

## ***“What Is That To Thee?”***

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John 21:15-22

The scene is Jesus having breakfast with His disciples after His resurrection on the shore of Galilee. Jesus asks Peter three times, “*Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?*” (John 21:15-17). Each time Peter affirms he loves the Lord. Jesus follows up Peter’s answer with instructions to care for His sheep and lambs.

➡ Peter was very impetuous. One thing that often got Peter in trouble was his mouth—He would blurt out the wrong thing without thinking.

- On the Mt. of Transfiguration (Mt. 17:4).
- He rebuked Jesus when Jesus said He was going to be crucified.
- At first he refused to let the Lord wash his feet, then asked Jesus to wash his entire body.
- He boasted he would never deny the Lord and would die with the Lord. Yet later he cursed and swore he did not know the Lord.

Here in our text, Peter is at it once again. In verses 18-19, Jesus informs Peter would live to be an old man and then die as a martyr. Then Jesus says, “*Follow me.*”

Instead of following the Lord, Peter turns and sees John. He immediately sticks his nose in someone else’s business and asks, “***Lord, and what shall this man do?***” — “Jesus, You told me I’m going to be martyred, but what about John? What’s going to happen to him?”

Peter was like a lot of Baptists—Curious about God’s will for others, instead of following God’s will for themselves.

Jesus rebukes Peter’s nosiness, “***What is that to thee? follow thou me.***” In other words, “Peter, you are going to die for me. Don’t worry about John. My plan for John is none of your business. Even if he lives until I return, that does not affect what I want you to do. You follow Me!”

➡ Notice this three-fold application of Jesus’ question to Peter:

**I. It EXHORTS us.**

- A. Exhorts us to **focus on Jesus**. Problems start when you take your eyes off of the Lord to look at what others are doing.
1. You cannot “follow Jesus” while you are looking at someone else. Keep your eyes on Jesus (Heb. 12:1-2).
  2. God is not going to judge my service by what others do, or don't do. What others do or don't do does not excuse me from doing what God wants me to do. Romans 14:10-13—*“we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ... everyone of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another [or compare one another] any more.”*
- B. Exhorts us **against comparisons** (2 Cor. 10:12—*“But they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”*).
1. Beware of developing a **jaundiced eye** by comparing your service to another's service and surmise you are more spiritual than they are.

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Illustrated in the parable of the pharisee and the publican. The Pharisee compared his outward behavior to the sinful acts of the publican—*“God, I thank thee that I am not **as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.**”* While congratulating himself, he was oblivious to his own sins. Typical!

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2. It works the other way also. We want to make sure others are just as busy as we are serving the Lord. Martha was guilty of this when she criticized her sister Mary for not working as hard in kitchen as she was. This happens all too often among church members.
  - Why aren't they serving the Lord? *“What is that to thee? follow thou me.”*
  - Where was so-and-so on Sunday night? *“What is that to thee? follow thou me.”*

- Why don't they come to G.R.O.W.? *"What is that to thee? follow thou me."*
- Why are they playing with their cell phone and not paying attention to the sermon? *"What is that to thee? follow thou me."*
- Why doesn't God chasten him/her for what they are doing? *"What is that to thee? follow thou me."*

## II. It ENLIGHTENS us.

- A. **What was Peter thinking?** Peter looked at John—The disciple whom Jesus loved... The one who leaned on Jesus' bosom. Was Peter a little jealous? Did he think John was closer to Jesus than he was? Was Jesus giving John preferential treatment?
- Do you know what happened to John? Jesus previously told John he would be baptized with a baptism of suffering (Mt. 20:20-23). John was not going to escape suffering.

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Irenaeus, one of the early church historians, wrote about John from what he learned from Polycarp, who was a disciple of John. The God's enemies tried to poison John's drink, but God miraculously healed him. Later the wicked Roman emperor, Nero, had John thrown into a boiling cauldron of oil. Although John's skin was severely burned, he survived. Domitian sentenced John to exile on the isle of Patmos. Patmos was like a penal colony—Lonely, desolate, barren, uninhabited, seldom visited—A perfect place to silence John's preaching the gospel. But God had other plans—It was on Patmos that God gave John the Book of Revelation, where he did live to see the Lord's second coming!

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- B. This enlightens me because Jesus didn't say to Peter, "You want to know about John? Let me tell you about him. John is going to be poisoned... he's going to be put in a cauldron of boiling oil... he's going to be exiled. He's going to live a very painful and hard life." No, Jesus simply said, *"If I will that he tarry till I come,*

*what is that to thee? Follow thou me.*" Period. Knowing John's fate would not help Peter one way or the other!

1. You may be tempted to look at someone and say, "Poor me. I'm being crucified and they are cruising." But you don't see the trials that person may be facing. No one escapes suffering in life. We all have our heartaches and our hey-days... our desserts and our disasters... our merriments and our miseries... our celebrations and our calamities.
2. When we get to heaven, none of us will say, "Well, I really had it rough on earth... a lot tougher than some who lived on Easy Street." No, we will fall before the throne and say, "Lord, You are just and merciful in all your ways" (cf. Rev. 16:7).

### **III. It ENABLES us.**

- A. Peter and John had different temperaments and personalities.
  1. John was a thinker—meticulous. Peter was a doer—a go-getter.
  2. This can be seen when Jesus called them. Peter was busy casting his net (Mt. 4:18). What was John doing? He was mending nets (Mt. 4:21). They were both in the same business of catching fish, but each had a different job.
  3. Peter and John were very different in ministry, in mentality, and in personality. But, God used them both equally, just in different ways.

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Early in my ministry, I would sometimes get discouraged when I saw how God was greatly blessing other pastors' ministries while I was struggling just to keep my nose above water. God used this text to rebuke me— "Hughes, '*What is that to thee?*' [What if I choose to bless another man's work? I have a work for you to do, so, just do it! "*Follow thou Me.*"] God was telling me to focus on His will for me, and leave the ministries of other men to Him.

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- B. We are all members in the body of Christ and God has gifted each of us differently for different ministries. We do not compete with each other—We compliment each other!

**SUMMATION:** If we would take to heart Jesus' question to Peter, it would prevent many church problems. Proverbs 20:3, "*It is an honor for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling.*" We are commanded to "*do your own business*" (1 Thess. 4:11). **Peter learned his lesson.** He later wrote "*But let none of you suffer... as a busybody in other men's matters*" (1 Pet. 4:15).

How the Lord deals with other Christians is none of our business. Our responsibility is to look unto Jesus and run "*the race that is set before us*" (Heb. 12:1-2). Run in your own race—Stay in your own running lane! Or as Paul says, "*Take heed unto thyself...*" (1 Tim. 4:16). Again, "*Let every man prove his own work*" (Gal. 6:4). Follow God's plan for you, and don't worry about God's plan for someone else! They have their own race to run.

When you are looking at others, instead of Jesus, you are not following Jesus, but following after men.