“NEVERTHELESS AT YOUR WORD…” by Al Diestelkamp

It had been one of those nights for Simon Peter and his partners in the fishing trade. They had worked all night and caught nothing. They had given up for the time being and were washing their nets (Lk. 5:1-3). Jesus “borrowed” Peter’s boat from which He taught the crowds who had gathered to hear Him. Afterward Jesus told Peter, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch” (v.4).

Peter, James, and John, exhausted from a long night of fishing, probably had little enthusiasm for Jesus’ plan; and besides, they were already cleaning their nets. Peter began to inform Jesus of their efforts and lack of success but quickly pivoted from his negativity by saying, “Nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net” (v.5). Peter’s professional expertise and opinion told him one thing while his faith in the Master told him the opposite. The result was such that they had to call for a second boat and crew to secure the catch.

Truly a great miracle occurred that day, causing Peter to fall down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” (v.8). Peter had previously seen Jesus’ “beginning of signs” when He turned water into wine at a wedding feast (Jn. 2:2,11), and had witnessed the healing of his own mother-in-law (Lk. 4:38-39), but it was this miracle that caused him (and his partners) to forsake all and follow the Lord (v.11).

I have to wonder how differently Peter’s life would have been had he stubbornly insisted that letting down the net would be useless. And I shudder to wonder how many times I (or others) may have used the “we’ve tried that before” excuse when some enthusiastic Christian proposes a scriptural method of seeking the lost. Yes, I know that’s not quite the same as arguing with Jesus, but if it means that we end up doing nothing in reaching people with the gospel, it’s similar.

Not understanding the “why” of God’s command or prohibition has been a problem from the beginning. Eve was well aware of what God had commanded concerning the fruit from the tree in the midst of the garden; but after hearing the devil’s lie, she “saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise” (Gen. 3:6). She acted on what *she* thought was harmless.

The Bible is filled with examples of people—even God’s people—trying to outsmart God. In fact, in almost every case of sin, the sinner acted on his own judgment rather than saying, “Nevertheless at Your word I will, or will not…”

Many people fail to see the harm in some of the things that God has clearly condemned. This is especially true regarding personal behaviors and relationships. Many young people (and some old people) try to justify sexual activity outside of marriage as harmless despite the warning that “fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). Most of the world is ignoring the inspired warnings against homosexual behavior revealed in the first chapter of Romans. Why? Because they think there’s no harm in such behavior. Instead of taking the “Nevertheless at Your word” attitude, most of society goes ahead and does what seems right in its own eyes.

If we’re honest with ourselves, we will probably have to admit that we don’t fully understand God’s reasons behind some things that He has commanded or condemned. God’s commandments are “just and good” (Rom. 7:12). I am convinced that they are for mankind’s good, whether we understand why or not. When we fail to see or understand the reasons for God’s commands, let us join Peter in saying, “Nevertheless at your word I will…”

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