

Following Christ (1907)

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon emphasizes that the primary calling of every believer is to faithfully follow Christ, focusing on personal salvation and holy living rather than being distracted by curiosity about others.

Scripture: John 21:22, Acts 2:37, Matthew 16:26, Hebrews 12:2

Topics: "Discipleship", "Christian Living", "Faith and Salvation"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon calls believers to focus on the essential Christian calling of following Christ wholeheartedly. He warns against distractions caused by curiosity about others and encourages steadfastness in personal faith and service. Spurgeon emphasizes that true discipleship involves prioritizing salvation, pursuing holiness, and faithfully fulfilling God's unique calling for each individual.

Transcript

"What is that to you? You follow Me." John 21:22.

[Other sermons by Mr. Spurgeon on FOLLOWING CHRIST are as follows—#403, Volume 7—THE BROKEN COLUMN; #1530, Volume 26—FOLLOWING THE RISEN CHRIST; #2273, Volume 38—FICKLE FOLLOWERS and #2324, Volume 39—THE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.]

ONLY a moment or two before, our Lord had said to Peter, "Follow Me," yet He found it necessary to repeat that command from which it is clear that the Lord Jesus, Himself, might be here and might speak to us in the most plain terms and yet His words might not make the impression upon our hearts that we sometimes think they would. Yet even though Jesus Christ Himself should speak to us, we should not feel the full force of His words unless the Spirit of God applied them to our hearts. This reflection may teach us not to indulge in idle regrets that Jesus is not here now in bodily Presence, or to say, "I wish that I had been living on the earth in Christ's day." The fact is, if the Holy Spirit shall bless the word that is spoken to you by the humblest Christian alive, it may be quite as useful to your soul as though the Master, Himself, had been here and the Truth of God had fallen upon your ears direct from His own lips!

Peter's mind seems to have been distracted from the command to follow the Savior by a very simple incident. "Turning about," it is said, he saw John following—and the sight of his fellow disciple awakened his curiosity and he put to the Master the speculative inquiry as to John's future, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" To which the Master replied, in the words of my text, "What is that to you? You follow Me." This

teaches us that the presence of even the holiest man may sometimes call us off from following our Master. It is certain that thousands of serious impressions have been lost through idle chit-chat after sermons. The Sabbath's services lose many of their benefits to us through the common habit of talking on the way home from a place of worship about anything and everything rather than the one subject that ought to engross our minds. Some of the best people in the world may, involuntarily, turn our minds from that line of thought in which the Savior would have them run, so let us constantly pray, "O Lord, keep our eyes, keep our ears, keep our hearts from wandering away from You for, if not, we shall soon forget the sound even of Your own voice and the impressions which may have been made upon us!"

I think we have greater reason to ask the Lord to impress more deeply upon us the Truth of God we have received than to ask Him to give us more Truth, for what we already know might suffice us if we did but know it better. And if we kept in mind the things which we have already heard, we might almost be satisfied even if we heard no more. One sermon a Sunday, really cut into the soul as with the point of a diamond, would be of more real, permanent value to us than two sermons which we hear, but speedily forget because we happen to meet an acquaintance on our way home, or have our thoughts diverted by some other simple means.

Dear Friends, do not let our thoughts be thus diverted at this time, but let us come to the principal point and keep to it. And that point is this—that the main business of our life is to follow Jesus. And, secondly, to effect this, we had better avoid all idle speculations—and indeed, questions not altogether idle had better be left alone that we may keep to the one main business of our life. The reasons for doing this are very clear—and with them I shall close my discourse.

I. First, then, THE MAIN BUSINESS OF OUR LIFE IS TO FOLLOW THE LORD.

I can truly say to every one of you that the main thing you have to do in this world is first to follow Christ until you find Him as your Savior or, in other words, the first thing for you to do is to look to Him, to trust in Him. We live in

vain if we do not live unto God and if we do not live by faith in Jesus Christ, the one and only Savior. "Live in vain," did I say? It were better for you, dear Hearers, and for me, that we had never been born if we should live and die without faith in Jesus Christ! You may neglect your business, you may neglect what you will—but do not neglect your souls. First, first, FIRST—beyond and before everything else—must be the matter of your own personal salvation! On board a vessel that is going down, a man may forget his luggage and many precious treasures that he has with him. It is for his life that he is concerned. Even Satan spoke the truth for once when he said, "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life." Let it be so with you in the highest sense. Make your soul your first care, for what shall it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? So the first thing for you to do is to follow Christ for life, for salvation— looking to Him by faith, in obedience to the Apostolic command, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

Procrastination often comes in to cause the solemnities of the Gospel to seem less serious. "There is plenty of time," we say. "We are quite young as yet and we have many years in which to think of these things." Where the sere and yellow leaf is beginning to fall, there is something else to put away thoughts of eternity. There is another daughter to be married, so a few more hundreds of pounds must be saved up for her. And then when you have retired to your country house, you will think about "making your peace with God"—as if it were nothing to you that you are "condemned already" because you have "not believed in

the name of the only begotten Son of God," and as if it were a matter of no importance to be an enemy of God and to be unsaved for 50 or 60 years of sin—as if it were a small thing to have the leprosy of sin still eating into your immortal spirits! Why, if there were no Hell, sin would be, to a right-minded man, such a vile thing that he would long to escape from it and dread it as he now dreads the pains of Hell. Oh, that all here had even half such a sense as Christ had of the solemnity of the things of which I am speaking! That would drive us to our knees and we would not dare to go out of this house unsaved—and all through this building we would hear the cry that arose on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Keeping more closely to my text, I have to say that after we are saved, the main business of our life is still to follow Christ. When sin is pardoned and the eternal safety of the soul is ensured, the next thing is to seek the purity of the soul and to secure a character that shall be worth having throughout eternity. There is no character which is worth having which is not fashioned according to the Character of Christ. He is absolute perfection! In Him is nothing redundant and from Him nothing is omitted which ought to be there. To be perfect, we must be like Jesus. "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith," we are to conquer this sin and to overcome that passion and, in the power of God's Spirit, to cultivate this tender Grace and that other bolder virtue! The one thing we are to aim at is to tread in Christ's footsteps, to do what He did and, as far as He is imitable by us, to do it as He did it and to be as He was in the midst of the sons and daughters of men. If I am a Christian, I am not to be following Calvin, or Arminius, or any other earthly leader—I am to mold my doctrinal opinions, my thoughts, words, character and acts after the model of Christ's!

The same Law applies to the whole of our life-service. If we would do what we were created to do—if, being trees of God's planting, we are to bear the fruit He meant us to bear, we must follow Jesus Christ! We are sent into the world, under Him, upon the great errand of seeking the lost—

"'Tis all our business here below To cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'"

some from the pulpit, but every Christian from some place or other. To each individual Believer, Christ has given a position which nobody else can so well occupy and from that position he can influence some other person or persons whom God will bless through him. I do not believe that any Christian was created merely to keep a shop—he was created to serve God in his trading. Notwithstanding all man's sin, a man is such a noble work of God that he cannot have been intended merely to measure off yards of silk, or to weigh pounds of sugar, or to sweep street crossings, or to put on crowns, robes and diamonds. There is something grander than that for man to do! The little birds are made to sing God's praises and I, who am of more value than many sparrows, must be meant to sing God's praises too! This is especially true concerning us who profess to have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and to have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Our life has an outlook towards the Infinite—there are windows in our life that look towards God. Look out of them, O Christian! With your windows open towards God, live in the light of His Countenance and seek in all things to please and honor Him! It is your life-work to honor God, to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the instrument

by which God shall illustrate His almighty power—the black foil from which He shall display the brightness of His Grace. You are to be the means of spreading abroad in this world the savor of Christ's name—but you cannot do this unless you follow Christ.

And, mark you, for each one of us there is a special vocation in which we can follow Christ. I do not believe that all of you would be following Christ if you were to attempt to preach. Even Christ never attempted to do what His Father did not intend Him to do. A man once asked Him to officiate as a lawyer or a judge, but He replied, "Who made Me a judge or a divider over you?" One beauty of Christ's life was that He kept to His calling and did not go beyond His commission. And you will be wise if you do the same. If you are a servant, you can follow Christ by ministering to the comfort of all who are in the house. If you are a mother, you can follow Christ by training up your children for Him. Every man has his own particular calling and every Christian's calling should be especially for God. One is called to the foreign mission field—let him go, in God's name, to the regions beyond—let him not stay at home. Another is called to go from house to house to visit the sick, to care for the poor and so on—Bible-woman, City Missionary, I greet you in Christ's name and bid you keep to your own work and never run away from it! One is called to teach an infant class and another to care for the lads or the lasses—and all are fitted for the work to which they are called by God. And to each one the Master says, "Follow Me and keep to the work which My Father has given you to do, even as I pleased not Myself by selecting My own work, but did that which My Father had appointed for Me."

II. Now secondly, IN ORDER TO FOLLOW CHRIST IT WILL BE A WISE THING TO LET A GREAT MANY

OTHER THINGS ALONE.

Peter wanted to know about John—"What shall this man do?" But Jesus said, "What is that to you? You follow Me." From this answer of Christ, we learn that we are not to be curious as to what God is going to do with other people. I will tell you what thoughts have been passing through the minds of some of us. One has said, "I am a poor humble believer in Jesus. I have to struggle with poverty and need, yet God graciously helps me and I can tell of many instances of His delivering mercy." Well, dear Friend, God is greatly glorified by this testimony! But when you go on to ask about those rich people who have everything that heart can wish, "What is God going to do with them?" I can only reply, "What is that to you? Follow you Christ and be not curious about others." It is equally wrong if a rich man says, "There are those poor people who are converted, but who cannot give much to the cause of God and who need education to enable them to teach others—what will the Lord do with them?" That is nothing to do with you, my Brother. You have to follow the Lord, yourself, and to mind your own business! Someone else says, "There's such-and-such a man—really, I can't see any ability in him! He tried to preach the other day and I was glad when he stopped, for it was very poor talk." I must confess that I have sometimes felt like that when I have listened to a friend, but I have said to myself, "What is that to me? God knows His own servants better than we do and He knows where to place them, and how to use them to the best advantage." Possibly, someone says, concerning a fine orator, "A man who blazes away at that rate thinks too much of himself for God to bless him." But Christ says, "What is that to you? You follow Me." God has all sorts of stones in His Temple and some of them are of such a strange shape that I am glad the placing of them is not left to me, for I could not do it! I am thankful that God never sent me into the world to make people perfect, but to use them as I find them. And I believe that He also uses them as He finds them and gradually prepares them for higher uses and for the place which He means them to occupy in His Temple above. So do not say, "I am wondering what this man will do and what that man will do, and what others around me will do"—but do what you can for Christ and, as for others—leave them to the Master!

Further, this rule also applies to the character of others. How much some people are concerned because a certain man is so purse proud! It seems to be a sort of consolation to them to think how much better they

are than he is. Another is very frivolous and they frequently bring his character into their conversation, apparently as a means of showing how superior in sobriety they are. To everyone of that stamp, Christ seems to me to say, "'What is that to you? You follow Me,' and then the imperfections of your neighbor will not lie so near to your heart." I have heard of a minister who, wishing to bring the Truth of God home to the hearts and consciences of his people, said that he should like to pass a Reform Act—that everybody should reform one person and then all would be reformed. He meant that they should all reform themselves, but one man said, "The minister is quite right! Everybody is to reform one and I am going home to reform our Mary." That is often our idea—that we must reform somebody else—but if we could bring ourselves to feel that weeding our own garden, watering our own plants and fulfilling our own vocation is what God requires of us, how much better it would be for the entire Church of Christ!

I think the same rule applies, to a large extent, to remarks concerning the general condition of Christian Churches. There are some of my Brothers who assure me that these are the most terrible times through which the world has ever passed. They cannot discover any ground for congratulation—everything seems to wear to them a most gloomy aspect. It may be so, yet I think I can see much reason for thankfulness as well as much cause for sorrow and regret. We are constantly told that this is a crisis, but I recollect that when I first came to London, 20 years ago, [1853] I was told that it was a crisis and it seems to have been a crisis every few weeks since! Some people appear to imagine that the future of the universe depends upon a meeting which they propose to hold in a month or so—yet so far God has managed the affairs of the universe without any help from them and He still reigns as universal King and Lord notwithstanding all the efforts of the Pope, the Devil and Essays and Reviews! I have come to the conclusion that instead of trying to set all my Master's servants right at once, my first and most important work is to follow my Lord—and I think, my Brothers, that it will be wise for you to come to the same conclusion!

Suppose a man is set by his master to plow a field? His main business is to go up and down that field until he has plowed it all. But suppose that, instead of doing so, he gets into a comfortable corner under the hedge and tells his fellow plowman that the whole system of farming adopted by his master is a mistake, that this field is being sown with the wrong sort of seed, that his master does not understand the best manure to use and that if he were make me his manager, the whole farm would pay much better that it now does? If his master comes while he is talking like this and asks, "John, what have you been doing?" and he replies, "I have been expounding to William a better plan of farming than you have adopted," his master would probably say to him, "I shall have to discharge you unless you give up these speculations. Get on with your plowing at once and leave the management of the farm to me." And I would say that to many Christians— Get on with your plowing! Get to your own proper work! Teach that class in the Sunday school. Speak to sinners about Christ whenever you can and try to win them for Him—but leave those greater and deeper things to your Master. Go on following Him with all your heart and serving Him with all your might. He has His special servants whom He calls to great works of reform, those whom He uses as His speaking trumpets to proclaim the Truth upon the solemn matters with which the most of us have not so much to do.

The same rule applies to many theological questions. For instance, the puzzling problem concerning the origin of evil. I am not so much troubled about how evil came into the world as about helping to get it out! Practical common-sense seems to say, "If there is a thief in the house, let us catch him, or else get him out. And after that we will try to find out how he got in." Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come into the world to tell us how sin was brought here, but He came to show us the only way in which sin can be taken out of the world—and that is by the door which He opened in His own side. It is by His death that sin is to be

expelled from the earth!

Then there is that great and weighty question concerning the relation between Divine Sovereignty and human responsibility. You may go to one place of worship and you will hear about very little except Divine Sovereignty. And you may go to another place and you will hear about little except human responsibility. Or you may have heard me

preach about both Truths of God [See Sermon #77, Volume 2—DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY; #194, Volume 4—HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY and #207, Volume 4—SOVEREIGN GRACE AND MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY.] without any

attempt to "reconcile" them, as I believe that they have never been at enmity against one another and, therefore, there is no need for any reconciliation! It has been a great temptation to many good men to get to fighting about these Truths when they would have been better employed in preaching the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ. I believe that before the foundation of the world, God chose in Christ all those whom He will eternally save. And I equally believe that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be eternally saved, that salvation is all of Grace and damnation is all of man's sin—that God will have the glory of every soul that is saved—and that every lost soul will be responsible for its own ruin.

I think my text also applies to those prophetic studies in which so many seem to lose their way. I am not much encouraged to follow their example when I see how the students of prophecy denounce each other and disprove each other's theories. There are some prophetic Truths that ought to be constantly preached, as for instance that the Lord will surely come again and that there will be a Final Judgment when the righteous shall have the full glories of Heaven, and

the wicked shall know the woes of Hell. But as to the dates of the various events foretold in the prophecies that are still unfulfilled, I think I have something better to do than to puzzle my brains over them. "Oh!" say some, "but we now have the right theory." So others thought 20 years ago! But it did not prove to be right, nor did the theory that was held a hundred years ago, or 200 years ago, or even more! Yet men go on building up their card house of speculation and Time comes and pushes it all over with his finger! I advise you to study Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—and to preach the crucified Savior of which the Gospels and Epistles will tell you! And when you get to the Revelation, keep it in its proper place and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you the meaning of its mysteries. May God save this generation from the follies of some of the generations that have preceded it—and may we be most of all concerned about being born-again, about faith in Jesus, about preaching His Gospel and following Him all the days of our life!

III. Now, lastly, THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY WE SHOULD CONFINE OUR LIFE-WORK TO THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST. And those reasons are these.

First, our powers are limited. Mine are, I know, and I should like to use what powers I have in the work of following Christ in preaching the Gospel and seeking to bring others to follow Him.

Next, our time is limited. We may all of us live but a very short time. And at the longest it will be but a brief life. I have heard of a minister who used to say that he would be thankful, in his last hours, that he had been enabled, by God's Grace, to spend the greater part of his time in inviting sinners to the Savior. And I should like to live—and I should like you, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, to live in such a way that when we come to die, we may be able to say, "There, that is the kind of life I would like to have lived, now that I am at the end of it." Suppose anyone should live to fight for the Baptist denomination? When he

dies, men would say, "Well, he was a thorough Baptist and he fought well for his denomination." But that would be a poor wreath to lay on his coffin! Would you care to have a long Latin inscription on your tombstone recording the fact that you were always hammering away at some important Doctrine? Or would you wish to have it said, "There lies a man who charmed a few Christian people with the deep spirituality of his teaching, but

that was all he did"?

I covet and I think I am right in doing so, the honor of having it said of me, "That man lived to snatch sinners like brands from the burning." I hope some of you will have it said when you are gone, "That woman lived to bring her children to Christ. That girl lived to talk to those she met with about the dear Savior who had been so precious to her that she wished all others to enjoy the same blessing." Oh, that each one of us might live to glorify God! To be like an arrow shot from Christ's bow by His own pierced hand! To feel an impetus given to us to bear us right on to the center of the target of the Glory of God, nothing turning us aside, either to be thought good, or to be thought great, or to be thought learned, or to desire to gain honor or esteem among our fellow men—but just to glorify God by the conversion of sinners through the Holy Spirit's blessing resting upon our labors!

Having but little strength, it is best for us to use it all in one direction. Some men know too much to be powerful for anything. They are like water that is spread over the meadows and not like the stream that runs along in a narrow channel and, therefore, concentrates its energy and renders real service to mankind. "This one thing I do," is a good motto for any man, if he does that one thing well. And the one thing that I will seek to do shall be to glorify God by following Jesus and doing the work He has given me to do! For, my Brothers and Sisters, suppose that you and I should make out the mystery of predestination? Suppose we should become adepts at prophecy? Suppose we should become exceedingly learned in a thousand subjects and yet should go down to our graves without having ever glorified God? We should find no apology for our neglect in all that we had done! Nobody will be lost, as far as I know, through my getting a wrong theory of prophecy, but thousands may be saved if I know the Truth concerning Christ and Him Crucified and preach Him with all my might! I do not know that I shall love the Savior any the less if I make a mistake about some of the great mysteries of the Kingdom, but I do know that if I give myself up wholly to His service and am the means of bringing others to do the same, I shall have no regrets compared with those I should have felt if I had neglected this all-important matter. I charge all of you, men and women, in these evil days to keep close to Jesus! Follow Him with the utmost care, reverence and love. Follow Him with intense ardor and with all your heart, soul and strength—and make that the one thing for which you live! Do not let anything divert you from the straight path of obedience to your Lord, for to that you are called above everything else! If men come to you talking about mental culture and modern thought, stand firm to this—that you will follow Christ wherever He leads you!

I wonder what God would have each of us here do? You may think I am falling into Peter's error if I press this point upon you. I wonder what there is for us to do as a Church? Do you think, dear Friends, that we are doing all that we ought to do for this neighborhood? We have heard about what our missionaries have been doing in foreign lands and most of us have something to do with that. But I think the principal point for us is—What is to be done in Newington? What is to be done for Christ all around this region? You tract-distributors, are you earnestly attending to your work? You Sunday school teachers, are you faithfully doing your work for God? I will not bid you forget the foreign field, but still, our first concern must be our own class, our own immediate neighborhood. Many of you have come from different parts of London—what are you doing for the district where you live? Every Christian should first seek the good of

those nearest to his own door. Some of you have come from the country—what are you doing in your own village? You say that you have been hearing a man of God preach the Truth. That is quite right, but is that working for God? There is a young man over there who professes to be a follower of Christ and who often speaks at the debating club. Do you, My Friend, ever preach in the street, or teach in the Sunday school? Then I am ashamed of you! Or rather, are you not ashamed of yourself? There is a man over there who is making money. I do not say that he is doing wrong, but My Friend, have you ever consecrated to God the part which belongs to Him? If you keep it for yourself, it will canker all the rest!

I might say to someone here, "You ought to be taking a Bible class for young women." I might say to others, "You ought to be teaching in the Sunday school. You come here twice on the Lord's day, but you have no business to come here twice—you ought, once at least, to go to work for Christ." I am pleased with some whose consciences prick them so that they say, "Dear Pastor, do not imagine that we are forsaking you! We would be glad to be here, but we have been down at the lodging-houses, or down in Golden Lane, or over at Bethnal Green." That is right and I am glad when I see somebody else in their seats! With four or five thousand members in the Church, if they all come here at each service, where are our converts to come from? Am I to cast the Gospel net into the midst of the fish that are already caught? If you stay away to let a sinner come here in your place and if you are, yourself, seeking to bring sinners to Christ, you are doing two good things! I want everyone of you to be living to do good to your fellow men and seeking to save souls for the Glory of God! The enemies of the faith are very busy and very earnest—and they seem to use up all their material. The moment a man gets into the Church of Rome, there is sure to be something found for him to do and I want to see all of you used to the utmost of your power. You are free men and women and, therefore, not to be controlled by me. I do not prescribe what you are to do, but cannot you, as independent men and women, obey the sacred dictates of the Spirit of God and each of you drop into your proper place?

Give up all speculating, I beseech you—give up reading books merely for the sake of curiosity, and, in God's name, get to work for Him! The graves are filling, our cemeteries are filling, and Hell is filling too! Meanwhile, the dupes of Satan are compassing sea and land to do all the mischief that they can. If you really are what you say you are, the servant of Him who wept over Jerusalem—if you are bought with the blood He shed on Calvary's Cross—I charge you to consecrate yourself, this very hour, to that form of Christian work to which your Master calls you and follow Him through evil report and good report! Follow Him in the path of duty and let nothing turn you aside from your life-work of glorifying God! May God bless you all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN21.

Verse 1. After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed He Himself. Jesus loved to show Himself to His people. Of old, His delights were with the sons of men. So now that He had risen from the dead, He was not ashamed to visit His brethren and He did not disdain to make Himself known to them—and He will still show Himself to us after a spiritual fashion, if we sincerely desire to see Him.

2. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples. As John was the writer of this record, he did not put his own name there, but merely mentioned "the sons of Zebedee."

3. Simon Peter said unto them, I am going fishing. They said unto him, We will also go with you. Men who are in a right state of heart cannot willingly be idle. So, if these Apostles cannot preach for a time, they will go back to their old employment and seek to catch fish.

3. They went forth and immediately entered into a boat and that night they caught nothing. Brothers and Sisters, without Christ's Presence, that is what always happens—"they caught nothing." But notice what the next verse says.

4. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. We must remember that a great change had taken place in Him and that the disciples were at some distance from the shore. They saw a person standing there, but they were not sure who it was.

5. Then Jesus said unto them, Children, have you any food? This is not an exact translation of our Savior's words. He might too readily have revealed His identity if He had spoken like that. His question was more like a common fisherman's salutation, "Lads, have you any food?"

5. They answered Him, No. Jesus likes us to admit that we do not possess anything of our own before He gives us the blessing He is waiting to bestow. He lets us see that the table is bare before He loads it with His bounty so that He may have all the praise and glory for what He gives us.

6. And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you shall find some. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. This is another proof of the difference between Christ's Presence and Christ's absence.

7. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved (again John does not mention his own name) said to Peter, It is the Lord." It is only He who could spy out the fish and only He who could fill the net with them. It is just His way of acting. 'It is the Lord.'" The eyes of true love are very quick. Peter was not the first to recognize Jesus—John was—for He loved Him most.

7. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had taken it off) and did cast himself into the sea. He had such reverence for his Master that he would not appear before Him without a sufficient covering, yet he was in a hurry to get to Him. Peter always was in a hurry—yet he was grandly impetuous as a rule. I wish that some "slowpokes" had a little of his pace!

8, 9. And the other disciples came in the little boat, (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits) dragging the net with fishes. As soon as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there and fish laid thereon, and bread. How that fire must have reminded Peter of his denial of his Lord! He saw his Master by the light of the charcoal fire—and that is how he saw Him on the night when he denied Him.

10, 11. Jesus said unto them, Bring of the fish which you have now caught. Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty-three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. On the previous occasion when Peter's net was miraculously filled by Christ, we read that the net broke. That was Peter's own net, but this time I suppose it was not Peter's, but one that he had borrowed and probably he had no time to mend it, so the Master took care that it should not break. He always has His own ways of working—and they always fit the circumstances of the case and show His thoughtful care of His people.

12. Jesus said unto them, Come and dine. The Revised Version is more correct—"Come and break your fast"—

"Come and have your breakfast." [See Sermon #2072, Volume 35—BREAKFAST WITH JESUS.]

12-15. And none of the disciples dared ask Him, Who are You? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples, after that He was risen from the dead. So when they had dined. When they had broken their fast—but not until then, for Christ does not talk to men when their hunger might make them inattentive.

15. Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me more than these? He had talked as if he did— "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I."

15. He said unto Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He was wise in not measuring his love in comparison with that of his fellow disciples, or in speaking of the quantity of it, but he affirmed that even Christ knew that he did really love Him.

15-17. He said unto him, Feed My lambs. He said to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me? He said unto Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said unto Him, Feed My sheep. He said unto Him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me? Here is a lesson for all who would be pastors of Christ's flock. The first necessity of a true pastor is love to Christ. The second necessity of a true pastor is love to Christ. And the third necessity of a true pastor is love to Christ. A man who does not love the Great Shepherd cannot properly feed either His sheep or lambs. If his own heart is not right towards the Divine Owner of the sheep, he cannot be a true under-shepherd to Christ's flock.

17-19. Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said unto him, Feed My sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto you, When you were young, you gird yourself, and walked where you would: but when you shall be old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you, and carry you where you would not. This spoke He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. Peter was to stretch out his hands and be nailed to a cross as his Lord was.

19. And when He had spoken this, He said unto him, Follow Me. "That is to be your rule, whether you feed My sheep or lambs, or whether you stretch out your hands upon a cross and die as a martyr—"Follow Me." That is also the rule for all of us who love the Lord. O Lord, help us to obey it!

20-25. Then Peter, turning about, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrays You? Peter seeing him, said to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus said unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, he shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you? This is the disciple which testifies of these things, and wrote these things. And we know that His testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen

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