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**November memory verse: [Philippians 4:13 \(NKJV\)](#)
I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**

Commentary on John Chapter 21, by Chuck Smith 11.11.2020

Now after these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and this is how it happened. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus [the twin], and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee [James and John], and two other [unnamed] disciples. Simon Peter said unto them, I'm going fishing. They said unto him, We'll go with you ([Jhn 21:1-3](#)).

Now, here's a classic example of human leadership. Simon was evidently a natural leader, and he said, "I'm going fishing." And they all said, "We'll go with you." In a sense, Simon is going back to the old life. He had been a fisherman before he ever met Jesus. That's the way he made his livelihood, that's the life he knew and no doubt enjoyed. He was fishing when Jesus called him to leave his nets and to follow Him. "And I will make you to become fishers of men." Jesus had told the women to tell the disciples to go up to Galilee, He would meet them up there. And they had, no doubt, come up to the Galilee, but Jesus hadn't shown up yet. Peter, being the impetuous, impatient person that he was, when the Lord didn't show, he said, "Well, I'm going fishing. This is probably all over. It was a great time; it was a marvelous experience, it was an exciting life. But, hey, we can't live forever in memories; we've got to get on with living. I'm going back fishing. I'm going fishing." They said, "Well, we'll go with you." And so, they got into the ship and they fished all night and caught nothing.

But when the morning was now come, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples didn't know it was Jesus. And Jesus said unto them, Did you catch anything? ([Jhn 21:4-5](#))

Typical question to ask fishermen.

And they answered him, No. He said unto them, Cast your net on the right side of the ship, and you will find ([Jhn 21:5-6](#)).

Notice how sure Jesus is.

They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it in for the multitude of fish. And therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved, [John] said unto Peter, It is the Lord.

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and dove into the sea and swam to shore ([Jhn 21:6-7](#)).

They were only about a hundred yards out.

And the other disciples came in a little ship, (for they were only about a hundred yards away,) and they were dragging the net with fishes ([Jhn 21:8](#)).

They had fished all night and caught nothing; they weren't going to let this catch go, dragging the net with fish.

And as soon as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and there were fish laid thereon, and bread. And Jesus said unto them, Bring the fish which you have now caught. And Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land full of great fish, a hundred and fifty-three: and for all there were so many, yet was the net not broken ([Jhn 21:9-11](#)).

Now, you remember the last time that Jesus told them to cast the nets on the other side, there were so many fish as they tried to draw them in, the nets began to break. But now, they draw it in, and though there was all of these great fish in it, yet the net was not broken.

That the net was full, and yet it didn't break. Jesus said, "All that the Father hath given Me are Mine. No man can pluck them out of My hand." Now, in the earlier net-breaking thing, you have maybe the evangelism, where you're gathering in all kinds, and you don't hold onto them all. But once they are truly in, no man plucks them out. "The net, yet for its number of great fish, yet it didn't break."

I find it interesting that what they could not all do in their own efforts out in the boat when they tried to pull the net into the boat, Peter was able to do by himself because Jesus told him to do it. Jesus said, "Now go draw the net," and Peter, because Jesus had commanded it, was able to do it by himself though all of them weren't able to do it earlier. The strength of the commands of Jesus. The very fact that He has told me to do it, if I will just endeavor, I can do it. Because He gives me the ability to obey any command that He gives to me. And so, service offered to the Lord. You see, we can sometimes go out and try and do things on our own and are totally unsuccessful. "I'm going fishing." "We'll go with you." Human energy, human effort. They knew how, they knew how to throw the nets. They knew where the fish usually were. But going out on their own, they were totally unsuccessful. Jesus comes along, and He says, "Hey, cast it over on the right side and you'll find." Now their service is directed by the Lord. And notice the difference; when you're doing something that the Lord is directing you to do, rather than just doing something out of your own impulses. Service directed by the Lord is so totally rewarding, you can't even pull in the nets.

And I often, when I go out and talk to people who want to hear about what God has done here at Calvary Chapel, I say to them, "Look, when the nets get so full, you can't

pull 'em in any more, you know there's only one reason for it. Like John said, it's the Lord! It's just service directed by God, and it is always fruitful; it's always productive. It's the Lord! It isn't man's genius. It's the Lord!" People have a difficult time understanding this. But it's God-directed service. Jesus is the head of the body, the church, and directing the activities. They are fruitful.

Jesus said unto them, Come and eat. None of the disciples dared to ask him, Who are you? knowing that it was the Lord. Then Jesus came, and he took the bread, and he gave it to them, and the fish likewise ([Jhn 21:12-13](#)).

He had done this before, divided bread and fish among them.

Now this is the third time that Jesus showed himself to the disciples, after he was risen from the dead ([Jhn 21:14](#)).

So, John records the first three times. Jesus did appear on other occasions after this, but this was the third time in order.

When they were through eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? ([Jhn 21:15](#))

The word love here is *agapas*. It is a Greek word of deep love used of God's divine love. It is a supreme love. It is a giving love. "Lovest thou Me?" *Agapas*, divinely, fervently, more than these. What were the "these"? Maybe the one hundred fifty-three fish still flopping in the nets over there. "Do you love Me more than your livelihood? Do you love Me more than the greatest success in your chosen profession? Having the height of success in your chosen field, do you love Me more than that, Peter? How much do you love Me? Do you love Me more than these?"

Or the "these" could be referring to the other disciples whom Peter had avowed that he loved the Lord really more than them in an off-handed way. For Jesus had said to His disciples, "All of you are going to be offended tonight because of Me." And Peter said, "Lord, though they may all be offended, I will never be offended." In essence saying, "Lord, I am more faithful, and I love You more than the others." And Jesus said, "Peter, before the cock crows, you'll deny Me three times." "Impossible, Lord. If they would slay me, I would never deny You." But he did. And Jesus could be recalling that failure when He said, "Peter, lovest thou Me more than these?" And He could be referring to the other disciples there. We don't know the "these" because we weren't there to see what Jesus was looking at, or beckoning or motioning towards.

Peter said,

Yes, Lord; you know that I phileo you ([Jhn 21:15](#)).

Now, he did not use Jesus' word for love, but he used another Greek word, which is a word of fondness, or affection. "Lord, you know I am fond of You." Jesus didn't say,

"Peter, are you fond of Me?" He said, "Peter, do you love Me...divinely, fervently?" Peter said, "Lord, you know that I am fond of You."

And Jesus said unto him, Feed by lambs ([Jhn 21:15](#)).

"You're not to be out here fishing, Peter. I told you to leave your nets and to follow Me. I'll make you to be fishers of men. Now, feed My lambs." The Lord is interested that His lambs be fed. Jeremiah said that, "The Lord will give them in that day pastors after His own heart, who will feed them with knowledge and understanding." That would be the knowledge and understanding of God. When I read that passage in Jeremiah after having been a pastor for many years, I realize my failing. And I repented before God. And I determined from that day on I wanted to be a pastor after God's heart who would feed the flock with the knowledge and the understanding of God. "Feed My lambs," Jesus said. "Do you love Me? Feed My lambs."

The second time Jesus said unto him, Simon, son of Jonas ([Jhn 21:16](#)),

Lovest--using the same Greek word as He did before, *agapas*,

lovest thou me [divinely, fervently]? And he said unto him, Yes, Lord; thou knowest that I phileo you ([Jhn 21:16](#)).

I am fond of you, Lord.

And he saith unto him, Feed my sheep ([Jhn 21:16](#)).

The word *feed* here is a different Greek word, and it literally means "to tend my sheep, or to watch over my sheep, to be a shepherd over my sheep, take care of my sheep."

And he said unto him a third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? ([Jhn 21:17](#))

And this time Jesus used Peter's word, *phileo*. "Peter, are you fond of Me?" And Peter was grieved because this third time, Jesus used his word and said, "Are you fond of Me?" It hurt Peter deeply that Jesus had reduce Himself to Peter's level.

God will always meet us on whatever level we will meet Him. But it is tragic when we bring God down to our level, rather than our rising to His level. But God will meet us on whatever level we will meet Him, and He will do His best for us on that level. I'm convinced that we often limit that work of God in our lives, because we won't rise to the level that God wants us to dwell upon.

God made concessions for the children of Israel. God wanted to be their King. He wanted them to be unlike all of the other nations, in that they would not have any visible king; but that the world would know that God ruled over these people. But they didn't want that. They came to Samuel and they said, "Appoint a king over us like the other nations." And Samuel was grieved. And the Lord said unto Samuel, "Don't grieve

because they haven't rejected you, they have rejected Me from being king over them. And now, you anoint the one that I will show you to be the king." You see, God is now making a concession. He's coming down to their level. It's sad, though, when we bring God down to our level, rather than rise to His level, because we're not living then on the highest plane. And God would have us to live life in the highest plane. He'd draw us to His level if we would only but do so.

But Jesus came down to Peter's level. "Peter, are you fond of me?" And Peter was grieved because the Lord had to come down to his level. And he said, "Lord, you know all things." "And you know that I am fond of You." He wouldn't come up, because he couldn't come up. He would love to, I'm sure. But Peter was always guilty of speaking impulsively and getting rebuked for it.

When Jesus said, "Who do men say that I am?", Peter said, "Well, thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah. Flesh and blood did not reveal that unto you, but my Father which is in heaven." And I'm sure Peter puffed up and said, "Hey, fellows, you hear that? Revelation! I'm tuned in! You heard that, didn't you fellows?" And Jesus at that point, began to tell His disciples how that He was going to go to Jerusalem and be turned over to the hands of sinners and they would crucify Him and slay Him. And on the third day, He would rise again. And Peter said, "Oh, Lord, never, never, be that far from you!" And Jesus said, "Get thee behind Me, Satan. You're an offense unto Me. You can't tell the difference between what comes from God and what comes from man." His foot in his mouth, speaking impulsively! "All of you are going to be offended this night because of Me." "Oh, Lord, though they're all offended, I'll never be offended." "Peter, before the cock crows, you'll deny Me three times." "Though they kill me, I'd never deny You." Speaking impulsively, having to eat his words.

Now, Jesus had said, "He that hath My commandments, he it is who loves, agapas, Me." With a divine, fervent love. How is it shown? By keeping His commandments. Peter wasn't keeping His commandments. "I'm going fishing." Jesus didn't say, "Peter, go fishing." He said, "Wait in Galilee. I'll meet you there." He said, "Leave your nets and follow Me." And he was in the very act of disobeying the command of Christ, going back to the nets. And therefore when Jesus said, "Agapas, do you love Me divinely, fervently?" he could not say, "yes," because Jesus would then have said, "Then what are you doing out there in that boat leading these other fellows on this fishing venture when I didn't tell you to?" And Peter knew that he was trapped, and he knew that he couldn't say, "I love you divinely, fervently." And so, he had to use that lesser Greek word, "I'm fond of You," and tragically had to bring Jesus down to that level. And it hurt.

Jesus said, "Feed My sheep!" This is the word *feed* again. So, you have "feed My lambs, take care of My sheep, and feed My sheep." "Do you love Me?" This is what the Lord would have you to do. This is His command: feed the sheep.

And then He said unto him,

I tell you the truth, when you were young, you girded yourself [you dressed yourself], and you went wherever you wanted: but when you are old, you will stretch forth your hands, and another will gird you, and they'll carry you where you won't want to go. And this Jesus was speaking, signifying by what death he should glorify God ([Jhn 21:18-19](#)).

He was telling Peter that He's going to be crucified. "When you were young, you dressed yourself and you went where you wanted, but one of these days others are going to dress you and they're going to take you where you don't want to go." They're going to take you to a cross. And sure enough in years to come, when Peter was in Rome, he was sentenced to die on a cross. And Peter said, "I have one request. Please crucify me upside down; I'm not worthy to die as did my Lord." And he was crucified upside down. But it is interesting to me that Jesus here tells him by what death he's going to die.

And immediately after telling him what death he's going to die, he said, Follow me ([Jhn 21:19](#)).

"You can go back fishing, but follow Me. It's going to be tough; it's going to be a cross. You're not going to drive a Rolls Royce. You're not going to live in a fancy mansion. It's not going to be easy, Peter. But follow Me."

Then Peter, turning about, seeing the disciple whom Jesus loved following;...he said unto him, What about him, Lord? ([Jhn 21:20-21](#))

Peter, back in the same old position, speaking out of turn again. "What about him, Lord? What shall this man do?" And Jesus in essence, said, "Peter, that's none of your business. I'm talking to you about you. You worry about yourself. Don't worry about him."

If I should will that he lived until I come again, what difference does that make? ([Jhn 21:22](#))

"You just hope, Peter. You're going to be crucified." "Oh, but what about him, Lord?" Jesus said, "Hey look, Peter, you take care of yourself, your relationship with Me. If I will that he should live until I come again, what's that to you? What difference does that make to you?"

You follow me ([Jhn 21:22](#)).

Now, the Lord always wants to deal with each of us personally, and that personal relationship with us. The Lord will talk to me and tell me about me, and the Lord will talk to you and tell you about you. I put very little stock in people coming up to me who say, "The Lord told me to tell you..." I wonder when He forgot my number. "What about him, Lord?" "No, Peter, I'm talking about you. It doesn't matter what I've intended for John. You follow me."

Now, because Jesus said, "If I will that he remain till I come," many picked up that statement and misinterpreted it. And they said Jesus said that He was going to come before John died. But John is careful to correct that misunderstanding. And John points out that is not what Jesus said. Jesus only said, "If I will that he should tarry till I come." And so, John seeks to correct that common mistake that had gone out within the early church, "Oh, the Lord is going to come before John dies." John said, "No, no, that's not what He said. He said, 'If I will that he tarry,' but he didn't say he will tarry."

but, If I will that he tarry, what is that to you? ([Jhn 21:23](#))

Now John tells us that he knows that the things he is writing are true because he witnessed them himself. And then he goes on to tell us that there are so many other things that actually happened, that could have been related. As he said earlier, "Many other things did Jesus which are not written in this book." And now he says,

There are a lot of other things that happened, and I suppose that if you would write down everything that could be written about Jesus, that the whole world could not contain the books that should be written on the subject ([Jhn 21:25](#)).

It's a subject that is so vast that we will never fully comprehend it on this side of eternity. But it is a subject that is so vast, it'll take all eternity to comprehend it. I look forward to eternity as a growing experience, a learning experience. As Paul tell us in Ephesians, "And God, through the ages to come, shall be revealing unto us what is the exceeding richness of His love and grace and mercy towards us in Jesus Christ" ([Ephesians 2:7](#)). God's love for you and His mercy towards you is so vast, He's going to take all eternity to reveal its fullness. Throughout the ages to come, we'll be learning of how much God does love us. So, impossible to write it all in a book, or in books. The world isn't big enough to contain the libraries that should be written on the subject of Jesus Christ. It's an ever-enlarging revelation to our own hearts, that work of God's Spirit, that work of God's love in our lives. Shall we pray.

Father, we thank You, for all that You are and all that You've done. We thank You for sending Your Son who died and rose again, and who lives tonight making intercession for us. Lord, bless us we pray, as we learn of Thee and as we learn of Your love. And as we grow in this grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In whose name we pray. Amen.

May the Lord be with you and give you a beautiful week. May you just sense His presence to such an extent that you won't need any kind of an artifact or relic to remind you that the Lord is with you. But may you come to that consciousness and awareness of His presence by the things that He is doing in Your life. May things happen in such a way that you realize, "Ooh, the Lord is here with me." That's always a neat flush when you get that, ooh!...you know? The Lord is here. May you experience that this week, as you walk with Him in an ever-deepening and enriching fellowship through His Holy Spirit.