



Lake Wales
Church of Christ
463 N. Buck Moore Rd.
Lake Wales, FL 33898
www.lakewalescoc.com
(863) 676-4114

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Tower of Strength

**“The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”**

—Proverbs 18:10

They Were Mending Their Nets

Matthew 4:21 says,

Jesus saw two brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets.

When one considers the work of an ancient fisherman, mending the nets must have been an annoying aspect of his day.

The fisherman would have been tired from many hours of fishing, and would've rather gone home and relax than stay by the shore mending the nets.

It would have been intricate work, going through each square of the mesh, finding the broken threads and stitching them back together. I have watched my neighbor, a quasi-commercial fisherman, mend his cast nets, and it takes him hours with a needle and thread, sitting under a shade tree with his eyeglasses perched on the end of his nose.

For the ancient fisherman, it also would have been constant work that was never truly finished, for each time the nets were used, the nets would snarl and tear. This does not indicate some weakness of the

nets, or mishandling of the nets on the part of the fisherman. It was, quite simply, a natural consequence of using them to catch fish.

Even though mending the nets is not an active part of catching fish, it is essential for being a successful fisherman; at least, for more than the first week! If the nets are not kept up with, they will render the fisherman less effective in his work. Fish will begin slipping through the holes. The holes will get bigger, and large catches will begin escaping. Soon the nets will be so tattered that the fisherman will begin wasting almost all of his time.

And so it is with almost every profession. The cook must sharpen his knives, the carpenter must organize his tools, the teamster must lubricate his rig, the rancher must ride his fences.

Perhaps there is a lesson from this type of work.

Ourselves. We all need to take time at the end of every few days, to mend the little tears and holes that have crept in throughout a day's activities. We must maintain ourselves if we are to be effective for more than a day or two. While we don't want to take leisure to an extreme, we might think of it as keeping ourselves ready and efficient in our future tasks. Don't be afraid to veg out, to rest (Mark 2:27), to devote time to prayer (Luke 6:12), to read a book, to study the Bible (Psa. 63:6, 119:148), to watch a little TV.

Our families. Spouses and children do not run on autopilot. Even the best clock must be wound from time to time. Get a babysitter and take your wife on a date. Schedule a special activity with the children. Eliminate distractions such as the newspaper and TV, and eat dinner together around a common table discussing the day's events.

Our congregations. Would that the membership of the local church remained constant without attention! But, it does not. Holes appear in pews, sheep go astray, once-strong individuals have struggles. Weekly and monthly maintenance must be performed by reviewing attendance records, touching base with people, making phone calls and visits, sending notes of encouragement.

—John Guzzetta

Lost

If we are to believe God's word at all, there are billions of souls walking in this world today who are lost. That's not a fact that we like to cheerily meditate upon. Nevertheless, it is true. What is the real significance of living in a "lost" condition?

The word "lost" in Biblical Greek, *apollumi*, has approximately the same range as in English—it can refer to things that go missing ("I lost my wallet" or "I got lost in the forest"), or it can refer to things that perish ("the ship was lost beneath the waves").

In Matthew 15:24, Jesus spoke of the "lost sheep of Israel." In Luke 19:10 He said that "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." In Luke 15, He speaks of a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a son who "was lost and has been found." When an individual is lost, he wanders aimlessly in the world. He has no direction, no meaning, no answers, no roots in the past and no hope in the future. He lacks the lamp which lights the path (Psalm 119:105). Not all roads are leading the same way, and many do not have the map to get on the right road. To be lost is to need direction desperately.

Actually, in Biblical Greek, the predominating emphasis is on the latter meaning, much more so than in English. Of the 94 times *apollumi* appears in the NT, it takes the latter meaning—in the active voice "to destroy or kill" or in the middle voice "to perish or die"—61 times. That's about 75% of the time. In 2 Peter 3:9, the Lord is "not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance." In 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul says "the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing"; and in 4:3, that if the gospel is veiled, "it is veiled to those who are perishing." And of course, John 3:16 says, "whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." Let us not forget that one of Satan's names, revealed in Revelation 9:11, is "Apollyon," in other words, "the Destroyer."

Thus, to be lost is to be on the verge of perishing. When an individual commits sin, He dies spiritually. He has been separated from God by

his sin, and if that condition should go unchanged when his soul is separated from the body and goes seeking a home with God in heaven, he will be cast away, eternally lost.

What an awful shame to think of a world full of lost people. Because no one has to be lost! As quoted above, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

No one is lost because of the number or terribleness of his sins. Paul identified himself as the “chief of sinners” and still found salvation. There were members of the Corinthian church who were former drunkards, thieves, homosexuals, and adulterers. Many of those who shouted “crucify” at the trials of Jesus were saved (if there were ever an unforgivable crime, that should have been it)!

No one is lost because God wants them to be lost. He sacrificed His Son to save! But people reject the offering of salvation.

No one is lost because he is following God’s word. People are lost because they are following something else—whether their untrained conscience, a false book, or an unsound preacher. There is a story told of a teenage girl who was driving her car in a blizzard and became lost. She remembered something her dad had once told her: “If you ever get lost in a blizzard, wait for a snow plow, and follow it.” Pretty soon a snow plow came by, and she started to follow it. She followed the plow for about 45 minutes. Finally, the driver of the plow stopped, got out, walked back to her car, and asked her what she was doing. She explained that her dad told her that if she ever got lost in a blizzard, to follow a plow. The driver said, “Well, I’m done with the Wal-Mart parking lot, and I guess you can follow me over to K-Mart!” You’ve got to follow the right Man to find your way home.

Be found. Be saved. Be lost no longer!

—John Guzzetta

Quote of the Week:

“He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else.”

—Ben Franklin