

**“Lessons from the Miracles of Christ”:
The First Miraculous Draft of Fishes**

in *The Youth’s Instructor*, Vol. XLIX, Nos. 28, 29, 30, 31, 32
(Jul. 11, 1901; Jul. 18, 1901; Jul. 25, 1901; Aug. 1, 1901; Aug. 8, 1901)

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**Sources for The First Miraculous Draft of Fishes,
in the order in which they first appear**

- (1) Wm. Arnold Stevens and Ernest DeWitt Burton, *A Harmony of the Gospels for Historical Study: An Analytical Synopsis of the Four Gospels in the Version of 1881* (Boston: Silver, Burdett and Company, 1893)
- (2) William M. Taylor, D.D., LL.D., *The Miracles of Our Saviour, Expounded and Illustrated* (New York: A.C. Armstrong & Son, 1891)
- (3) Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “The Two Draughts of Fishes” (1862)

Note: Spurgeon delivered this sermon in London on Apr. 6, 1862 and it was published in Vol. 8 of *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (1863). I have been unable to access this volume, so have used *The Treasury of Spurgeon on the Life and Work of Our Lord, Vol. IV, The Miracles of Our Lord, 1*, published by Baker Book House in 1979. This source is coded **Spurgeon1.**

- (4) Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “At Thy Word” (1882)

Note: Spurgeon delivered this sermon in London on Apr. 16, 1882 and it was published in Vol. 28 of *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (1883). This source is coded **Spurgeon2.**

- (5) Richard Chenevix Trench, D.D., *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord, Revised, with Additions* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1883)

Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and the Sadlers pointedly differ from one another.
- (e) **Light blue** indicates a passage which anticipates something in the Urantia Book.
- (f) **Red** indicates an obvious mistake.
- (g) **Gold** points out words and themes that will be treated in a later discussion.

THE FIRST MIRACULOUS DRAFT OF FISHES I

INTRODUCTORY

0.1 *Preceding Events*.—The following important events occurred between the working of the second miracle at Cana and this, the third miracle:—

XI: THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST’S PUBLIC WORK IN GALILEE. (*A Harmony of the Gospels* 42)

§36. FIRST REJECTION AT NAZARETH. Luke 4:16-30

§37. REMOVAL TO CAPERNAUM. [Mt. 4:13-16.] [Luke 4:31*a*.]

XI: CALL OF THE FOUR, AND THE FIRST PREACHING TOUR. (*A Harmony of the Gospels* 46)

§38. THE CALL OF THE FOUR. Matt. 4:18-22. Mark 1:16-20. Luke 5:1-11.

0.2 1. First rejection at Nazareth. Luke 4:16-30.

0.3 2. Christ’s removal to Capernaum. Matt. 4:13-16.

0.4 3. The final call of the four. Luke 5:1-11.

(NOTE: The working of this miracle was immediately associated with the final calling of the four.)

0.5 *Main Reference*.—Luke 5:4-11.

0.6 *Other References*.—None.

0.7 *The Bible Story of the Miracle*.—“Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draft. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word, I will let down the net.

[*Note*: Sadler used the KJV here instead of the Revised Version (as found in *A Harmony of the Gospels*) because only one Gospel account, in this case Luke’s, records the miracle.]

And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draft of the fishes which they had taken: and so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.” Luke 5:4-11.

0.8 *Place*.—Near Capernaum, by the sea of Galilee.

0.9 *Circumstances*.—This miracle was worked without the request of those who benefited by it. It appeared as a *result* of obeying Christ's command, “Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets.” The disciple-fishermen had already spent the night, the best time for fishing, in fruitless toil. The working of this miracle immediately precedes the final calling of Peter, Andrew, James, and John, from their work as fishermen, into the great and glorious work of becoming fishers of men. The miracle was worked under the personal supervision of Christ.

0.10 *Great Lesson*.—One of the great lessons taught by this remarkable miracle is that we should persevere under difficulties, obey in the face of obstacles, close our eyes to apparent failures in the great task of fishing for souls,

[[T]he night was the most favorable time for fishing ... (Taylor 63).]

and recognize divine foresight and providential leadings in every experience connected with the great work of catching men. The pathway of success to-day sometimes carries us by the scenes of yesterday's failures.

STUDY OF THE MIRACLE

1.1 *He said unto Simon, Launch out into the Deep.*—Christ had been teaching the multitude, but now he addressed one of his disciples personally. It is sometimes easy to accept truth which is spoken to a large audience, but now comes the personal test to Simon,—“Launch out into the deep, and let down the net.” To obey this command would greatly test the faith of Peter and his associates. The disciples, it would seem, had been fishing in shallow water, and were fearful of getting out far from shore; perhaps they were afraid of storms and contrary winds. But the Saviour said, “Launch out into the deep,” and then, “Let down your net.” Let us not fear to launch out into the deep waters to fish for souls when the Master has spoken. We may learn a spiritual **lesson** from this circumstance. Sometimes we go about our **work of soul-saving** in fear and hesitation, afraid to risk much in our efforts to catch men; but we must go out into the deep waters before we can expect great things, or be able to do a great work. The **Christian worker** must move forward in confidence, expecting great things from God.

1.2 *Let Down Your Nets.*—Often we toil all day and far into the night, and meet with little success. It may be for the purpose of developing patience and perseverance, and again it may be because it was not his word that directed us to the place where our nets were lowered. If this be the difficulty, let us listen and receive the message from above, and obediently make such changes in our methods of work and field of labor as may be required. In enabling the disciples to secure a draft of fishes after they had toiled all night, and failed, the Master gives us a beautiful illustration both of his willingness and of his ability to qualify us for the great and sacred work of catching men. He stands ready to help us even after apparent defeat, and upon the very verge of despair.

1.3 Another **lesson** to be learned from this miracle is to labor on, when the Lord has spoken, in spite of disappointments and unfavorable circumstances. When his Spirit directs, let not adverse conditions and unfavorable surroundings deter us.

“THE TWO DRAUGHTS OF FISHES”
(**Spurgeon** 449)

1. First you will perceive that in both miracles we are taught that *the means must be used.*

In the first case, the fish did not **leap into Simon's boat** to be taken; nor, in the second case, did they swarm from the sea and lay themselves down upon the blazing coals that they might be prepared for the fisherman's feast (S1 450-51).

This miracle teaches us the necessity of **employing every means** at hand in connection with soul-saving work.

Christ did not cause the fish to be miraculously washed ashore,

or to **jump into the boats.**

The disciples must first cast the net, and this act represented all they were able to do. Divine Providence arranged the rest. In this miraculous draft of fishes, the Lord employed the nets and boats, to catch the fish and bring them ashore. He used the usual manner of catching fish, simply adding his special blessing.

[W]e enter our solemn protest against that spirit which ... sets aside the **instrumentality** by which our Lord especially works. He will have you still keep the fishermen to their nets and to their boats; and your new ways of catching fish without nets, and saving souls without ministers, will never answer, for they are not of God (S1 452).

So let us adhere to the old way of catching men,

fishing for them individually, casting out the gospel net; only we must have the divine blessing attend our efforts if we would achieve lasting success.

However essential is human **instrumentality** to the work of saving sinners, we must remember that

2. Again, in both our texts there is another truth equally conspicuous, namely, that *means of themselves are utterly unavailing*.

of ourselves we are utterly insufficient,

however skillful or experienced as **soul-winners** we may be.

In the first case you hear the confession, “Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing.” ... What was the reason of this? Were they not fishermen

Were not these apostles experienced fishermen?

plying their special calling? (S1 452)

Had they not followed that vocation for their livelihood?

[*Compare:* What, then, was the reason? Is it not because there is no power in the means of themselves apart from the presence of God? (S1 452).]

And yet they toiled all night, and took nothing.

If we are deceived into depending upon our own sagacity, or relying upon our own experience, we shall meet with certain defeat in every effort to rescue the perishing and uplift the fallen.

W. S. SADLER.
(*To be continued.*)

THE FIRST MIRACULOUS DRAFT OF FISHES II

2.1 *For a Draft.*—The Lord never bids his servants bear useless burdens. He never sends us to a needless task. He first told the disciples to “launch out into the deep,” and then to let down their nets for a draft. When the Master says, “Go, work to-day in my vineyard,” you may be sure there is work for *you* to do. When he says: “Go yonder, let down your nets,” it is because his infinite eye has there beheld a soul in peril, and he would send you to the rescue. He never commands us to let down the net except “for a draft.” The soul that is led by God will not be directed to do useless work.

2.2 *Toiled All Night, and Taken Nothing.*—When the Lord is providentially leading us out to do a great work, to catch a net full of fish, there may be little difference between the appearance of our present circumstances and surroundings, and those which figured in our last defeat.

It was in these same waters that the disciples had toiled all night, and caught nothing; but now they were about to witness the miraculous draft. The Master knows where the fish are. We can see but a short distance below the surface. Nevertheless, we let down the net at his word, and trust him to do the rest. We may have taken nothing without Christ; but working *with* him, we shall not lower salvation's net in vain.

2.3 *Nevertheless at Thy Word.*—

“AT THY WORD” (Spurgeon2 461)

The disciples had toiled all night, and taken nothing; yet Peter said, “Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.”

This ought to be the rule of all Christians for the whole of their lives—
“At thy word” (S2 463).

This should be the attitude of every true follower of Christ,—

ever listening for the word, and acting when it comes.

Night was the most favorable time for fishing, but they had failed; nevertheless now, in obedience to the Saviour, and against every appearance, they let down the net.

2.4 Peter could have had no greater incentive for casting in the net than the simple fact that the Lord had spoken. The word of God is all-powerful.

“At thy word” the living creatures filled the sea, the air, and land, and man at last appeared. Of all this we are assured, for by faith we know that the worlds were framed by the word of God (S2 461).

It was by his word that worlds were created,

It is not in creation alone that the word of the Lord is supreme, for the Lord **upholdeth** all things by the word of his power (S2 461).

and by his word they are **upheld**.

Sometimes as we toil all night with sinners and wanderers, the dawn of another day finds us well-nigh disheartened and discouraged; but we must look up, we must not faint. If Jesus has said, “Cast in the net,” let us leave the results with him. His word has in it that divine power which guarantees success when we yield obedience. The word was spoken to Peter personally; it demanded his personal obedience. He did not linger. He did not recount the useless struggles of the night just past; he did not repeat that they had accomplished nothing; he simply obeyed the Master’s word. He cast in the net, and success rewarded his obedience. When we have toiled long and faithfully, it would seem without success, let us not cast about to find some new way of “catching” men; but at his word cast in the net again.

2.5 I Will Let Down the Net.—It is not enough to hear the Master’s word, or to profess to obey it; we must yield immediate, actual, and *exact* obedience. Christ had said, “Let down the net;” the word was spoken to Peter, and notwithstanding the remembrance of his night of fruitless toil, Peter says, “Nevertheless at thy word *I* will let down the net.” Oh, that we might learn always to do just as the Master commands, just as he directs! We never reap before we sow; and so on this occasion the disciples did not secure the miraculous draft of fishes until they willingly and exactly carried out the Master’s directions.

2.6 *They Inclosed a Great Multitude of Fishes.*—Note carefully that the multitude of fish did not enter the net until the disciples had obeyed the Master’s command, “Let down your nets for a draft.” It is not enough merely to launch out,—enter the Lord’s work; and to let down the nets,—put forth direct efforts for souls. We must do all this *in faith*; that is, “*for a draft*.” We must not expect to succeed as fishers of men unless we work in faith, expecting to see souls saved; and go about it in harmony with the Master’s directions, never doubting that our efforts will accomplish that which will please him.

2.7 *And Their Nets Brake.*—The net broke,—a suggestion that we are not to glorify the net, or show off the means, methods, or occasions which the Lord may choose to use at our hands in the work of saving souls. They are of no real value in themselves. It is the *word* upon which we are to let down the net, that is to be glorified,—not us, nor any of the means or methods we may use. The **Christian worker** is often compelled to witness what appears to be a breaking of the net. Difficulties, obstacles, and even misunderstandings among his fellow workers, cause things to appear as if the nets were breaking; but let the sincere **worker for God and humanity** rest secure upon the fact that the work is the Lord’s, and that it is his word that has given the command to launch out into the deep.

W. S. SADLER.
(*To be continued.*)

THE FIRST MIRACULOUS DRAFT OF FISHES III

3.1 *And They Beckoned unto Their Partners, Which Were in the Other Ship, That They Should Come and Help Them.*—Two ships went out, but only one had this remarkable, miraculous experience. The fishers whose nets were full to breaking called upon their fellow workers to come over and help them,—a beautiful illustration of how workers in one part of God’s cause should feel free to call upon others to lend a helping hand in times of special need or great crisis. Two may be working together. The one may have an extraordinary experience, while the other has a very common one. Yet both should rejoice over the special blessing of the one, and labor in harmony to gather in the harvest. One of the most deplorable forms of jealousy is that of a **Christian worker** who manifests a reluctance to help gather in the fish taken in another’s net.

3.2 *And They Came, and Filled Both the Ships.*—Here is an object-**lesson** of brotherly love and mutual co-operation. These in the other ship did not say: “They got the fish; it’s their net; let them get along with it the best they can.” Neither did they say, “The Master, by his personal presence and his special blessing, is paying more attention to that boat-load of people than he is to us,” and so become sulky, and refuse to co-operate with their much blessed fellow laborers. No; they came, and by so doing set a worthy example for every **Christian worker** to-day.

When God has especially blessed one of his servants, and calls another worker to his side to render aid, let the one who was last called be sure there is blessing enough for both, or he would not have been asked to come. The richest blessings are received as a result of giving and doing; and so when we are called to give or to do, we may be sure of receiving strength and blessing. If our work is to support the efforts of another, let us be sure that there will be enough fish to fill both boats.

“THE TWO DRAUGHTS OF FISHES”
(Spurgeon 449)

Sometimes we are in one boat trying to catch all the fish we can. There is another boat over yonder, and they are trying to do the same. We ought to consider them as being partners, and whenever our boat gets too full,

we should beckon to our partners in the other ship to come and help us (S1 456).

When the Lord has worked a great miracle for you, when your net is full of blessing, and your efforts for souls are crowned with success,

beckon to your brethren, and say, “Come over, and help us.”

Then when they come, and lend a helping hand, don’t try to crowd all the fish in your boat, but fill *both the ships* with the glorious results of the blessed work.

3.3 *So That They Began to Sink*.—The remarkable miracle worked on this occasion in the very waters where the disciples had toiled all night without results, so filled the small and shallow vessels of the Galilean fishermen that they began to sink. So with us: our Christian experience is sometimes so shallow that God can not work many great miracles for us;

too soon we begin to sink beneath the heavy weight of spiritual pride, selfishness, and moral lethargy. Heaven can not bless mortal man very much, because he is so easily lifted up. If God should work great miracles for many of his children to-day, it would be the means of their own destruction as well as exerting a wrong influence upon those who would behold their spiritual pride; and so, in his mercy, because of our spiritual weakness, our narrowness and shallowness of character, because of the great liability of our ship of experience to sink, Jesus can not perform many miracles among us.

3.4 Depart from Me; for I Am a Sinful Man.—

III: THE FIRST MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES. (Taylor 60)

With that quickness of insight, and that promptitude in yielding to the impulse of the moment, Peter saw the glory of Messiah's Godhead streaming through the miracle,

and fell at his knees,

saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (T 65).

[*Compare:* [M]ost certainly, this petition of his was entirely different from that of the Gadarenes when they besought Jesus to depart out of their coasts. In their case, their concern was for their property; but in this, Peter's anxiety was for his soul (T 65).]

Peter was quick to recognize the Lord's hand in the miracle,

and so we see him falling down on his knees

before the Master of earth, sea, and sky,

and imploring him to depart, saying, “I am a sinful man.”

Although from a different motive, the request which Peter made on this occasion was very similar to that of the Gadarenes at the time when the two demoniacs were healed.

[Note: Compare 168:4.5.]

They prayed Jesus to depart out of their coast, and he departed. He answered the prayer of those godless people, and yet the prayer of Peter, who prayed in sincerity, although perhaps he did not use the most suitable words, was unanswered. An immediate answer to prayer is not in itself a divine credential. God does not always answer prayer at once or in the exact words of the petitioner; but his delays should never be regarded as denials.

3.5 They Were Astonished at the Draft of Fishes.—

VIII: THE FIRST MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES. (Trench 134)

Everything in the material world is subservient to the will of Christ: all power in heaven and in earth has been given him.

It was not merely that Christ by his omniscience *knew* that now there were fishes in that spot.... Rather we behold in Him here the Lord of nature, able ... to guide and draw the unconscious creatures, and make them minister to the higher interests of his kingdom; we recognize in Him the ideal man, the second Adam,

Christ, as the second Adam, exercised complete and entire control over all the earth and every creature thereon.

The perfect obedience that the animal world yielded to Adam, we now see, even under the influence of sin, willingly yielded to Christ. The fish of the sea and the fowls of the air recognize him as their Master and their Maker. Man is the only creature that has said in his heart, “There is no God.”

in whom are fulfilled the words of the Psalmist:

But the humble, trusting soul can say, with the psalmist:

SOURCE

‘Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet,

...

the fowl of the air, *and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea*’ (Ps. viii. 6, 8) (Tr 139).

“LESSONS FROM THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST”

“Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:

all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;

the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.”

3.6 *Jesus Said unto Simon, Fear Not.*—Perfect love casts out all fear. Jesus knew that Peter loved him. The love of Peter was not a perfect love, for Peter had not a perfect heart; nevertheless, in his sphere, and according to his light, Peter could truly say, as he did on a subsequent occasion, “Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;” therefore if Peter loved his Master, and we can not question that the Master loved Peter, there was no ground for fear. To you and me the word, “Fear not,” has been spoken, as literally as it was to Peter. See Isa. 41:13.

W. S. SADLER.
(*To be continued.*)

THE FIRST MIRACULOUS DRAFT OF FISHES IV

4.1 *Henceforth Thou Shalt Catch Men.*—Christ used this recently wrought miracle and the work of the fisherman as an illustration of the work to which he had called the disciples, because it had been their daily occupation. The difficulties, the trials, and the triumphs of the greatest of all work—soul-saving—were here symbolized. Henceforth they were to catch men.

III: THE FIRST MIRACULOUS
DRAUGHT OF FISHES. (Taylor 60)

They were to catch men,
not as the huntsman catches his prey,
by driving it away before him,
and striking it down in death,
but as the fisherman does his,
by drawing it to him,

and taking it alive (T 69).

They were to hunt for souls;
not, however, as the huntsmen and
sportsmen catch their prey,
driving it before them
into the corral;
nor by striking it down in death;
nor yet by the cruel, piercing bullet;
but as the fisherman catches his fish,
letting down his net,
dependent upon Providence to fill it.

As a type of the soul-saving work, Christ
chose the net; for by this process

the fish are caught and saved alive.

The fisherman catches his fish, not by his
own sagacity. Circumstances contribute
largely to his success; he must use
judgment in choosing the right bait to
catch a particular kind of fish; he must
choose the proper time of day, as well as
the most promising fishing grounds.
When he has carefully regarded these
matters, it remains for him to keep
quiet,—to keep himself out of sight.

4.2 Thus in the life of a successful fisherman we have much that teaches us how to succeed in **soul-winning**. We should be sure to use the right bait; that is, the divine word. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth. The gospel net is the only soul-saving agency. Tell the story of the cross in plain, simple language. Spread salvation's net as best you can; then lift up in your daily life the One who said, "I, if I be lifted up, . . . will draw all men unto me." The fisherman keeps self in the background. Just as unnecessary noise would frighten the fish from the carefully-baited hook, so the demonstration of self is sure to frighten away many eager souls, who are hungering and thirsting for light and truth. Put forth every effort to do your work without a single thread of selfishness being woven into it; but if after you have worked in faith and labored in love, the Holy Spirit should disclose to your view threads not of divine origin, woven into the pattern of your work, do not be discouraged.

Thus it tells us, for one thing, that if we would catch men, we must use the right kind of net. It is to be feared, in these days,

that many preachers use no net at all.

They do not seek to catch anything but applause for their own efforts. Their desire is to gratify itching ears, by novelty, or wit, or humor, or originality, or the like ... (T 69).

4.3 In these solemn times when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people,

many so-called **Christian workers**, instead of the gospel net,

seek to use logic and rhetoric, and other nets, to catch fame, worldly honor, and vainglory;

while souls are perishing on every hand.

SOURCE

Then there are others who use nets with meshes so wide as to let every thing through (T 69).

“ LESSONS FROM THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST”

These nets are so loosely and carelessly made that the majority of the fish slip through,

and are not caught.

Such decry the uselessness of church organizations, and would make us believe that we need no nets to catch fish. Those have gone far beyond the Man of Galilee; for when he was catching fish, even by a miraculous draft, he told the disciples to launch out, and let down the nets. Universalism constructs a net so loose and broad and wide, that we might well wonder if any fish would ever be taken in it. To many persons, God is not very real; and religion is regarded as a code of general moral ethics, which almost any one can keep, and which it is unnecessary for anybody in particular to obey.

4.4 Again: there are those who lean toward ceremony and formality, weaving their net so closely that but few fish are caught. To some, the machinery of church government is of more importance than the souls it was constructed to save, while others go to the opposite extreme, and are like those whose nets are broad and loose. Such toil all night and catch nothing. Let us seek not only to launch out into the deep at the Master's word, not only to let down the net at his command, but to have a net woven in the looms of heaven. Let us study, work, and pray, that we may be workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth; that is, employing right methods of labor.

4.5 It is necessary that the word of truth, the gospel net, be wisely used in order to catch and hold the particular class of people whom we may be seeking.

SOURCE

“LESSONS FROM THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST”

But, for a third thing, these phrases tell us that

The Saviour’s words, “I will make you fishers of men,” suggest that

we must follow men to their haunts, if we would catch them for Christ.

we must take our nets, and go where the men are;

we must not wait for souls to come to us for the gospel, but we must take the gospel to them.

The fisherman studies the habits and haunts of the fish (T 70).

If we are to be fishers of men, we must study their habits, their modes of life,

and learn how to reach them in their own environment.

Soul-saving can not be learned in the class-room any more than successful angling can be taught in the colleges. The **Christian worker** must learn to save souls as the angler learns to catch fish,—just where the souls are. We must reach men and women in the every-day walks of life if we would become successful **soul-winners**. We can not catch fish by experimenting on dry land with a net, however good the net may be; neither can we expect to win souls where there are no souls to be won. We must go, like Jesus, to those who are lost, if we would be used as instruments for saving souls.

4.6 Be sure you use the bait for which every sinful mortal is hungry, the righteousness of Christ. Then when, by precept and example, you have preached Jesus Christ as the Saviour of men, those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness will be attracted by the Man of Calvary; for it is written that he who hungers and thirsts after righteousness shall be filled.

Launch out into the deep, cast out the net, and then *trust*—not in your own experience and ability as a **soul-winner**, but in the Holy Spirit of God, to do for you what you are unable to do for yourself.

W. S. SADLER.
(*Concluded next week.*)

THE FIRST MIRACULOUS DRAFT OF FISHES (*Concluded.*)

5.1 *And When They Had Brought Their Ships to Land.*—The disciples were required to forsake all, and follow Jesus. However, the Master sanctioned their efforts to exercise a reasonable care over their material possessions. The boats were brought to land; that is, they were beached, and proper arrangements probably made for their care or disposal. On one occasion the Master said, “Let the dead bury their dead;” and from this and other similar references, many have argued the uselessness of giving attention to temporal matters when called into the service of God; but this act of the disciples teaches us properly to care for the things that we are about to forsake.

5.2 *They Forsook All, and Followed Him.*—The Master asked his disciples to forsake all, and follow him. This was Christ’s third miracle, and at the first, where he turned water into wine, it will be remembered there were present with him Peter, John, Andrew, Philip, and Nathaniel.

Although these are not specifically mentioned, the record states that he was bidden, and his disciples, and they were the only disciples he had at that time. To a certain extent, therefore, they had already forsaken the world, and were following him; but now the great test comes,—will they forsake *all*, and become his disciples?

5.3 Just so will this supreme test come some day to each one who confesses Christ. It is not enough to be a professed Christian; we must be true followers of the Lord.

III: THE FIRST MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES. (Taylor 60)

They who would teach others about Christ must first be acquainted with him themselves (T 66).

We must have learned to follow him before we can lead others into a knowledge of his saving grace.

Many are in darkness because,

One may be like a **light-ship**, useful for **guiding others** into the harbor,

like **light-ships** at the mouth of a harbor,

and yet so **anchored** as not to be able to enter it himself! (T 66-67)

they are so securely **anchored** that they themselves are unable to enter the harbor into which they seek to **guide others**.

Many fail to “walk in the light, as he is in the light;” and in the last great day they will appear before the Lord, saying, “Have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” Matt. 7:22. But such, having perhaps pointed many to the gate of heaven, yet failing to walk in the light themselves, will not be allowed to enter.

VIII: THE FIRST MIRACULOUS
DRAUGHT OF FISHES. (Trench 134)

The Lord clothes his promise in the language of that art which was familiar to Peter; the fisherman is to *catch* men

as David, taken from among the sheep-folds, was to *feed* them (Ps. lxxviii. 71, 72) (Tr 143).

“THE TWO DRAUGHTS OF FISHES”
(Spurgeon 449)

II. Having, then, shown the likeness, you will be still more interested in REMARKING THE DISSIMILARITY (S1 455)

[contd] Allow us to say in the commencement, that we think the first picture

[The fishermen have nets—in the plural; they have boats—in the plural (S1 456).]

represents the Church of God as we see it:

the second represents it as it really is (S2 455).

Peter was a fisherman, but he was taken from among his fellow fishermen to become a fisher of men,

as David was taken from the shepherds to become a shepherd of the Lord’s heritage. Ps. 78:71,72.

5.4 *Comparison with the Second Miraculous Draft.*—

There is a **lesson** to be learned by comparing this first miraculous draft of fishes with the second miracle of the same kind, wrought immediately after Christ’s resurrection. John 21:1.

The first draft,

in which many nets and boats were used,

and in which a great multitude of fishes were taken,

represents the church of God, or heaven’s soul-saving agencies here on earth, as they are seen by the eye of man.

There are many divisions of the work, some apparently not working in the greatest harmony with one another. There are many boats into which the fish are gathered,—one denomination or one branch of the work does not get all. The nets break, representing the occasional apparent failure which we encounter in prosecuting the organized work of the Lord in the earth.

We understand that this is the way in which human eyes must oftentimes be compelled to view the Lord’s work; but in contrast with this,

In the next case, it is one. There are many men, but they are all in *one boat*.

They unitedly drag the net, and it is but *one net*—there is no division, it is all one (S1 456).

Now, in the visible Church the net breaks.... But glory be to God, the *net does not break* after all in reality, for though the visible Church may seem to be rent and torn to pieces, the invisible Church is one (S1 458).

the second miracle brings to our view but *one boat*,

and only *one net*,—

a *net that does not break*.

Moreover, the fish were not put into the boat; the net itself was dragged to the shore.

5.5 Thus we learn that while the eye of man may recognize many boats and many nets engaged in the work of catching souls, God recognized only one boat and one net; and while man may detect what appears to be the breaking of the net, the invisible net that God recognizes does not break. Not one fish is lost: all the one hundred and fifty-three of the second draft were saved alive.

SOURCE

“LESSONS FROM THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST”

We may sometimes think the fish are escaping, that souls have been lost; but God himself is managing the gospel net (we are only his assistants), and every honest soul will be safely brought by it to the eternal shores.

W. S. SADLER