

The Convicting Power of Grace

Ryan Fullerton | illbehonest.com

Well, let's read from Luke 5:1-11. And what we're going to notice in this passage is the convicting power of grace. It's grace that spurs on the kind of radical obedience to reach lost areas in Mexico and the rest of the world. It's not simply calls to be radical that result in people being radical. It's tender kindnesses and grace that form the most radical discipleship in the world. Luke 5:1 May the Lord bless the reading of His Word.

"On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on Him to hear the Word of God, He was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret..." That's the Lord Jesus standing. "And He saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, He asked him to put out a little from the land, and He sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.' And Simon answered..." And you've got to realize that Simon was a blue-collared fisherman at this point. "'Master, we toiled all night, and took nothing, but at Your word, I will let down the nets.' And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both the boats, so that they (plural) began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken. So also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid. From now on, you will be catching men.' And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him."

Let's pray. Lord, we thank You so much for Your Word. We thank You for its perfect encouragements, consolations. We thank You that it's able to reach into the deepest parts of our hearts and divide between soul and spirit; that it knows us and it knows not only the depths of our sin, but it knows the depths of how to encourage Christians like us. It knows how to reach the lost. Lord God, there's nothing Your Word can't do. The Word made the world. It was by the voice of Your mouth that Asia and Mexico and America were formed. It's by the voice of Your mouth that we were formed, and that we were given voices. Oh God, it's by Your Word that we're born again. Lord God, we come before You, and we come now and we ask You, Lord that Your Word would be given to us now in a demonstration of the Spirit and of power. We confess to You, Lord God, that there is no real preaching apart from Your Spirit. Lord God, there's no man who has the corner on preaching. But Lord God, if You will come then any man can preach Your Word. Moses with twisted tongue can be made to speak eloquently of Your truth. So we want to come now, Lord, and pray that you set a guard over the door of my mouth, that I might not sin against You. I want to pray for all the moms who have been hoping their kids would fall asleep in their laps by now, that they would and they'd be able to listen. I want to pray for the hardest heart, that it would be cracked wide open. I want to pray for the neediest Christian that they'd be met. We just look to You, Lord. We look and we wait, as the watchman waits for the morning, so our souls wait for You; as the watchman waits for the morning, so our souls wait for

You. Now, Lord, as we open up Your Word we wait for You, and we ask You for Your Spirit to help us. Forgive all of our sins, Lord. Cleanse us and make us clean. And then use a sinner like me to help your saints. Use a saint like me to help your saints. I pray that You would do this, in Jesus' name, and for His worldwide glory, Amen.

I want to talk to you this evening about the convicting power of grace. The story is ultimately and very clearly a story of conviction. It's a story where Peter, the friend of Jesus, comes to see that he is wrong; that he is a sinner, and that he is not worthy to be in the presence of the Son of God. It's a story where Peter goes through this change of mind; where he, really in a sense, repents and confesses his own sinfulness before Jesus, and he comes to a place where he is utterly convinced of his unworthiness to be in the presence of the Son of God. And so this is a story about conviction. It's a story about how that conviction translates into radical discipleship. He leaves his net. They leave their nets. And they follow the Lord Jesus Christ with reckless abandon. They let goods and kindred go; this mortal life also, realizing the body they may kill, but God's truth abideth still, and so they go all out with Jesus.

But here's what's strange: Even though it's abundantly clear that Peter is brought to a place of deep, spiritual conviction - the kind of conviction we pray would rain down into our own hearts, and the kind of conviction that we pray would sweep across this nation and the nations; even though Peter is clearly brought to that point, it's not because anyone ever called him a sinner. Jesus does not call Peter a sinner in this passage. Jesus has not just preached a hell-fire and brimstone sermon in this passage. Jesus did preach hell-fire and brimstone sermons, and every true man of God will from time to time preach hell-fire and brimstone sermons, but Jesus hasn't done anything to point out Peter's condemnation or his sin at all in this passage. He hasn't even said something like, "You fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have said." He doesn't say, "Get behind me, Satan," to Peter in this passage. What's happening in this passage is that a fisherman has basically just gotten an extra paycheck. You remember that this fisherman Peter was a businessman who worked on one hundred percent commission, or was like a salesman that worked on 100% commission. No fish. No market day. No market day. No money. No money. No food. No food. The wife and babies are crying. Peter was a man like you and I. He was an every day, working man, and he was a man who'd been out all day fishing, and all he had to show for it was clean nets. And Jesus comes along and says I'm going to give you the catch of the century.

I was thinking about this, kids. What would this be like for you? What would be something comparable for the children in this room? And I was thinking, this is like your parents say to you, "Don't disobey me." "Don't whine and cry." "Don't complain." "Don't steal toys from your brothers and sisters, because if you do, I will be faithful to discipline you." And then you do all those things - complain, whine, steal toys, and your dad says "get in the van." Get in the van? I thought it was go to your room? No, get in the van. We're going to Dairy Queen. And you're not getting the 99 cent blizzard this time. You're getting whatever you want. But dad, I just disobeyed you. You're starting to feel something of the convicting power of grace.

You see, Peter, in this passage is brought to a place of: "Depart from me, I am a sinful man..." but he's brought there with something similar to receiving a refrigerator full of free groceries. The Lord Jesus Christ takes Peter out fishing and fills - not one boat, and not two boats, but He actually fills the boats with so many fish, that the hull principle that keeps boats

a float is compromised. And the boats are going down. The fish is so great that the problem is we may not be able to get all these fish to shore. And that is what brings Peter to the deepest point of conviction, and what brings Peter to the deepest devotion in discipleship.

Now, this may be different than what you've heard. Many of us are regularly hearing about the convicting power of the law; the convicting power of God's law, and of course, what is the law? Well, the law is the fact that God has standards; God has requirements that He gives to all mankind; He's written them on the conscience, says Romans 2, so that each conscience knows what is right and what is wrong and each person accuses or excuses themselves when they do what is right or when they do what is wrong. God's law was not only revealed in creation, but it was revealed more specifically to the nation of Israel when God gave them the Ten Commandments. He told them, you should worship Me, and you should not steal, and you should not commit adultery, you should not bear false testimony. Usually when we think about conviction, we think about conviction by law. You want to convict people? Tell them how they're guilty before the law. Remind them of what nags their conscience late at night. Remind them of how the Word of God condemns their actions. And I don't want to say a negative word about that. The Lord gave the law to convict people. He gave the law. The book of Galatians calls the law a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. It's a schoolmaster. The ancient Roman schoolmasters had a stick that they could beat their pupils with, and often, it was told that when a pupil came of age, they could sometimes kill their schoolmasters because they were so infuriated with the service they had given to them. And the law does convict people and bring them to Christ. But it's not the only way God convicts people and brings them to Christ. There's more than one way to skin a cat. And there's more than one way to bring an unbeliever to Christ. And what we want to focus on tonight is the convicting power of grace. Loving, gracious grace.

So, how does it work? How does it work that grace can bring a sinner to the deepest place of conviction and devotion to discipleship? How does that happen?

Well, the first thing that I want to point out to you is that grace works in the face of our ignorance and arrogance. Grace works in the face of our ignorance and arrogance. Look at v. 2. The last half of v. 2 says, "The fisherman had gone out of them, (that is, their boats), and then they were washing their nets." Then Jesus gets into one of their boats and it says, "getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, (which was Peter's other name), He asked him to put out a little from the land, and He sat down and taught the people from the boat." Now, I think Peter would have liked this arrangement. I'm the fisherman. You're the Teacher. I'll drive the boat. Get You a nice place to preach. I'm the fisherman. You're the Teacher. The world is as it should be.

I once had a deacon at the church I pastor who was a police officer, and he was a devoted marine. If you asked this man to stay in one place, he would not move until you released him from his position. And one time, we were having a conversation about the difference between elders and deacons. And I said to him, now listen, you are a police officer and you want to serve the church, and there are cars parked around our church building that we want to see towed away. Who should handle that? You or me? He said, "me." I said there are people who scam the church, who want to scam the church, who should handle that? You or me? He said, "me." I said, "Well, don't I care about the church?" He said, "No, you care about the church, but I'm the deacon and I know a little bit more about that stuff." I said, "Well, people come along and they have questions about the Trinity. Who should handle that? You or me?"

He said, "you." I said, "why?" He said, "Well, you're the preacher and you know how to explain the Trinity." And everything was well in the world. I was the preacher. He was the deacon. In this story at the beginning, everything's fine. Peter's the fisherman. Jesus is the Teacher. Peter handles the boat. Jesus handles the teaching. Everything's good. Until Jesus goes to meddlin' with fishing. And He says to a seasoned fisherman - a man with years of experience in his trade - He says why don't you let down your nets? He didn't say let down your nets for one more try. He says why don't you let down your nets for a catch?

I have a friend named Herman Vanderpool who's the first man I ever had the privilege of baptizing. Herman Vanderpool has been fishing on the same lake for 40 years. He has a depth finder in his boat, but there is no need for the depth finder. Herman knows where the lake is 20 feet deep and 40 feet deep. He knows all the details. And when I'm in the boat with Herman, Herman decides when we let down the rods for a catch.

But here, the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, the One Who knit every fish together, the One Who is the Lord of every tide and every wind and every wave and every sea, and Who controls where schools of fish move and live and have their being, that Lord Jesus says, "Let down your net for a catch." And Peter, in my estimation, responds in ignorance and arrogance. Because you see, Peter says, "Master..." It sounds so submissive, doesn't it? "Master, we have toiled all night." We have toiled all night. "...and we have taken in nothing." He's respectful, but he's not convinced the Lord Jesus has the best plan.

And isn't that our tendency? To doubt the wisdom, the sovereignty, and the miracle working gracious power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Share the Gospel with that guy. That guy won't respond. Go confront that person over there. That person will never listen. Ask Me anything you want and I will do it if you ask in My name. Yeah, well, you don't want to be extreme. Essentially, we approach most situations in our lives when we are not living by faith, and we determine that if we have given it our best and nothing has happened, then nothing can be done. Because we tried. It's like we're singing this little song: Ryan, Ryan, he's my man. If he can't do it, no one can. And all the while, Yahweh reigns. Sea splitting, ocean creating, manna producing, meat from the skies, Yahweh reigns. And we've determined it can't be done. And in so doing, we are ignorant of Who He is, and we are arrogant to think His plan is bad.

My wife's grandfather was a Methodist minister by the name of Wilbur Norman Teal. He is one of my heroes. He was a mechanic until he was 40 years old, and around the time he was 40 years old, he was a leader in the Methodist church, though he was not a preacher in the Methodist church. And there came a Sunday when the preacher of the church he was a part of in Niagara Falls, Canada, was away at a conference meeting. And Wilbur Norman Teal thought to himself, I know exactly what's going to happen. It was a snowy day and the roads were closed and the preacher couldn't get back from his conference meeting to preach in Niagara Falls, Canada, and so Wilbur Teal knew that preacher is going to wait till the very last minute, and then he's going to call me and ask me to preach. And that's exactly what happened. The preacher wanted to come home and preach really bad, so he waited till the last minute when it was clear the roads weren't going to be open, and then he made the call, "Have Wilbur preach." And so Wilbur got the call and he thought to himself, I have a sermon in the back of my Bible. No one will know I had a sermon in the back of my Bible, and I'll get up there in this impromptu setting and I will hit that one out of the park. And so he says that he got up into the pulpit and he

prayed a perfunctory prayer of reliance on God and he stood in the pulpit to deliver that sermon and I kid you not, nothing came out. He started with a sentence or two and then the Lord confounded his mind. And some merciful sister volunteered to turn the time into a prayer meeting. Or actually, he said, would someone pray? And the dear saints, he said, tried to carry the service up by prayer, but I just got down out of the pulpit a complete failure. And he said to his wife, "I will never preach again."

Oh... don't ever say never to God. It's like begging Him. He said I will never preach again, and he went home and he was working out in the yard that day, or doing something around the house, and then it dawned on him. That preacher's going to do it again. He'll do it for the evening service. He'll wait till the very last minute... He'll wait till the very last minute, and he won't call me until the very last minute, and then, when I get to the church, he'll call and he'll ask me to preach, but I'm never preaching again. So he said to his wife, we're going to go to church a half an hour late. This was a devoted Methodist. You don't go to church a half an hour late when you're a devoted Methodist. His wife thought this was a terrible idea. But he insisted. So they should be up at church a half an hour late. When they opened their car doors there was no sound. It was like they haven't started the service. And he walked in and one of the class leaders came up to him and said, "Wilbur, the pastor has called and he wants you to preach." And Wilbur said, "I'm not preaching." "If God wanted me to preach, He would have stuck with me." This is ignorance and arrogance right here. And so the class leader went to the other godly men in the church and said, "Wilbur doesn't want to preach." And they all said, "We think Wilbur should preach." So they walked back up and said, "We just think the Lord wants you to preach." And he says, "Start the service." And he went down into the basement, I think in part, in ignorance and arrogance. And he got down on his knees and he said, "Lord Jesus, what should I pray? What should I preach? I have nothing." And he said that the Lord said to him, "Jesus. Preach Jesus." He walked upstairs and he mounted the pulpit and preached about the birth of the Son of God and the death He died for sinners. And his account is that no one unconverted in the building was left unconverted by the end of the night.

I tried. It didn't work. Not doing it again. Peter: I tried my best. There's nothing that can be done. Until the Lord ordains a sovereign grace in your life; A sovereign mercy in your life. And so the grace of God works in the face of our ignorance and arrogance. It also works in the midst of our half-hearted obedience.

Look at Luke 5:5. "And Simon answered, 'Master, we toiled all night and took nothing, but at Your word, I will let down the nets.'" That's a bare minimum obedience in my mind. Now, I say that because of the way it's worded. At Your word, I will let down the nets. I also say that because we know where the story goes. He winds up being convicted, and so we know that he wasn't approaching this in wholeheartedness. Ok, Lord, I'll do it. And have you heard that in your own soul before? Have you ever heard that in your own soul? We read, "Wives submit to your husbands." Ok. It's the inspired and inerrant Word of God. We read, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church..." even when she's full of anxiety, even when she's full of difficulty, love her like Christ loved the church. Ok... I'm a fully devoted disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm going to do it. "Rejoice in tribulation." I just want to be obedient. I'm just going to do what the Lord says because He's the wisest One here. And you know what? There's something terrible about that. And there's something wonderful. It's a long way from: "Lord, I'm in rebellion

and I'll never obey You." It's the fledgling steps of a child of God toward what is right. It's the pressing on against the flesh that pulls us back from disobedience to God into obedience: "Master, at Your word... I'll let down the nets." It doesn't make a lick of sense to me, Lord. But I'm going to do it. And it's right there that the Lord is ready to move with exceedingly, abundantly, beyond all that Peter could ask or imagine.

So, grace that convicts the soul works in the face of our ignorance and arrogance, and grace that brings conviction to the soul, moves into the midst of our half-hearted obedience, and then the question is, how does it work? How does grace move into this sort of a person's life? It moves with lavish abundance. Peter's foot dragging is not met by the Lord's foot dragging. Peter's foot dragging is met by the Lord's lavish love. Why don't you let down your net for a catch, Peter? And I'll bring in so many fish, that your entire business will be in jeopardy of sinking. He brings in two boat loads of fish to show Peter that He is lavish and abundantly gracious.

Now, think about this. Jesus could have brought in one fish to show Peter that he was wrong. Right? You said there'd be none. Look. There's one. He could have brought in a good catch to show that He controls the sea. But He didn't bring in one fish. And He didn't bring in a good catch. He brought in boat loads of fish so that the boats were sinking. It's exceedingly, abundantly above what a sluggish disciple deserves. It is not being treated as your sins deserve. That's the God you serve all the time. Every day. That's always God. That's not the God of this sermon. That's not the God of today. That's the God of the universe forever Who is with you in His grace. On your worst days, you ought to be looking for trophies of grace. But what if He disciplines me? It'll only be so you can share in His holiness. Just one more kindness. One more kindness.

Have you ever thought about the power of grace and kindness to convict people of their sin? Is the way you do evangelism mindful of that? Is the way you walk through life mindful that it might just be a tender touch, a lavish kindness that's the heartbreaking thing that walks into that person's life with the grace and love of Jesus?

Let me read you a story from the life of Evangeline Booth, the daughter of William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army. It's found in a book we'll recommend tomorrow to you. Charles' "The Law of Christ." And it's the story of how God moved Evangeline Booth one morning to shower lavish love on a very sinful woman and how that opened the way to the woman knowing Christ. Now listen carefully. It's such a good story. "The gates opened wide, and I witnessed a sight which if eternity could wash over my mind, time never can. It was a woman. Two policemen walked in front of her and two behind. One stalwart man firmly held the right arm and the other the left. Her hair was uncombed and matted and disheveled. Her right temple was blackened with bruises. Clots of dried blood stood upon her left temple. Her clothes were torn and blood-stained. She tried to wrench her arms from the grasp of the policemen. The very atmosphere of the morning was laden with curses and oaths. She tossed her head wildly as the six policemen dragged her down the passageway. What could I do? (Says Evangeline Booth). One more moment and the golden opportunity to be of help would be gone. Could I offer a prayer? No, there was not time. Could I sing? It would be absurd. Could I give her money? She would not take it. Could I quote a verse of Scripture? She would not heed it."

And then Booth says, "Whether it was a divine suggestion or not, I did not stop to think, but the impulse of a burning desire which filled my heart as she passed made me step forward and kiss her on the cheek. Whether the police were taken off guard by my extraordinary action and relaxed their grip, I do not know, but with one wrench, she freed her arms and clasped her hands as the wind spread her matted, disheveled hair, and she looked toward the grey skies and said, 'My God.'" She'd just been swearing. "She looked around wildly for a moment, and then said, 'My God, who kissed me? My God, who kissed me? Nobody has kissed me since my mother died.' Lifting her tattered apron she buried her face in her hands, and like a little lamb, she was led to the vehicle which took her to prison. Later, I went to the prison in the hope of seeing her, and at the door stood the warden. When I approached the warden, she said, 'We think her mind is gone. She does nothing but pace up and down her cell, asking me every time I go in, if I know who kissed her.'" Evangeline Booth said, "'Would you let me go in and speak to her?' I asked. 'I am her only and best friend.' The door was open and I slipped in and her face was clean. Her eyes were large and beautiful. She said, 'do you know who kissed me?' And then she told me her story. 'When I was a little girl, 7 years old, my widowed mother died. She died very poor although she was of genteel birth. She died in a back basement in the dark. When she was dying, she called me to her, took my little face in her hands and kissed it and said to me, 'my poor little girl; my defenseless little girl. Oh God, have pity on my little girl. And when I am gone, protect her and take care of her.' From that day to this, nobody ever put a kiss upon my face until recently.' Then again, she asked me, 'Do you know who kissed me?' I said, 'It was I who kissed you.' Then I told her of Him Whose life was so much more tender than mine could ever be. And how He went to the cross and bore our sins upon Himself and was wounded for our transgressions that He might put the kiss of pardon upon our brow. In Him, she found light and joy and comfort and salvation and healing and love. Before she was released from the prison, the warden testified not only of the change in her life, but to its beauty. She was made through Christ the means of salvation to numbers of others who were down as low as she had been. And they were bound with fetters as heavy as those into which she herself had been bound." Isn't that glorious? Just a kiss. Beloved, do you know that Romans 2 tells us that the kindness of the Lord is meant to lead us to repentance?

I was talking to a man years ago, witnessing to him in the mall one day, and he began to tell me how his life was going good and so he knew that God was favoring him because his life went so well. And what I remember telling him is - what I hope I told him - it's been a long time, was something to the effect of, you should not take God's favor on your life as an indication that He is pleased with you. You should take His kindness as an indication that He wants you to repent. Can you believe that there are people who curse the name of God every day and they still draw clean oxygen that fills their lungs and fills their life with the kindness of life? Can you believe that I was one of those people? I think I was saved 18 years ago on Good Friday. I was saved 18 years ago this day. At least, in one calendar. And God saved me after years of fornication and years of pornography and years of sexual immorality and years of drug abuse - God saved me. But what's amazing is all the way along those sins, He was keeping me alive, giving me meals, giving me the tender affection even of pagan friends. There was just kindness all over the place. And it was meant to lead me to repentance. And some of you are here and your lives have been blasphemy against God. Your lives have been full of lies,

self-righteousness, pride, immorality, Phariseeism, majoring on the minors, dividing churches with your persnickety opinions. And you've had kind mothers and kind fathers and good meals and warm places to sleep and you're clothed today. And if you had no kind mother and no kind father and no good food, you still breathed. And He sustained your life. And the kiss of that kindness is meant to lead you to the cross of Jesus Christ where Christ is kinder than everyone else in the universe. Kind enough to pour out His own blood for those who would spit in His face. One look ought to lead to the deepest repentance.

How does the grace of God lead us to conviction and discipleship? It works in the face of our ignorance and our arrogance. It works in the face of our half-hearted obedience. It works with lavish, lavish kindness.

And then it works by denying our most fervent prayers. You know what Peter prays? We were treated this morning during the devotional time to a wonderful devotion by our brother Clint Leiter. Where he pointed to three of the shortest prayers in the Bible. "Help my unbelief." And also, "Lord, save me." And one other which I've already forgotten. I can't hear you. What is it? "Give us faith." Amen. Increase our faith. Here's another one. "Depart from me." "Depart from me." And you know there's reason and order in prayer. Depart from me, for I am a sinful man. How does Jesus answer that prayer? He doesn't go anywhere. He does not go anywhere. "Go away!" You have just brought me to a place where I see that You are holy. You are devoted to Yourself. You are good. You are kind. And I am doubtful. And I am suspicious. And I am self-trusting and not God-trusting. And now go away! And Jesus says, "No." No. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man. For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that was taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid.'" Simon had good reason to be afraid. Sinful men have good reason to be afraid in the sight of a holy God. Uzzah in the Old Testament was carrying the ark of God - carrying it in a way that God never commanded - carrying it on an ox cart, and then the ox cart began to tip and the ark began to fall, and no human being was to touch that ark, but Uzzah reached out to save the ark from the dirt, and he died instantly. As one preacher pointed out, he assumed that his hand was cleaner than the dirt. And he died instantly for his disobedience. Here Peter is moved to the depths of conviction. "Depart from me, I am a sinful man." And Jesus doesn't move in to say, "I agree. You're condemned." He moves in to say, "Don't be afraid." Don't be afraid of Yahweh? Don't be afraid of the Holy One of Israel? Oh, surely, the Son of Man came not to condemn the world, but to save it, didn't He? I mean, surely this is amazing. To not only preserve Peter's life; to not only not cast him into hell immediately; to not even give him a rebuke, but to give him a comfort: "Don't you be afraid." On what warrant can the Holy One of Israel say such a thing? Only by this, that He would go on to the cross and satisfy every bit of justice that should have made Peter afraid. And He would take away all the condemnation that Peter, for his unbelief, deserved. Fear not.

But that's not it. Then, Jesus decides it's a good time to call Peter into ministry. Isn't this amazing? I mean, Jesus, the Lord of the Universe has commanded an ignorant, arrogant, half-hearted obedient fisherman to put down his net for a catch of fish, and fish have come up with such abundance from the sea - they just can't even believe how many are in the net, they're all there; they're sinking the boats. And Peter is crying, "I'm a sinner. Leave me." And Jesus stays put and says, "Don't be afraid. From now on, you will be catching men." You think there

might have been 3,000 fish in there? That's how many he caught on the Day of Pentecost. Went straight from the prayer meeting to the baptism of the Holy Spirit to a sermon that covered the entire Scriptures, and 3,000 men were cut to the heart, baptized, added to the number, devoted to the Word, devoted to prayer, devoted to fellowship, devoted to worship. Three thousand people from all over the planet were saved, by a fisherman who thought he knew more about the sea than the Son of God. Don't ever say God can't use you. I'm too sinful. His blood is too pure. I'm too weak. His power is too mighty. My tongue is too twisted. Did He not make man's tongue? I'm a Jew - how could I ever reach Gentiles? I don't know, Paul, but you can. Somehow Paul didn't get the memo on contextualization. Jews can reach Gentiles. Former Pharisees can be effective witnesses to pagans. Yes, yes, but... I'm not like Peter. I've had bad moments repeatedly. No, that makes you like Peter. No, but he had lots of bad moments before Pentecost. And after. When the upstart apostle has to rebuke you in public, and include it in a letter in the New Testament, it's bad. It's bad. It's a bad day. It always stuns me. You know who wrote the book of the Bible that's the most helpful to Christians to remain steadfast under trials? The one who denied the Lord three times. First Peter. You know who's the one who commanded you to add all these things to your faith? It's the one who sometimes didn't. That one was used to catch 3,000. That one was used to lead a church in Jerusalem. That one was used to take the Gospel and spread it through the earth and equip the first generation of Christians who we are still benefiting from today. And his commissioning came on a day when he thought he was better at fishing than the Son of God. It came on a day when he had a refrigerator full of food and an extra paycheck.

Brothers and sisters, do you realize that throughout the Scriptures, God doesn't just do the saving thing, He does the kind thing. Do you know that? Do you know that throughout the Scriptures God does not just do the saving thing, He does the kind thing? You think about the days of Moses when God was going to raise up a deliverer out of Israel. He was going to raise up a deliverer who would take the people out of Egypt, and what happened was, Pharaoh said, "Kill all their children. Kill all their young sons. Get rid of all those boys, because I want to destroy this nation that could rise up against me; or keep them down." That meant Moses' life was in jeopardy. It meant God's deliverance was in jeopardy. But it also meant that a mother was going to lose her son. And so, Moses' mother put him in a little ark, pushed it down the river, and Moses was found by Pharaoh's daughter. That's all that had to happen. For Israel to be saved, that's all that had to happen. Moses just needed to be preserved so that he could go on to be the deliverer of Israel. It had all happened. Everything needed to save Israel had happened. Moses' life, the deliverer, had been preserved. But Miriam comes up out of the water and says, "Would you like a nursemaid?" And Miriam goes and gets Moses' mother to coddle her own child who's been preserved. He doesn't just save. He's kind.

Think about the feeding of the 4,000. Why did the feeding of the 4,000 happen? Is it because Jesus wanted to display His mighty power? Yes, but there's another reason. He just thought all those people would be hungry. He didn't want them walking all the way home without a meal. Think about Him on the cross. Everything is done. By the time the nails are in Jesus' hands, everything that needs to happen for everyone who will believe to be redeemed has happened, but that's not enough for Jesus. He's kind. He looks down and He says, "John, take My mother home and from now on, she'll be your mother. And from now on, you'll be her son." I

mean if there was a moment you could forget your mother, that would be the one. But not the Son of God. Not the eternally kind Lord Jesus Christ. In the midst of salvation, He's thinking of the hungry crowds, Moses' mother, and His own mother. And those tender mercies ought to lead us to repentance. They ought to lead us to praise the Lord and throw away everything that doesn't serve Him.

Now finally, we see what happens in Peter's heart as a result of all this kindness. Here's an extra paycheck. No, I'm not leaving. You're going into ministry and you're going to catch a lot of fish. Men fish. V. 11, "And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him." There is no greater discipleship than that, is there? They left everything and followed Him. And isn't it amazing? You can turn the heat up on encouraging the people of God to get radical. You need to get radical. You need to do awesome things for God. You need to storm the gates of hell. You need to give everything up. And there's a place for that. But constant appeals to be radical actually don't produce the most radical believers you can have.

But a deep knowledge of the tender kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ will create people that will drop everything for Him. How could Peter worry about not having enough food following Jesus? This guy's got the fish covered. Whatever He says goes. And so the kindness of the Lord is one of the key ingredients in the most devoted discipleship. You want to storm the gates of hell, and advance the Kingdom of God in Mexico, be kind to one another. Pastors, you want to see other pastors raised up and send them out? Preach to your people about the tender, loving kindness of God. They'll go everywhere with Him. Husbands, have you noticed that the more you tell your wife not to be anxious and tell her not to do this and inundate her with every command - biblical commands, of course, because you are a "godly spiritual head," and the priest of your home. And she's going to hear the Word of God from you. From Jesus. Who is truth? I wonder what would happen if the men who are here just said, honey, I know you want to hear this sermon badly. Let me take care of the kids tonight. I know dinner's not made. Let's order out. I've got it covered. I can see you've been working hard. I wonder if you might see more victory over anxiety in your wife. I wonder if you might see more confidence and security and ability to trust her Lord, if she found in you the tenderest and kindest of men.

I believe firmly that parents ought to discipline their children. But every once in a while, when it's time for my children to apply the board of education to the seat of knowledge, I sit down with them and I spank my own leg as hard as I can in front of them. I took that one for you. And Jesus takes discipline for you. I'm not saying give up spanking. We don't need parents who say I don't spank my kids; I just spank myself. That won't do. But some demonstration of over-the-top kindness; over-the-top sweetness. Hudson Taylor was waiting for a boat in China in the years when he was evangelizing the lost Chinese. And he was waiting for this boat, but because he was in Chinese dress, you couldn't tell that he was an Englishman. And he signaled to the boat driver and the boat driver came to pick him up, and a rich Chinese man bowled Hudson Taylor over and knocked him into the mud. Well, the boat driver was mortified because it was important for him in his culture to give honor to Hudson Taylor as the person who first asked for the boat and as a foreigner and guest to his country there was a double requirement for honor, and so the boat driver was mortified that the rich man had pushed Hudson Taylor into the mud. So Hudson Taylor, being a good American, stood up and said, "I have rights." And he was an Englishman, but more importantly, he was a Christian. And he wiped the mud off himself

and invited the rich man to sit beside him in the boat. And because of that love and kindness, had the opportunity to witness to the Gospel with the rich man.

Our church witnesses - and I'm sure many of you do this as well - witnesses outside of the abortion clinic every Saturday morning. We go and there's preachers there, and those handing out tracts, and people just speaking to the women who are about to receive abortions, telling them we don't want you to kill your child. We want you to know the grace and the love and mercy of Jesus. It's a wonderful ministry. We need people who will tell the truth about God's law on abortion. But we had a testimony night a couple weeks ago. I didn't organize it. One of our other pastors did. He brought up some folks who were doing some work, some evangelism, and some of them I hadn't even heard of. And a young lady originally from Scott Lee's church, stood up and told about a new ministry they had. And that's that not only are they meeting the people going into the abortion clinic before their abortion, she's prepared baskets of soap and lotion and a Gospel tract, and she's waiting for the ladies when they come out of the abortion clinic, to hand them an offering of kindness, and an invitation to a church that will offer them forgiveness. That's the love of Christ. That's the convicting power of grace. Some of you are starting to realize that putting people in submission holds with theological arguments is not the most effective way. If you have to put a man in a figure four leg lock to win him to Christ, something's gone wrong. We need to take every argument captive. Bring every thought into submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. But a kind word breaks a bone says the Proverbs. A kind word. What an image. Brother, I don't think that will save.

Would you let your evangelism, your life, your husbanding, your being a wife, your child raising, your relationships in the church - would you let it be seasoned with grace? "I want deeper repentance in the church." So do I. How do you get there? Tender, loving, lavish kindnesses from the cross. And that's not just something you do; that's something you believe about how Jesus is treating you every day. Are you suffering? He's going to do you lavish good. Are you praying for something that never seems like it will be answered? He's going to do you lavish good. Are you being called to something that doesn't look too wise? You haven't got a clue about wisdom and neither do I. You just look to Him and trust Him and walk forward. He'll do you lavish good. Are you going to die for the Gospel? You might. And He will be doing you lavish good. You'll get to heaven and say this was better than boat loads of fish. And this was even better than boat loads of men. Let's pray. We praise You, O God, for the Son of Your love, Who has died and has risen and has now gone above. Hallelujah! Thine the glory! Hallelujah, Amen! Hallelujah! Thine the Glory! Revive us again. Revive us, Lord, under a vision of Your kind cross and a picture of Your tender mercies and a trust that You're a lavish Father Who never gives scorpions or snakes or stones, but Who gives bread and fish and the kindness-producing Holy Spirit. We pray these things in Jesus' mighty name, Amen.