

The Final Days of Jesus
FROM FAILURE TO SERVICE

Friday, April 10

Reading: John 21:15-25

John 21:17 *The third time He said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love Me?" He said, "Lord, You know all things; you know that I love You." Jesus said, "Feed My sheep.*

Luke 24:34 and 1 Corinthians 15:5 mention a private meeting of Peter and Jesus that occurred on Easter Sunday. We are not told what was said in this meeting. It was probably such a personal meeting that Peter never talked about it. I believe it was during this meeting that the issue of Peter's denials was dealt with and forgiven. This would explain why Peter was so excited to see Jesus on the shore instead of being hesitant to face the Lord He had denied.

But there was another issue that needed to be addressed. After his denials, Peter probably felt that he was disqualified to serve Jesus. The first two times Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love Me?" the Greek word *agápē* is used. This is the word used for supreme love - the kind of love God shows. However, Peter does not use this word in his answers. He uses the word *philēō* which speaks of friendly or brotherly love (i.e. Philadelphia – "the city of brotherly love"). This exchange could be translated: Jesus: "Do you have supreme love (*agápē*) for Me?" Peter: "Lord, You know I have affection (*philēō*) for You." The old Peter would have boldly declared that he had the ultimate love for the Savior. But after his failure and restoration, Peter knew his heart and honestly admitted that his love for the Lord was not yet perfect.

The third question from Jesus grieves Peter because Jesus changes it to reflect Peter's answers. He asks Peter: "Do you have affection for Me?" Jesus has accepted Peter's honest appraisal of his love and Peter can only affirm that Jesus knows his heart ("You know all things"). Peter's attitude has changed. Gone are the big boasts! They have been replaced by an honest acknowledgement of his own shortcomings and need to grow. Because of this, Peter is just who Jesus is looking for to "feed My sheep." In all three statements, Jesus commissions Peter to be a shepherd while also reminding him that the sheep he leads belong to Christ. One day his love for Christ would give him the courage to face death, exactly what he had failed to do the night of Jesus' arrest. His death by crucifixion ("stretch out your hands") would bring glory to God. He only needed to focus on following Christ with his whole heart.

LESSON ONE: "Do You Love Me?" Failure does not mean Christ cannot use us for His glory! Peter realized his love for Christ was far from the perfect love Christ had shown him. This did not disqualify him for ministry. On the contrary, it was necessary to be the kind of leader Jesus could use for His glory. Before we can be useful servants of Christ, we must acknowledge our need to grow. How strong is your love for Christ? In what areas of your life do you need to grow?

LESSON TWO: "What About Him?" After hearing about his future, Peter asks about John's future. Jesus tells him not to concern himself with the task He has given someone else. His task was to follow Jesus. We do not compare our service with that of others. We glorify God by serving in whatever capacity He has given us. In what areas has God called you to serve? Are you serving with all your heart for the glory of God?