

DEAD FISHES



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Scriptures Cited:

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Before we begin this lesson I would ask that you extend grace because this message came together in a slightly different way than the previous ones. Normally I am mindful to not speak much of myself in these lessons, but there is a bit of my own experience in how this message came to be. Even the title itself... "fishes" may sound a little different, but it is exactly what it should be. So with all that being said, as always the main focus is on the scriptures and what we can gain when we take our time and study what God's word truly says.

We will begin by touching on one thing from the last lesson "[The Prophet's Path](#)". If you remember, we looked at the prophets in the Old Testament, and some of the strange things that God asked those prophets to do. And then we brought that theme to Jesus (Him being the ultimate prophet) and the ultimate strange thing that He was "asked" to do. When reflecting on that lesson, I realized that God was personifying (to a certain degree) His relationship with His people *through* the prophets. For example: with Hosea, God demonstrated His relationship to the people by telling Hosea to marry an 'unfaithful' woman. With Moses, God told him 'Go into Egypt and deliver my people' - this showing His relationship to the people as **the** deliverer. So, these different prophets foreshadowed various aspects of God's relationship with His people throughout time.

Ultimately when I considered how all of this relates to Jesus, I asked myself “What is it that God was showing us about His relationship to His people through what Jesus did?” The answer that became clear to me is... it is His great love for us. God was showing us that He would be willing to die for us - and He did. This is one of the greatest things that Jesus personified in God’s relationship to us, His great love – to the point of being willing to die for us.

THE LOVE OF GOD

With the love of God as our starting point, we will now go to the book of John in chapter 3. Our focus is on verse 16 which hopefully everyone reading already knows. For a bit of context, we will start in verse 14 as Jesus was speaking and teaching, and we will continue reading through verse 18. Keep in mind God’s love that was shown through Jesus by Him being willing to die for us.

John 3:14-18

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: ¹⁵ That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

¹⁷ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. ¹⁸ He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

In John 3:16 we can plainly see the core message stated in this teaching from Jesus: God shows His great love for us by *giving* His Son. It is interesting that we see the very same truth echoed in 1 John 3:16, which says:

1 John 3:16

¹⁶ Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Similar to what we read in John 3:16, we see that 1 John 3:16 also clearly lets us know that by Jesus laying down His life for us, we can know the great love which God has for us.

DEAD FISHES

As we now get to the main direction of this lesson, I will share a bit of how I came to the title “Dead Fishes”. I am pretty sure that we have all experienced being up late at night and starting to doze off. And right as you begin dreaming, you wake up and realize ‘Oh, I just dozed off’. And you know that you were dreaming because you realize, ‘Wait a minute, my mind was just somewhere else’. Well, that is what happened to me...

As I dozed off, I saw a man on a beach. He was dressed in a robe and He had sandals on. He had a big net and it was full of ‘fishes’ – they were ‘dead fishes’. He was dragging this net along the beach away from the water. And then I woke up.

I thought to myself ‘Wow, that was really strange’. But I really did not think too much of it. I began to doze off again, but right when I was about to fall asleep I saw the words “**Romans 5:6**”. Now I am not one to have every chapter and verse of the Bible memorized. I know the scriptures more for what they say – not so much where everything is located. Though this was all a bit strange, I just went to sleep and did not think much of it - until later the next day. It was one of those times when you are reminded of what you dreamt the night before... Well, it came back to me: ‘Romans 5:6’ - I needed to look that up. So with that, we will go there and read together Romans chapter 5, starting in verse 6:

Romans 5:6-8

⁶ For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. ⁸ But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

When I read this, it brought to mind what I saw as I was dozing off the night before - the man dragging the dead fishes. I realized that the fish I saw, were "without strength". They were dead... and yet this man was carrying them. I began to think about the dead state of mankind (the death that we are in because of sin) and how it relates to the death that Jesus died for us. In trying to understand it from a spiritual perspective, I wondered "Why did Jesus have to die? Why was *that* His calling?"

The conclusion that I came to was that in Jesus' death, He met us where we were.

We were dead, and so *He* died. And then, since death could not hold Him (Acts 2:24) He was raised back to life. Now through the gospel, Jesus asks *us* to participate in *His* death so that we can also have life.

If we were to continue reading through the end of Romans chapter 5, Paul explains that sin came through one man (Adam), and through that sin came death - showing us the connection between **sin and death**. He also wrote that through the obedience of one man (Jesus Christ) and His conquering of death, many will have life - showing us the direct connection between **obedience and life** (Romans 5:12-21).

So I would now like to go through a few of the scriptures that this contemplation led me to. We will start with what is written in Hebrews chapter 2 beginning in verse 9 and reading through to verse 14. It says:

Hebrews 2:9-14

⁹ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

¹⁰ For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹ For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹² Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. ¹³ And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

Note: Verse 14...

¹⁴ Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

And so there we see it explained in Hebrews, that the death which Jesus partook in for our sake, was so that He could destroy all the power of death. The same is said in 1 Corinthians 15:54-55 "...Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Jesus came and He rescued us from death.

Next, going to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21, the scriptures make it even clearer. Speaking of Jesus it says:

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹ For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

So there it is again. We saw above in Hebrews that Jesus took on **death** for us. And here, we see Jesus taking on **sin**.

If we remember what we read in John 3:14, He said 'Moses lifted up the serpent'. And if we understand what that story was about, it was a story of the healing that was brought to the children of Israel after they were bitten by serpents. And the solution that God gave was for Moses to make a "serpent of brass" and hold it up, that whoever looked upon the brass serpent would be healed (Numbers 21:5-9).

So, in that same sense of the thing that is the problem (sin) - Jesus *became* that. He became sin, because sin was the problem. He entered death and took on death, because death was the problem. And by doing this, He made the Way for us to be healed. It is interesting to note that throughout all of the different epistles, the gospel remains the same. In truth, there really is *only one* message.

Going now to Philippians chapter 2, we will see this one truth explained in another way.

Philippians 2:5-8

⁵ *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*

Note: As we read, we get two things from this passage of scripture: One, it will explain to us the mind that was in Christ Jesus. And two, it tells us that this is the mind we should also have in us. So again...

⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

So, we see it there again, the death that Jesus partook in. But remember where that passage started: **"Let this mind be in you"** which is to be a servant, willing and obedient unto death. And if we keep going in verse 9 it says:

Philippians 2:9-12

⁹ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: ¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; ¹¹ And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹² *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

So, we see that example of Jesus being willing to die - and again, this is the mindset that we should also have. Christ is our guide and we are to emulate Him. And then this scripture concludes with... **"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."**

As I was looking at these verses, I realized that there are many levels of insight to be gained from these scriptures. And Lord willing, we will get into some of those deeper aspects in future lessons. But staying on the main thread of dead fishes, let's go to Mark chapter 1, verses 17 and 18, when Jesus was gathering His disciples.

Mark 1:17-18

¹⁷ *And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.* ¹⁸ *And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.*

Here Jesus is saying "Come ye after me". In this, we see that we are supposed to follow Him and be like Him - as we read before, letting the mind of Christ be in us. It is also interesting to note that after calling His disciples to follow Him, Jesus said He will make them to become "fishers of men"...

FISHERS OF MEN

Often times when speaking to people who are not yet in Christ, I encourage them to obey the gospel by telling them to "Get in the boat". Usually I am speaking from the perspective of Noah before the flood, because the only place of safety and salvation at that time was **in** the ark or "boat".

Here, we will look at salvation from the perspective of 'fishers of men'. If we think about fishing in the natural, in order to catch a fish... you take the fish **out of the water** and you put it in the boat. But it is somewhat ironic that when being fishers of *men*, in order to get someone **'in the boat'**, you actually put them **in the water**.

Catching actual fish involves taking the fish out of their old environment and bringing them into a new one - out of the water and now surrounded by air. When the fish are removed from where they were used to living, a death will take place. The fish will die when pulled into the new environment.

And it is similar with fishing for men. When pulling them out of the world and out of sin, there is a death that must take place. In this new environment, "...*ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God*" (Colossians 3:3). In other words, when you've been caught as a fish of Christ, there is a death that has to take place. Staying in the book of Mark in chapter 8, we will see Jesus speaking of this as He was teaching. Starting in verse 34 we read:

Mark 8:34-35

³⁴ *And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

Note: Denying oneself and taking up the cross indicates crucifixion and death. Then the command to follow Jesus comes after.

³⁵ *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.*

So there we see that in coming to follow Christ, there is this losing of the old life, in order to gain new life in Christ.

As mentioned above, there are many perspectives that we could view this from. Without going too deep, we see a few examples from the scriptures that connect to the theme of 'dead fishes' and how it relates to being in the water:

- In Matthew 12:39-41 Jesus says the only sign that He would give to the people is the sign of the prophet Jonah. As Jonah was in the belly of the 'whale' for three days (although in the book of Jonah it says He was in the belly of the fish)... Jesus said that this would be the sign. Being in that fish under the water, was a symbol of the death which He was going to partake in.
- And on another level, there is the parallel between Moses and Jesus. As God said to Moses in the book of Deuteronomy, 'I will raise up a prophet like you'... and since Jesus *is* that prophet, we will look at the first miracle of Jesus and the first wonder that God did through Moses in Egypt.

The first miracle or wonder that Moses did on Egypt was to make the **water turn to blood**. And the first miracle of Jesus was to take **water and turn it into wine**. Going one step further, when Jesus announced the new covenant before His crucifixion, we see Him take *wine* and say, "For **this is my blood...**" (Matthew 26:28).

As a result of the water in Egypt being turned to blood, we are told that the people could not drink the water, and that all the fish in the waters died. And likewise, as a result of all that Jesus accomplished, when a person is put *in* the water (baptized into Jesus Christ), that "fish" also dies - having their life now in Christ.

We will now look at one last scripture from the book of Romans to complete this thread of the dead fishes and why Jesus also had to die. Typically, the book of Romans can be difficult to teach from and is often misunderstood because Paul is explaining many deep spiritual truths, using long and intricate explanations. Scripture even lets us know that many people were having trouble understanding Paul's writings, even while the Bible was still being written (see 2 Peter 3:16). But we will go ahead and read Romans chapter 6 starting in verse 1. Keep in mind the things we have read so far concerning Jesus' obedience and death, which show His love for us in salvation. His death - so that we might live. So again, Romans chapter 6 and verse 1:

Romans 6:1-11

¹ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ² God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? ³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

⁴ Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: ⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

⁷ For he that is dead is freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: ⁹ Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. ¹⁰ For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

¹¹ Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And I just think that is a beautiful way of summing up this whole lesson. Hopefully you are now beginning to see the bigger picture of how through death, Jesus rescued us "dead fishes" from our dead state - giving us life through His resurrection.

I also wanted to note something interesting in verse 4, where it says "Therefore we are buried with him..." - If we look at most translations of this verse, it reads "Therefore we *were* buried with him..." This detail gives context and sheds light on *who* the book of Romans was written to (note that Paul says "we" - "We *were* buried"). This lets us know that the people he was writing to had already been buried with Jesus, by baptism into death - just as Paul himself had been buried (Acts 9:18; 22:16). And as Christ was raised, we also should walk in the newness of life. That is where we participate and are planted in the likeness of His death - it is through baptism.

So, I think it's pretty plainly spelled out. In the fulfillment of Christ's 'strange mission', God was showing His great love for His people. As Paul also wrote to the church in Rome, "*He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*" (Romans 8:32)

And as mentioned above, the death of Jesus was foreshadowed in the Old Testament with Jonah in the fish for three days - in the water, but *in* the Big Fish. Jesus died and was buried for three days. And for us on the other side of the cross today, we are now told to participate in His death by being baptized into Him.

Hopefully this lesson has shed some light on the importance of Christ's death and the ways that it relates to our own. As we read throughout the scriptures, we are called to participate - participate in His suffering, participate in His death - that we might participate in His life. So with that, if you are someone today who has not yet partaken in the death of Jesus through baptism in His name, feel free to [contact us](#) and we will help you in any way possible to take your first steps in becoming a follower of Christ.

Ezekiel 47:9

⁹And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh.