



PETER'S LESSON OF LOVE FOR SOULS

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Luke 22:31-34 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

John 21:15-17 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Jesus spoke to Peter and was readying him for the troublesome times ahead when Jesus would be crucified and the enemy would attack the disciples.

- Jesus' main concern was that Peter be there to strengthen the brethren.
- But Peter missed that entire emphasis and only heard Jesus speak of Peter failing.
- Peter's self-centeredness was so strong that he did not hear anything else Jesus said.

Jesus told Peter, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

- In order for Jesus to tell Peter that when he would be converted, he must strengthen the brethren, Peter knew that Jesus implied Peter would stray away from following Christ.
- The Greek word translated as converted is defined as turning back, or get back on track again.
- So Peter was going to go off-track.

Peter rose up and told the Lord that in no way would he turn away from Christ.

- In fact, we read in another gospel that Peter stated his dedication to the Lord being more than the other disciples.
- Matthew 26:33 Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.

We find that Peter, in fact, did turn from the Lord and denied him three times.

And after Christ rose from the dead, Jesus appeared to the disciples three times.

- During the third time, the disciples were waiting for Him in Galilee, as he had instructed them to do.
- During their wait they went fishing.
- Christ appeared at the seaside and they left to see Him.
- While Jesus gave them fish to eat, He asked Peter a question.
- "Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"
- Who were the "these"?
- Recall that Peter said that he would not forsake the Lord though all others would.
- Peter felt he would love the Lord more than the other disciples would.

- He was quite self-centered and self-exalted.

So Jesus asked Peter, after Peter did stray from Him, and did deny him three times, proving Peter wrong in his self-assessment, if in fact Peter did love the Lord more than the other disciples did.

- Jesus was putting Peter in his place.
- He was softly mocking Peter to bring forth a point to him.
- Remember that Peter missed the main point that Jesus was trying to give to him concerning strengthening the brethren.
- Peter was so self-concerned that he paid no heed to Jesus' words concerning the brethren to whom he would have to minister.

And the word **“lovest”** that Jesus used in speaking to Peter was the Greek word **AGAPE**.

- **AGAPE** is a word denoting choice-love, and a love of the will.
- It is the kind of love that one simply makes one's mind up to exert.
- We have heard of God's AGAPE love that loves us without expecting anything in return.
- And that is a very blessed love He has for us.
- But there is another angle that we are seeing in this kind of love when it comes to Peter and his situation.
- Peter was so self-involved that he made up his mind that he would love Jesus more than all the others would love Jesus.
- It was a will-love and a choice-love, but it was based upon self-exaltation and being better than the others.

So Jesus in effect asked Peter, “Do you still willfully choose to love me more than these other disciples?”

- And the word Peter uses in response is not AGAPE when he says, “Thou knowest that I love thee.”
- Peter used a completely different Greek word.
- That word is **PHILEO**.
- This word implies a more personal love than will-love and choice-love.
- It is more affectionate and personal.
- So Peter responded saying, “No, Lord. I do not simply will to love you more than others. But you know that my love is deeper and more personal. I have great personal affection for you.”
- Jesus said, “Do you agape me more than these?”
- Peter said, “I Phileo you.”
- And nothing was said by Peter about his love as compared to the other disciples' love for Jesus, as Jesus asked.
- Peter was changed.
- The self-exaltation was gone.
- He was truly humbled.

Then Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

- Jesus is getting Peter back to the main point that Peter missed to begin with during Jesus' warnings to him about straying, but the getting back on track in order to strengthen the brethren.
- Feeding His lambs is strengthening the brethren of Luke 22.

Once again Jesus asked the same question.

- We should note also that Jesus referred to Peter as Simon son of Jonas

PETER means ROCK.

- Peter was not acting much like a rock when he self-centredly denied Christ so as not to risk his neck.

Jesus says a second time, “Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?”

- He again used the word AGAPE.
- He was drilling Peter with this thought.
- He was making sure Peter saw his error.
- And once again Peter replied using the word PHILEO and not AGAPE.
- And in response to Peter's statement that he PHILEO-LOVED Jesus, this time Jesus says, “Feed my sheep.”

From lambs to sheep, young and old, Peter must replace his concern for himself and catch Jesus' burden to minister to souls.

- Souls are souls.
- Both young and old.

- And Jesus wants us to catch His burden.

Then something is very interesting.

- The third time Jesus again asks Peter this question He replaced the word AGAPE with PHILEO.
- He said, “Simon son of Jonas, PHILEO-LOVE me more than these?”
- It was as though He was saying, “Okay, you claim you do not AGAPE-LOVE me more than the other disciples You say you PHILEO-LOVE me. But let me ask you this. Do you PHILEO-LOVE me more than the other disciples?”
- “You say it is personal affection that you have for me. Fine. But is there still any grain of self-exaltation that will cause you to miss my point of feeding souls? Do you PHILEO-LOVE me more than the others? You were so proud and self-exalted that you missed my whole point that day when I told you to strengthen thy brethren. I must ensure you do not miss that point this time.. ”

And then we read this.

- “Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?”
- He was grieved that the third time Jesus asked him if he loved Him, that He used the word PHILEO.
- Peter was suffering rebuke from Christ.
- It was uncomfortable, but necessary.
- If Peter did not AGAPE-LOVE Jesus more than the others, but PHILEO-LOVES Him, it could be that there is still some better-than-thou attitude in him and perhaps Peter thinks that he PHILEO-LOVES Jesus more than the rest.

Peter responds saying, “Lord, thou knowest all things.”

- Peter was confessing.
- It was as though he said, “Lord, you knew me better than I knew myself. You could see right into my heart. You were right, I was so self-centered. But I really am changed. I PHILEO-LOVE you.”

It is interesting that Jesus called Peter “Simon son of Jonas.”

- Perhaps Peter had a father named Jonas, but we also see a spiritual note.
- The prophet Jonah was also quite self-centered.
- The reason Jonah ran away from his commission to preach to Nineveh is discovered in Jonah 4.

After Nineveh heard Jonah’s preaching and repented, we read Jonah speak these words to God.

Jonah 4:2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, *was* not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou *art* a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

In other words, Jonah wanted God to destroy Nineveh.

- He knew that Nineveh would repent and that God would forgive them and not destroy them.
- **Jonah had a lack of love for souls as much as Peter did!**
- He felt Nineveh deserved destruction for their wickedness.
- And even after he spoke these words to God, we read this.

Jonah 4:5 So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

He went to see what would become of the city.

- He felt that God would heed his words and once again choose to destroy Nineveh although he forgave Nineveh when they repented.
- So God set out to teach Jonah a lesson on the compassion of souls.

Jonah 4:6-8 And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

God prepared three things for Jonah.

- Reminds me that Jesus spoke three times the same basic question to Peter.
- He prepared a gourd, a worm and a hot east wind.

- The gourd protected Jonah from the heat, and then the worm destroyed the gourd.
- Jonah was in desperate heat again.
- And furthermore God sent a hot wind to make Jonah suffer more.

Then God spoke to Jonah again.

Jonah 4:9-11 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, [even] unto death. Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

God rebuked Jonah for his shameful attitude in having more compassion for a plant that came and went in one night, than for 120,000 souls.

- If Jonah could have compassion on a silly plant, should not God have compassion on these heathens in Nineveh who did not even know the right from the wrong.
- This shows us that God has compassion on the heathens.
- Nineveh did not simply rise in one night like the gourd did.
- It was a great city.
- Scores of Decades passed before the city became so great.
- God had to ensure that if Jonah be a prophet then Jonah have a compassion for souls.

Yes, Peter was a son of Jonah!

The words that follow Jesus' three questions are very enlightening when considering Peter's past misbehaviour.

John 21:18-19 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

Recall that when Peter denied the Lord, it was because Peter did not want to risk his neck.

- Peter was so full of self that the same self-concern that caused him to declare his love for Christ was greater than the other disciples, was the self-concern that caused him to want to save his own neck when confronted by those who questioned his association with Jesus.
- So now this issue of risking his neck arises again.
- Peter must preach the word and feed the sheep of God knowing that he will have to die for it!

Remember that Peter said this:

Luke 22:33 And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

He would follow Jesus and die for Jesus.

- But he failed to even follow Jesus when danger approached him.
- But now these two issues are brought up again by Jesus.
- Peter must follow knowing that he will die for it.
- Thank God that Peter was indeed changed!

1 Peter 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

Peter wrote in his own words concerning his ministry of feeding the lambs, the young, with the milk of the word.

Peter was so changed, as far as being self-exalted to not risk his neck and being self-concerned so as to not care about feeding the sheep, that we also read in his own epistle of his determination to preach the word and to feed the saints, knowing he must die for it.

2 Peter 1:10-15 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this

tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

He so much had lost his self-seeking desires that he told them that he desired them to be so entrenched in the truth that after he was deceased and gone in martyrdom that they would always keep these truths in remembrance.

Jesus got his point through to Peter, finally!

- Peter did gain the compassion for souls that Jesus endeavoured to give to him.
 - May the Lord likewise give us a compassion for souls and help us realize what the main point is all about!
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