

Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter: "It is the Lord." The Lord, for whose return he had been longing and looking,—not to say praying—all that night, not for his own sake alone, but for the sake of his brother Apostle, whom he had upheld before, but who had sunk beyond him now, and whose soul refused to be comforted.

Simon Peter's heart was in the right place after all. It was breaking with grief at the thought of breaking from the work and from the Master, whom yet it was too broken to serve. He dashed into the sea, and made straight for Him whom he loved.

What followed next I need not dwell on. No word was yet spoken, except the Lord's brief invitation, "Come and dine." At least none is recorded until that wonderful meal was over. And then, after what more we know not, our Lord came as He only can come, to the point. "Simon, son of Jonah,"—and yet surely not altogether the son of Jonah, seeking to escape by sea from the presence and the labour of the Lord,—"Simon, son of Jonah, lovest thou Me more than these?" You do not surely mean that you prefer the fishing for nothing in the sea to the fishery for living men who are always to be found upon the land? Simon Peter does not answer that part of the question at all. Whatever else I love, "Lord thou knowest that I dearly love Thee." Jesus said unto him, "Feed my lambs." If not a fisherman, how would you like to try the shepherd's work? Try and feed the little ones, if you can. I suspect Peter loved children; sailors often do. "Feed my lambs." And so having drawn him up one step, our Lord pulls again and again at the same chain and draws him further, from feeding the lambs to tending the sheep, as one had tended him ever since he fell, and then to feeding the sheep also. And all for the love of the Master, the one link that Peter could not break, and even his sin had not broken for him. And He lifted him up and set his feet upon the Rock once more, and "ordered his goings," in these last wonderful words, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, when thou wast younger, thou girdedst thyself, and walkest whither thou wouldst. But when thou shalt grow old, another man shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not." This he spake, signifying by what kind of death He should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said unto him "Follow Me."