



- Feel the Wind – Song Clip with scrolling lyrics.
- Explain the origination of the song.

Sometimes, I think we get the wrong impression that the Christian life is like an escalator—that is, we expect it to be an easy ride upward. However the testimony of Scripture combined with the reality of our experience and makes clear that it can often be more like a roller coaster. There should be no doubt that the general progression of Christian living and spiritual growth involves steadily increasing in Christlikeness. However, **living for Christ can be often anything but a smooth ride.**

If you are like me, or like most every believer I have known, it can be very easy to feel discouraged at times like these. In fact, if we are honest, at times we are tempted to give up all together, aren't we? Sadly, many people do. They are the ones who used to be actively involved in church, but now, although they could participate, they choose to do something else. What once seemed like a passion for Jesus Christ has been replaced by a hollow pursuit of worthless idols.

Because we live in a world thoroughly marred by sin, these spiritually tedious times will undoubtedly come, and persevering through them is crucial if we are ever going to develop a mature faith for the glory of God. In essence, what I am asking this morning is this: What do we do when our faith feels flat? How do we keep the faith when our spirit isn't in it?

Please look with me at verses one through five. As we read these verses take note of the nature of **this failed fishing mission.**

- Read v. 1-5.

There are three aspects of the failure of this fishing mission, which I believe we are blessed to consider this morning:

- 1.) Here we see unexpected failure.

-- Illustration – Flan for Spanish speech – Wonderful plan and preparation, horrific gelatinous disaster

Well, in a very real sense, we find a similar type of unexpected failure in our passage this morning. In the first place, in it we see a group of skilled fishermen. The fishing expedition we read about in these verses was no hobby. No, these men were trained professionals who had been fishing most, if not all, their lives. Second, they weren't newcomers to the Sea of Galilee. No, they were fishing in waters that they knew extremely well. Third, they were using all the right equipment. They were in the right type of boats for fishing on the Sea of Galilee, and they were employing the right kind of nets. In the fourth place, they had been working at the right time. Due to regional conditions, such as strong winds that routinely flared up in the heat of the day, nighttime was widely known to be the best time for fishing on the Sea of Galilee. If all that were not enough, in verse five, we hear Simon Peter telling Jesus that they had been working hard all night. And, finally, we can be sure that these very same procedures had resulted in great successes in the past. By all rights, in these verses we see failure where failure should not have been...unexpected failure, indeed.

Another interesting aspect of the failure we see in this passage is this:

2.) Here we see unexplained failure.

When I read this passage, I find myself wondering what went wrong. *Why* were these fishermen unsuccessful? Well, from a divine perspective, we know why—God had a plan to use their failure for good. As we read through these verses, we see just how powerfully Jesus used their night of fishing futility to teach them, and us, a lesson of the utmost importance. But I wonder what transpired on the lake from their perspective, because in mere human terms, we simply do not know what happened. For example, were the fish simply not being caught by anyone at all, or were other fishermen around them having grand success? The answer is, we don't know—the Bible does not say. It seems safe to assume that the answer to this quandary was also a mystery to these fishermen. They seem to have done everything right, and yet they still came back to shore empty handed. Thus, not only was their failure unexpected, but, worse yet, it was unexplained.

You know, I think for most of us these two factors combine to create the most frustrating form of failure imaginable.

-- Hanging up pictures last week – I still cannot figure out how my meticulous measurements went so terribly wrong.

Failure that we expect—that is, failure that we see coming—is certainly uncomfortable, but at least it is not a surprise. And failure that we can explain is annoying, but at least we can see how to fix it. However, failure that is both unexpected and unexplained is extremely frustrating...and that is why I no longer do for home improvement projects.

There is yet one more facet to the failure that we see in our text, and it is the most important of the three.

3.) Here we see failure, but not resignation.

Do you know what I love most about the fishermen in this passage? It shows up at the end of verse two, as Luke is describing what Jesus saw as He was standing there on the lake shore. Look at verse 2 with me. It says, “[*Jesus*] saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets.” Not only did Jesus look out and see what these men were doing, but I believe He was very pleased with what He saw. As He studied the behavior of these defeated fishermen, He didn't see people with their heads hanging in discouragement, nor did He see people who were ready to quit because they had experienced one dreadful night of fishing. What He saw was a group of empty-handed fishermen who were dutifully cleaning their nets. // He saw a group of people who, in spite of dispiriting defeat, were preparing to go for it again.

Let me ask you, how do you suppose this story would have ended if Jesus had looked out and seen these failed fishermen stomping away in disgust and forfeiting their nets to the sea? Do you think that any of them would have known the matchless privilege of becoming His disciples and companions? Do you think they would have been the men chosen by Christ to change the world? On that day at the lake, Jesus saw men of perseverance, and those are the type of men that He was seeking. Let it be known loudly and clearly that, just as it was on the day in Galilee, so it remains today: Our Lord seeks persevering people.

That is really one of the chief issues at stake in these first eleven verses of Luke chapter five, is it not? Perseverance. So that we might gather unto a fuller understanding of the type of perseverance in question here, let us look carefully at the nature of the command Jesus gives to Simon Peter and the other fishermen with him. In verse 4, Jesus gives this group of weary fisherman this instruction: He says, “*Put out into deep water, and **let down the nets** for a catch.*”

If we think about it, Jesus' command *must* have seemed utterly ridiculous to these men. First, He was asking them to do the very thing they had unsuccessfully been doing all night. They had already fished the same unproductive waters to which He was sending them. In fact, they had been up all night, and as any of us would be, they were exhausted. Not only this, but it was daytime, and everyone knew that the nighttime hours were the most productive for fishing. In fact, these fishermen were already cleaning their nets and putting them up for the day. All of these factors could very easily have combined and caused them to say, "Hey, Jesus, what on earth do you know about catching fish. Leave us be!" There is no doubt that worldly wisdom dictated to these disciples that doing what Jesus told them would prove completely pointless.

But, praise be to God that they didn't follow the advice of worldly wisdom. Rather, they humbly did exactly as Jesus commanded them. I love the answer Simon Peter gives in verse 5. He replies, "*Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.*"

You may recall at this point that we opened the message this morning with an important question. We asked, "What do we do when our faith feels flat?" or "How do we keep the faith when our spirit isn't in it?" In Peter's response to Jesus, I believe we see the answer to these questions. Peter certainly did not *feel* like letting down the nets again, did he? In fact, I would argue that doing so cut against his every natural impulse. I would further argue that he was probably even disgusted by the idea. As he said, "*Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything.*" (Read like a valley girl.) However, the next phrase is the key phrase. In fact, the next thing Peter says is so important that it is the title of this morning's message. He says, "*But, because you say so...*"

These words are the answers to the question at hand. Indeed, **these words are at the heart of Christian living that glorifies God.** Here we see Peter engaged in the type of perseverance God desires of us—regardless of what he was feeling, he obeyed anyway. I mentioned earlier that God is seeking people of perseverance. However, when we say that, we must recognize that not just any type of perseverance will do. God is seeking those who will persevere in one very specific way—in obedience to Him regardless of the circumstances. You see, this passage highlights two essential elements of a faith that brings honor and praise to God. They are (1) obeying His Word even when we don't feel like it and (2) submitting to His will even when it doesn't seem to make sense.

You know, in the course of human history, **God has definitely asked people to do some pretty off-the-wall stuff that they did not understand and they certainly did not feel like doing.**

- Noah and the command to build an ark (Genesis 6)
- Abraham and the command to offer Isaac (Genesis 22)
- Joshua and the command to conquer Jericho (Joshua 6)
- Jesus' mission to go to the cross
 - Luke 22:42 – *“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”*

We all know about these famous examples, but the more pertinent question is, “What does this mean for you and me living in Carmi, IL, in 2008?” Is God calling *us* to do something we don't feel like doing? Is He commanding *us* in ways that don't make sense? The answer: Sure he is.

- 1.) We are commanded to put others first
 - Philippians 2:3-4 – *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*
- 2.) We are command to go and make disciples.
 - Matthew 28:19-20 – *Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*
- 3.) **One command in particular sums up this point well.**
 - Luke 9:23-24 – *Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.”*

That verse says it all, doesn't it. It tells us that if our Christian obedience goes no further than doing that with which we are comfortable, we will not please God. That demands of us that we not be consumed with self, but that we be committed to sacrifice. It tells us that if Christian obedience seems easy to us, then we have not rightly understood or calling in Christ. It calls us to recognize that faith has very little to do with how we feel, but it has everything to do with what we choose to do. It has everything to do with how we obey. // It beckons us to live as people who, in every situation and regardless of the circumstances, say, *“But, because You say so...”*

This is what the Bible means when it talks about perseverance, and just listen to the importance this type of perseverance plays in the lives of those who call Jesus Christ Lord.

- Hebrews 10:36 – *You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.*
- James 1:4 – *Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*
- James 5:11 – *As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.*
- Luke 8:15 – *But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.*
- James 1:12 – *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

What, then, do we do when our faith feels flat? How, then, do we keep the faith when our spirit isn't in it? We **obey anyway**. We say in our hearts and demonstrate in our actions the same attitude Peter exhibited on that day on the Sea of Galilee. We say, "But because You say so, Lord," and we walk in faithful obedience to Him who gave His very life for us. We persevere for the glory of God. We put Hebrews 12:1 into practice, which says, "*Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*"