

# Fire of Denial or Fire of Revival

by Peter Brandon

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*The sermon explores Peter's denial of Christ as a warning against spiritual complacency and the importance of remaining devoted to God amidst worldly temptations.*

**Duration:** 1:32:04

**Scripture:** Luke 22:31

**Topics:** "Denial vs. Devotion", "Restoration and Revival"

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## Description

Peter Brandon preaches on the contrasting fires of denial and revival, using Peter's denial of Christ as a pivotal example of how ego and distance from God can lead to spiritual failure. He emphasizes that true leadership requires humility and a willingness to be tested, as seen in Peter's journey from boastful devotion to bitter weeping after denying Christ. Brandon highlights the importance of being restored by the Lord, illustrating how Peter's encounter with Jesus after the resurrection led to a profound reinstatement of love and purpose. The sermon calls for believers to examine their own hearts and prioritize their love for Christ above all else, urging a return to the fire of devotion that ignites true revival.

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## Transcript

And we shall read from verse 31. Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.

And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

Would you please turn to verse 54. Then they took him, the Lord Jesus, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed the Pharaoh.

And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down with them. And a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour, after another confidently affirmed, saying of a truth, This fellow also was with him, for he is a Galilean.

And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately while he yet spake the cockcrow, and the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cockcrow thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

And the Lord will bless to us the reading of his word. A number of us are praying that the Lord will start a fire in one or two assemblies. That vision has not yet been given us.

And we are praying that one or two companies may see restored to them the presence and the power of God. And what our brother was saying to us, that there might be two praise in the home, and then among the assemblies of his people. And when they were praising God, they had favour with the people, and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be said.

So I want to share with you perhaps for the last time, the two great fires of Scripture. First of all I want to speak before tea on the fire of denial. And then after tea I want to speak to you on the fire of devotion.

The fire of denial. Peter was to be the leader. To him the Lord was going to give the keys of the kingdom.

And he was going to open the door through the preaching of the gospel, first of all to the Jews. And then he was going to open the door of the gospel to the Gentiles. And therefore he was an extremely privileged man.

But every leader must be tested. And every leader must have drained from him every form of egoism and self. And therefore he was going through the process of the fire of God.

May I say this to myself in the presence of my brethren? And I'm sure every leader will relate this to himself. If we are going to lead the people of God, we must be prepared for death. But we find now that Peter is going to be tested in a way perhaps in which he never really anticipated.

And I'm going to speak first of all of the denial of Peter. And I want to do this under four simple headings. For if you look at his denial, you will notice that there are four downward steps.

First of all, he boasted of his devotion. Secondly, he followed afar off. Thirdly, he sat in the wrong place.

And lastly, he abruptly denied his law. Now first of all, we must remember this, that his denial was predict. After the Lord Jesus had washed the disciples' feet, and I want you to think of that.

After he had celebrated the feast. After he had rebuked them because of their aspiration for greatness. Then turning to Peter, he said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have thee, to sift thee as wheat.

Now please note, Satan was not going to shift him. His faith was going to remain. But Satan was going to sift him.

The idea is a normal sift. The idea is a thorough shaking. And the result is obvious.

The husks are removed, and the original wheat is left. And therefore we see that Satan earnestly, for that is the meaning of the word, desired to have Peter. I wonder, do we realize that? Ever since we have been converted, Satan has desired to have you.

To trip you. Stumble you. But thank God, it's the prayers of our great high priest that keeps the enemy from us.

And how we should praise God constantly, that there is a man in the glory that's praying for us. Brothers, sisters, where would we be without the prayers of our great high priest? We must praise God too for the prayers of the Holy Spirit. Constantly moving in us.

Constantly prevailing. Constantly praying to God so that Christ might be formed in us. Apart from the praying of the precious divinity, or the Trinity, where would we be? And then we find that Satan is going to sift him.

And I'm sure of this, there comes a time in our experience, or at least some, when we're allowed to go into a dark corner. When we're allowed to go down to the valley. When we're allowed almost a minor defeat.

And all this is being engineered by the Lord. For what purpose? God cannot use an egoistic man. He cannot use a person that looks down upon his brethren.

He cannot use a man that says like Elijah, I own them. The moment we begin to say, as Peter said, all the others will be offended or stumbled. But I'm willing to go with thee into prison and into death.

Then we're on dangerous ground. Beloved, it's so easy when leading God's people to look down upon them. And to elevate oneself.

And if God is going to use Peter, then he must be converted. Converted, yes. You see, there is the conversion that is very similar to repentance.

There is the initiation of our conversion. But then there is that conversion of a saint where he turns from one angle to another. And Peter was standing upon his toes.

He was inflating himself. He was parading his own loyalty. And the Lord was basically saying, Peter, I can't use you like that.

Then after the sifting. After the dark valley. After the shattering experience.

After the shaking. After I have been raised from the dead and then meet you at Galilee. You're going to be converted.

You're going to be a changed man. And when you're changed, you'll strengthen your brethren. Can we now with bowed hearts say this? Lord, start the work of conversion in me.

Aren't you a beloved in the Lord? We all want to help our brethren. Don't we? We want to strengthen them. But we shall never strengthen them whilst there is self and egoism in our hearts.

And so the Lord turns to Peter and he rebukes him for his boastful devotion. And then comes the moment when the Lord Jesus takes them into the garden. And what a moment.

And then he removes three from the other disciples in order to see him in the hour of his suffering. But alas, they fell asleep. Isn't it strange? They fell asleep on the mountain.

And when Peter came to, he was so shaken. He said, it's good for us to be here, Lord. Let's make three booths.

Put his foot right in it. Three tabernacles. You see, he had been asleep.

And he woke up and saw the glory. And then impetuously said, three tabernacles, three booths. No wonder there came the Shekinah glory.

No wonder there came a voice from heaven saying, this is my beloved son, hear ye him. There's no room for an Elijah. There's no room for a Moses when Christ is there.

And they lifted up their eyes. And they saw no man save Jesus. He fell asleep too with the other two in the garden.

And failed to see the anticipated sufferings of the Savior. And now we read this. And it sends a chill through my heart.

He followed afar off. And do you know how I feel at this moment? If I can see Peter, and I believe I can at this moment, I feel like saying to him, Peter, the hour of darkness is coming. Get near your master.

Let's think now of this man who followed afar off. He was casting in his net, for he was a fisher. It was a conical-shaped net, and only a few fishermen could use it.

He was throwing it in with a quick flick of the wrist, and there he was bringing out the fish. And the Lord looked at this diligent man with his brother Andrew, and he called him and said, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. You see, he was catching live fish for the purpose of killing.

The Lord says now, Peter, I want you to catch dead fish for the purpose of living. Much better, don't you think? And then Peter put down his net and followed Jesus, and from that moment, he became a disciple. And he followed the footsteps of his Lord doggedly.

In fact, if you go through especially the Synoptic Gospels, it's beautiful to see Peter always there, always following. There came a moment in his experience when he toiled all night and caught nothing, and he was washing his net. And the Lord turned to Peter after giving a brilliant discourse in his boat, and said, Launch out into the deep and let down your net for a draft.

He retorted, Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing. Nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, isn't this beautiful? They enclosed the great multitude of fishers so that their net break.

And they weren't exclusive brethren, you know. They called for their other brethren to come. Isn't that lovely? It's lovely when we can do that, isn't it? And they called them and they came and they filled both the ships so that they began to sink.

Now observe this. Here was Peter in the midst of prosperity. But what happened? The moment he catches sight of the Saviour, the moment he realizes the unbelief of his own heart in dodging the command of the Lord, then he falls at the feet of Jesus and he says a paradox.

As though holding on with one hand, he said, depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord. He was broken in the presence of his Lord. And then we read this.

He left the fish and the nets and followed him. And from that moment, apart from one or two occasions, he never went back to the fish trade again. Now can you see the development? He is called by the Sea of

Galilee and he follows.

He becomes a disciple. And now he is weaned from his business right in the midst of its prosperity. Note, not when it was bankrupt.

When it was in the midst of prosperity. May I say this to those who are going into the Lord's service. Never go into the Lord's service until you have done well in a natural job.

That's your university. When did he call David? When he was minding his father's ship. When did he call Elisha? When he was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen.

When did he call Peter? When the business was at its zenith. And then he left the net and the boat and followed the Lord Jesus. In this chapter, if you read it carefully, you will find that he was following the Lord, dogging his footstep right into the garden.

And then comes the tragedy. I can't grumble at him. I've done it myself, brethren.

He followed a Pharaoh. He stumbled. He tripped.

Something became between him and the Lord. And he went down. Could I ask you a gentle question? Would you bear it? Are you following a Pharaoh? Have you got distant from your Lord? Is he just now a speck on the horizon, and you lost your nearness? He calls you to get closer.

And then I want you to note he sat in the wrong place. Quite frankly, when he went into the high priest hall or his courtroom, because obviously John the Apostle was a relative to someone in that particular realm, immediately Peter went in. He had every right to stand with his Lord.

And what a moment. If only he could have stood with his Lord. You see, at this moment, if we read other sections of the Gospels, we find this, that the Lord Jesus was under intense trial.

They were looking for witnesses. And every witness was contradictory. And at last they trumped up this.

He said that he would destroy the temple and build it in three days. And then they made the Master the object of vulgarity. They spat on him.

Think of that. Then they made the Master not only the object of vulgarity, but they made him the object of mockery. They hit him with their hands.

And then said prophesy, who hit you? And then they made him the object of brutality, with their fists. They buffeted that divine fact. Friends, I find it hard to say this.

The face that once shone as the light, was now marred more than any man. And then they made him the object of brutality and blasphemy. If only Peter could have stood with him.

Can I say it delicately? If only Peter stood there and held the mighty hand. If only he had gone outside the camp. If only he had taken the outside place.

If only he had stood with the Lord in his rejection. But he sat down by the fire. And dear friends, it was the world that kindled that fire.

And then we read this, and John is very dramatic. He said it was cold. Can you feel it? He said it was dark.

Can you feel the drama of it? The bleaty wind swept all the land and so did everything. There was Peter chilling. And instead of standing with his Lord, he now sits with the world.

And Peter, I want to say this, you're heading for trouble. And yet I cannot criticize you. I can do it myself, Peter.

And he warmed his lips. This is what the scripture says. Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in that law doth he meditate both day and night.

Can't we all say to Peter, why didn't you remember that, son? But hadn't we ought to? Beloved, we have got near that world. We have got that desire, haven't we? Could I share something with you? Just before the war and just after the war, the evangelicals in Britain had one clear line of demarcation between the world and the church. Before the war, no one went to a cinema in Britain who was a Christian.

Only a backslider. No one went to a dance hall. This was not just the settlers, all evangelicals.

No one was a supporter of the local football team. There was that line of demarcation. You could tell the difference between a Christian man and a worldly man, a Christian woman and a worldly woman.

There was a line of demarcation. But round about 1955, something happened. New ideas came in.

A new approach. And we were told that worldliness was just a state of the mind. And we can enjoy the best things of the world.

And we've had that philosophy for approximately 40 years. Has it improved the church? Beloved, we have slid rapidly. When the church was separate from the world, we were a powerful God in Britain.

Quite frankly, in 1938, there were 10 missions that shook the whole of Britain. But don't you feel that we have got too near to the world's fire? And we've warmed our flesh and chilled our hearts. And our brother is right.

Could I say this to you almost waitingly? Because I know my own way with hearts. The television can become the world's fire to us all. It can.

Do you know I've been in homes of late where I've had to get up and walk out. Because God's people were seeing something that was filthy. Been in homes where the Lord's people are more worldly than even the world.

Now I'm not grumbling. I'm not shouting at you. I'm subject to that.

If I had a television and I want to make this confession, sport in every aspect would become a little God to me. And it would trick me. I know that.

Now of course, I want to repeat what our brother said. It's not wrong to have a television. But you must pray that you must discipline it.

When you're out, your little children can turn on the switch and they can be polluted. With a half an hour. Beloved, can I ask a question? And when I was studying this this morning, it hurt me so much.

Because I felt that sometimes I had been by that fire. Have you been by the world's fire? And then I want you to note this. He denied his Lord first of all and then came to him.

And quite frankly, he said to Peter, Surely, you were one of them. And Peter immediately denies any relationship with Christ. And he says, I know him not.

And he denies knowing the Lord. Now I want you to think of it. Peter had been with his Lord.

And the Lord had said to his disciples, Whom say ye that the men say that I am? What's your impression of the world? How do they think of me? And then they rattled off the answers. Jeremiah, Elijah, Elisha, one of the prophets. John the Baptist.

Then he turned to his own disciples and he says, But whom say ye that I am? And as Peter looked into the face of his Lord, he received a flashing revelation. And he said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And the Lord Jesus turned to Peter and he said, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father in heaven.

Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And yet this man could deny that he ever knew him. Think of that.

But more. The Lord Jesus had spoken about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. And then suddenly all the people shook their heads and they said, These are hard words.

Who can hear it? Hear it. They were all. And the Lord Jesus with a sad look watched them go.

Then he turned to his own disciples and he said, If I may use simple language, Do you want to go also? And Peter looked at the Lord and he said, To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we are sure that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. He knew him.

Peter had been on that holy mount when he saw the Lord Jesus transfigured. When his face did shine as the sun and his raiment was white as the light. Now know this.

Standing by the world's fire, warming his hand, he denied ever knowing the Lord Jesus. Beloved, if you stand in a theater and sit with the crowd, you can deny your Lord. If you can stand in a football match where they are swearing and cursing, and many times I go in as you know to preach, you can deny your Lord and Christians do it.

If you can sit with the ungodly, now note this, and drink wine with them so that you are one with them, you have denied your Lord. And there are many doing that. Do with it tonight before you finally stumble.

But more. Not only did he deny he knew him, he denied that he followed him. They said you were one that were with him.

Now we have seen how Peter had been following the Lord, admittedly he follows now afar off, but he denies that he ever followed the Lord. Denied his discipleship. And then lastly as he is warming himself by the fire, he denied that he was ever with Jesus.

Ever with him. And I find this hard really to say. He denied him with oaths and cursing.

And I want you to see that. Here is that lovely man being rejected and he can hear the slaps and the smashes on his divine face. And there is a man denying any relationship with his Christ.

At the world's hour. Isn't that a warning to us? And then all of a sudden as he denies his Lord the third time, suddenly a cock crowed. What kind of cock was it? Well the historian tells us it was a bantam cock.

And these bantams were there for ornamental purposes. They were beautiful, colourful birds. Now note this.

The bantam is the only bird in nature that when it crows inflates itself twice its normal size. And immediately Peter denied his Lord. The Lord made a noise about it.

Always does when this world lives in the church. He crows then. And I am sure of this that God did something supernatural with that bird and he crowed right in the face of it.

And Peter knowing him could have rung its neck. And as he looked at the little bird he saw himself. They'll all be offended yet I will never be offended.

And there was the bird inflated. What a picture. Beloved I do want to make this confession.

If I have inflated myself before you, I make this dreadful apology. I'm very sorry. I trust the Lord will forgive me.

If ever I've looked down upon my brethren, I pray the forgiveness of God. I believe the cock is crowing. Could I ask a question for you? Is the cock crowing in your home? Is the cock crowing in your business? Is the cock crowing in your assembly? Is it? Then after the cock crew we read this.

The Lord turned. There he was with his face set as a flint to go to Calvary. Nothing would deter him.

His mind was set to die. And in the midst of all his sufferings, in the midst of all this brutality, he turned. And Peter caught a glimpse of the Lord's face.

Vile spittle was pouring down his beard. A part of the beard plucked from his face. His face perhaps at this time buffeted beyond recognition.

Coming from that buffeted face, there were two loving eyes that had not been damaged. And the Lord turned and looked on Peter. Is he looking on you, dear sister? Is he looking on you, brother? Is he looking on you, young man? He's looking.

Was it a look of disappointment? Don't know. Was it a look, I told you so? Don't think so. I'm sure it must have been a look of agape, a look of love.

And then as he loomed, Peter remembered. Peter, can you hear the drama of this? Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrive. And he remembered.

Friends, can you remember a time when you took the wrong journey? You went the wrong way. You did the wrong thing. I think you can.

Just remember. And then Peter, having a glimpse of the Lord, feeling the atmosphere of that moment, feeling the impact of that inward look of love, he went out and wept bitterly. And Satan shook him for three days, three nights, but never shifted his face, sifted him.

And after that, Peter was a better man. The Lord give us tears. Shall we pray? Lord, we come to thee this afternoon and thou hast spoken to us in power.

Please give to us this praising heart. Give to us, Lord, a heart of purpose that's fixed, fixed on God. Give to us this heart of purity.

Lord, granted, we pray thee. And if we have warmed ourselves by the world's fire, if we're in the process of that, wean us from it, Lord. Look on us now.

We believe perhaps the cock is crowing. The Lord is looking. Produce in us those tears of repentance that will bring about a conversion so that when we are converted, we shall strengthen our brethren.

Lord, grant us. Now it's time to introduce again our brother, Peter Brandon. We shall be discussing, as probably you know, the New Testament church.

And we want to try, first of all, to get back to a scriptural structure. And then we want to get back to the power of the Spirit. And let's pray that this last session may be a time when the Lord will really speak to us.

Now you'll remember our good brother gave us that lovely word from Psalm 101. And his points were threefold. First of all, he gave us the great fact of the purpose of the heart should be fixed.

And then he spoke on the purity of life. That was essential if we were going to really enjoy the fellowship with God. And then you'll remember his first point was a praising heart.

And he took us beautifully into Ephesians 5, where we saw, first of all, the praising heart, the thankful heart, and then the submissive heart. And we thank God for his word. And then you notice, we went from there to Luke 22, where we notice four things about Peter's denial.

First of all, his boastful devotion. Secondly, he followed afar off. Thirdly, he sat in the wrong place.

And lastly, he denied his Lord. And we notice in connection with his denial, the Lord turned and looked on Peter in the presence of a crowing cock. And then Peter went out and wept bitterly.

And now we're going to look at another fire, and this time the fire of devotion and the fire of blessing. It's in John 21. John 21, and we shall read from verse 1. And after these things, Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias, and on this wise showed he himself.

There were together Simon Peter and Thomas, called Didymus, Nathaniel of Cana of Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, James and John, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee.

They went forth and entered into a ship immediately, and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishers. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord.

Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fishes coat unto him, for he was naked, and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship, for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits, dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and breathed.

And Jesus saith unto them, Bring up the fish, which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, a hundred, and fifty, and three. For all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine, and none of the disciples doth ask him, who art thou, knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. 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, then Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, Lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lamb.

He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, Lovest thou me? And he saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, Are you attached and very fond of me? Peter was grieved, because he said unto him the third time, Are you attached? Are you fond of me? He saith unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things.

Thou knowest that I love thee, I am attached to thee, fond of thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkest whither thou wouldest.

But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hand, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This speak he signifying, by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow, follow me.

Now we can see the sequence come where. Follow me. I'm not going into the details of what was said this afternoon, because if I do so, we shall never complete the address.

But Peter went out and wept bitterly. And a man that can weep over his mistakes as Peter did, will always be brought into repentance. If we are casual about our sins and our failures, we shall never get victory.

But if we are truly broken by our failures, God will restore us. For three days, probably three nights, Peter was in the sift of Satan. And he was being badly shaken.

But all the time, the Lord Jesus, although his body was in the grave, his spirit was praying for him. And immediately the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead. The first person to meet him was a woman.

And then he gave the message to the woman, that the Lord was looking for Peter. And I believe that's one of the loveliest touches in the resurrection appearances. Somewhere, quietly, somewhere in the regions of Galilee, Peter was privately restored.

You see, dear friends, when God restores a man, it's not always in public. Many times it's in private. And it's a sanctuary experience when God deals with a man.

Think of that moment when God dealt with Jacob. What an encounter. When he saw God face to face, and his soul was preserved.

From that moment, Jacob was a different man. And now in private, the Lord restores Peter. But not yet in public.

Peter still becomes impetuous, and he says to his friends, I go fishing. Now you will notice that they were not told to go fishing. They were told to wait for the Lord in Galilee.

But Peter says impetuously, I go fishing. And that night, they caught nothing. And by the side of my Bible I have the words, serves you right.

Rather casual and rugged, but I don't know where I put that, but obviously it was Peter moving outside the will of God. Unfortunately, the Lord Jesus comes to them, and they do not observe him. Here was the risen Christ.

Here was the one that had restored Peter. And he stands on the Galilean shores, and he's not recognized. And then he quietly says, Children, the word is dear children, have ye any meat? And they answer him emphatically and yet coldly, no.

And then he says, cast the net on the right side and ye shall find. The right side, by the way, was the wrong side. It was only a person who was a novice that would ever cast the net on the right side.

But when the Lord says the right side, the right side is always right. You will notice if you go through the book of Acts, the Lord told the disciples to do some paradoxical things. Philip had to go to Gaza.

How ridiculous to go to a desert. Ananias was told to go to Saul. What a foolish thing to go to someone who was a hater of Christ.

Peter was told to go down to Caesarea, to a Gentile's house. Paul was told not to go into Asia or Asia Minor, but to go over there to Macedonia, among the Gentiles. All this was paradoxical.

But it was the right side. And therefore it's absolutely essential for us to constantly hear the Lord speaking to us in these dark days in which we live, so that we are moving in the current of God's will. And when they cast, they were not able to draw the net because of the multitude of fishers.

The fishers have brought in Peter again showing us his impetuosity, was at that time naked, and he girds or puts on his fishing coat and into the water he goes. That's Peter. There's the fish in the net.

But here's a man that's been so restored to the Lord that he can't get to him quick enough. And then the other disciples come in the boat dragging the fish. And when they bring the fish to land, they get this lovely surprise.

There was a fire of coals there. And on that fire of coals, little fish and bread. In other words, if I may use some language that we understand, he had pilchards and toasts.

What a lovely breakfast. Something that was delicate and tasty. They had nothing for him.

He had something for them. And it's around that fire they were drawn. And it's around that fire the Lord is now going to reinstate Peter who had denied him.

Now all the time I'm speaking now about Peter's devotion and the fire of devotion. Please bear in mind Peter weeping. Bear in mind his failure.

Always bear in mind that dramatic moment when the Lord turned and looked on Peter. And he went out and wept bitterly. Bear in mind that the enemy desired to have him to sift him.

And if you bear that in mind, then this picture will bloom in all its glory. Now why do I say this? Is it possible for a man to be used of God who has utterly failed? Yes. David failed, but he was used.

Peter let down the Lord with a few nasty swear words, but he was used mightily on the day of Pentecost. Once we learn to weep, God can do anything with us and through us. And that's why it's absolutely essential for us to go through a process of humbling.

Even a church like Corinth where they were sitting around the Lord's table drunk. Think of that. Where they had allowed a man to come in who was a fornicator.

Such fornication that was not known in the world. Where sometimes when they were sitting around the Lord's table, they became so excited that they were all speaking together and there was mass confusion. And where they were even eulogizing men saying, I am of this, of Paul, I am of Apollos.

Even that local church was used of God when it was broken before the law. And beloved, it doesn't matter how far you've gone. If the church can weep, God will bless it.

Now we're going to see Peter by the Lord's fire. And first of all, I want you to know this is a divine fire. Who lit it? The Lord Jesus.

Who collected the coal? The Lord Jesus. Who struck the rocks and kindled the spark? The Lord Jesus. Who caught the pilchards? The Lord Jesus.

Who provided the toast? The Lord Jesus. This was not supper time. This was breakfast.

And so Peter now, can you see it? He's weaned from the world's fire and he's brought round the fire that the Lord provides. And oh, what a difference. May I say this in passing? Let the Lord now tonight wean you from the world's fire.

I believe He's doing. I feel all of us have felt that we have heard the crackle of the world's fire. We have seen the wood burning.

We have seen the sparks flying. Our flesh has been warmed. Our spirits chilled.

And now we want to leave it, praise God. And get near the fire of the Lord. What then do we mean by the fire of the Lord? You see this in Acts chapter 2. When the Holy Spirit came, He came in the form of a rushing mighty wind.

You can't have a fire unless you have the blowers. Therefore there's the wind. And then you find the cloven tongues of fire sat upon each of them.

What then is the fire? It speaks of the restored presence of God. And that's what we need in our local church. Beloved, when the presence of God is restored to His people, we shall get back to that lovely word of awe.

We shan't reverence the building. Oh no. We shan't reverence so much the people.

We shall reverence the presence. We need that, don't we? When we come in and we are gathered around our precious Lord, the first thing that marks the presence of God and the presence of the fire is the awe of God. Isn't that beautiful? Secondly, with the presence of God there is peace.

I'm not referring now to peace with God. That's legal. Our justification.

I'm not referring so much to peace of God. That's experimental. But I'm talking about the God of peace being with us.

And do you know what that means? That all over that gathering there is an experimental manifestation of God's peace. There's no peace in the world. The wicked are like the troubled sea.

Out there in that dark world there is enmity. But when there is the restored presence of God, there is the restoration of His peace among the people of God, and unsaved people will come in and recognize it. It will be the presence of God that will reveal His peace.

In this fire, the restoration of His presence, there will also be joy. Now, of course, I'm not speaking about anything that's really emotional so that we lose control of ourselves. But I am talking about the joy of the Lord.

And when God's people come together there will be a sense when we shall understand that we exhort rejoicing God. I've already mentioned this. I must mention it again.

When David brought back the ark of God in the Levitical way, he danced with all his might. He could say in reference to this, in thy presence there is the fullness of joy at thy right hand, pleasures forevermore. In Acts 2, the moment the Spirit of God filled them, they were speaking out the wonderful works of God.

And they were praising God and having favor with the people. And when the fire of God is among His people, there will be a revival of intelligent joy. We shall hear those lovely subdued hallelujah.

Praise the Lord. Glory to God among the people of God. Now, can you see what's happening? It's not a joy without awe.

It's not all awe without joy. One balances the other. This is the fire, but more.

With the revived presence of God there will be a wonderful awareness of love. Why do we say love? God is love. God is love.

And therefore when the saints of God come together and when there is the restoration of His presence and the flickering of divine fire, there'll be love among the people of God. Love that's fulfilled. Love to God.

Love for the Word. Love for the saints. Love for the world.

But more. With the restored presence of God there will be power. And brethren, that's what we have lost.

Power. You see, the moment God's spirit begins to move, the moment God takes up His place among His people as Lord, you won't have to tell yourself, the Lord's here. You know how we do that sometimes.

We close our eyes and we say, where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst. We've got to really now believe that the Lord's here to find us. That's not the presence of God.

When God is manifested among His people, it's now. And feel. And see.

And could I share something with you that's so hard? When you've been in revival, you know. When you've been in meetings and whilst you were preaching, you just stepped off the platform and stopped. And in the stillness, people just worshipped the Lord and souls were saved and people were restored.

You know the presence of God. Beloved, that's what we want restored to us. And give God no rest until it's restored.

That is the house of God. The house of God is not an empty structure. It's not a veneer.

The house of God is the very place where God is present. That is why we must learn to behave ourselves correctly in the house of God. Why? Because His presence.

This was a divine fire kindled by the Lord. But more. It was a consistent fire.

It wasn't a fire of wood that they made there in that particular place called the palace courtroom. It distinctly says a fire of coal and therefore it's marked by consistency. Do you remember that mighty man Moses who was caring for his father's in-law's sheep? There in the backside of the desert he saw a bush burning and there were scores of bushes burning.

You understand more about that than we from England. Yes, there were burning all over the wilderness. But there was one bush that was different.

It burned and burned and burned and burned without being consumed. Ah says that mighty man Moses I must turn aside to see the great sight. And turning aside the Lord spoke to him out of the burning bush.

Five times in scripture you find the Lord Jehovah in a fire. Five times. And here is the first occasion.

But you see the other bushes were burning and they burned out. But there was one bush that burned without being consumed. Doesn't that show us the work of God? You know there are some of us we can burn well for four months and then when all the missions are over we can burn out like firewood can't we? I've seen it.

You know in some of our missions that last for three weeks in the old country we have a tremendous time for three weeks. And the saints are all burning. You say oh this is lovely.

Some of them burn too much they nearly wet or touch the sky with the tongue of their flame. But after the mission they burn out. You see our zeal is like firewood it burns and burns out but not God.

His fire burns forever. Burns forever. Isn't that beautiful? Therefore this was a consistent fire it was a fire of coals it was the fire that the Lord kindled and it was a fire marked by real consistency.

Now that's what we want. Acts 2 I love this. They continued steadfastly steadfastly not bedfastly steadfastly in the apostles doctrine.

Now dear friends I do want to say a word about this. You know we are living in days when people are living on their emotions and for six months they have a kind of a praise time and then after six months they

are just like a burnt out meteor. They are a wreck.

Don't be like that. There are literally millions of Christians who have been burnt out. Ask the Lord to give you an experience of His fullness that will cause you to live a consistent life.

And it's the fire of coals that God will bless. It's the consistent Christian witness that He wants. But more.

It was an attractive fire. Now I love this. It was a fire of coals and you can imagine those men who had been dampened by the winter sea and when they get to land they are shivering with the cold and it could be very cold out there in the east and it was still winter.

And they come from the sea they come from their boats they come from their fishing and there is a fire of coals and you know the feeling when you come in on a cold night probably you don't know this but in the old country we know it and after a bitter cold night you come in and nearly all the men do this they put their backs to the fire and do that. Don't know why. The ladies always face a fire in the old country.

The men always put their backs to the fire. And all the thrill of it. On a cold night to come in and see a glowing coal fire and to warm yourself.

It's something that you Australians really miss. You never have the snow on the ground. Sometimes it's a good miss.

You never have the snow on the ground and the frost but it's a lovely experience to come in from a cold bitter night and to sit round a fire and you see the flames going up the chimney. Now that's exactly how the disciples did it. You see my dear friends that's what an assembly should be.

So that new converts can come in and feel the warmth of divine love. Where God's people are living in first love be sure of this there's a coal of fire. But shall I tell you what spoils the fire? If an assembly has about 150 breaking bread and only about 22 at the prayer meeting that creates a bleak experience.

Do you know what we have seen? Converts come into a local church after the mission and they come to their first prayer meeting. And could I use some hard language? It's like a bucket of freezing water on them. Where's all the Christians? Where have they gone? And just a few brethren maintain the glow.

Now we want to deal with that. You never give live children to a dead mother and the Lord will never give converts to a fire that's going up. And therefore it's attractive.

Now how can we really stoke up the fire? How can we put the blowers in? First of all individually for us all to get right with the Lord. Personally I am what the assembly is. Simple as that.

My contribution to the local assembly makes it. And if I am a carnal Christian I'm bringing into the assembly carnality and I'm pouring water on the fire. And beloved, it hurts me to say this but I must say it.

There are many Christians that pour water on the fire by the lives that they live. Are you doing that? But when we have a deep experience with God and when we are restored to first love and when we are having our daily reading and when we are having our prayer as we were exhorted this afternoon to do and when there is that lovely family reading in the home then when we come to the local church we have something to give. Something to give.

And dear friends I believe we've all got to face up to that. Another thing that pours water on the fire if there is an inconsistency if two brethren are not speaking one with another if two sisters are clashing if there's an old grudge if I'm shaking hands with another brother and still bearing a grudge in my heart that is actually pouring water on the fire and that creates a smoke instead of a fire. Do you know brethren and sisters sometimes in our local churches there's more hatred in a local church than sometimes in an old English public house.

I have been preaching in a public house where there's greater love there than in the local church. Why? Because the devil's got in and he's disturbing the people of God. Now let's think carefully about this.

We want to do something don't we? In your local church is there deep love? In your own heart is there real love? Is there real devotion for Christ? Is the local assembly a fire? A real fire? Can I apply that to Kenmore? If someone came to your normal prayer meeting what is it like? Your normal gospel meeting? Has the fire almost gone out? Let's deal with it. Let's make the fire attractive and let the local church be a place where love is prevalent but more. There was food.

They caught big fish. The Lord Jesus had little fish. I love that.

You know quite frankly I have been into some assemblies and I remember one where we took along 15 new converts and they had a Bible reading on Revelation 13, the beast. And I watched these new converts listening and they didn't understand a word of it. And there these giant theologians were trying to push down these little babies that the Lord had just given to them whacking, ocean going hell of a. No wonder they all vomited and no wonder half of them never came again.

You see for the converts you need small fish. Now this is absolutely essential. And then there was this delicacy.

Probably there was bread, maybe toast we don't know with the fish and the Lord had food and the Lord had fellowship for them and He could say come and die. An attractive fire. But more.

It was a restoring fire. You see one particular fire was the fire that was going to warm the fish. But this fire was going to chill the flesh as far as the Adamic nature was concerned and warm the spirit.

And after the Lord had fed them He turns to Simon Peter. And you could almost see Peter looking at that fire and then thinking of the other fire that he had been to previously. And then you could almost imagine Peter as he looks at that fire saying something like this I denied the Lord there.

And then he looks at the Lord. And then he takes a deep breath and as he looks at that fire he says again He turned and looked on me. And I wept.

And he looks again and the Master is looking at him. And then quietly the Lord says to him Simon, son of Jonah using his unconverted name Lovest thou me more than thee? That went right to the heart of Peter. I want you now to notice the nature of the love that the Lord asked for.

There are three words He could have said. He could have said Peter do you hear of me? Have you fallen in love with me? Do you love me emotionally? Well, thank God He never used that word. I know we Christians sing foolishly I keep falling in love with Him over and over again.

That's Eros. But praise God that love is never used in the New Testament. It's a beautiful love.

It's a love you can't help. When two people meet and they fall in love they just can't help it. It happens.

It comes. It passes the rational mind. But that's not the word He's using here.

Or He could have said Peter do you love me? What does that mean? Peter, as your children love you and as you love your children do you love me with a fatherly a family love? He didn't say that. But He uses the most profuse word in the New Testament Agape me. What does it mean? It means this Peter I'm not asking you do you love me with an ordinary love? I'm asking you do you love me with divine love? With Heaven's love? That was a high order for Peter but more.

Agape love was a sacrificial love probably at this time the Lord Jesus was showing him His hands and His side and His feet and He was basically saying Peter this is how I love you. I loved you unto death and you were afraid to die. You said that you would die for me.

But when it came to it you missed it. Now are you prepared to die for me? Peter are you prepared to lose your life? That's Agape. And that's why the Lord predicted the death that he would die.

Peter you missed it in my rejection but you're going to gain it in my enthronement. You're going to die and that's the privilege you're going to have. That's Agape.

Friends we've got to bring Agape back. You see we shall never really extend the kingdom until we get back to sacrificial love. Now I'm not going to grouse tonight or grumble but I am going to say this.

Unless we really love the Lord more than ourselves more than our loved ones more than our business more than our hobby we shall never bring in the kingdom. It's Agape sacrificial love he's asking. But more when he says Agape he meant an intelligent love.

Paul says I pray to the Philippians that your love might abound more and more in all knowledge. And therefore this Agape love is not a love that finds its way just in the realm of the emotions it's a love that finds its realm in the mind and therefore it's a love that overcomes willpower. In fact more.

It's a love that controls the will. And it's not an emotional love where we have to be on a number seven cloud before we enjoy it. There's lots of people like that.

They never enjoy a meeting until they're clapping and raising their hands and working themselves up into a kind of a stupor. They can't enjoy a meeting until they get into that emotional state. Now all that's dangerous.

There is true emotion which is God. But Agape is an intelligent love. So that I have an intelligent concept of the Lord and that intelligent concept causes my emotions to be moved.

But more. It's an obedient love. You say what do you mean by that? If you love me keep my commandments.

And it's a love that says oh it's Sunday morning so I'm going to break bread. It's Tuesday night. Praise God I'm going to the prayer meeting.

It's two weeks of meetings. Hallelujah. I'll be there every night because I love him.

Glory to God. And that comes before everything. You see it's an obedient love.

But more. There's some visiting. I love the Lord I'm going to do it.

But it's a very practical love. It affects every part of us. It will affect our giving.

It will affect the way we serve the Lord. It will affect body, soul and spirit. He was using the word agape.

Then secondly I want you to note the object of his love. Love is not me. Now this is fine.

I must get this point out. The thing or the person I love with agape love becomes my idol. Did you know that? Your idol basically is the object of your chief devotion.

It's not basically the thing that you say you love most. It's the thing by experience you show that you love most. Therefore if I say I love the Lord and I love the world and I love the things of the world more than I love the Lord then if I love the world with agape I become worldly.

I become like the thing I love. And that is what went wrong in Laodicea. They loved the material things.

They loved the white linen. They loved the gold. They loved the iso.

They loved everything that surrounded a materialistic edifice. And they loved it so much they became like it. You see their agape was in the wrong direction.

The Corinthians loved their leaders. Until would you believe it they said I am of Paul. I am of Paulus.

I am of Cephas. And what a sin that was. They were eulogizing man.

We must never do that. If we eulogize a leader the Lord will remove him. But more.

The Galatians were loving the letter. The letter. Now I know this is fine.

But do you know you can love the Bible far more than you love God. Now if our Bible doesn't bring us to God and if our Bible doesn't bring us to Christ we have made an idol of the Bible. We never worship the Bible.

We worship the God of the Bible. And it is possible to worship the text more than the Lord. Now read the Bible.

Study the Bible. Pray that the Bible's words especially the New Testament might be engrafted in your life. But don't love theology more than the Lord.

I have been with people who knew the text far more than they knew the Lord. And all the danger of it. They were constantly dividing because of personal opinions.

And then lastly it is possible to love the assembly more than you love the Lord. Try to look at it and it's a very beautiful structure. And you can actually become what some say assembly minded.

And that's where the idol blooms in all its ugly reality. We must never be assembly minded. Christ minded.

Christ minded. You see the moment I love the system. The moment I love the structure more than I love the Lord.

The structure takes the place of the Lord and we revere the assembly more than the center. And that's what some of our brethren have done and isolated themselves from their other brethren. Notice what it says.

Lovest thou me. That's the object. And brethren when we love the Lord we have perfect liberty.

We are set free. And as we love Him we are conformed into His lovely image. But more.

The contest of love. Lovest thou me more than these. Oh, these.

What did Peter say to the Lord Jesus? Though all may be offended meaning to stumble yet will I not be offended. I'm willing to go with thee into prison and into death. In other words he was claiming to have the chief love.

Peter had failed bitterly. In fact failed more than all except Judas. And the Lord Jesus quietly looks at Peter and He says Peter lovest thou me more than these.

And He doesn't say no presumptuously with the spirit of arrogance. Yes Lord, of course I do. He appeals to the omniscience of Christ.

Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love thee. And He doesn't aspire to the word agape.

We shall see why in a few moments. He just uses the word filia which basically means Lord you know that I'm very fond of you. That's all I can write.

He says alright. Leave my land. But yet I believe there's something more.

What was Peter doing when the Lord called him? Fishing. What was Peter doing when the Lord consecrated him? Fishing. What was Peter doing on the occasion of this resurrection morn? Fishing.

Perhaps like the poet he was saying I must go down to the lonely sea and tide. It was right in his blood. You could ring the salt from Peter's socks.

The whine of the wind, the roar of the sea, the fill of the oar, the net had just got into him. If you love the sea you know the magic of it. And now he was touching the thing that was right near to the heart of Peter.

And he says Peter, Lovest thou me more than these? And there they are, a hundred and fifty and three fish, large and small, all there. You see the Lord was testing everything. Dear friends, I'm sure of this.

No one in this room really feels that he's got chief love. That's not your problem. It may not even be your business that the Lord is pointing at.

But come now. What is your chief love? Is it your hobby? Is it self? Is it that delightful wife or husband? Is it the child? Or the children? Is it your hobby? Or could it be the thing that our brother was talking about? The television. One brother heard a similar address as this in the old country.

And he went straight home with his wife. And he took the television into the garden. And together they broke it to pieces.

Now I'm not asking you to do that. But that was the thing that the Lord pointed to. But you say he should have sold it and given the money to the missionaries.

I know what's going through your mind. But you see the brother was so scared of himself that three days he could have had it back again. You know how an idol can come back.

But he dealt with it. And I met that brother recently. And he and his wife are radiant with the joy of the Lord.

Beloved, can we deal with the thing that comes between us and the Lord? Lovest thou me more than thee? And then the Lord reinstates him. It's the reinstatement of love. And notice this.

Peter cannot rise to agape. But you say, why couldn't he rise to agape? Do you know why? Because agape wasn't really a word that the Greeks used. It's a biblical word.

In fact, so the scholars tell me the Greeks hardly used this word in their literature. But the New Testament is full of it. You see when the Lord was asking him about agape love, he couldn't rise to it.

It baffled him. It was beyond him. And that's why he uses the strongest word that he knows.

Why couldn't he use the word? Why didn't he retort with the Lord? Lord, thou knowest that I agape thee. Do you know why? This love doesn't come from our hearts. It doesn't come from our emotions.

Hallelujah. This love comes from Him. And the Holy Spirit hadn't been poured out.

But when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. And hallelujah, they were filled with agape love. And that was the first time agape love had been poured into the hearts of men and women.

Listen to this. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. And the word there, love, is agape.

And divine love has been shed abroad in every Christian's heart. He said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death.

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