

# The Gospel of John SS – 5/25/08

## *John 21:15-19*

### I. Do You Love Me?

- A. What does Jesus mean by “more than these”?
  1. *More than the disciples?* Doesn't really fit the theme of the book.
  2. *More than the fish?* Possible, but Peter wasn't called from fishing in John 1, and if the symbolism of the fishing scene in ch. 21 is correct, then this distinction would not be necessary.
  3. *More than these disciples do?* This option seems most likely since throughout John's gospel, Peter has appeared to be the most eager of the Twelve to follow Christ despite his subsequent denials in chapter 18. **See John 13:37-38.**
- B. Peter's Response to Jesus
  1. “You know that I love You.”
    - a) Relational?
    - b) Affirmation of Jesus' deity by alluding to a divine attribute? (cf. 2:25).
    - c) It seems that Peter is possibly appealing to Jesus' divine ability to assure him of his love, but also it would not be out of the question to read this statement such as one that reflects Peter's understanding that nothing he can say can convince Christ of his love, either Jesus knows that he loves him or not.
- C. Love of the Person of Christ
  1. There could not be a more appropriate question for Jesus to ask Peter at this moment. Previously, in Jn 13:37-38, Peter declared that he would lay down his life for Jesus, yet as prophesied, Peter forsook Christ and denied him as his hour grew darkest. Now, as an indispensable part of John 21, Jesus returns to question Peter concerning the condition of his heart before he sends him out on mission for the gospel.
  2. Spurgeon's Sermon ~ “**Lovest Thou Me?**”
    - a) Love to the Person of Christ may be absent from our Hearts
      - (1) No outward righteousness renders the inquiry needless.
      - (2) Nor, brethren, would the highest office in the church render it unnecessary to ask the question.
      - (3) The enjoyment of the greatest Christian privileges does not render this question unnecessary.
      - (4) Nor, my dear brethren, does the greatest warmth of zeal prevent the necessity of this question.
      - (5) The greatest self-denial does not prove it.
    - b) We must love the Person of Christ, or all our Past Professions have been a Lie
    - c) We must have Love to the Person of Christ, or nothing is right for the Future
      - (1) Our piety will not have *the adhesive element*

- (2) Love is *the great inspiring force*
- (3) Will be lacking *the transforming force*
- (4) Will lack *the perfecting element*
- d) If We do Love Him, What then?
  - (1) “If you love Christ, get to work!”
- 3. Illustration: We can see this truth come out clearly for instance in the scene in John 5 where Jesus tells the Pharisees that they search the Scriptures in order to find eternal life in them, but fail to recognize the Christ of whom the Scriptures speak. Likewise, we must not commit the same misguided bibliolatry, but realize that the Bible was meant to point away outside of itself to Jesus Christ. Love for him should be the end result.

## II. Feed My Sheep

- A. Three Times: What is the significance?
  - 1. Mirrors the 3 denials of Jesus in Jn 18?
  - 2. ANE customs of reiterating something three times before witnesses?
- B. Peter’s Grief: Why does he become upset?
  - 1. The Futility of Mere Verbal Confession – Returning to Jesus’ opening question, “Do you love me more than these?”, the heart of the matter is the reality of one’s love for Christ, despite what he or she might say. We have seen this proven true in Peter’s own words, harkening back to Jn 13:37 and Jn 18. Peter is grieved because he remembers his three denials of Christ and that now, the Resurrected Lord wants more than simply words of affection, but rather, a true, self-sacrificing love from his disciple before he commissions him out into the world.
  - 2. Andreas Kostenberger – “*Perhaps at long last Peter has learned that he cannot follow Jesus in his own strength and has realized the hollowness of affirming his own loyalty in a way that relies more on his own power of will than on Jesus’ enablement. Likewise, we should soundly distrust self-serving pledges of loyalty toady that betray self-reliance rather than a humble awareness of one’s own limitations in acting on one’s best intentions (598, BECNT).*”
- C. Application:
  - 1. *Feed, Tend, and Shepherd* – The task that Christ lays before Peter is not one of simply preaching the Word with respect to “feeding” the sheep. To a further extent, Jesus has the entire shepherding responsibility in view here. We know this is true especially in light of John 10 where Jesus highlights his identity as “The Good Shepherd” and whose job consists of a number of roles such as being a watchman, protecting, tending to them, feeding them, knowing them personally, and even laying down his life for them. For one to separate the role of shepherd from teaching is to completely betray the kind of service that Christ has in mind. Shepherd is the title; feeding is only one thing among others, though very important, that a shepherd does.

2. “My” – Though it seems obvious, we must not miss the claim which Jesus makes regarding ownership of the sheep. These are his sheep. Those whom Peter will be tending to are Christ’s sheep and thus he is ministering to them on behalf of the Good Shepherd. (John 10; Ezek 34)
  3. Who are the Sheep? – John 10; They are the children of God who have been scattered abroad (cf. 11:52).
- D. How does Jesus’ commission fit into the Mission of Church theme in John 21?
1. The sheep in John 21 are those who will believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God and will receive eternal life as well as the right to become the children of God. Thus, we see that Jesus is preparing his disciples to go and search for his lost sheep and then to take care of them until he returns (cf. **11:52, “the children of God”**). Here we see that though it is one of the most important and fundamental tasks of the church, evangelism cannot be the only emphasis. Just as we have seen from John’s conclusion in 20:30-31, acceptance of the gospel is only the beginning; John 21 shows us what is supposed to happen as a result of belief in Jesus for eternal life.

### III. Follow Me

- A. What does “young” and “old” mean? This is figurative language for representing a time when Peter was free to do as he pleased and the coming time when he will be restricted, imprisoned, and martyred.
- B. Was Peter crucified? The terminology in this passage most definitely lends itself to being interpreted as a crucifixion (“stretching out of hands” was understood to reference a crucifixion). In addition, in John 13:36, Jesus says to Peter, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.” Then again in Jn 21:19, Jesus tells Peter, “Follow me.”
- C. “Follow Me”
  1. Walk on the beach?
  2. Discipleship?
  3. Journey to the cross?
  4. All three?
    - a) Each interpretation takes the meaning of Jesus’ words to a deeper level. With reference to the last one, now that Jesus’ “hour” has passed, Peter can follow Christ and go where he has already traveled, namely, to the cross.
    - b) All who follow Christ must be prepared for death (cf. **Jn 15:18-20; 16:33**).
  5. It is hard to imagine what it would have been like to live with the shadow of cross on your life like Peter. How can one endure? How can we live with hope and in joy a life that Christ says will be hated by the world? Here are three comforts and truths that we can draw from this scene between Jesus and Peter in Jn 21.
    - a) A Christian’s death glorifies God; it is not in vain, even in martyrdom.

- b) Christ is our leader; he has gone before us. He is not calling us to do something that has shrunk back from doing.
- c) Just as Peter stood before the Resurrected Lord who proceeded him in going to the cross, we also have the hope of eternal life and the final resurrection of our “lowly bodies”.