

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

THE LORD

WORKING

AND WALKING

WITH THE BELIEVERS

IN RESURRECTION

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In John 21:1-14 we see that, in resurrection, the Lord moved and lived with the believers. Now, in 21:15-25, we see that He is also working and walking with the believers.

WORKING AS THE SHEPHERD

The Lord is working as the Shepherd to build up the church by shepherding His flock (21:15-17; 10:16). There are three aspects of the Lord as the Shepherd: the good Shepherd (10:11), the great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20), and the chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4). Shepherding is not for individuals; it is for the flock. The flock is the church, and the church is the building. By reading John 21 and 1 Peter we can see that shepherding is for the building of the church.

STIRRING UP THE DISCIPLES' LOVE

In 21:15 the Lord Jesus said to Simon Peter,

“Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” The Lord was here restoring Peter’s love toward Him. Peter did have a heart to love the Lord, but he was too confident of his own strength, his natural strength. His love for the Lord was precious, but his natural strength had to be denied and dealt with. The Lord allowed him to utterly fail by denying Him to His face three times ([18:17](#), [25](#), [27](#)) so that his natural strength and his self-confidence might be dealt with. Furthermore, Peter had just taken the lead in backsliding from the Lord’s call. His natural confidence in his love toward the Lord must also have been dealt with by this failure. Since he might have been somewhat disappointed, the Lord came to restore his love toward Him, to charge him with the shepherding of His church, and to prepare him for his martyrdom, so that he would not follow Him with any confidence in his natural strength.

When the Lord spoke to Peter in [21:15-17](#), He did not call him “Peter,” which was his regenerated name, the new name of his regenerated person. The Lord called him “Simon.” Simon was his old name, the name depicting his natural person. Because Peter was still a natural person, the Lord asked him, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” The reason the Lord asked

him this question first was because Peter had boldly told the Lord on the eve of His betrayal that he would not give up the Lord, even though all the other disciples would forsake Him ([Matt. 26:33](#)). Peter had said that he would follow the Lord unto death ([John 13:37](#); [Matt. 26:35](#)). By saying this, Peter made himself different from the other disciples. Yes, he was different from them—in his weakness, not in his strength. When the Lord asked him, “Do you love Me more than these?” the Lord was reminding Peter of what he was. He was a man so self-confident and proud.

Peter’s love toward the Lord was precious, but his natural strength had to be dealt with. Peter’s strength was dealt with in two ways: in his denying the Lord and in his taking the lead to backslide from the Lord’s call. Peter failed the first test by denying the Lord three times, and he failed the second test by going fishing. The reason the disciples went fishing was because they were without food. When Abraham was in Canaan, he also was tested by the same problem and went down to Egypt because of the famine. In the same principle, Peter and the other disciples went to the sea to fish, being tested by the lack of food. Peter thought that he was strong, and able to withstand any test, even death itself. He had told the Lord that he

would follow Him even unto death. Thus, the Lord tested Peter twice, and Peter failed both tests.

How did the Lord deal with Peter's natural strength? By temporarily taking His hand off him. In 10:28, the Lord said that no one is able to snatch the believers out of His hand. When Peter betrayed the Lord, denying Him to His face three times, it meant that the Lord had taken His hand off him for a while. The Lord seemed to be saying, "Peter, you have too much confidence in yourself. You don't know that your standing depends upon My holding you in My hand. If I don't hold you, you cannot stand. Let Me take My hand away for a while and see if you are able to stand." Then the Lord stood back a little, and Peter fell. Do not think that you have the power to stand. No, an unseen hand upholds us all the time. I appreciate the fact that throughout the years, and even now, many saints have been praying for me. In my fellowship with the Lord in the spirit, I have the deep sense and appreciation that so many dear ones are praying for me. By myself, I cannot stand. By myself, I cannot minister. I know the source of the power of ministry. And I know that the source of the strength to stand is not in me—it is in Him. We all need to realize this. Because Peter was so strong, having too much confidence in himself,

the Lord was forced to temporarily remove His hand. As a result, Peter fell and denied the Lord three times. Moreover, Peter could not stand the test of his daily living and took the lead to backslide to the sea. Perhaps Peter thought that he had reason to do this because, at that point, he had not seen the supply of the Lord. Nevertheless, by his backsliding Peter was exposed. The Lord withdrew His hand for a little while, and Peter was fully exposed. This was the Lord's dealing.

In [chapter twenty-one](#), Peter was humble and very low. Undoubtedly he was quite disappointed. Thus, the Lord came in to recover, strengthen, and restore him. It is quite meaningful that, in front of all the other disciples, the Lord asked Peter, “Do you love Me more than these?” The Lord seemed to be saying, “Simon, have you forgotten that a few days ago you said, in the presence of all the others, that although they would forsake Me, you would follow Me to death? That was your word. Now, Simon, I ask you if you love Me more than these do?” If I had been Peter, I would not have had the face to say anything. Peter simply replied, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love You” ([v. 15](#)). Peter could not answer the Lord with a clear word, for he was in a very perplexing situation. He did not say, “Lord, I love You,” or, “Lord,

I don't love You." How would you have answered the Lord if you had been Peter? Would you have said, "Yes, Lord, I love You more than all of these"? Would you have said, "Lord, I'm sorry I don't love You," or, "Lord, I'm sorry that I boasted and was unable to fulfill it"? Peter had lost his self-confidence and could say nothing except, "Lord, You know that I love You." In other words, Peter seemed to be saying, "I don't know whether I love You or not. Lord, You know. If I say that I love You, I know that this does not mean anything. Formerly, I told You that I loved You, but I failed. In fact, You told me that I would fail and deny You three times, and it was so. Now, Lord, it is up to You. You know—I don't." Here we see a man who had become a tested and broken person.

In [verses 16 and 17](#), we see that the Lord twice more asked Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" When the Lord asked him this the third time, Peter was deeply grieved. He was grieved for two reasons. The first was that the Lord asked him this question three times. If I asked you the same question three times, you also would feel quite troubled. The second reason Peter was grieved was that by asking him this question three times, the Lord was reminding Peter that he had denied Him three times. When Peter denied the

Lord, he was warming himself by a fire (18:25). There was also a fire in John 21. The Lord's action was very meaningful, for now, having a fire to remind Peter, He seemed to be saying, "Peter, do you remember that fire? Do you remember that it was by a fire that you denied Me? By that fire you denied Me, but by this fire I supply you." Thus, the Lord caused Peter to remember what he did by that fire and to realize what he was and where he was. Peter fully learned that lesson. In the whole New Testament, the best picture of Peter is the one in John 21. I do like Brother Peter in this chapter. Here he is a soft, meek, and broken person, a man who has truly learned the lesson of being tested and broken by the Lord.

CHARGING THE DISCIPLES

After restoring Peter's love toward Him, the Lord Jesus charged him, saying, "Feed My lambs," "Shepherd My sheep," and "Feed My sheep." The first twenty chapters of the Gospel of John stress the matter of believing in the Son that we may have life (3:15). But in this chapter it is not a matter of believing but of loving. The fruit-bearing in chapter fifteen is the outflow of the riches of the inner life. Here the lamb-feeding is the nourishing with the riches of the inner life. In order

to feed others we need to enjoy the riches of the Lord's divine life. This requires that we love Him. To believe in the Lord is to receive Him, and to love the Lord is to enjoy Him. The Lord came as life and as the life supply to us. We need to have faith in Him and love toward Him. According to the Gospel of John, these are the two requirements for participating in the Lord.

Lamb-feeding is by the nourishing with the riches of the inner life, and sheep-shepherding is for the building of the church. Shepherding is for the “flock” ([10:14, 16](#)), which is the church ([Acts 20:28](#)). Therefore, it is related to God’s building ([Matt. 16:18](#)). Later, in his first Epistle, Peter indicated this by saying that growth, by feeding on the pure milk of the Word, is for the building of God’s house ([1 Pet. 2:2-5](#)), and by charging the elders to shepherd the flock of God ([1 Pet. 5:1-4](#)). The growth by nourishing is for the building. The Lord is still working with His disciples in this way. Today, by lamb-feeding and sheep-shepherding, the Lord is working with us for the building of the church.

By considering three chapters, [John 10](#), and [1 Peter 2](#) and [5](#), we shall see that feeding the lambs and shepherding the sheep are for the building up of the church. According to [John 10](#), the Lord

laid down His soulish life that His sheep might have His divine life and be brought together as one flock. To bring all His sheep together as one is truly the building. In [1 Peter 2](#), Peter says that we, as newborn babes, must be fed with the pure milk of the Word that we might grow up to be built up together as a spiritual house. Finally, in [1 Peter 5](#), Peter, as one of the elders, charges the elders to care for the sheep by feeding and shepherding them. Feeding the sheep is different from shepherding them. In [21:15](#) the Lord said, “Feed My lambs”; in [21:16](#), He said, “Shepherd My sheep”; and in [21:17](#), He said, “Feed My sheep.” To shepherd means to take care of the sheep, and to feed means to supply food to the sheep. While we are serving the Lord today, we must not only care for His sheep, but also feed them with spiritual food. It is not sufficient simply to care for and to look after the brothers and sisters; we must also feed them. In [verse 15](#) the Lord said, “Feed My lambs,” and in [verse 17](#) He said, “Feed My sheep.” By this we see that both the young believers and the more matured believers need the feeding. If the Lord has committed to us the burden of His flock, we must be sure to do two things—to feed them and to care for them.

WALKING WITH THE DISCIPLES

In [21:18-23](#), we see that the Lord Jesus walks with the disciples as His followers. After restoring Peter's love for Him and charging him with lamb-feeding and sheep-shepherding, the Lord, by predicting Peter's martyrdom, instructed the disciples to follow Him to death. In [verse 18](#) the Lord said to Peter, “Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go.” In saying this to Peter, the Lord was “signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God.” Later, in [2 Peter 1:14](#), Peter referred to this. Here in this chapter the Lord was preparing Peter to follow Him to death, but not by anything of himself nor according to his own will. The Lord seemed to be saying, “Peter, you did not keep your word, but I will keep My word. You said that you would even die for Me, but you did not keep your word. One day you will die for Me, for you will die to glorify God. While you are young, you will be free. But the day will come when you are old. Then people will catch you, bind you, and bring you to a place where you do

not want to go.” After hearing these words, Peter realized that he would be martyred for the Lord. At that time, Peter did not say either yes or no.

After predicting Peter’s martyrdom, the Lord said to him, “Follow Me!” We all must follow the Lord as the indwelling One. The “Me” whom we are to follow is in us. As [verse 18](#) indicates, we must not follow the Lord by our own will but according to His leading. Our following Him even unto death is to glorify God ([v. 19](#)). Furthermore, we must follow Him without paying attention to others. After the Lord told Peter to follow Him, Peter turned to John and said to Jesus, “Lord, and what about this man?” ([v. 21](#)). To this, the Lord replied, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!” ([v. 22](#)). The Lord was telling Peter that what would happen to John was none of his business and that he had to follow Him.

This chapter is a picture showing that after we have been regenerated and commissioned by the Lord, we must love the Lord at any cost and follow Him to the end at any sacrifice. By following the Lord in this way, we shall accomplish the Lord’s purpose to feed His lambs and to feed and shepherd His sheep.

[Verse 23](#), referring to what the Lord had said to Peter about John, says, “This word therefore

went forth among the brothers that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?" In this word the Lord indicates that some of His followers will live until He comes.

THE LORD'S INVISIBLE AND VISIBLE PRESENCE

It seems that in this portion of the Word there are some contradictory elements. When the Lord said, "Follow Me," He was there with the disciples. How then could He say "until I come"? Since He was there, He need not come. If He meant that He would leave them and later come back to them, how could He say to them, "Follow Me"? How could they follow Him? When I was young, I was troubled by this and said to myself, "If the Lord is here for us to follow Him, then there is no need for Him to come. He is here already. But if He is coming, then He must be away from us. How then can He ask us to follow Him?" The answer to all these questions is the Lord's invisible presence. According to His visible presence, He would leave the disciples and come back later. But according to His invisible presence, He would be with them all the time. On the one hand, He would

be with them, and, on the other hand, He would be away from them. Therefore, on the one hand, they could follow Him, and, on the other hand, they would have to wait for His coming back.

There are two aspects of the Lord's presence—His invisible presence and His visible presence. Because of the Lord's invisible presence, we can follow Him. Invisibly, the Lord is here, and we follow Him. Visibly, He is not here, and we must wait until He comes. The key is the Lord's wonderful presence. In this age, His invisible presence is better than His visible presence. His invisible presence is more precious, available, prevailing, rich, and real. I hope that we all understand these two aspects of the Lord's presence. Visibly speaking, we are waiting for Him; invisibly speaking, He is walking with us and we are following Him. After His resurrection, the Lord remained with the disciples for forty days ([Acts 1:3-4](#)) in order to train them to realize, practice, and live by His invisible presence. In [verse 23](#) of [John 21](#) the Lord indicated that some of His believers would follow Him to death and that some would remain, would live until He comes.

[John 21](#) is a very practical chapter. We have been regenerated as the sons of God and have the life and nature of God. Thus, we are the

manifestation of God. God has committed to us His heavenly and divine commission, and we must do something to accomplish the Lord's purpose—feed His sheep and shepherd His flock until all the sheep are brought together as one Body to be a spiritual house. Although we must do these things, there is still the practical matter of our living. In this chapter we see that the Lord will provide for our needs and take care of our living. We must simply commit the matter of our living into His hands and leave it there. If we are under His will, the Lord will certainly maintain our living. Furthermore, we must also realize that we must suffer and sacrifice for the Lord's testimony, following Him even unto death.

The span of things covered in [John 20](#) and [21](#) is very broad. It begins with the discovery of the Lord's resurrection and ends with His coming back. These two chapters show everything that will happen to us between the Lord's resurrection and His coming back. Between these two events are all the things related to the Christian life during the church age: seeking the Lord with love toward Him, especially in the personal morning watch; seeing the Lord in resurrection; receiving the revelation of the issue of the Lord's resurrection concerning the “brothers” and the “Father” by

experiencing His manifestation; meeting with the believers to enjoy the Lord's presence; being breathed on by the Lord with the Holy Spirit and being sent by the Lord with His commission and authority to represent Him; learning how to live by faith in the Lord and to trust in Him for our daily living; loving the Lord with our natural strength having been dealt with and having learned the lesson of being broken, of losing our self-confidence, and of putting our trust in the Lord; shepherding the flock for the building of the church; practicing the Lord's invisible presence in which some follow Him even to death to glorify God, not by self-will but according to His leading, and some live until He comes back.

The Gospel of John begins with the Word in eternity past. After passing through the long process of incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, this Word has become the life-giving Spirit, the holy pneuma, the holy breath ([20:22](#)). In Greek, the word pneuma is used for both breath and spirit. The very eternal Word has become such a breath, such a Spirit. This is the processed God for our enjoyment. He is now the life and the Spirit in resurrection, moving, living, working, and walking with us. Furthermore, He meets with us all the time. As the life,

the Spirit, the holy breath, in resurrection He is constantly with us invisibly. He will continue with us invisibly, meeting, moving, living, working, and walking with us, until He comes visibly. This is the very Jesus Christ in whom we believe; the very Lord whom we have received; the very God whom we serve, worship, and enjoy; and the very all-inclusive Spirit who is always with us and within us. Praise Him!

The Gospel of John has no conclusion. This book is not closed; it is still under the Spirit's composition. Perhaps today's Gospel of John has two or three thousand chapters. This book is still being composed, and we are included in its composition. Praise the Lord!

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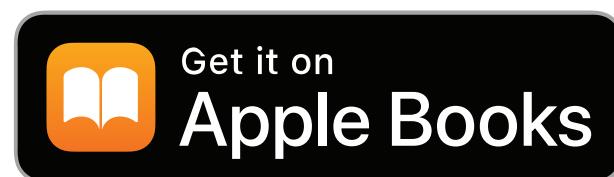
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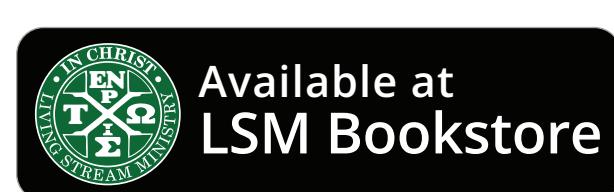
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