

TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

John 21: 15-25: The Restoration of Peter to Fellowship with the Lord

"So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs."

16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep."

17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep. 18 Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."

19 This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."

20 Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?"

21 Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?"

22 Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."

23 Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?"

24 This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.

25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen."

Background Notes

Just a few weeks ago I stood on the shores of the Sea of Galilee near the site of Peter's restoration, at the "traditional" site where this event took place. We can't be sure of the exact location, but it was likely very close to that site.

In verse 15 the Lord asked Peter, *"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?"* What was the Lord referring to when He said "more than these"? More than the fish? More than the boat and the whole fishing business? More than the disciples? There are lots of different opinions here. I believe that most likely the Lord was asking him whether Peter really loved the Lord more than the other disciples loved the Lord. After all, at the Last Supper Peter had declared that even if all the other disciples forsook the Lord, he would remain faithful -- and then of course he went out and denied the Lord three times.

In verse 18 the Lord predicted Peter's martyrdom: *"Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."* There is reliable tradition in early Christian literature indicating that Peter was

crucified upside down. Why upside down? Because Peter said he was not worthy to be crucified in the same way as his Lord was crucified. The Lord's words seem to indicate that Peter's martyrdom would be by crucifixion. *"This He spoke signifying by what death he would glorify God."*

In verse 24 we read, *"This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true."* As we can see from the context of previous verses, by process of elimination we believe that this disciple who wrote the book is none other than John the apostle.

One more background note for this section. Some commentators have said that verse 25 is "hyperbole." Do you know what "hyperbole" is? You use it when you speak or write a purposeful exaggeration. Have you ever used the line, "I've told you a million times...." when you reprimand your kids?! Is that a lie? No -- it's hyperbole! It's purposeful exaggeration! So some have said that verse 25 is an instance of hyperbole in the Bible. However, this is not necessarily so. *"And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen."* This verse **could** be taken quite **literally**. After all, the Lord Jesus is the infinite, eternal Son of God. The world literally could not contain the number of books it would take to record, let alone describe, the infinite number of activities of the eternal Son of God.

Doctrinal/Teaching Points

1. The Good Shepherd restores the sheep.

In the first half of John 21 the illustration of fishing was used, speaking of evangelism. In the second half of the chapter the illustration is shepherding. This speaks of pasturing and restoration. One of the things that a shepherd does is restore the sheep, and here Peter was being restored. Back in John 18, Peter had warmed himself at the **world's** fire. Here in John 21, Peter was restored at the **Lord's** fire.

The Good Shepherd restores His sheep. Psalm 23:1-3: *"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. ³ He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."*

Peter had denied the Lord three times. Now the Lord asked Peter three times, "Do you love Me?" I'm sure some of you are aware that two Greek words are used here for love. This is most likely quite significant. Even though our Lord probably spoke to Peter in Aramaic, John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, captured here (in the Greek language) the essence of our Lord's conversation with Peter. In verse 15, the Lord used the word *agape* – a sacrificing type of love, a love that's more of the **will** rather than the emotions. Peter responded with the word *phileō* – the word for affection or brotherly love. Again in verse 16 the Lord used the word *agape*, and Peter responded again with *phileō*. Then in verse 17, the third time the Lord asks Peter "Do you love Me?", the Lord used the word *phileō*: "Peter, do you have affection for me? Peter, are you really my friend?" We read that Peter was grieved because the Lord was pressing him, and he responded, *"Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You."*

The restoration process is not always pleasant, but a good shepherd knows the best way to restore the sheep. Maybe you're a wandering sheep and you're in need of restoration. You can be sure that the Good Shepherd knows the best way to restore your soul. It may not be pleasant, but it will be the **best** way. Are you willing to let Him do it? That is the key! Are you willing to let Him do it?

By the way, verse 20 would strongly indicate that this was a private conversation between the Lord and Peter, since John was some distance away. It teaches us that, in the

restoration process, the Lord deals with us one on one. The Good Shepherd restores the sheep.

2. The Good Shepherd feeds His sheep.

Three times the Lord told Peter to take care of the Lord's flock: feed my lambs (v15), tend my sheep (v16), and feed my sheep (v17). The Lord would say the same to us. The Good Shepherd wants His flock to be fed and cared for, and He uses us to do the job. In that sense, we are all pastors and shepherds. If you're a Christian, you're both a sheep and a shepherd at the same time, and we're to follow the model of the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd feeds His sheep.

Do you notice here how feeding the flock is a test of whether or not you love the Lord? Three times: Do you love me? Feed my lambs. Do you love me? Tend my sheep. Do you love me? Feed my sheep. Do you love the Lord? Are you involved in feeding the sheep? Are you involved in teaching somewhere -- involved in feeding the flock? What about VBS or Sunday School? What about Bible studies? Are you directly involved or indirectly involved in feeding the sheep? Right here we see that feeding the flock is a test of whether or not we truly love the Lord.

Do you love me? Feed my sheep. The good shepherd feeds His sheep.

Practical Applications

1. Don't keep looking around at other believers.

After the Lord revealed to Peter that he would die as a martyr, Peter turned and said in reference to John, *"But Lord, what about this man?"* Jesus said to him, *"If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."* The Lord would say the same to us today: **"Don't keep looking around at other believers -- you follow Me!"**

Why is it that we always want to compare the way the Lord works with us with how He works with other believers? For example: "Why does the Lord let that other believer have more money than I have?" "Why does the Lord let that other ministry be supported more than the ministry in which I serve?" "Why does the Lord seem to bless that family more than ours?" "Why do I have more problems than brother so and so?" "Why do I always get sick and sister so and so is always healthy?"

The answer is simple: Don't keep looking around at other believers!

2. Make sure you quote the Word correctly.

In verse 22, in reference to John, the Lord said, *"If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."* Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, *"If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?"*

The early Christians misquoted the Lord: *"this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die."* Jesus didn't say that, and John had to correct the misconception that was spreading. Do you see the false doctrine that could have developed from misquoting the Lord here? A doctrine that John would live forever could be built from this misquote -- or that the return of the Lord had to be within John's lifetime, or that the Lord was not accurate in all His predictions. Do you see the problem? The problem was that they didn't quote the Word correctly! The Lord didn't say John would not die; He said, *"If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?"*

Make sure you quote the Word of God correctly. Sometimes incorrect quotes from the Bible can lead to incorrect ideas of what the Bible teaches --- for example, the misquoting of 1 Timothy 6:10, saying that "money is the root of all evil." True? No, that is a misquote,

and it could lead to wrong ideas about money. The verse actually says that the **love** of money is a root of **all kinds** of evil.

Quote the Word of God correctly! And don't quote as "Scripture" things that are not even Scripture at all, such as, "God helps those who help themselves." You have heard that one, right? Make sure you quote the Word of God correctly!