of us, that's the deep. We just don't have the time or the interest, but something is gnawing at you to get your health in shape. Some of us have to lose weight and exercise. We are the temple of His spirit. What kind of abode are we providing for our King? Jesus even said He and His Father would come make their abode in us!

Others are being told to **dig out the spiritual weeds in their lives** that are CHOKING the fruit God wants us to produce. Remember the parable of the sower? Cares of this world - WORRY, desires for riches and being forever busy – all that could be bankrupting us spiritually! **Read Matthew 13:22**. A complete refocusing of our lives could be "the deep" for some of us.

Maybe the Deep for us is that God is telling us to change our complete lifestyle. He wants more of our time. He wants us to make Him our #1 priority. I preach to myself too. He wants us to slow down, smell the roses, and go for daily walks with our Husband, King Jesus.

Evaluate your life. Our King talks to you and me too – unless we're so busy, or so sound asleep, or so distant, that we can't hear His voice! He's knocking on our door (**Rev 3:19-21**) – unless we're already in bed or have the TV blaring so loud we've tuned out our King! Sometimes even our king went to a quiet place for some quiet time. Forty days in the wilderness. Sometimes he went into the wilderness to pray, or to the top of a mountain. Sometimes til early in the wee hours of the morning. How about you? When was the last time you had a good heart-to-heart baring of your soul, exposing your heart, to your Savior? Isn't it time to do it? Isn't it time to seek to listen to what He's saying to us?

And I believe when we hear Him, there's a good chance he'll be asking us to launch out into the deep.

I hope we'll obey – and if we do, I know we too, will see a miracle.

REPEAT PERFORMANCE – John 21

TURN NOW TO JOHN 21, for we'll see that Peter and the disciples were just human. They had their weaknesses and fears like we do. Up until the crucifixion, it looked pretty certain to the disciples that Jesus was the Messiah who had the words of life. The crowds at various times were willing to make him King. Surely the kingdom of God was about to be set up, or so they thought.

And then their Lord and Master is martyred. He's dead. They saw Him die on the cross.

Their world turns upside down, and what do they do? Let's read it in John 21.

John 21:1-6

"After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself: 2 Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. 3 Simon Peter said to them, ***"I am going fishing."***

They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, **and that night they caught nothing.**

4 But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?"

They answered Him, "No."

6 And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish."

Sound familiar? It does, doesn't it! Sometimes our King has to remind us – we're in His army now, marching to HIS orders now. Why are we leaving our calling and going back to what we used to do?

Does God have to remind us over and over to remember our calling, to walk worthy of our calling, to honor Him for calling us, to do our calling? Yes, He does.

When we don't do what we're called to do, we're going to ultimately come up empty - - though we may work all night. Or worse yet, we may *appear* successful by worldly standards, and still lose everything. I preach to myself too. Remember Jesus said someone could have all riches, and still lose their own soul – profiting him nothing. Let's read it!

Mark 8:34-38

"When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, **"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.** 35 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 **For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? 37 Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 38** For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

What's the lesson here?

Do we want the temporary material glory of earthly riches and success – or do we seek true glory from our King and Lord? And don't forget, there are times our Lord may well bless us physically and

materially as well, especially if we place Him first. But whether we have much, or whether we have little, our brother the apostle Paul says “therewith learn to be content”.

It seems the King had to *remind* Peter and the disciples – “get back to your calling to be fishers of *men*, not fishers of fish!”

What does this have to do with you and me?

You’ve been called to be a disciple of Jesus Christ too. You’ve been called to be His ambassador too. You’ve been called to sing His praises (**1 Pet. 2:9**) and to bring His light into this dark world.

Or – with Peter - - do we weaken and say, “I’m going back to what I know....I go a-fishing”. And without the blessing of our King, we too will come up with empty nets and a cold, wet body that has worked hard, for NOTHING that lasts.

What are *you* doing that will *last* forever? Into what are YOU investing that will pay dividends for eternity? Where are you spending *your* time? Does God come first in your life? Do you speak of God openly and show forth His praises?

1 Peter 2:9-10

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, *His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;* 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy”.

We are NOT of this world – but are pilgrims and sojourners, called out of this world, for a new and higher purpose. I think we forget it and go back a fishin’, in the night, without our King’s blessing or presence, and we come up empty.

So I ask you again: ‘what’s your DEEP? What’s “the DEEP” in your case, in your life? If the King is with you, in your boat, and tells you to launch into His deep, I hope we will be like Peter and do it. And at His word, cast our nets where it sometimes doesn’t make sense – but then watch what happens!

Yes, you too have been called to be a fisher of men – and you too have been called to let your light so shine that people see your new good works and ... and do what? Glorify you? A thousand times no! “That men may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven”.

We’re all called to become FISHERS OF MEN

Let’s read about how others did this. They weren’t ordained. They didn’t wait and make excuses such as saying, “talking about Jesus is what ministers are supposed to do. I’m no minister. And besides, it would all be just a waste of time unless God calls them first....” --- and excuse after excuse, why we don’t do what Peter says in 1 Peter 2:9 – “that you may *proclaim* the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”.

I said we’ll see how others did this:

Do you remember the Samaritan woman at the well in **John 4**? She got so excited that she forgot why she went to the well. She went there to get physical water – and returned with no physical water, but

did return with the spiritual water that Jesus was offering! And she didn't keep it to herself but went back into the village and shared it with everyone. So there was a great harvest, because she looked past her shame, past her disgrace, and let God's spirit use her in spite of her handicaps. And for that matter, look at whom God used to tell the good news about the Messiah: a disgraced Samaritan woman!

YOU too can be that woman. I preach also to myself here. You too can look past your human limitations and ***look past the ways you have in your past been a disgrace to God*** -- and now let the power of God be mighty in you, instead of relying on your own goodness, your own talents, your own popularity or contacts. This way, any success is all from God. Just as Peter could clearly see that his haul of fish was not because he was such a great fisherman, but was 100% because of God's blessing!

The King loves to use the disgraced and the evil who repent – for it shows of His great love and grace, as he does that. Look whom He uses to write most of the New Testament: a man committed to the death of God's people, that vicious Saul, whom we now know as the Apostle Paul. Look who was the first one to see and talk to the risen Christ: Mary Magdalene, in whom were once 7 demons!

So don't think God can't use you – or won't use you. He can – if you just get yourself out of the way and go where HE tells you to go. In faith, in peace, at once, in obedience.

Another example of sharing that faith was the early group of disciples. Stephen had just been martyred brutally.

Acts 8:1-5

“Now Saul was consenting to his death.

At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

4 **Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.** 5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and ***preached Christ*** to them.”

We learn later how effective these folks who were scattered were.

Acts 11:19-24

“**Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word** to no one but the Jews only. 20 But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, **preaching the Lord Jesus.** 21 ***And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.***

22 ***Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem,*** and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. 23 When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart ***they should continue with the Lord.*** 24 For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.”

The flesh profits nothing, our King says (**John 6:63**). But when we bring people to an awareness of God, of salvation, of the coming Kingdom, of our opportunity to be ambassadors of that kingdom now – we're sharing in the gospel and in the opportunity to be part of the wonderful first resurrection.

Some of these things God is asking us to do may seem very, very uncomfortable for many of us. But then again, I'll say the cross must have also been a bit uncomfortable for Jesus to do for us, don't you think?

He says I suffered and died for you – and was resurrected by our Father that *you* may have life – and can you not share that message with others also? Can you not give glory to God when great things happen in your life? Can you not share with others how you're not worried when things don't go smoothly – in fact are going downright terribly in your life – you're not worried because Jesus is with you and all is well? That's letting your light shine.

I just wrote a grieving widow whose husband has just died. I told her she will see her husband again. I attended a memorial service to a business associate named Susan, who also died recently. At the service, they asked for folks to come up and say something. I got up and told the crowd that there is a God who resurrects, and we'll all see her again. You can bank on it, I said. And I also told everyone to not wait until someone dies to wish you had loved them, hugged them, encouraged them, or told them how much they mean to you. Do it now, I told them. "That's what Susan would have wanted", I assured them. I then continued, "MOST of all – come to know God". I told them, "Susan and I had many conversations about our faith, about God, about the Way – and please, if you wish to honor Susan's legacy, nothing would touch her more than to know you can say that she helped you find God in your life."

Afterwards, many came up and said they really appreciated the words of encouragement. Two people said they were going to try to start to pray and see if they could find God. I held their hand and said to them: "God promises, 'Seek me with all your heart, and you will surely find me'. I'll pray for you as well."

Brethren, we have no end of opportunities to let our King help us be fishers of men. It may be like launching into the deep for us to try to start doing this. It may be hard, uncomfortable. But it's downright numbing when you start to see results!

Why do you think I do this website? It's for the same reason! To help people find God

The point remains: what is "the deep" for you?

If you hear the Lord and Master of our lives saying launch out there - - and it's Biblical, and it's what we're supposed to do, and the King is with us in our boat – then let's launch into our deep, let's let down our nets and trust Him to do a great work by His grace, by His power, and to His glory and honor.

Brethren – enjoy the deep. Be at peace as you travel to the deep. And then marvel at the catch. And then – like Peter – get on your knees and *worship* our King – King Jesus!

Until next time, this is your fellow fisher-of-men saying Good-bye my dear brothers and sisters. Share this message with others . . . and launch out into God's deep.

