

# The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved

by Roy Hession

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*The sermon explores the contrasting lives of John and Peter, emphasizing the importance of understanding our identity as beloved disciples of Jesus rather than relying on our own love for Him.*

**Duration:** 54:10

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Matthew 26:31, Matthew 26:33, John 20:31, John 21:3-6, John 21:15-17

**Topics:** "Disciple"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of grace and how it applies to believers who have failed. He emphasizes that God's love is unconditional and that even in our failures, we are still loved by Him. The preacher uses the example of Peter, who denied Jesus three times, to illustrate this point. Despite Peter's failure, he was still loved by Jesus and was eventually restored by grace. The sermon also highlights the importance of understanding and believing in the depth and breadth of God's love.

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## Transcript

I want to turn you to John's Gospel, chapter twenty-one. John's Gospel, chapter twenty-one. Now this particular chapter is a rather special one.

It really is a PS to the whole Gospel. It is quite clear that John, as he was writing, intended to finish it all at verse thirty-one of chapter twenty. He's tied up all the ends, it's a perfect conclusion.

And yet in chapter twenty-one, he has one PS to add. The whole chapter is a very important one, because but for this chapter, you wouldn't know what in the world's happening in the book of the Acts, which follows. What in the world is Peter standing up with the twelve, preaching for? The last we saw was him denying the law.

Has something happened? He hasn't said anything. Surely something's owing to the other disciples and to the readers. Down on his face one moment, next moment standing up there.

Doesn't he owe us a testimony? Doesn't he owe us an explanation? Of course he does. And therefore this last chapter, chapter twenty-one, is of great importance. Now let's read part of it.

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, and Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go

fishing.

They says 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 come, they fished through the night, of course, that was the best time, Jesus stood on the shore.

But the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye ought to eat? They answered him, No. And 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 fishes. 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 fisher's coat unto him, for he was naked, and did cast himself into the sea, and the other disciples came in a little ship.

As soon as they were come to land, verse 9, they saw a file of coals there, and fish laid thereon and bred. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, and hundred, fifty, and three.

And for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come and break your fast. And none of the disciples dared 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 broken their fast, 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, Tend my lands. He saith to him again the second time. Strange this, isn't it, really? Why three times? Maybe it's because Jesus denied or disowned Jesus three times.

That he himself has asked this question three times. He saith to him again the second time. Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.

He saith unto him, Tend my sheep. He saith unto him the third time. Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things.

Thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Tend 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 hands, and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith to him, Follow me.

Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following, which also leaned on his breast at supper and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter, seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou 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 thee? This is the

disciple which testifieth of these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

Now in this passage you have two disciples brought before us very specially. The first disciple is one who is called the disciple whom Jesus loved. And this disciple appears a number of times in the whole gospel record.

And on every occasion he is not named. He is simply called the disciple whom Jesus loved. And if he needs a little further identification, it is added, the one who leaned on Jesus' breast at that last supper.

No less than five times do you have this man appear, and on each occasion he is called the disciple whom Jesus loved. Who in the world is this disciple? Well this passage tells us who it is. This is the disciple which testifieth of these things and wrote these things.

It's none other than John. And of course he figures in the story that being a modest man, and not wanting to push himself, he doesn't mention his own name. He simply identifies himself by this extraordinary phrase, the disciple whom Jesus loved.

That's all he ever wanted to say about himself. He didn't want any other identification but simply the disciple whom Jesus loved and whom grace received. Otherwise he preferred to be anonymous.

Now there was another disciple in this incident, and that of course is Peter. If John wants to describe himself only as the disciple whom Jesus loved, how do you think Peter would have described himself? Well we'd all know enough about Peter to know that had you asked him, he would have said that he was the disciple who loved Jesus. Certainly he tried to.

That seemed to be outstanding about him. He was one who thought and professed to love Jesus. And so we have these two contrasted disciples.

One, the disciple whom Jesus loved, and the other, the disciple who loved Jesus. And I want you to see in these two disciples, two sorts of Christian lives. Maybe we might not think both of them deserve to be called the Christian life.

One certainly is a bit rocky, but they're two possible, apparently, Christian lives. The one which bases its Christian life on its own love for Jesus and its own attainment. They're trying to love Jesus.

They profess to love Jesus. They're asking other people, do you love Jesus, because I'm trying to love Jesus. And they base their Christian life on their attempted love for Jesus and their own attainment.

That seems, nothing wrong about it. But there is another Christian life altogether. And this life, this man doesn't base his life, his Christian life on his love for Jesus at all.

Certainly not on his attainment. Because in his more honest moments, he knows he hasn't got any attainments. Everything is in the other direction.

This man, however, bases his Christian life on not his love for Jesus, but the love of Jesus for him. And if he says anything about himself, he only wants to say, I am the disciple whom Jesus has loved and whom grace has reached. The one life, referring back to our message of this morning, bases itself on law.

I don't need to expound any further than was expounded this morning what law means, the sense in which we use it and the New Testament that uses it. A Christian life based on law. Unrighteousness before God,

which we hope will be achieved by our attempts to keep the law, by our attempts to be faithful, by our attempts to love Jesus.

And the other is that Christian life which is based on grace alone. Undeserved grace. I'm not talking merely about salvation, the two ways of salvation, but I'm talking about a person, two people, both of whom would profess to be converted, but one is basing their Christian life on their attempts to love Jesus, their attempts to be faithful on law.

And the other is standing on other ground altogether, the ground of grace, the ground of redeeming blood, and only wants to be known as a disciple whom Jesus has loved and whom grace has received. I want us to look then, first of all, at the disciple who loved Jesus, or who tried to, or who thought he did. You can hear him professing his love for Jesus in Matthew 26, where Jesus had told the disciples that they were all going to be caused to stumble because of him.

And Peter says, verse 35, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. In another gospel it says, I am willing, Lord, such is my love for you, to go into prison and into death. And I want to tell you, he meant every word of it.

Now that is a picture, as we shall see, of the Christian life based on law, based on your love, your attainments, your faithfulness or attempts. Let's see how it worked out. Three things.

Jesus says in verse 31, in Matthew 26, 31, Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be caused to stumble because of me this night, for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. Peter answered in verse 33 and said unto him, Though all men should be caused to stumble because of thee, yet will I never be offended, or never I be caused to stumble. Now I'm reading from the Authorized Version.

And in the Authorized Version, a helpful thing is this, that where a word that's not in the original has to be added in order to make it English sense, to complete the sentence, they always let you know that fact by putting the added word in, in italics. And the word in italics is men. Though all men should be offended in thee, yet will I never be offended.

Which means that if you like, you can make your own alteration. You can use your own judgment. Is men the best word to put in there? And I would suggest that what fits the context is this.

Though all the others should be offended in thee, yet will I not be offended. Lord, I can well understand what you say about all the others. I know them and live with them.

I know the chicken hearts they are. And I can well understand all the others would be offended in thee. But I want you to know, Lord, not me, I want you to know, Lord, that I am the disciple who loves you.

In other words, this is how it worked out. Because he was basing his spiritual life on his love for Christ, his attempted love, he found himself, and the others found him, despising them. What a lot those disciples had suffered at that.

There had been a common attitude with Peter all the time. He assumed a place of superiority. And how forgiving those disciples were to this man as blind as a bat.

Because he was basing things on his love for Christ, he found he couldn't but despise others whose love for Jesus didn't seem to be so apparent as his. And if deep down you're basing your Christian life on your attempt to be better and to attain and to be faithful and to be zealous and to love the Lord, I want to tell you, you cannot avoid despising others. You haven't got to keep me from despising.

You can't help it, if that's the ground. There'll always be some that don't seem to have done so well as you. And because this is so important, your activities, it may be a spouse that you despise, not very earnest, not very dedicated, not very zealous, doesn't want to read his or her Bible.

But this is so important, this is the way you're getting on. And you find yourself despising that other one and letting it out. And it's little wonder that they don't respond more.

People don't enjoy being spoken to as from a pedestal. It isn't you want to be in a pedestal, you can't avoid it. The Lord always gives you a pedestal on which to stand.

And you commit this offensive attitude. Though the others would it not be. And you little know how offensive it is to others and to God.

And how much they've had to bear with you. And perhaps how forgiving they have been. Then the next thing was this.

That Peter, because he was basing his Christian life on this line, found himself in collision with the word of Jesus. When Peter said he would never be offended, Jesus said, verily I say unto you that this very night, never be offended, I want to tell you, this very night, before dawn comes, before the cock crows, you're going to disown me three times. And Peter said, though I should die with thee, yet will I not disown thee.

Peter, I said you're going to. I'm saying I'm not going to. I'm saying you're going to do it and you're going to do it three times.

Lord, you don't seem to understand. I am the disciple that loves you. And I'm not capable of that sort of thing.

Jesus said one thing, Peter said another, and he was in collision with the word of the Lord Jesus. And in any degree I'm based on this ground, I will find myself in collision with the word of the Lord. He'll tell me things about myself.

Out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, and fornications, and adulteries, and a whole host of unpleasant things, pride and envy. And you don't believe it, you're capable of it. He's got the wrong person, it's the others, can well understand it, I've had cases of it, I can tell you some stories you say.

I'm talking about you, says Jesus. And really you don't take the testimony of the Bible as being applicable to you. Am I not converted? Am I not one who loves the Lord Jesus? And we read in John's epistle, if we say that we have not sinned, or are not capable of this and that, or are not in danger of it, we make God a liar.

And Peter was making Jesus a liar because he was so convinced of his own integrity. And it's the same with us. And your whole attitude, it may well be, is of such sureness of your own integrity that you are making him a liar when he tells you what you're capable of.

What's beginning already to happen? He rejected the counsel of God against himself. So have we, as the Pharisees have done. You are rejecting the counsel of God against yourself.

Out of the heart of man. Out of the heart of man, even when he's converted, proceed a whole nasty brood of things. But we don't really believe it.

And then the third thing is that just as Jesus said he would, he fell. And he fell in precisely the way he said he would, that very night, before the dawn broke, before the cock crowed. He had sworn with oaths, he didn't even know that man up there.

And the way in which Peter did fall is most interesting. When they came to arrest Jesus in the garden, we read that they all forsook him and fled. But Peter followed afar off.

He said, look at them, I said, so look, chicken. They're all scared. I'm the disciple who loves Jesus, I'm not going to do it, I'm going to follow, notice, afar off at a safe distance.

And he followed John, who happened to have some friends in the high priest's palace, into the courtyard of that palace. And because he was so confident that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved, that he was incapable of doing what Jesus said he would, he went right into the place of temptation. And there, at the other end of the courtyard, he saw his saviour being mocked, spat upon and slapped.

It shook him. And when a serving girl said, you belong to him, don't you, he just couldn't face it. And he pretended he knew nothing of that man.

Do you know, it would have been much better for Peter had he done what the others had done. Had he taken to his heels. The trouble was, he thought he was holier than they were and walked right in to the jaws of temptation.

And I want to say that when we are blissfully going along, doing our best, confident that we are the disciple who loves Jesus, who is serving him so hard, despising others, consciously or unconsciously, and really in virtual collision with the word of the Lord, you are riding for a fall. It may be in very much the same way that Peter fell, or in another way. And my dear friends, it's necessary for you to fall, if only to prove that God is true.

If Peter hadn't fallen, Jesus was undone. He had to fall to prove that God was true. And maybe it's already happened.

This isn't something that might yet happen. Maybe in spite of all your protestations, you've fallen flat on your face in one way or another. You know you have.

And friend, just as well. Just as well! One of the best things that happened to Peter was so to fall. And sometimes it's just about the only way God can get through to us and show us the valueness of that ground we've been standing on, trying to build our lives on our love for Jesus, our faithfulness, the ground of love.

Now I want to turn over to the other disciple. This is the disciple who only wanted to be known as the disciple whom Jesus loved. Now most of us have got a false picture, I think, of John.

We think of him as a seraphic man, an angel of man, of a man, such a peaceful counsellor and so loving and gracious. And when you read his epistles, why, he's the apostle of love. Little wonder, you say, that

Jesus loved him.

But actually, in the gospels, he's nothing of the sort. This man, John, showed himself a sinner even more patently than Peter did. A real carnal Christian in the most unpleasant way.

First of all, we see him possessed of a nasty, unholy ambition. All the more unholy because his ambitions worked in the realm of holy things. He and his brother, James and John, I think their mother was behind it, came up to Jesus and said, grant us, I'm reading from Mark 10, 37, grant us that we may sit one on thy right hand and the other on thy left in thy glory.

They really believed that Jesus was the Messiah and they thought if they got in quick they could book the place of the prime minister and the chancellor of this checker in the coming kingdom. Well, you say that was rather selfish of them but the others were just as selfish. They were furious.

They were greatly displeased because they'd want the same thing. The trouble was these two got in first. Unholy ambition.

And Jesus had to rebuke this man. He says to sit on my right hand, on my left hand is not mine to give and I'm not at all sure how the one who has the right to give it will view your application. And he rebuked this man, John.

Well, who doesn't know unholy ambition? If you work in a team, you're all the time saying who's doing the best and you hope you are and want to be promoted and noticed. Yes, John showed himself to be a sinner in a most unpleasant way. It's the trot of trouble that splits churches and diaconates and PCCs and ministers.

This was the sort of man this John was. And then we find him falling into the sin of intolerance when it came to other people who didn't believe as he did. Luke 9, 49.

And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out demons in thy name and you know what we did, Lord? We forbade him. Said, you stop it, you are not allowed to cast out demons in the name of Jesus. You do not, he followeth not with us.

Doubtless he was following. Oh yes, John would have to admit that. But the trouble was he wasn't following with us.

He didn't belong to our group. He didn't say things the way we say. He didn't quite believe what we believe.

And it was spiritual or unspiritual intolerance to those that didn't follow with him. Do we not know something of that? How quick we are. We like to forbid them.

Stop them. They don't follow with us. They don't see things as we see things.

And Jesus challenged this man. He said, Forbid him not. Hear that? Forbid him not.

For he that is not against us is for us. He hasn't, they haven't all got to belong to our particular clique. Please turn the cassette over now.

Do not fast wind it in either direction. And then later in the same chapter, verse 54, Hebert was betrayed into utter vindictiveness against those that were opposing Jesus and himself. And when his disciples, James and John, saw that the Samaritans would not receive Jesus and give them hospitality because they were going up to Jerusalem, James and John said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elijah did? They liked the whole lot to be wiped out.

Daring to refuse us. Don't they know who we are? Do we know who Jesus is? And Jesus had to challenge it. He said, You know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

That which you have said is of the devil. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, even if they oppose him, but to save them. It's all very close to reality with us, the sort of things this man fell for.

A carnal Christian, if ever there was one, with regard to his brethren, a desire to excel. With regard to those that didn't follow with them, a desire to forbid. And with regard to those that opposed them, a desire to consume.

And so it was on these three occasions, if on no other, John showed himself a sinner, if ever there was one. But he found that he was a sinner who was loved. And it was because Jesus loved him as a sinner, that Jesus rebuked him.

That wasn't the rebuke of hatred, but of love. He wanted that man restored. And so he challenged him, rebuked him, convicted him.

And when he repented, and I can only assume he did. Oh, give me Lord. Oh, how terrible.

He found himself not only forgiven, but given a place by the side of Jesus, leaning on the breast of Jesus. And it seems to me John could never get over it. To think that I, who manifest such a loathsome attitude, should be forgiven.

More, that I should be given a place, lying on his breast. And as I say, he could only call himself, I'm a disciple, whom Jesus has loved, whom grace has reached. And I want to tell you, dear friend, although you have, and may yet, show yourself a sinner, and prove yourself to be a carnal Christian, this is carnality, what we've got here.

And made yourself offensive, and a source of trouble may be. I want to tell you, you're still loved. He's not going to love you anymore, when you're delivered from all those things.

Then he loves you right now, before any deliverance has taken place. How helpless and hopeless we sinners have been, if he never had loved us, till cleansed from our sin. And it's because he loves us, as sinners, that he convicts us.

He doesn't let us down, but he doesn't let us off. And it's love, that doesn't let you off. And if God might use another man, a loving brother to try and help you, remember, it's the love of God doing it.

And when he comes to you through the word, it's the love of God. You're loved. And when you repent, you find you're not only forgiven, but with John you're restored and given a place, lying on the very breast of Jesus, as near to him as grace can make you.

And so it was, this man didn't have any other testimony. I'm the disciple, whom Jesus loved. Five times he refers to himself in that way.

Grace has reached me. It wasn't because he'd never fallen, he had. But in his fall, he was still loved, and grace restored him.

And so it is with us. You and I are loved unconditionally, without any strings, even before we've repented, we're still loved. That's why he goes after us, and gets at us, because we're loved.

Paul talks about the four dimensions of the love of God, the breadth of the love of Christ. As Wesley says, so wide, it never passed by one, or it had passed by me. The length of the love of Christ, patient and long, did he plead with my soul.

The depth of the love of Christ, though you make your bed in hell, there, even there, will the long arm of grace reach you, if you but cry out, the first tiny bit of repentance, and the height, right up, to sit with him in the high and holy place, putting your feet under his table, resting your head in his bosom, in the sweetest communion, and all that for a sinner. And our testimony ought to be, if you've done your repenting, if you've owned up, if you've come to him as the wrong one, your testimony should be, the disciple whom Jesus loved. And now, how Peter joined John, and took the same ground himself, as the disciple whom Jesus loved.

And that, of course, is the story of that breakfast, that Jesus prepared for his disciples, on the shores of Galilee, after they'd been toiling all night. There in the dawn was the fire crackling, and the fish frying, and that's where this great thing happened. That's how I set out the stages, by which Peter joined John, on the ground of grace.

The first thing was this, he was allowed to fall. First step. He must be shown to be a sinner.

He must admit that fact. His sin must be such, that not even he can excuse it, or ignore it. But the fall of Peter was a controlled fall.

He didn't fall one bit lower, than what Jesus permitted. And the falls of the saints of God, are all controlled falls. You fall, you show yourself to be a sinner, but no lower, than what He permits, so that you can learn your lesson.

And as I've said, maybe it's already happened. Be encouraged, friend. That shameful fall, it's a controlled fall.

You don't think it is? It is. The saints of God, they fall, but they're all controlled. And they're permitted, for this great purpose that was in mind here.

And then secondly, Peter was given, a sight of grace, in that fall. Do you remember that bit in Luke 22, where Jesus, it's the same bit where He was telling Peter, what was going to happen to Him? There we have these words, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not, and when thou turn again, strengthen thy brethren. Now whenever you come across the word faith, always ask yourself, faith in what? Peter's going to have a big trial of faith, apparently.

Well you see, I suppose it was a big trial, to have to own up in front of all the mocking crowd, that he belonged to Jesus Christ. It was a test, of his loyalty. It was nothing of the sort.

The failure, that was going to prove such a test, to Peter, a test of faith to Peter, was his failure. And what was going to be tested, was not his loyalty, or his faithfulness, or his courage, but his faith in grace. Having fallen down on his face, could he still believe, grace there is my every debt to pay, blood to wash my every stain away.

It was a test of faith in grace. The immutability of divine grace for sinners. Judas had the same sort of test, but he collapsed.

He cast away his confidence in grace for sinners, which had great recompense or reward, and Jesus said, in your case Peter, I don't want it to happen. I'm going to pray for you, that your faith in grace, shall not fail. I tell you, when failures come, it is a test, of faith in grace.

Can you really believe it? Can you really feel there is liberty for you? Or does it take you a month or Sundays, before you get right with God, and can rejoice again? Your faith in grace, isn't doing very well, but this is the great thing, that I have, a holy confidence, in God's grace for sinners, when failure comes. And you know how it worked out, in Peter's case? I imagine, that when he went out and wept bitterly, Jesus had looked at him, and otherwise reminded him, didn't I tell you so? And that was the most helpful thing in the world to him. And Peter in the midst of his tears said, but he told me I'd do it.

It has taken me by surprise, it hasn't taken him. He was all the time telling me, why I would do it, and he who anticipated me doing it, assured and provided ahead of time, for it. And do you know, he's got his feet on the first step, back to freedom.

The first little bit of grace, began to shine. And there was yet another stage, first the fall, then this beautiful new sight of grace. Oh, that's lovely when you get it.

There's hope of a tree. If it be cut down, that it will sprout again. Though the root, though the stalk, grow old in the earth, and seems to be dead, yet at the scent of water, it can bud and bring forth, boughs like a young branch.

That's it. That scent of water, the message of grace, to a sorrowing saint, who knows he's a failure, doesn't have any hope. Oh, it's lovely.

God knows how to do it. Maybe through the scripture, through a message, maybe through another brother. Paul said, God who comforted those that are cast down, comforted me by the coming of Titus.

Titus was to depress Paul, at that time. The scent of water. And Jesus was praying for Paul, that his faith in grace, would not fail, under test.

He could still believe, there was mercy for him, in all his depressions. And then it's obvious, if you compare verse with verse, we haven't got time to do it, that the first thing, that Jesus did, when he rose from the dead, was to seek out that sorrowing disciple. I can't explain the verse, we haven't got time.

Take my word for it. It's clear. Before he appeared to anybody else, the first one he appeared to, was Peter.

We don't have a record of that interview, but we know it took place. And oh, what a wonderful thing it was, for Peter and his failure, to be met by Jesus. And to receive those words of grace, direct to his heart.

And, all was well, between him and Lord. He confessed, Jesus forgave. And everybody knew he'd seen the Lord, because he could see it on his face.

So that when the two on the road to Demas, went back to the other disciples, with their bit amused, they greeted them with, The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Peter. You can see his face. Look at him.

Just fine. But wait a minute. He's not through yet.

He knows he's forgiven, he knows he's restored. But he hasn't said anything to the other disciples. No testimony.

All blown over. All okay. Moving amongst them, as they usually did.

Perhaps taking the lead, pushing them around a little bit. Why, it was he who suggested that fishing trip. At it again.

Taking the lead that didn't, didn't really belong to him at all. And so there came this breakfast. Now I want to tell you how I interpret that.

It was simply Jesus, nudging him, into the light with his brethren. He owed it them. He owed it us readers later on.

We wouldn't understand him standing up with the eleven and giving the sermon on the day of Pentecost. And you know it's very easy to blow your top and have a scene. And you feel so much better when you've blown your top and got it off.

Now that's much better. But you don't say anything to anybody else. Relative of ours, years ago, came to one of these conferences and she'd blown her top about various things.

And God was moving. Way back in Abigailia, I remember. And I said to my first wife, I said, you know, I think she'll be coming to us and telling us she's sorry for that blow off.

No, nothing happened at all. And so I eventually asked her, I said, haven't you felt a little convicted about that? Oh, she said, once I've blown off I feel so much better. It's all okay afterwards.

It wasn't okay with us. And the last the disciples had seen of Peter was denying the Lord and going out and weeping bitterly. Doesn't he owe a testimony to his brothers? Of course he does.

And grace even gave him a place of leadership afterwards but not before. And so the Lord asked him, Simon, I'm going to ask you a question. Do you love me more than these? Because Peter, you said you did.

You said, though all the others would be offended, you wouldn't. You thought that you loved me more than these. Now, in the light of what's happened, I'm asking you, they were all listening.

Lovest thou me more than these other fellows? Can you say so? Dear Peter didn't know where to put himself. What a pity he had to be nudged into the light. But he was.

And he said, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. Well, here's a little thing that most of us know. It's often been mentioned that in that verse there are two different Greek words for the word love.

The first is agapeo, the word for the divine love. The big word, divine love. Do you love me with that sort of love, Peter? And Peter didn't dare to say yes to that word.

And so he dropped down to a much smaller word, phileo. Yea, Lord, you know that I like you. Then Jesus asked him the same question again three times he denied, three times he's going to be asked this question.

Peter, lovest thou me agapeo? And he, once again, couldn't get any higher than Yea, Lord, thou knowest I like you. And then the third time Jesus dropped down to his word. Peter, do you like me? And Peter was so grieved.

Oh, Lord, you're not going to doubt that. Surely you'll admit, you'll accept the fact that I like you. I'm asking you, do you even like me? Because what happened didn't look like the work of one who liked another.

And Peter gives a lovely answer. Lord, thou knowest all things. Thou art omniscient.

I don't know whether I can say yes to your question, but it could be that omniscience can somewhere find a little flicker of liking for you. And the truth's come out in front of the others. He's been nudged into the light.

And then he was given his commission for coming days. And you know, friend, Jesus has to nudge us. Maybe things have been more or less settled with the Lord.

But you haven't said anything to anybody else. They heard those words. But the family haven't heard you give a testimony that you've repented, that you've been to Jesus for the cleansing power.

And you're not yet really on the ground of grace until you do. Ostensibly a sinner whom Jesus has loved, whom grace has reached, and whom the blood has cleansed. And we're not really on the ground of grace is a practical matter until we're willing to come into the light and put it right with those that saw it and were affected by it.

And raise our song that we've been forgiven and restored. It's only because of this we can understand Peter taking the lead. We would have been absolutely false.

So would the rest of the disciples. But oh, they were only too glad for him now to take the lead to feed and tend the sheep and the lambs. And that's the way in which leaders are made.

They're not made by being one step ahead of the rest. They're made when they put themselves in the wrong and put themselves many steps behind the rest. And grace then restores them.

And on the ground of grace they've got something to give others. Before it was a self-righteous testimony. Now it's a sinner's testimony.

Do be sure that in your testimony that it's a sinner's testimony. Only that glorifies God. It humbles us when it glorifies Jesus.

And so ends this little contrast between the disciple whom Jesus loved and that other disciple who thought he loved Jesus and who had to be humbled and brought down to the sinner's place and who thanked God by the loving ministering of Jesus was brought right on to the ground of grace. The ground of peace. And that's where the Christian life works.

Well you say, is it wrong to love Jesus? Listen, it's wrong to build your life and your love for your Christian life and your love for Jesus. I wouldn't give a tuppence for it. Nor mine.

We sing about it, yes. I think it's alright. Because after all he that's forgiven much does love much.

I'm quite sure that John loved in actual fact Jesus far more than Peter did. But he didn't speak about his love. It was all that grace, that love that had reached him.

We're going to sing a beautiful hymn. It passes knowledge. That dear love of thine.

It goes on verse and then comes this wonderful verse. I... don't look at it for a moment. I am an empty vessel.

Not one thought or look of love I ever to thee brought. But I may come and come again to thee. With this the empty sinners only plea.

Thou lovest me. And you know some of the books have left out that hymn. It's my favourite verse.

That verse, not that hymn. They really can't get round to saying, Oh Lord, I am an empty vessel. Not one thought or look of love I ever to thee brought.

But I'm not... That's no problem to me. I've got other ground to build my life on. My peace with God on.

But I may come again to thee. With this the empty sinners only plea. Thou lovest me.

Now which are you? Where are you standing? Have you ever stood as an empty sinner? As a failure? At the foot of the cross where Jesus anticipated all the wrongs we've done in his body on the tree. And offered yourself by your confession of sin as a candidate for the grace of God. You and I are no candidates for the grace of God unless we put ourselves in the wrong.

And somebody won't put themselves in the wrong. There's a man or a woman or somebody else. They've got other loved ones who are Christians.

I'm thinking now just such people for a moment. You never become a Christian unless you're prepared to put yourself in toto in the wrong. The wrong one.

Then my dear friends the skies are blue. You become a candidate for that marvelous grace of our loving Lord. Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt.

Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured there where the blood of the Lamb was spilt. Amen. And I tell you this the electricity we put turned on in your soul.

You won't thank the Archangel Gabriel to tell you that you're eternally saved. You'll know it. But we're also thinking perhaps more especially so is that all we know about initial salvation that we've been on the wrong ground trying our best.

You know the old hymn Oh dearly, dearly has he loved and we must love him too and trust in his redeeming blood and how depressing try his works to do. You never get, you never make it. Someone said was it this morning someone in a prayer meeting that they had thanked oh yes it was in the prayer meeting thank God for the place wherever it was where they learned what to do with sin not to try and strive but to go to Calvary.

And not just you get forgiveness and peace there but at the cross on the ground of grace Jesus progressively puts into you what he wants out of you. And I want to tell you unless he puts it in you'll never get it out. He doesn't expect to find it there.

But when you confess your emptiness grace not only forgives puts in what he wants out and it's a new experience day by day. Let us pray. Lord Jesus oh we thank you for this love of thine for a sinner the breadth of it the length the depth the height thank you Lord that we can be with John loved by thee and leaning on thy bosom and oh Lord we ask thee to interpret all that we've been trying to think about this evening to each one show us where it fits show us what it is we've missed show where in the world we've gone wrong all this time and may there be a new coming to thee as sinners to the foot of thy cross where the just for the unjust died on the tree this we ask in thy dear name Amen Amen

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