

Loving Jesus

John 21:15-23

How do you feel after you know you've failed the Lord? (You know you have failed. I know I have... many times). So, how does it make you feel? Embarrassed? Ashamed? Worthless? Regret? Discouraged? Dejected?

Peter may have felt some of these things... He boasted he would lay down his life for Jesus (John 13:37). Yet he fled when Jesus was arrested. He bragged, "*Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended*" (Mt. 26:33). But he flatly denied he knew Jesus...three times. Later, instead of waiting for Jesus at Galilee, he went back to his old life as a fisherman. Yes, Peter failed... more than once and was grieved and convicted by it.

But **failure isn't final** with the Lord. Jesus confronts Peter to show him his failure didn't mean He was through with Peter. This confrontation was a defining moment in Peter's life. He was never the same afterwards.

I. **Loving Jesus will be DECLARED** (vs. 15-17).

A. Jesus was RECLAIMING Peter. He was not chastening Peter.

- Jesus did not ask Peter—"Why did you deny Me?" "How many souls have you won to Me?" "How much money have you given to missions?" "How many chapters of God's Word have you read?" "How often do you pray?"
 - Jesus simply asked, "*Lovest thou Me?*" **THAT** is the issue! [When was the last time you bowed before the Lord just to tell Him you love Him?]
1. Jesus was not asking for information (cf. John 2:24-25). Jesus knew Peter loved Him. Peter never stopped loving Jesus, although it didn't always look like he loved Him.
 - A married couple who sincerely love each other may have an occasional "spat." Peter got upset with the Lord about his sword (Mt. 26:52), but he never stopped loving Jesus.
 2. Jesus knew how Peter would answer. The question was asked to prepare Peter for Jesus command, "*Feed my lambs.*"

- B. Jesus was RESTORING Peter (Gal. 6:1). Jesus used Peter's answer to restore him into the ministry. Jesus still wanted to use Peter.
- Jesus is the God of the second chance (and third chance!).

II. Loving Jesus will be **DOMINANT** (v. 15).

➡ "**MORE** than these..." Was He referring to the other disciples (cf. Mt. 26:33)? Or, did Jesus point to the 153 fish in the nets? ["Peter do you love Me more than you love to fish?"]

- It really doesn't matter. What mattered was Jesus wanted Peter to love Him more than anything else in his life!

There has been a lot written about the two Greek words for love in our text—*Agape* [deep spiritual love] and *phileo* [brotherly, friendship kind of love]. Greek scholars claim if you don't know Greek, you'll miss the deeper truth Jesus teaching Peter—Jesus was asking Peter if he loved Him with *agape* love and Peter answered he loved Jesus with *phileo* love. However, the NT uses both these words *interchangeably* showing it really doesn't make any difference.

- John 3:35 says the Father love the Son (*agape*). John 5:20 says the Father loves the Son (*phileo*).
- John 3:16 says God loves the world (*agape*). John 16:27 says God loves us (*phileo*).
- Ephesians 5:25 says husbands are to love their wives (*agape*). Titus 2:4 says wives should love their husbands (*phileo*).

The issue is not what word was used. The issue is our MEASURE of love for Jesus—We should love Jesus more than anything. "**More Love to Thee**"

➡ The first and great commandment is to love God; the second is love your neighbor (Mt. 22:37, 39). Keep them in that order. You cannot properly love your neighbor if you do not love God.

III. Loving Jesus will be **DEMONSTRATED** (vs. 15-17, 19, 22).

➡ **Feeding** (vs. 15-17) and **Following** (vs. 19, 22).

“But Lord, I’m a fisherman. Sheep are dumb. Sheep are dirty. I don’t like sheep.”

“I didn’t ask if you liked sheep. I asked you if you loved Me?”

- Whose sheep? “*MY* sheep” (John 21:16, 17). The flock belongs to Christ. Pastors need to remember the flock does not belong to him. It is not their church but Christ's church.
- The flock is composed of both “*lambs*” (v. 15) and “*sheep*” (vs. 16-17). One speaks of babes and the other mature. Both require feeding and nurturing. Both need the Word.

A. Demonstrated by our WORKS — *Feeding* (1 John 3:18).

- Love and labor are joined at the hip. Our work for Him is a “*labor of love*” (1 Thess. 1:3). Because we love the Lord we labor for the Lord.
- The Bible knows nothing about the church member who sings, “*O How I Love Jesus,*” and sits on their haunches and does nothing for Him.
- Jesus said, “*He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me*” (John 14:21). “*If a man love me, he will keep my words*” (John 14:23).

➡ When a person loves God, you can tell it. 1 Cor. 8:3– “*If any man love God, the same is known of him.*”

- If you love someone, you try to please him.
- If you love someone, you will do things for him.
- If you love someone, you think about him.
- If you love someone, you desire to be in their presence.
- If you love someone, you brag about him to others.
- If you love someone, you will give to him (Luke 7:36-48).

One evening before Mary Martin was to go on stage in the musical *South Pacific* she received a note from Oscar Hammerstein, who was on his death bed. The note read: “Dear Mary, A bell’s not a bell until you ring it. A song’s not a song until you sing it. Love in your heart is not put there to stay. Love isn’t love ‘til you give it away.”

B. Demonstrated in our WALK — *following* (vs. 18-19, 22).

➡ This is how (and where) it all began 3½ years earlier when Jesus called Peter, “*Follow me*” (Mt. 4:18-19). Nothing has changed. Jesus still wants Peter to follow Him.

1. A **submissive** walk—“*Follow ME...*” Jesus is leading and you are following. You are no longer calling the shots. You go where Jesus leads you. It is all about Him.
2. A **simple** walk. The Christian life isn’t complicated. It is simply following Jesus. That is the meaning of discipleship.
 - You don’t have to **be in the lead**—Just follow.
 - You don’t have to **be recognized**—Just follow.
 - You don’t have to **be concerned** about what others are doing—Stay focused on Jesus and follow Him. Mind your own business! “*If I will... What is that to thee?*” Oh, how we need to focused on God’s will FOR US, and not God’s will for someone else.
 - The **places** you go... the **words** that you say... the **things that you do**... the **relationships** you build, should all be based on the premise you are following Jesus.
 - If someone asks, “Why are you here?” you should be able to say, “I’m following Jesus. He lead me here.”
 - If someone asks, “What are you doing?” you should be able to say, “I’m following Jesus.” If you can’t say that, you are probably doing something you shouldn’t be doing! Ask yourself, “Is Jesus leading me to do this?”

SUMMATION: Before Jesus said, “*Follow Me,*” He predicted Peter would die as a martyr (vs. 18-19). Peter had no hope of being raptured before he would die. Yet, he followed the Lord anyway knowing he would eventually give his life for the Lord.

Do you love the Lord enough to follow Him even if it means giving up something you love in order to follow Him?

“*Where He Leads Me I Will Follow*” (#350)