Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Characteristics of a Committed Christian
Scripture: John 21:15-25
Code: 1579

Chapter 21 of John, this morning, and this morning is a farewell. I'm not leaving but John is. I'm like the poor, you always have me with you. But this is our last study in John's gospel, Lord willing. And so we come to chapter 21 verses 15 to 25. It's very difficult to say farewell to John. We will not say farewell, it is indelibly in our hearts and shall be crossed reference for years to come. But as we come to chapter 21, particularly verses 15 to 25, rather than just read through the historical narrative, I want to do what I know the Spirit of God wants me to do, and that is to apply the principles of the historical narrative to the action of your own lives. And I want to talk to you on the characteristics of a committed Christian.

Now as Christians, we frequently talk about commitment. And, you know, having been in a church repeatedly, as most of you have, you have heard many preachers say you ought to be more dedicated, more committed, consecrated, re-consecrated, rededicated, whatever. And it's a valid thing because what they're talking about is the idea that now that you're a believer and you've received Jesus Christ, you need to really commit your total life into His total control for the expression of His will and power through you. It amounts to the elimination of yourself in order that Christ might live totally through you as He designs. And preachers and teachers urge people constantly, week in and week out, day in and day out, to be committed to Jesus Christ, not just born again, not just saved, but obedient, yielded, Spirit-filled, walking in the will of God kind of Christians. And it's valid, as I say. It's important.

I'll never forget, however, an incident that illustrated to me that much of the appeal is contentless and that though people are told to be committed, they really don't know what it's all about many times. I was in a camp and I was sitting in the back while a speaker was speaking and having completed the message which was full of inspiration and nothing else, and a lot of emotion and everybody was getting worked up and certain kids were crying and there wasn't really any content, no Word of God, but lots of stories that made you cry and things. At the end, he said...the speaker said, "Now we want commitment. Now everybody who wants to commit their life to Jesus Christ come up here and take a pinecone and throw it in the fire." You know, you've been through that thing in a camp, which is okay, testimony time. And so, kids came by and said, "I want to dedicate my life to the Lord," and zap, they threw their pinecone in the fire. One kid came up, I'll never forget it. And the speaker had made a heavy emphasis on dedicating your time to God. And so he said, "I want to give my time to God," he

ripped off his watch and threw it in the fire.

Now, you know, I appreciate his spirit and I appreciate what he was doing, but that's not what you do when you want to commit your time to God. That's poor stewardship. You have to go out and buy another watch. And, you see, here is...this is kind of a graphic illustration to me, and what goes on very, very much and that is great emotional appeals to people to be real disciples and following Jesus without ever any instruction about what it's about. Or how to follow Jesus Christ in the area of commitment. And I don't want to be guilty of emotionalizing commitment without any content, so when I talk about commitment, I'll talk to you out of the twenty-first chapter of John verses 15 to 25 because in there you have the principles of commitment. And I'll let the Spirit of God stir up your emotions. I'll work on them a little bit. But I'll let the Spirit of God be responsible for that in response to what you learn from the Word of God. So, this morning as we look at these verses, particularly I want you to see the four characteristics of commitment that are in these verses and they are factual.

Now before we look at these four, I must review since this will be our parting time with John, and give you again a little repeated insight into what's going on in chapter 21. John has been writing now 20 chapters. And at the end of chapter 20 he really closed the main body of his message. When he wrapped it up in chapter 20 with verse 31, he said that the reason I've written all of this is that you might believe that Jesus, that is the human Jesus, is in fact the Christ which is a New Testament word for the anointed which is the Old Testament word Messiah, Jesus is Messiah, He is the Son of God and that believing you might have life through His name. All 20 chapters written to show that Jesus, a human being in human flesh, is Messiah, is God and that you believing in His name may come alive to eternal and abundant life. That's the purpose of John's gospel and in its total purpose it kind of wraps up in chapter 20 verse 31 so that chapter 21 then becomes an appendix, in a literary sense, not in a medical sense. In a medical sense, an appendix is worthless. In a literary sense, it is very important because it ties together loose ends and John and the Holy Spirit don't leave loose ends. And so what is not really fully dealt with in the 20 chapters is kind of summarized in terms of answering questions in chapter 21. So John pulls together the loose ends, those things that he has not fully explained. And he puts them in chapter 21. He hung around just long enough to do that.

And this is not an uncommon situation. I think about my own self. Many times on Sunday mornings, for a long time, having completed my message, I always remain up here and without exception, many times, I don't think there's a service that goes by, people will come up afterwards...the reason I stay here and not at the door is because I want to be available to the people who need an appendix to my message. In other words, the people who have questions that have arisen out of the message that they did not understand are the ones that come and speak with me, rather than just everyone. So I feel that I must be available to kind of sum up what I've said and defend the parts that maybe weren't too clear or left unsaid. And that's exactly what John is doing so I have a biblical base for doing it. In 21, he's pulling together the loose ends.

Now, quick review. There are five questions that were kind of left a little bit vague at the end of chapter 20 that John answers in 21. We can divide 21 into five little sections, each of which answers a question left unanswered in the gospel.

The first question that was kind of hanging there for a while was, "Now that Jesus has risen, now that He is in His glorified body, now that He's going to ascend to the Father and the fact that He told Mary not to hang on to Him cause He had to leave and there was no more going to be that kind of relationship physically, does that mean that Jesus no longer will provide for the needs of His own in an intimate way? Is Jesus saying, in fact, that now this relationship is severed and you're on your own totally. The answer to that is in verses 1 to 14, and what's the answer? No. The answer is, "I will provide for you even after My resurrection," and He proves it by providing for them not only so many fish they could hardly get them in, but He also made breakfast for them, didn't He? And what He was saying in a living parable was, "Gentlemen, it is not over, I will continue to provide for you beyond what you really need even." And so the answer to question number one.

Question number two that was left at the end of chapter 20 was this, "What ever happened to Peter?" If all we have is John's gospel, Peter just kind of washes out at the end. First he denies Jesus Christ, then he flees at the cross. The next thing you know, Jesus has risen from the grave and John believed, but Peter just stood around wondering what was going on. And if Peter is to be the great leader of the apostolic group, if he's to be the great dynamo on the day of Pentecost, if he's to be God's man to move in the beginning of the church, it's kind of a hopeless situation if all we have is the end of chapter 20 because Peter just kind of fades into oblivion. And so the question that's left in your mind is, "What about Peter?" So verses 15 to 17 answer that and that's Jesus restoring Peter to the place of leadership among the Apostles. Very important that He do that.

The third question that's unanswered at the end of chapter 20 is this, "What about the future of all the disciples?" Now that Jesus is leaving, who takes care of us? Who is going to determine our life and our death? Is our destiny in somebody's hands? The answer to that is in verses 18 and 19a where Jesus the destiny is in My hands, don't you worry about that, I'll guide your life and I'll guide your death. That answers that question.

The fourth question that came up and it came up really because of this incident here at the Sea of Galilee was the question about whether the Apostle John would ever die or not because Jesus had made the statement, as we'll see a little later, to Peter. He said, "What do you care if John lives till the Second Coming, it's none of your business?" And so they picked up the thought that maybe John was never going to die but was going to be around till the Second Coming. So the Holy Spirit wants to correct that error and that takes place in verses 19b to 23 and in that section He corrects that problem.

That leaves one other question. The other question was raised in chapter 20 verse 30 and it was this, "How come we didn't record everything Jesus did?" And John gives the answer in verses 24 and 25 by saying, "If we did that, the books of the world couldn't hold it."

So, in chapter 21 then we have those five key questions answered and the book becomes a total unit, it summarizes itself in chapter 1...21, leaves nothing out and it's complete. But let me add this, and I hope you've learned this by now, as we approach chapter 21, we're not going to just look at it from the standpoint of those answered questions. You'll be able to see those answers as they weave through. But Scripture is a many faceted diamond, believe me, I know you do, we could spend a year on chapter 21. There are many, many things that we could dwell on in this chapter, all of Scripture can be looked at at various different angles. Somebody said to me this morning, "You know, Such-and-such a person taught on Ephesians on the first chapter, the same chapter that you taught on only he brought out things that you didn't bring out." That's exactly right. That's exactly the way it is with the Word of God. If everybody that taught the same passage said the same thing, we'd only need one teacher. The Word of God is like a diamond, it explodes in a spectrum of color and you can go at it from all angles. And I may take a certain approach and I may highlight certain things, that doesn't mean there's nothing else there by any means. That only means that I'm limited by my mental capacities and by your endurance.

And so, as we look at chapter 21 verses 15 to 25, we're going to pick out an area of emphasis and that area is the characteristics of committed Christians. And we're going to see them here. Now remember that in verses 1 to 14 we saw kind of a basic pattern for the Christian life because we saw Jesus in a living illustration show the difference between self-effort and spiritual effort, didn't we? Last week we saw that the disciples tried to do it on their own and they met with failure and they lost the intimacy of Jesus' fellowship. Jesus moved in, they did it His way, they were obedient, they had success and they experienced fellowship. There are only two ways to live the Christian life, that's all, two ways. Number one, you live it all by yourself in disobedience, you end up a failure and you lose the intimacy of the presence of Jesus. The other way is to live it in His power, obedient to Him, you have great success and you enjoy the fullness of His presence. That spiritual truth is illustrated in verses 1 to 14, in Jesus' provision of the fish.

So, we've seen the basic to the Christian life is living it in the Lord's power, not your own. Now we're going to move a step further into the Christian life and see the four characteristics of a really committed Christian. Here they come.

Number one, his work is compelled by love. A real committed Christian operates on the basis of his love for the Lord. Two, his way is controlled by God. He has learned how to give his life totally to

God and trust Him for it. His will is content with following. He's happy to do what Jesus leads him to do. Fourth, his words are concerning Jesus. His work is compelled by love. His way is controlled by God. His will is content with following. And his words are concerned with Jesus. I pray, God, that these words of Jesus may dwell in you richly because they are great profound truths.

First of all, the first characteristic of a committed Christian, his work is compelled by love. Love is the great thing that really moves people who are in the service of Jesus Christ. Love is t he driving force. Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, "The love of Christ does...what?...constrains me." It drives me into service. John said, "We go out and we preach...3 John...for the sake of the name because we love His name." Paul said in Romans 1 that we go to preach obedience to the nations for the sake of His name because we are overwhelmed with love for the glory of our Savior, Jesus Christ. That's the greatest, the highest, the pinnacle of all motives, isn't it? And you can always tell somebody who really loves Jesus, who really does...you know how? They're busy serving Him.

Now this principle is very important, that the work of a committed Christian is compelled by love. Not legalism, not "have to," the Christian who really loves Christ sometimes needs to be harnessed from running too fast. Now you recall, as we look at verses 15 to 17, this passage deals with restoring Peter, but it's all about love because that's the issue. And we learn the principle of our service compelled by love from this little encounter with Peter that is so loaded with spiritual truth that it's a shame not to spend more time, but let me just pick out of it what I want to set in motion for this message.

Now you'll remember Peter was always kind of vociferous. He was always kind of stating his great, not pride really, but his...he was kind of proud in the fact of his own boldness. He was stating his great courage. He would always say, "Well everybody else may fail You and the disciples may fall by the wayside, but I will never betray You, I will never fail You," and he said in John 13, Jesus says to him, "Peter you can't go where I'm going, just relax, you can't go. Now afterward you'll go but not now." Peter said, "Lord, I don't care what anybody does, I don't care what happens, I'll go with you and I'll die for you." And, of course, you know what happened, that's all talk and no action. Not only did he not die for Him, he didn't even live for Him. He came down to the crux hour, the hour when he was confronted with his testimony in Jesus Christ and he blew it three different occasions, he denied Jesus. And if we put the synoptic gospels together with John, the other gospels, and put all four of them, it just may well be that six different times he stayed that he denied Jesus...six specific denials on three separate occasions. So this was a big thing with him, he was really letting everybody know that he had nothing to do with Jesus. And so, Peter who was so great in stating his courage because so small in being able to maintain.

Now since that time, Peter had just kind of fluttered around. And if Peter was going to be, now watch this, if Peter was going to be the leaders of the Apostles and a great instrument in God founding His church, he had to be restored. Do you see? And he had to be restored not only personally between he and the Lord, but in the eyes of everybody else. That's very important. So the Lord knows his commission must be a public commission. Now we believe that before you ever get to 21:15 Jesus has already had a personal encounter with Peter. You don't find it in the gospels, but you find it in 1 Corinthians 15:5 which says Jesus appeared to Cephas, or Peter. So Jesus had already appeared to Peter on a one-on-one basis. Now we don't know what happened on that basis, but this time Jesus wants to commission Peter publicly so that all the other disciples can see that Peter has been restored, has been given the responsibility, has stated his love, has been approved of Jesus Christ and therefore they'll follow him as he leads them. The Lord needs Peter.

And so Jesus meeting the disciples at the Sea of Galilee, as we saw in the first 14 verses, sits down to have breakfast with them. And it's interesting because during breakfast, I don't know what was going in Peter's mind but just because of the circumstances, we would imagine that Peter was very sad, that Peter was sitting there with a heart full of grief. He had blown it every way you could blow it. He denied Jesus. He fled when Jesus died. He wondered about the death and resurrection. He wasn't even too sure about that. And now Jesus said go to Galilee in a mountain and wait for Me, and instead of being in Galilee in a mountain, where is he? He's down at the Sea. Instead of waiting for Jesus, he's gone back to his former occupation, he's going to make a living again. He's rejected the initial call of Jesus. He's blown it every way you could blow it. And then Jesus meets him on the Sea and provides more fish than he can handle and says, "Come on in, Peter, I've cooked breakfast for all of you." And you can imagine he's just..."oh...oh," you know, he's overwhelmed with the grace of God to the point where he can't stand himself. Do you ever get like that? And so he sits there and I imagine his head was hanging and tears were perhaps in his eyes and he was lost in the horror of his own inability to believe his Savior, whom he loved.

But Jesus isn't done with Peter. He's after Peter because He knows that Peter is to be the leader of the apostolic band and so Jesus confronts Peter right at the breakfast table at the Sea of Galilee. Verse 15, "So when they had breakfasted," it's the Greek word for breakfast, "when they had breakfasted, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of,'" it's *Ioana*in the Greek, or John, "'Lovest thou Me more than these?'" Right out of that breakfast group, the disciples around there, seven of them, Jesus zaps Peter. Breakfast is over, Simon Peter's there. Jesus says to him, "Simon," and that alone must have hurt because his name wasn't Simon anymore, what was it? It was Peter. And who changed his name to Peter? Jesus did. When...when...when Peter came into an encounter with Jesus, he was a new man, Jesus gave him a new name, but now he was acting like the old man. And so Jesus pinpointed the problem right there when He called him "Simon" and not Peter. And Jesus was saying, "Peter, we're not together anymore, are we?" So He says, "Simon," and I can

imagine that was the initial entrance of the scalpel into Peter, the surgery was begun.

"Simon, son of John," and then He says this, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" Lovest thou Me more than these, what do You mean? Well, you remember that Peter had sword his allegiance, he had sworn that he loved Jesus and Jesus confronts him with this love. Now the reason Jesus confronts him with love, hang on to this, is that He wants Peter to lead the apostles. He wants Peter to be the shepherd of the flock. And in order for Peter to be an effective shepherd, the overwhelming drive in Peter must be his love for Jesus Christ, right? That's the only thing that makes you effective. If a person doesn't love Jesus Christ, they have no reason to serve Him. And so He wants to establish that Peter loves Him because that's the compelling thing that will drive Peter to serve Him. So He says, "Peter, do you love Me more than these?" And when He said "more than these," remember I told you last week that I believe that what He was doing was sweeping His hand over all the boats and the nets and the fish and the whole regalia that went with it and saying, "Peter, do you love Me more than you love this profession? Peter, you've gone back to fishing again." And Peter loved fishing. And Jesus says, "Peter, do you love Me more than you love the fish and the nets and the boats and the sea here and you're daily routine and your profession and your career which you're successful in doing? Do you love Me enough, Peter, to say goodbye to every bit of it? Do you love Me enough to just write it off? All your successes, all your chosen career, all your direction, just write it off, do you love Me enough, more than all of that to do just what I tell you to do? You claim to have great love, Peter, is it for real?"

Now I want to show you something here that's fantastic in the Greek and you don't get it from the English, but I want you to see it. He uses the word "love" here in verse 15, *agape,*or *agapao*, the verb, and that means the highest, greatest kind of love, the most noble divine kind of love. He says, "Peter, do you really, really super love Me?" See. I mean, this is the purest, most glorious, fullest kind of love, "Peter, do you really, really super love Me?" Well, that's the key to commitment, but let's face it, Peter knew he couldn't say yes to that because his life wouldn't match it, would it? Jesus says, "Do you really, really love Me?" And Peter is not about to say, "Lord, You know I *agapao* You. I really, really super love You." The Lord would say, "Now wait a minute, Peter, it's obvious from your life that you don't *agapao*Me in the fullest sense."

So Peter didn't answer that way. Watch what Peter said, look at verse 15. He says, "Peter, do you really, really love Me in the fullest sense?" Peter says unto Him, "Yes, Lord," and I imagine it came out kind of meek. "Yes, Lord." Notice he appeals to the Lord's omniscience, "You know that I...what?...that I love Thee." But wait a minute, that's not the same word Jesus used. That's the word *phileo*in the Greek which means, "I have a great affection for You." It's a few degrees down from the other kind. The Lord says, "Peter, do you really, really love Me." Peter says, "Lord, You know I like You a lot." You see, the thing is he can't admit anymore because his works wouldn't back it up, would

they? I mean, he's not about to say, "Lord, look at my heart, You know that I really, really super love You, if that's really, really a super love, wow, it's in pretty bad shape." So Peter doesn't acknowledge that, he couldn't do that. He's a broken man, he's humbled now, the courageous pronouncements are over and his mouth is silent. A deep humility bows his broken and contrite heart and tears in his eyes very likely he says, "Jesus," he says, "You know in my heart I have a deep affection for You. I can't claim to love You like that. I can't claim the fullest kind of love. My life doesn't back it up."

But you'll notice that he believed that he did love Jesus because he said, "Look at my heart, You know I have affection for You." Now he couldn't say, "Look at my works," could he? He couldn't say, "Lord, Lord, look at my life, doesn't it show that I love You?" So he says, "Lord, You know in my heart I love You." He has to appeal to His omniscience to indicate his love because it's not obvious. You know, I used to think that was terrible. When I was a little kid my parents would always say to me, "Johnny, just remember everything you think, God sees." Whooo, you know, that's a scary thought. When I was a little kid I had weird thoughts, "Oh no," you know. I'm going to wear a hat so God couldn't see, you know. You have this fear that everything God sees, and I thought, oh, that's a bad thing, that's a terrible thing. And then I began to realize later on in my life that it's a wonderful thing because you know something? I'm not sure God would know I loved Him if He couldn't see my heart because a lot of times my deeds don't manifest it. There are times in my life when I have to say, "Lord, sometimes I'm not too glad You can read my insides, and then, Lord, I want You to know that sometimes I'm glad You can because You know I like You a lot. I don't have the highest kind of love for You like I ought to have, but, Lord, You know I have affection for You. You know I love You." That's what Peter does. And so he's broken and he says, "Jesus, You know I have affection for You, You know that, it's obvious."

Then He says at the end of verse 15, and I love this because this is how we know Jesus accepted that. "Jesus said unto him, 'Feed My lambs,'" pasture My lambs. You see what Jesus did here? He called him. He says, "Peter, I'll take you on that ground," He didn't say, "Oh, Peter, I'm sorry, if all you've got is *phileo*love, forget it. Let's see, who will be next? Thomas, you try." No. No. He says, "Peter, if you're humble enough to acknowledge that your love isn't what it ought to be, that's exactly where I want you to be. Take over the job. Pasture My lambs."

You want to know something? The Lord never expects us to love Him in the fullest sense of divine love before the service begins. He only expects us to acknowledge that we don't love Him enough. That's where we begin. Did you get that? If you're willing down in your heart to get on your knees before God and say, "Lord, I want to tell You right now I don't love You enough," at that point...if God will break you at that point, then God will build you again to use you. But you've got to come to the place in your life where you recognize you don't love Jesus Christ like you ought to love Him. And Peter was there. And God said, "On that basis, do the job." And so He says, "Pasture My little

lambs, deal with My babies." And all of the disciples at that point were immature lambs. And the word "feed" here is a durative present which means it's a keep on word, keep on shepherding My sheep. You know, shepherding the sheep is a constant feeding and a constant nourishing of the flock and Peter was called to do that and that's what every pastor/teacher has ever been called to do. We have the strange idea somewhere that there's a dichotomy between being a pastor and being a teacher and we say So-and-so is a good teacher but not a good pastor, or So-and-so's a good pastor, but not a good teacher. There's no such thing. There's only a hyphenated word in the New Testament, teaching-shepherd. Any shepherd who doesn't feed his flock isn't a shepherd at all, they'll all wither up. And sometimes we get the idea that for a ministry, a pastoring ministry, is running around all the time visiting everybody and having coffee. That's not a pastoring ministry. A pastoring ministry is feeding the flock whether you're feeding them on a public basis or a personal basis, that's pastoring. The other is running around having coffee.

And so, the Lord says, "Peter, I'll accept you on that basis, now you pastor My little lambs." And that means you protect them, that means you feed them. That's what it's all about. So the Lord accepts him.

You say, "Well it should have been done there." No, how many times had Peter denied Jesus? On three occasions, so Peter's going to get three shots to restore himself. Verse 16, "He saith to him again the second time, 'Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?'" Again He uses *agapao*. "He saith unto Him, 'Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.' He saith unto him, 'Feed My sheep.'" Not only My little lambs, but keep on feeding My little lambs and when they get to be sheep, you feed them, too. Keep on doing it, continuing to minister. So He accepts him again.

Then as if that's not enough, the third time so that Peter can be restored once for each occasion, when he denied Him, "He saith unto him a third time," watch this, this is a change, and this is the point I want to get at, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" Peter was grieved because He said unto him a third time, "Lovest thou Me." "And he said unto Him, 'Lord, Thou knowest all things.'" Did you hear that? That's Peter's faith that Jesus was God in human flesh, did you hear it? That's another sermon. "Lord, Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I...what?...I love Thee." Jesus saith unto him, "Feed My dear sheep." That's the most mature believers.

Now what's happening here? Oh, there's been a change. Peter's grieving. You would have thought that Peter would have said, "O Lord, thank You so much for asking me three times and giving me three shots at getting back to where I should have been." But no, Peter breaks down and when it means grieved it means he was aching and he was hurt. You say, "What's making him grieve?" The fact that Jesus changed the word. When Jesus said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" He didn't say *agapao*, the fullest sense, He says this, now watch the intonation. He says, "Peter, you've

said two times you really have affection for Me. I say to you, do you really even have affection for Me?"

You say, "What's He saying?" He is putting even Peter's *phileo*up to suspect. Do you see? He's saying, "Peter, is this affection you say you have for Me even verified by your life?" You see? That's what hurt Peter. Peter had twice boasted again, "Lord, You know that I have a great affection for you," and Jesus said, "Oh really? Does your life really show that you even have affection for Me, let alone supreme love?" And that shattered Peter's heart because Peter, as he looked in his life, thought that he had that kind of affection, but Jesus says, in effect, even your...even the love that you acknowledge on a limited level isn't evident by your life.

You know, there are a lot of you here this morning like Peter. And if somebody came up to you and said, "Do you love Jesus Christ?" You'd say yeah, I love Him. If somebody said to you, "Love Him in a full rich and total supreme sense?" You'd say no, but I like Him a lot. And Jesus might be looking at you right now and saying, "Oh really? You even like Me? Your life doesn't show it. If you really like Me, what will you do? You'll feed My lambs, you'll feed My sheep, you'll feed My dear sheep."

You say, "What are you saying?" I'm saying this. My friend, don't you say you love Jesus Christ if you're not busy doing His will. And some people will claim to love Jesus Christ and no way He would ever know it except by omniscience cause there's not any evidence in their life. I can always tell the people who love Jesus, I can tell. They're the ones who are busy doing things for Him. I can tell the people who think they love Jesus, or who say they love Jesus, they're the ones who are here on Sunday morning and never again. They're the ones who come and they kind of get it all but they don't ever do anything with it. And they say they love Jesus and maybe they do, but even that is suspect. And so, Peter was hurt. I hope maybe you're hurt this morning, if that's the case. And I say that to you in love as Jesus said it to Peter. I say this to you because I don't want you to be at the low level. I don't want your life to be the kind of a life that doesn't manifest love for Christ because it doesn't do anything...so practical. There's so many people around here who need ministries. There are so many people who are starving for someone to love them, to minister their spiritual gifts. There's so many classes that need teachers, so many people that need calls in the home. So many neighbors on your street that need Jesus Christ. And you'd all say, "I profess Jesus Christ. I don't love Him in the supreme sense, but I like Him a lot." And Jesus would look at you right in the eye and say, "Well I don't even know if you like Me."

And that hurt Peter. And it should have hurt him. And Jesus meant it to. You see, because Jesus only wounds in order that He might heal. Did you get that? And that's the only reason that in the stead of Christ I've wounded you this morning is because I want the wound to be open so Jesus can sew it up again and you'll know what it ought to be.

Now you see what Jesus is establishing in Peter's mind is the priority of love. He will never be effective in serving Jesus Christ unless he loves Him. For whom you love you serve, do you not? It doesn't matter what relationship it is. When you love somebody you serve that somebody. It's like the guy who wrote his letter to his girlfriend and said, "I'll cross the burning sand, I'd swim the widest ocean, I'd fight wild animals to get to your side and if it doesn't rain, I'll be over tonight." So many of us have all of it in our lips and none of it in our life. But, you know, the wonderful thing about it is Peter got the message of loving Jesus and he did do it. He fed the sheep. And you can read 1 Peter...if you haven't studied 1 Peter and 2 Peter, get the tapes and go over it and find out what Peter became. When he wrote those epistles, he was so excited and turned on about feeding the sheep, he said, "I have put you in remembrance and I'll continue to put you in remembrance, and I'll write it down so you've got it in remembrance when I'm gone." He fed that flock until he died. Why? Because he loved Jesus. But he didn't know what his love had to be until he knew what it wasn't. When you really love somebody, it determines your life. Does your life say, "I love you" to Jesus Christ? Does it?

First thing then is the committed Christian, his work is compelled by love. Secondly, his way is committed to God. And we'll see these briefly. His way is committed to God. Having loved Jesus Christ to that extent that you'd give your life for Him, it's no problem to hand Him your life and let Him keep it, right? Didn't Paul say, "I'm confident that what I've given the Lord He'll keep till the day of Jesus Christ?" Sure. And as a Christian, you can say, "All right, Lord, I love You, here's my life, You've got it now, it's up to You to do what You want." Are you willing to say that? That's the second characteristic of a committed Christian, his way is committed to God. Whatever God's will is, he'll do it. The committed Christian yields the control of his destiny to God, no questions asked. Psalm 37:5 puts it this way, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also...what?...in Him." Just let it go. Here's my life, God, and it's Yours, do whatever You want. And Paul says, "If I live, I live unto the Lord. If I die, I die unto the Lord. So, if I live, if I die, I'm the Lord's." See. I gave myself to Him.

Now notice how He teaches us this principle in verses 18 and 19a. Verse 18, "Verily, verily," truly, truly, very important emphatically, "I say unto thee," He's talking to Peter, "when thou wast young," Peter used to be a young man, "thou girdest thyself and walkest where thou wouldest." In other words, He's simply saying, "Peter, when you were young you did your own thing. Put your own clothes on your own way and took off and went your own direction, did exactly what you wanted to do and nobody hassled you, and nobody told you what to do." "But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands." That's a statement that is used by Greek writers to speak of crucifixion. Jesus is predicting the crucifixion of Peter. "Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee, he will be bound and taken to be crucified and carried thee where thou wouldest not." You wouldn't chose to go that way, Peter.

You say, "How do you know He's talking about his crucifixion there? It's a little vague." Verse 19, "This spoke He," that is Jesus, "signifying by what...what?...death Peter should glorify God." Peter was going to be crucified. Now watch this, here is a message from Jesus to Peter. I've just called you into My ministry, Peter, now my first message to you is get ready, you're going to be crucified. You know, whoa...whoa...where are the good parts? I mean, God, I love You and I commit my life to You, but is that all there is to it? No, Peter doesn't say that. Peter must have been blessed. I mean, Peter must have been thrilled and excited about it. You say, "Why?" Watch this, Peter had had a chance to prove his love, hadn't he? But he didn't make it. He denied Jesus when it came down to the real issue of life and death, didn't he? You know what Jesus is saying to him here? "Peter, you're going to grow old," first of all, cause He says, "When you'll be old, so he's..you're going to have a full life, Peter. And when it comes to the end of your life, you're going to be crucified."

You know what that means? That means, to Peter, that when it comes down to the crux at that hour, he's going to confess Christ and die for Him, right? Now don't you think that's good news to Peter who last time he had a chance to die for Jesus blew it? And so He says, "Peter, I'm going to give you another chance, you're going to live a full life and then at the end you're going to hang in there, it's going to come down to a life/death issue and you're going to stand up and say I believe in Jesus boldly and you're going to die for it." Now I can imagine the thrills were shooting up Peter's back like crazy because he was going to get a chance to prove his love for Jesus.

Peter committed his life to Christ and Christ said, "Peter, you'll live for Me and you'll die nailed to a cross." That's the destiny that God had designed for Peter. That's a beautiful promise. O Peter I'm sure in his heart just was saying over and over again...if I only had another chance...if I only had another chance to show the Lord I could be faithful in a crucial situation...if I only had one more chance to show Him my love in a life/death thing, O I'd do it, I'd do it. And so the Lord says, "Peter, you'll do it...you'll do it." And, you know, it's a good thing He told Peter cause Peter would have lived his whole life a nervous wreck thinking that every time he came to a real issue he'd blow it. And a leader with no confidence is no leader at all. And the Lord knew that Peter would worry himself about this so the Lord says, "Peter, you can relax through your whole ministry. When it comes to the end, you'll proclaim My name, you'll die a crucifixion death, don't worry about it."

And you say, "Well, that doesn't sound so thrilling to me." Well it's true, you know. I can imagine that most of us if the Lord came and announced to us, "Now that you've committed your life to Me, you're going to die being crucified," most of us would die of apoplexy before we ever got to the cross. We'd be wrecks. We'd be looking around every corner for the guy with wood, you know? But not Peter, he doesn't care one bit about whether he dies or not, he doesn't care one bit about being crucified, the only thing he cares about is the fact that Jesus finally says to him, "Peter, you're going to make it and

you're going to proclaim My name and you're going to die for Me," and that's what Peter wanted more than anything, was to show his Lord that he loved Him. And so Peter says, "Here's my life, do what you want." He says, "I'm going to take it at the end." And Peter says, "Good, You've got it, You can have it." Now that's commitment. That's the kind of commitment that kisses goodbye everything that matters and says whatever it is, God, I'm willing to do it. And when Peter got to the end of his life and they started to crucify him he said, "No, I'm not deserving enough to be crucified like Jesus, do it upside down," and history tells us Peter was crucified upside down because he didn't want to be crucified like his Lord was. He made it. And all through his life we only know of one time he failed and his cowardice kind of crept back in again, but Paul set him straight. But for the rest of his life, except for that incident and others that we may not know about, the main of his life was faithful to the very end and Peter died a martyr with his faith strong and firm in Jesus Christ. You see, Peter was able to give his life to the Lord and let him have it and do whatever He wanted with it.

How about you? Are you willing to do that? Are you willing to say that whatever you love in life, your successes, your job, your money, anything, God, here it is, whatever it is You want me to do I'll do it even if it's dying for You.

Notice in verse 19 it says that his death would glorify God. How? Because anybody who dies for their faith in Jesus Christ is a glory to God...is a glory to God. I've often thought that what God can't accomplish in life, He'll accomplish in death. We were in South America not too long ago and visited the Alca Indian locations in the Amazon jungle and we talked with some who had been there. Just prior...just after, I should say, the time of the slaughter of those five missionaries and we talked about how that they had given their lives and that today even as we were there the entire village of Alcas that was responsible for that execution have become believers, so much so that they are now sending missionaries from that tribe to lower tribes of Alcas down river who are still hostile. What God couldn't accomplish by the life of those missionaries, He has accomplished by their death and thus He has been glorified. In the death of Peter we see the glory of God for we see God's grace in Peter's life magnified. And so dear Peter finally made it. He finally made it. That's commitment.

And I ask you this morning, as I've asked my own heart over all week long, how about me, how about you? Are you really willing to let the Lord control your life all the way? Do whatever He wants you to do? I mean, maybe you're going through school and you're in your third year of college and you're studying underwater basket weaving or finger painting or whatever it is, or you're studying some kind of science, or you're studying something else, and God's speaking to your heart and you hear His voice saying, "Get out of this deal and get over here and study the Word of God, I want you to be a pastor/teacher, I want you to be this, or I want you to be that." And you're saying, "Wait a minute, that doesn't work." Are you really willing to just walk away from it and do what God wants you to do? Maybe you've been married, you've got a couple of kids, you don't see how you can get in a service for Jesus Christ, but God's speaking. Maybe you've got somebody down the street you need to witness to. Maybe God wants you to start a Bible study in your home. I don't know. Maybe there's a

Sunday School class available. Maybe some people are needed to work here, there and anywhere and you've been approached, are you willing to just put aside all the stuff that doesn't matter and be obedient whatever it costs? It may cost you everything, but it's going to cost you a lot more, the loss of great joy and reward to be disobedient.

So, the second principle of a committed Christian then is his life, his destiny, he leaves in the hands of God. The third one, his will is content with following. His will is content with following. His work is compelled by love. His way is committed to God. And his work, or his will is content with following, and this is just beautiful. The committed Christian is just happy to follow, you know, just happy to follow Jesus Christ. He doesn't have to be out front doing his own deal, doing his own thing, going where he wants, and going over here and saying, "Well I know the Lord doesn't want me to do this and I don't care, I'm a Christian anyway, I can get away with it. The Lord will forgive me," you know. That is not discipleship. The committed Christian wants nothing more than to follow Jesus. He doesn't want to run out and disobey, he wants to follow. He yields in loving obedience. Look at verse 19b. "And when Jesus had spoken this, He speaks to Peter and says, 'Simple, follow Me.'" See. Now you'll never get a more simple command than that. You say, "Oh, the Christian life is so complicated." No, no. You want to know there's only one key to the Christian life, are you ready for this one? Heavy thought. "Follow Me." See. Do you get that? It's not too hard, is it? "Follow Me."

You say, "Yeah, but...what does all that involve?" Well it just involves following Jesus. You say, "Well, what does that mean?" Well let me give you a couple of thoughts about it. Following Jesus, number one, means being where He is. Jesus said in John 12:26 that, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me that where I am, there will My servant be also." In other words, Jesus wants servants to go where He goes. That's the first thing about following. You go where He goes. Real simple. And in all...watch this one...and in all the days of your life, in all the circumstances of your life, in all the places of your life, in all the relationships of your life, you should be able to say when asked, "Why are you here?" I'm here because I'm following Jesus and this is where He's led me today. See.

I have Christian kids...a Christian kid come into my office, wants to get married. She brings a boy. Boy doesn't know Christ, not saved. She says, "I want to marry him." So I begin to talk to him about Christ. He doesn't want to receive Christ. This happens repeatedly, sometimes they come to Christ, sometimes their hearts are not open. And so I say, "You're a Christian and you want to marry him. He's not a Christian. You know the Bible says that an unbeliever and a believer are not to be yoked together especially in marriage. Now did Jesus bring you to this conclusion? Did you follow Jesus to this conclusion?"

"Well, no, but, you know, after all..."

"Well I'm sorry, I can't marry you." So they run out and get married somewhere else. Well I daresay that kind of love for Jesus is suspect. True commitment to Jesus Christ means that I go where He leads, that I obey what He sets as the patterns, that I follow the standards as He sets them up. That's following Jesus. And at any point in my life I can stop and say, "I'm here because I've been following Jesus today and this is where He led me." See. That's discipleship in the simplest form. That means the places you go, the words you say, the things you do, the relationships you build are all founded on the fact that you're following Jesus and He brought you to that place.

There's another aspect of following that's involved and that's this. Following Jesus means to pattern our lives after His attitudes. His holiness and His purity and His obedience to God becomes the pattern for us. We are to be...Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, "Be ye perfect even as I am perfect." We are to pattern our lives after Him. As He was faithful to the Father and obedient, so are we to be faithful and obedient. We're to pattern our lives after Jesus. We follow Him. We pattern ourselves after Him.

Thirdly, following Jesus means a willingness to suffer sacrifice for His sake. And that's the touch part. That's the nitty-gritty. Are you willing to do that? In Matthew 10, Matthew 16 Jesus said, "If any man follow Me, take up his cross," right, "and follow Me." Now that's talking about the suffering sacrificial side of following Jesus.

But what does it mean to take up your cross, to bear your cross? Well that's very vivid language if you happened to be living around the time that Matthew was written because in those days the victims of crucifixion bore the crossbeam of their own cross on their back as they marched to crucifixion. And in Matthew, as this was being spoken, the people in Galilee would well understand it because when the Roman General Varus had broken the revolt of Judas of Galilee, he crucified as a punishment two thousand Jews and he placed their crosses along all the roads leading through Galilee so that everywhere that everybody went they saw people hanging on crosses, two thousand of them. And all these people had borne the crossbeam on their back to their own death. And so what Jesus is saying here is just as vivid as can be to the people of Galilee to whom he spoke in Matthew, they understand what that means, that means to be willing to sacrifice yourself for a cause. That's what it means. To be willing to sacrifice yourself for a cause. And Jesus is saying the same thing, are you willing to sacrifice everything you hold dear, everything you love, all the stupid little things that occupy your time, all your dreams and all your ambitions to be obedient to His cause? That's the issue. That's the real issue.

After his trial in Scarborough Castle, George Fox wrote these words, "And the officers would often be threatened...be threatening me that I should be hanged over the wall. But I told them if that is what

they desired, I am ready."

Bunyan, the great writer, was brought to the magistrate, he said this, quote: "Sir, the law of Christ has provided two ways of obeying you. The one, to do that which I believe I am bound to do actively and where I cannot obey it actively, then I am willing to lie down and suffer what you shall do unto me."

Don't you see that's the simplicity of the Christian life? You just do what Jesus wants whatever the cost, that's all. Whatever the cost. Even if you have to crucify your ego, and that's where it all begins, you do it. To bear your cross is to follow Jesus, sacrificing personal ambition, ease, comfort, if need be. Lay aside your dreams, be obedient. In the back of your mind, just remember, that He'll reward you infinitely greater than you've ever been able to give up for His cause.

So, Jesus calls Peter. "Peter," He says, "be My disciple. Be My apostle. Love Me. Feed My sheep. Leave your life and your destiny in My hands. Follow Me in service, in obedience, in sacrifice, in suffering and in death. Do it all for My glory." And Peter responded and did it. Why? Because Peter was committed. He followed.

But before he really got following, we learn a terrific lesson in verse 20. Between verse 19 and 20 we know that Jesus had gotten up. The other records indicate that this is likely what happened, that Jesus had gotten up now because the fact He begins to move and they begin to follow Him. And He's leaving the place where they had breakfast and so Peter follows Him. This is beautiful. Jesus just said, "Follow Me," and Peter takes it in the fullest literal sense. Jesus gets up and Peter gets up and just sticks right with Him. And John trails along at the rear. John didn't need to be told to follow, he followed all the time anyway. And so there they go, Jesus, Peter and John. And Peter is doing what Jesus told him, he's following Jesus, but he doesn't have the whole picture yet, right? So he walks a little ways, verse 20, "Then Peter turning about seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following," that's John, and John again is identified in the next statement, "who leaned on Jesus' breast at the supper and asked who betrayed Jesus." You remember going back to that occasion, John 13. But John then is following.

So here's Peter following Jesus and John bringing up the rear. Now watch what happens. Peter was thrilled following Jesus and all of a sudden Peter turns around and he sees John. Verse 21, "Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, 'Lord, and what shall this man do?'" What about John? What's the deal with John? I mean, I'm going to be crucified, what's going to be his thing? What happens to John? He's concerned with John. Now I think it's, in a sense, a loving concern. I don't have any way to read anything else into it because I know Peter and John had a wonderful love relationship. But, you see, Jesus immediately knew, obviously, that Peter didn't get the message, see. That the "follow Me" thing hadn't quite registered on Peter's heart yet. And so Jesus has to repeat it a little bit with a little

more punch. So in verse 22, this tremendous statement, "Jesus saith unto him," and this is emphatic as you can ever get, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me." See. Peter, if I want John to live till the Rapture, that's none of your business. And then He uses the emphatic Greek, "You follow Me." You see, Peter got it slow so the Lord said it slow with all the words in there. Now you don't even need to use all those words because they're implied in the Greek verb, but He uses them, "Follow...you follow Me, Peter." What does He mean? He means, "Peter, get your eyes off of everybody else," like Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:16, I love this, "Take heed unto thyself." Oh, that's tough. We go through life, "Oh, look at her, she fell again." "Look at Fred over there, slipping, slipping." See. "So-and-so's not committed." "What about them, where are they going?" "Well, Lord, you asked me to do this, she never does anything around the church. I get all the dirty..." You know, that's the way it goes, always looking around.

There's a preacher out here in the valley who...really in another valley but in this area...who writes letters all the time blasting everybody out of the...you know, just blasting people for the things they're all doing wrong. All these people that he blasts are people who are doing the work of the Lord, you know, and he's blasting them because he doesn't like this and he doesn't like that. I'm sure the Lord would like some time to just tap him on the head and say, "Follow thou Me." There's no sense in running around with your nose in everybody's business. When I go to face Jesus Christ, I'm not responsible for whether or not everybody else did it right. I am responsible for whether or not in obedience I followed Jesus Christ.

And you want to know something, folks? It's so simple. We don't need to worry about how everybody else is doing. If we all just follow Jesus, we'd all be moving at the same pace. It's like Tozer's 400 pianos. You try to turn them...tune them to each other and you've got a mess. You tune them all to the same tuning fork and they automatically tune to each other. And so He says, "If I decide that John's going to live till the Second Coming, it's none of your business." Whew...that's pretty strong stuff. And I imagine that was the final smash in terms of Peter. By this time he was nothing, he was sand, if it was anything, not rock.

Well he did follow. Finally got the message. But this started a rumor running around that John wasn't going to die, you see. Evidently these guys missed the message and they thought Jesus said, "John's not going to die, he's going to live till the Second Coming." So this rumor's running around. You see, even the holy brethren can be wrong. Don't you ever forget it. Not often, but...no. Anyway, they were wrong this time. And so the rumor began to go around that John was going to live till the Second Coming. Well this could have been a real problem because when John died, immediately the word of Jesus would have fallen into disbelief, right? So that's why this has to be written. So in verse 23, "Then went this saying abroad among the brethren that that disciple should not die." And so John writing at the end of his gospel says, "Listen, fellas, I want to tell you something, Jesus didn't say that,

yet Jesus said unto him, "He shall not die..."... "said not unto him he shall not die, but He said, 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?'" The point is this, it's not a question of whether he will or will not die, it's a question that you're to be occupied with the will of God for your life, not the will of God for somebody else's life.

I stood in the office of a man who told me, "You don't know God's will for your life, I do." That's a quote. And I didn't say anything at the time. But he was wrong. I am responsible for God's will in my life. And what He does in the life of another man is between that man and Him. And so, you see there it is, the third aspect of commitment. His will is content with following.

Fourth and lastly and briefly, his words are concerning Jesus. I love this. You know, you can always tell a committed Christian not only by the fact that his work is compelled by love and his way is committed to God and his will is content with following, but his words are about Jesus. Have you ever met somebody who just talks about Jesus all the time? You just know that they've really got a love thing going, don't you? Notice verse 24, "This...that refers to John...is the disciple," and listen to this, if this isn't the description of John that has to be the greatest, "this is the one who testifieth of these things," present tense, "and wrote these things." This is that John, all he does is go around talking about Jesus and writing about Him. See. What a...wouldn't you like to have that be the comment of somebody about you? You know, "That So-and-so, that's the one who always goes around testifying about Jesus and wrote about Him." Boy, what a testimony that is.

Not only that, "We know that his testimony is...what?...is true," the evidence is in. What John says is true...it's true. Jesus is the Christ, He is the Son of God, He does give life and by faith you can have that life. It's all true. Everything John said is true and he's the guy that keeps going around talking about it and talking about it. Boy, that would be a wonderful comment on my life, it would be a wonderful comment on your life if at the end of our lives somebody could say, "Oh yeah, you remember them, they were the ones that always went around talking and testifying about Jesus."

What's the topic of your conversation? What is it? A committed Christian is preoccupied with Jesus...with Jesus. Trumble(?) made a...came to a crux in his life and he made a decision, I want to give it to you, it's absolutely fantastic and a long time ago I learned this principle. He said this, "My life changed when I prayed this prayer one day." He said, "I said to the Lord these words, "God giving me the power, every time I have the opportunity to introduce the topic of conversation, it will always be of Jesus.'" Is that something? God giving me the power, every time I have the opportunity to introduce the topic of conversation, it will always be of Jesus.

My friends, if that were true of us, things would happen in a revolutionary fashion. What do you talk about? A committed disciple, so full of Jesus Christ that it's on his lips all the time. And John said

there's even more I can't say. Verse 25, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself couldn't contain the books that should be written. Amen." Jesus did so much, His person is so far beyond captivity that we couldn't reduce Him to writing. And John says there's more that could be said, an infinite number of books couldn't handle the infinite love of Christ, the infinite character of His person.

Penciled on the wall of an asylum, said to be written there by a man demented, were these words, discovered after they found his dead body in this little room in a mental asylum. Here were the words that he had scratched on the wall. "Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made, were every stock on earth a quill and every man a scribe by trade, to write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry, nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky." He wasn't too crazy, was he? He just was saying you can't write about God's love, the whole universe couldn't handle it.

And so, John spoke words concerning Jesus and left much unsaid. I hope you know Jesus so well that you can speak about Him all the time and still leave much unsaid. Some Christians could give their testimony in five minutes and have shot their wad. That's it. That's all they know. I hope you can testify of Jesus all the time and still have much that you haven't said.

There it is. There's the pattern of real discipleship, a work compelled by love, a way committed to God, a will content with following and words concerning Jesus. And I say what John said, "So let it be."

Father, we thank You, this morning, again for teaching us.

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