

Peter's Experience of a Miracle

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon explores Peter's journey from failure to miraculous restoration through honesty and divine intervention.

Scripture: John 21:3

Topics: "Failure", "Miracles of God"

Description

Zac Poonen shares Peter's experience of failure and the miraculous catch of fish, illustrating how Peter, feeling like a failure after denying Jesus, decided to return to fishing. Despite his expertise, Peter and the other apostles caught nothing all night, symbolizing their struggle and despair. It was only when they reached their lowest point that Jesus appeared, demonstrating that God often waits for us to exhaust our self-reliance before intervening. The miracle of catching 153 fish serves as a reminder that honesty about our failures opens the door for God's miraculous work in our lives. Poonen encourages listeners not to give up, as their breakthrough may be just around the corner.

Transcript

In John 21:3, we read of Peter telling His fellow- apostles, "I am going fishing". He didn't mean that he was going to fish just that evening. What he meant was that he was quitting being an apostle - because he had been a failure at that - and was going back to fishing permanently! Peter had given up his fishing business some years earlier when the Lord called him. He had forsaken everything and sincerely followed the Lord, the best he knew how. But he had failed. He now felt that this business of being an apostle was not for him. After 3 1/2 years of listening to the most wonderful messages ever preached, by the greatest preacher who ever lived, he had denied the Lord outright - and that too, not just once, but thrice. He had had enough of trying to be an apostle. But there was one thing he could still do well - fishing. He had done that since he was a boy and he was an expert at it. So he decided to be a fisherman once again. Some of the other apostles felt the same way too. They too had forsaken the Lord in His hour of need and run away. So they would go back to fishing too, because they had failed at being "apostles"!! They were sincere men. They had appreciated Jesus' messages and their hearts had burned within them, when listening to Him. They had wanted to be His wholehearted disciples. But they had failed.

Your experience may be like theirs too. You may have heard powerful messages and been stirred by them. Your heart may have burned within you when you heard God's Word. You may have forsaken all and sincerely sought to follow after the Lord. Perhaps you too have made "decisions" time and again, after

listening to powerful messages. Perhaps after repeated failures, you may have said to yourself at times, "This time I am really going to make it". But you have gone out and failed again. As you look back today, perhaps all you can see behind you is failure piled upon failure, a thousand times over. Maybe some of you are so discouraged today that you are thinking, "It is no use. I might as well give up. This gospel may work for others. But it doesn't seem to work for me. I am too far gone. I can never make it."

Are you feeling like that today? Have you decided that you are never going to try again, because it's no use trying. Have you decided to go back to the world to seek a fortune or some empty pleasure there? Do you feel that it would have been better for you to have been a thoroughly worldly person who made no pretence of being a Christian rather than claiming to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus? Well, that was exactly how those apostles felt when they decided to go back to fishing. And the Lord permitted them to go, saying, as it were, "Go ahead. Try fishing and see if you can succeed there." So Peter and his friends tried all night to catch fish - and failed miserably. They had never had such a bad night in their entire lives.

Peter was turning away from the calling of God upon his life and God had to break him by making him fail. Those apostles had started fishing at about 6 o'clock in the evening. But Jesus didn't come to them until about 5 o'clock the next morning. The Lord knew that Peter was not going to get any fish that night. Why then didn't He come earlier - as soon as they went out - so that they wouldn't waste their time? Why didn't He come to them at least by 9 o'clock that night? Why did He wait till 5 o'clock the next morning? Why did He wait until they were exhausted, after having struggled for 11 hours and failed?

When Peter and his friends went out to fish that evening at 6 pm, they were not failures. They were brimming with hope. By 9 pm they hadn't caught any fish, and were perhaps a bit discouraged. But their outing could not still be written off as a "failure". By midnight they may have been quite depressed. By 4 am the next morning, they had begun to lose all hope. But they had still to become total failures. For that to happen, they had to fail some more. The graph of their self-confidence was going down. But it had to go all the way down to zero - to rock bottom. And that occurred only at 5 am. Then they were ready to give up. Then they must have said, "It's no use trying any more. Let's go home".

That's when the Lord appeared. That is God's way. And the Lord filled their net to overflowing. They had never caught such a good catch on any single day of their lives. That morning they caught 153 large fish. They had probably caught 20 or 30 fish on good days in the past. But this was a real miracle. No-one had ever caught so many fish in one day in that lake. This catch would go down in the record-books of Galilee! They would remember forever that the Lord did a miracle for them, just when they had given up all hope!

Are you at your "wits end" today, not knowing which way to turn, or what to do next, because everywhere you have turned you have experienced only disappointment and failure. Then you are probably very close to the place where the Lord is going to appear to you. Don't give up. He is only waiting for your self-confidence to reach a zero-point. If He hasn't come to you as yet, it only means that the graph of your self-confidence has not reached a zero-point as yet. He still sees some strength of Self left in you, which also has to go.

When Jesus finally came to the lakeside that morning, what did He ask them? He knew that they had no fish. Yet He asked them, "Boys, do you have any fish?" Perhaps none of them answered at first. Maybe He had to ask them that a second time. Then they answered, "No". They admitted that they were failures. They were honest. That was all that the Lord wanted them to admit - that they were failures. One of the greatest joys in my life has been to discover this glorious truth: That the main thing God requires from us,

at any point in our lives, is honesty. Then He can do a miracle for us.

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