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

Love and Obedience
Scripture: John 21
Code: 80-1

I'm so appreciative of the choice of song that the Nichol sisters made because that whole idea of loving the Lord Jesus Christ is really on my heart today. I thought, meditated, looked through the Word of God for a long time this week in some quiet moments, sort of searching my own heart and seeking the Lord as to what I might say to you in preparation for this His table. And as I sort of succumbed to the leading of the Spirit of God, my mind was flooded with the need to emphasize this whole matter of loving the Lord Jesus Christ.

The church is a complex thing. And life for us gets infinitely complex. And sometimes it becomes so complex that we lose sight of the bottom line, the basic. And I really think that the basic ingredient or element of the Christian life is to love the Lord Jesus Christ. And sooner or later we have to deal with that, we have to get back to that. That's not easy. I don't know if you've thought much about it but it's come upon my mind with an awful lot of force lately that we live in a world that has so many options that it's almost staggering.

In fact, I was reading a book this last week in which the thesis of the author was that we have so many alternatives and so many options and so many choices that people have just given up on everything. And one of the major contributors to the fact that people don't have any convictions about anything and don't really know what their priorities are is because they are literally devastated by the myriad of choices. I mean, it can be as simple as standing in one spot for 15 minutes arguing because you can't figure out which fast food place to take the kids to. And you have an infinite number of choices.

That's a simplistic approach. But we live in an incredibly pluralistic society and we have choices and choices and choices and choices. Choices about what we eat, choices about what we wear, choices about how we entertain ourselves, choices in terms of education, choices in terms of recreation, choices, choices, choices. And in a life where people are literally living by choice, what kind of car, what kind of house, what kind of clothes, what kind of whatever, somehow our approach to Christianity and our approach to the church has gotten meshed into those choices so that the things we do regarding the Kingdom and the things we do in regard to the Lord and the things we do in relation to the church seem to us to just be somewhere on that massive list of choices...just about as optional as anything else. I mean, it sort of comes down to the fact that either we're going to go to church or we're going to play golf or we're going to take a drive or we're going to go to brunch or whatever. Or we could have a prayer meeting with our family or we could watch television or we could

go to a ball game or we could take a picnic or...

In other words, it seems as though in this myriad of choices that we have there has been a loss of the distinctive category of the non-optional which is the spiritual dimension. It's gotten blended in. And with an infinite number of choices, we sort of fit the things of the Lord in there some place...of they are, in fact, the thing we desire to choose. And what I guess we could say in terms of the subject of loving the Lord Jesus Christ would be that we have learned to love the Lord Jesus Christ rather selectively. We want to love the Lord Jesus Christ and we'll sing to that effect...we'll sing about how much we love Him. We've said it many times and if we were asked, "Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ?" we would say, "Oh yes." And if we were asked, "Do you love Him with all your heart?" "Oh yes." "And all your soul and all your mind and all your strength?" "Well I certainly...I certainly desire that." And we would verbalize our love for the Lord Jesus Christ but the question is whether or not that in fact fleshes out in the way we live. Or whether in fact on the one hand we say we love the Lord Jesus Christ, on the other hand those things which would prove it are merely a series of options and alternatives along with everything else in the world and we really find ourselves loving a whole lot of other things just as much as we love the Lord Jesus Christ.

I mean, we love the Lord Jesus Christ if the price isn't too high. We love the Lord Jesus Christ if it makes us comfortable. We love the Lord Jesus Christ if that's the best choice.

And I'm concerned about this because I think that we have created in many places in our own nation, in many churches and in our hearts even here potentially a real problem where we have lost all sense of the sanctity and the holy and the obligation to that which is divine...the sanctity of the holy, I should say, and the obligation to that which is divine. It's just a part of the whole sweep of life which is filled with all kinds of options. And I'm concerned about that. And I wanted to see if I can't this morning set your focus...reset your focus along the lines of loving the Lord Jesus Christ. And I speak to my own heart, believe me, as well.

What was the primary mark of an Old Testament saint? If you want to identify the saintliest feature of an Old Testament saint, what would it be? Turn in your Bible for a moment back to the book of Deuteronomy. And in Deuteronomy chapter 6 and verse 5 I think you have the bottom line in Old Testament spiritual behavior, the bottom line in Old Testament saintly commitment. You have the very basic foundational element of spiritual virtue, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might." It was a whole souled, wholehearted, whole strength devotion to God. It was a consuming single priority which could be compared with nothing else. There was no sense in which loving God was an option. There was no sense in which obeying God was an option. There was no sense in which worshiping God, serving God was an option. It was a consuming dominant life priority.

In chapter 10 of Deuteronomy and verse 12 it says, "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee?" And that is a very important statement. What does God want? What is the bottom line request from God? When it's all boiled down, what does God want from you? "But to fear the Lord your God to walk in all His ways and to love Him and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command thee this day for thy good."

What is the bottom line? It is to love the Lord your God to the extent that you walk in all His ways, that you serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, that you keep His commandments and His statutes which He commands you.

In other words, to boil it all down to one word, loving the Lord your God is a matter of obedience. It is a matter of doing that which He has commanded to be done, of serving Him with a whole heart and a whole soul. Now there's no room for anything else and that's why it says in the book of James that anything less than total abandonment with God becomes a prostitution. He says that if you try to love God and love the world, you become an adulterer or an adulteress. You prostitute yourself off to an invasion into the unique and intimate and wholehearted relationship you're supposed to have with the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the bottom line. We are to love God.

In chapter 11 verse 1, again that Old Testament saint is told to love the Lord thy God and keep His charge and His statutes and His ordinances and His commandments always. I mean, there's no loopholes here. There's no out. This is a single consuming priority. Is it any wonder that when the lawyer came to Jesus and said, "How do you sum up all the commandments?" He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength." The whole thing boils back to that. And the same is true in our lives today. We need to be focusing on the same need to have a consuming love for the Lord Jesus Christ that parallels the command in the Old Testament to the saints of that time to love the Lord their God. And you will notice also that back in Deuteronomy 10:12 it says that it's for...10:13 it says it's for your good. It is not a non-reciprocated love. It is a love which pours out abundant and profuse blessing on the one who offers it to God.

Do you remember the prayer of Daniel in chapter 9 as he began to pour out his heart on behalf of his people? He said, "I prayed to the Lord my God, made my confession, said, O Lord, the great and awesome God...listen...keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him and them that keep His commandments." God keeps and fulfills His promises and God pours out His mercy to the people who love Him. So loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength puts you in the position to benefit from the covenant and to experience the mercy of God. By the way, that same prayer offered by Daniel was also offered by Nehemiah almost word for word. Nehemiah 1:5, he prays, "O Lord God of heaven, the great and awe inspiring God who keeps covenant and mercy for them who love Him and observe His commandments." And the fact that those two individuals, Nehemiah and Daniel, so utterly unrelated prayed identically the same prayer leads me to believe that that may well have been

a common prayer among the Jewish people. And it is a recognition that the people who know the mercy of God and the people who are blessed out of His covenant promises are the people who manifest a whole souled, wholehearted love for Him...an abandonment to devotion in love.

That was on the heart of the psalmist, wasn't it, in Psalm 18:1, "I will love Thee, O Lord my strength, I will love Thee, O Lord my strength." It is a volitional act. It is a choice made to love the Lord rather than to distract that love to other things. In Proverbs 8:17 God says, "I love those who love Me."

Now is it true in the New Testament? Is it the same? Is this our calling in the New Testament? I believe it is. Peter sums it up for us in 1 Peter 1:8, speaking of Christ, he says, "Whom having not seen you love." Whom having not seen you love. That's the mark of a true believer. Ephesians 6:24, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ with sincerity, with integrity, with honesty, with undivided, unhypocritical devotion." In fact, in Matthew 10 and Matthew 16 Jesus says, "If any man does not love Me more than father, mother, sister, brother and anybody else, he's not worthy to be My disciple." And in 1 Corinthians 16:22 it says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed."

So, we are called, I believe, to love the Lord Jesus Christ, to love Him with a whole soul, whole heart, whole mind, whole strength kind of love. And we would say we do but I look at our society, I look at the church and I don't see that same kind of devotion, you know, that same kind of commitment, that same kind of abandonment to the priorities that are the divine priorities. I see us defused into a myriad of options, giving equal weight or even greater weight to some of the passing things in favor of some of the eternal things.

And so, we need to ask ourselves as we come to this, the Lord's table, do we love the Lord Jesus Christ? We would say we love Him because He first loved us, 1 John 4:19. And we would recognize that this, His table, is an expression of His love, is it not? Because it reminds us of the cross. And the cross is the greatest symbol of God's love. And so when we come here we think about love, we think about how much He loved us and how much He gave for us. And I don't know how it effects you but it makes me stop and think I'm so eager to receive all the love that God can give me and I'm certainly less eager to give Him back all that I could give Him. I mean, it's a no-way equal. In fact, I tend to trade on His grace. I tend to want all of the love that He can pour out to me with little in return. And this too is a spirit of our age, it's the spirit of the church even. My heart is continually sickened by the self-indulgent theology that's developing in the churches, by the "name it and claim it" perspective, by the "Jesus has to do this for you" approach, where Christianity has so reversed its mentality that instead of my life being an act of devoted love to Jesus Christ whatever the price, my life becomes a demand on His love that He deliver all the goodies that I ask for. And it's a twisting of the whole intention.

I read yesterday the spiritual autobiography of John Bunyan in which he traces his spiritual pilgrimage to the embracing of the Savior. And it's an incredible thing to read that because you think you've just been transported by some time machine into another era of thought. Here is a sinner pounding on his breast realizing he is a sinner, realizing he is damned to hell, scared literally out of his wits that he's not elected to salvation, fearing that there's no way the grace of salvation will come from sovereign God to him because he's so utterly unworthy, crying out that he should please be chosen to be redeemed and when finally comes to full faith in Jesus Christ then can do nothing but recite over and over and over and over the endless list of his evil and desires only one thing in all the world and that is to totally abandon himself in every sense of life to the service of Jesus Christ whatever it cost him. And you know what it cost him, it cost him prison, didn't it? And you read something like that and you say, "This guy would get thrown out of most churches." I mean, he goes contrary to the self-esteem doctrines, contrary to the prosperity, health and wealth doctrines, contrary to the easy believism cheap grace doctrines. You see, we have made a Christianity that will accommodate the myriad of alternatives and options so that anybody can sort of slid in on any level they want to and unwittingly. It isn't that we have stopped and said, "I choose not to love the Lord Jesus Christ," it's just that we sort of get diverted subtlety and this is the plot of the enemy and he's been very effective. Satan has done his work very well. I said to the elders at the last meeting, I said, "I think it would be good to just strip Grace Church naked of everything except the worship of the Lord on Sunday morning and Sunday evening, training classes for how to evangelize the lost and prayer. That's all we're going to have, everything else is over. And then we'll find out where people are at." Instantly we'll know where the commitment levels are.

You see, we just...we just need to get back to the priorities. And one of those very basic things is an understanding that we are to love the Lord Jesus Christ. And as I say, I say that, "I love You, Lord, I love You," I don't have any problem saying that it's just living up to it that's trouble. And we all recognize that. So I want you to sort of test yourself against another life.

Look at John 21, very brief as we prepare for the Lord's table but I do want you to focus for a moment on John 21. Do you remember when the Apostle John wrote in 1 John 3:18, "My little children, love not in word but in...what?...in deed and truth?" Yeah, that's the issue. It isn't what you say, it's what you do. That's the issue.

Now in John 21 we have an encounter between Jesus and Peter. Let me just give you a little background. If you were to read the twenty eighth chapter of Matthew you would find out that Jesus had said after His resurrection and He had appeared to the disciples a couple of times, He said, "Go to a mountain...Matthew 28:16...go to a mountain and stay there. Wait for Me and I'll come." Told the disciples.

So they did. And verse 2 tells us there was Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, sons of Zebedee, who would be James and John and two others, no doubt Philip and Andrew. So they all go to the

mountain. They're with their leader Simon Peter. And this sets up for us a scene that is very instructive in this regard to loving the Lord Jesus Christ. The first thing I want you to see is the failure of love...I want you to see the failure of love.

Now remember in Matthew they were told to go and wait in the mountain. Now Peter had affirmed his love. Oh, had he affirmed his love in the twenty-sixth chapter of Matthew verses 33 and 34 he said, "Though all men shall be offended of Thee...by Thee, yet will I never be offended." He says, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I never deny Thee. And all the disciples chimed in," it says. Peter said, "I love You, I'll love You if it cost Me my life, I'll love You no matter what the price, I'll love You, I'll never forsake You." He had all this verbal commitment, all the words were right.

So the Lord gave him a little test, he and the other disciples who confirmed their love. He just said, "Go to a mountain and wait," and not very tough to fulfill, is it? I mean, not really one of the great challenges of all time, just go sit in the hill till I get there. And the verbalizing of love sort of set them up for the kill, in a way. We see the failure of their love in verse 3. "Simon Peter said to the rest," and he says it with finality, "I'm going fishing." I believe he was saying I'm going to go back to my old profession. He was given a simple command, wait in the mountain till I get there. He disobeyed it. I don't know what all of the factors spiritually and psychologically were in his mind, but the fact is he disobeyed it. And they also said to him because he was the leader, "We're going with you." And they all left the mountain. I mean, they have just instantaneously disregarded the very simple and direct command of the risen Jesus Christ whom they've already seen and twice on two occasions, they know He's alive. They went forth and entered into THE boat, the Greek text says, which may well indicate it could have been the very boat that Peter once had used as his own fishing boat, now he was going back to his old profession.

Here was the failure of love. All the verbalization in the world was meaningless when given a simple command, a simple priority, "Do this because I've asked you to do it," he couldn't hold on to that. He abandoned that and his love went right down the proverbial drain. Disobedience to a simple command.

Now I want to suggest to you a very obvious point. Love fails when it disobeys. And I don't care how much sentiment you feel, I don't care how much emotion you feel about Jesus, I don't care how many tears you might shed, or how certain songs make you feel misty and weepy, I don't care about sentiment. That is not the issue. Your love fails when you disobey...plain and simple. Because that's always the test. Jesus put it this way in John 14:21, "If you love Me you will...what?...keep My commandments." So love failed. And, of course, they fished all night and caught...what?...nothing...nothing. The Lord was in control of that. They didn't catch anything. And you can just see Peter saying to these guys, "Well I don't know about, you know, evangelism and I don't know about all this Kingdom preaching, but I know there's one thing I can do and I'm going to go do it." And that was one thing he couldn't do...catch fish. He caught fish all his life. He probably knew

where they were in the Sea of Galilee. He could probably follow the movement of the fish pretty well at any given season, any given time of day but he couldn't catch them now. You see, the thing he thought he could do he couldn't do anymore because God had put His hand on his life and was in control. And this is the beginning of the lesson.

And so we see the failure of love. But happily we see then the restoration of love. And this is good to know because all of us have failed, all of us have said, "Oh we love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength....oh, we really love the Lord Jesus Christ," and we may sing those songs and we sing them with emotion, we feel sort of sentimental about singing them. But we have failed because we have gotten our priorities all fouled up. I mean, you pick up the spiritual biography of John Bunyan and you feel like...you feel like the all-time lightweight, you know, the all time birdbath Christian, about an inch deep. Or you hear about the dedication commitment level of some missionary whose life is literally wasted out although not wasted in terms of purpose, wasted in terms of physical capability till death comes. Or you hear about the martyrdom of only God knows how many thousands of people in the Chinese revolution. And you wonder what kind of commitment level you have when you can't even get your act together to do some very, very simple things. I suppose it's kind of like the Lord giving them a test that was basic so they could handle some of the tougher ones later. All He says here is go stay in a mountain for a while. Later on He's going to say go get crucified for Me. But we've all failed.

And it's a happy thing to realize that there's a restoration of love. Notice please in verse 5, "The morning...verse 4 says...was come, Jesus was on the shore and this disciples didn't know it was Him." And by the way, they never knew it was Him after His resurrection unless He revealed Himself to them, there was some transformation in His person, there was some glory that was His after the resurrection that caused His identity to be somewhat veiled until it was disclosed to them. And so they did not know by looking at Him who it was although they were only a hundred yards or so off the shore and that may have contributed to their inability to distinguish Him. And Jesus then calls out to them, "Children, have you any food? Have you caught anything." And He knows full well what the answer is and they respond, "No," and it was sort of, I think, a clenched tooth kind of response. He said, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you'll find. They cast therefore and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fish. Therefore the disciple whom Jesus loved," who is that? That's John. Why call yourself John when you can call yourself the disciple whom Jesus loved...I can understand that. So he says, "The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, It is the Lord." How does he know that? Who else controls the fish? Who else can say drop your net on the right side of the boat, they're all there?

When Simon Peter heard it was the Lord, he put on his fisher's coat because he was literally stripped down to just a loin cloth. And threw himself into the sea. I mean, he didn't even think about what was going to happen, he just knew he had to get back to the Lord. He was in a big hurry for the restoration of love, wasn't he? And the other disciples were left in the boat trying to get the whole mess to the

shore. Peter's long gone. They drag the boat along with the net and the fish. "Soon then as they were come to land they saw fire of coals there and fish laid on it and bread and Jesus said to them, Bring of the fish which you have now caught. Simon Peter went up, drew the net to the land full of great fish." I don't know, he must have been a strong guy, he just took a hole of the net and pulled it all in with 153 huge fish. "And there were so many yet was not the net broken. And Jesus said to them, Come and have breakfast. And none of the disciples dared ask Him who are You because they knew it was the Lord."

Now this is the restoration of love. And it's a happy thought, people. Listen, no matter how my love has failed, no matter how your love has failed, there is restoration. And I want you to notice one thing out of this text, there are many things we could say but this one thing I want you to note, the restoration was initiated by the Savior who was offended. You understand that? It was the offended Savior who initiated the restoration. And it will always be that way. And I fear sometimes that Christians who know they have failed to love as they ought to love will drift away from the Lord and they feel some anxiety or shame about coming back. And what they need to realize is that He is eager for them to come back and when they get to the shore He doesn't have a whip to beat them with, He has breakfast for them. You understand that? That is the heart of the restoring love of the Savior.

And so we see the failure of love and then we also see the restoration of love. And I'm happy for that because I've been out on the sea a lot of times when I should have been in the mountain and I'm always glad when I come to the shore and He's not there with a whip, He's there with breakfast. He's there to have a meal with me. And that's the way it is with the one who restores. That's what it says in Jeremiah 31 I think it's verse 3, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love. Nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ, even our own disobedience, even our own lack of love from time to time cannot violate that love which is unending on His part and which reaches out to bring us back and bring us back and bring us back. And I'm glad for Peter's eagerness, I mean, he just dove in and swam, he wanted it right. He knew. His conscience was pricked the moment he knew it was Jesus Christ, he had no business being out there on the water when he was supposed to be in that mountain. And he knew he was out of line. But the reason he was such a useful man was because as fast as he would fail, twice as fast he would be restored. And when you look at your life, beloved, it is not that you have never failed that makes you useful to God, it is that when you do fail you are in a hurry to be restored. All right? It is when you fail and you keep failing and you become complacent about that failure and you do not desire that restoration to be what God wants you to be and you find yourself comfortable with some shallow kind of Christianity that avoids the real priorities of God's Kingdom. That's when you should be worried for that's when God finds little use for you. It's not that you do not fail, it's that you fail and hurry back to the place of blessing.

So we see the failure of love and the restoration of love. And then the requirement of love, they're there having breakfast. Jesus comes in verse 13, takes the bread and gives them, and fish. Not only

did He prepare the meal but He served it. Isn't that something? He serves them. You know, He didn't sit down and say, "Now I'm the King and you've disobeyed Me. Now you guys bow before Me." I mean, there's such a...there's such a beauty about this. He not only makes them breakfast...and you know how the Lord makes breakfast...Breakfast! So the Lord makes breakfast, they come all around and instead of Him demanding them to serve Him, He serves those loveless disobedient disciples. It makes my heart glad because as often as I have failed to love Him, so often has He not failed to love me to the point where when I come back He serves me. And this is the third time that Jesus had showed Himself to His disciples after He was risen from the dead, says verse 14.

Now we come to the requirement unfolding in this very, very familiar passage in verse 15. "So when they had finished breakfast," the word "dined" in the King James means to have breakfast, "When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonah...He calls him by his old name because he's acting like his old self...Simon, son of Jonah, do you supremely love Me more than these?" He uses the word agapao, the highest kind of love, the greatest kind of devotion. "Do you supremely love Me more than these?" You see, Peter had said, "Oh, though all others forsake You, I will never forsake You." And it may be the Lord is saying, "Oh, do you really love Me more than all the rest of these love Me?" Or, these may refer to the boat and the nets and the sea and the fish and all that stuff that Peter loved and grew up with, all the trappings of his life. Not evil...not evil, just not what God called him to do. "Do you really love Me more than you love your own way and your own life and your own fulfillment and your own desires and your own enjoyments?" I mean, it's easy to go back and go fishing, it's tough to preach the Kingdom, it will cost you your life. Easy to fish. Do you really love Me more than you love this stuff?

And Peter says to him in verse 15, "Yes, Lord, You know that I like You a lot." The Lord used agapao, Peter used phileo. There's no way Peter could have said, "Yes, Lord, I supremely love you." Then the Lord would have said to him, "You hypocrite, how can you say that when you've just disobeyed Me?" So Peter knows he can't claim that, not in front of the Lord and not in front of the others. So what he says is, "Well I like You a lot." And the Lord says, "Well if you do then feed My lambs, don't catch fish, feed lambs. You're not a fisherman, you're a shepherd. And you're not catching physical fish, you're feeding spiritual lambs." In other words, if you say you love Me, then let me see the demonstration of the priorities in your life. What do you spend your time doing? What do you spend your money doing? What do you spend all the energy in your physical frame doing? What do you spend your mind planning to do? Where are your priorities? If you really do like Me a lot, then feed My lambs.

He said to him the second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you really love Me, supremely love Me, super love Me, if you will, agapao? He said, Lord, You know that I like You a lot, says the same thing. And He said then, Feed My sheep, shepherd My sheep." The first and third have to do with the feeding primarily, the middle one has to do with shepherding. Take care of My flock. Don't worry about fish, you take care of My sheep, you stay in the Kingdom. Keep your priorities clear. And what He is saying here is if you really love Me then show you love Me by loving Me with all your heart,

soul, mind and strength and putting all your energy that you have into the thing that is most central to My purpose.

And then He said it to him the third time, and I believe He did this three times because Peter denied Christ how many times? Three times. So He gave him one shot for each one. "Simon, son of Jonah," and watch what He says here, "Do you really like Me a lot?" And He comes down to Peter's word phileo and says, I even question whether you like Me a lot. See, Peter couldn't say, I super love You, but he thought he could get away with I like You a lot. The Lord says I wonder if you even like Me a lot. And Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, do you like Me a lot. He wasn't grieved because He asked him three times, he was grieved because the third time He questioned even Peter's love at the level Peter thought he could away with it. And he said, "Lord, You know everything, You know that I like You a lot. Then Jesus said, Do this, will you, feed My sheep?"

The test of love is not your emotion, is not your sentimentality, it is not your spiritual goosebumps when you sing certain songs. It's not having warm feelings about Jesus. The test of your love for Christ is whether or not the priorities of your life are spiritual or physical, heavenly or earthly, whether you're in to catching fish because you enjoy it and you do it well and it's an earthly deal, or whether you're in to feeding sheep which is a spiritual dimension. The requirement of love is obedience.

Now I want to just wrap this up with an interesting kind of approach, I hope, for you that helped me as I was developing spiritually in my own life. I used to think that there were some people who loved God and loved Christ in a sort of far out mystical way. Have you ever had that? In fact, some of you may think that about me or about other pastors or spiritual leaders or missionaries, like they've got...they're at another level, they're at another plateau. They're up in some kind of dimension that you don't yet understand. I remember as a kid I used to read these mystics and they loved God in this very strange mystical way. And I used to think that some...something happened in your life to make you jump to that level. I guess you could call it a holy hop, you just went boing...see. You just...there was some kind of a catapult, you just catapulted up to some level. And I would go to church services or camp meetings or whatever kind of things and some guy would pour out his heart about consecration or dedication and he was really calling for what theologians have called triumphalism, or the holy hop is what I call it...just a sort of a big leap up somewhere...and now you've arrived on another plateau. And people tell you it can happen, it can happen when you understand the deeper life...or when you understand the second blessing, or when you understand the baptism of the Spirit, or when you speak in tongues, or when you're all is laid on the altar. Then you make your big hop.

I want you to know, folks, that frustrated me because I just, I couldn't pull it off. I couldn't hop. And I, you know, and I saw people trying to hop and I looked later and they were right back where they used to be and I wondered what happened. I figured you could also hop back. But this is the idea that there's some kind of ethereal mystical sort of area where super Christians live who have unearthly abilities to love. You know something? That's just a lot of nonsense. That's a lot of nonsense. It's just

a question of gradual growth toward Christ's likeness that comes about through daily obedience. There are no holy hops. Oh there may be crisis moments in your life, there may be moments in your life when you come to an understanding of a biblical truth, you come to a point where you relinquish a sin that you've held on to for a long time, where you decide you're going to be faithful and you make a volitional choice. But that doesn't catapult you into some new dimension, that's just one step in the process...maybe a bigger step than some other steps but it's a process of growth. And I didn't realize that until I realized that I was growing to love the Lord Jesus more and more and more and more. That's the issue. That's the key and it comes from obedience. That's the requirement of love. Not some mystical thing.

The cost of love then He says in verse 18 and 19, you're going to die. It could cost you your life. The cost of love is everything. So you have here the failure of love, the restoration of love, the requirement of love, the cost of love and after He's given all of that at the end of verse 19 He says to Peter, "Follow Me," at the end of verse 22 He says, "Follow Me." You see, the bottom line is as I said it's obedience, it's obedience. It's the kind of obedience that pleases the Lord. He wants His people to love Him. Kind of like the little girl, you know, who was loving her doll and came in and gave her mother a big hug and her mother said, "What's wrong?" "Oh nothing's wrong, I've just been loving my dolly for a long time and she doesn't love me back and I came in to love you because you love me back."

And I think there's a sense in which we have to understand that the God who pours out such infinite love to us expects that we should love Him back. And in some sad ways in the life of the church we've lost that love, that whole hearted, whole minded devoted love and we're all goofed up with our priorities. And as we come to the table this morning let's come confessing our failure to love, seeking restoration, committing ourselves to the requirement of obedience at any cost.

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