

**JOHN 21:15-17**  
November 14, 1993  
**ROME GEORGIA**  
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A famous **king**, depressed by circumstances in his realm and feeling rejected by many of his subjects, called for his **three daughters** to comfort and reassure him. After they had talked a while, he asked how much they loved him. Two of them answered that they cared for him more than all the gold and silver in the world; but **Mary, the youngest, said she loved him like salt.** The king wasn't pleased with her answer, for he considered salt to be of very little value.

The cook, who had overheard the conversation knew that the child's reply had more significance than the father imagined. She dared not speak to the monarch about the matter but devised a subtle way to emphasize the true meaning of the young girl's words. The next morning at breakfast, she withheld the salt from everything she served, and the meal was so insipid that the king didn't enjoy it at all. Then he realized the full force of his daughters remark. **SHE LOVED HIM SO MUCH THAT NOTHING WAS GOOD WITHOUT HIM!** With a smile he said, "I understand now Mary. Your love is the greatest of all."

Is our love for our Lord Jesus such that we are willing to sacrifice our greatest treasure for the Lord? Is our life so centered upon Christ that nothing is really good without Him?  
*DB Jan. 6. 1975.*

*(I was walking around the city of Bruges in Belgium and marveled at the antiquity of a 600 year old city. But – it was no big deal for me. I needed "my love" there with me . . . (interestingly enough, when I looked up the proper spelling of Brugge, I saw a video of the very courtyard where I stood when I thought these thoughts. )*

**Jesus once spoke to Peter on the matter of his love for Him. (John 21:15 ff.)** He did so in a setting and in a way that stirred Peter's remembrance of a painful experience. (his triple denial of Jesus)

He began by **addressing Peter in a way that Peter was not accustomed to** - it was the way that Jesus addressed him when he first called him - "**Simon son of Jonas**"

We spoke of that occasion **two weeks ago** when we recounted the story of Andrew bringing his brother Simon to the Lord.

*Cf. Jn. 1:42* And *Andrew* brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, **Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called **Cephas****, which is by interpretation, A stone.

Here, apparently, **Peter** must have felt as though he were back at **square one** of the playing board of life.

**Once again** he is fishing,

once again the Master comes,  
once again he is called - "Simon son of Jonas"

But this is not a [call of commitment](#) - nor a [call for belief](#) - nor yet even a [call for discipleship](#).

**It is a call for the CONFIRMATION OF LOVE.**

- Peter **didn't need** to be **saved again**.
  - He **didn't need to boast** of his **undying commitment** to Jesus –
    - **what he needed was to lay to rest once and for all the stigma of failure that hung over his soul.**

For all that Peter possessed in his relationship to the Lord, **he had failed and had fallen - but he had not escaped the Love of the Savior.**

Jesus here gives Peter an opportunity to **CONFIRM his love** and to demonstrate the reality of that love.

To fully understand the conversation in [John 21:15-17](#) we need to **look back just a few days earlier** to the **evening** which led up to the **arrest** of Jesus.

[Matt. 26:30-32](#) and [Luke 22:31-34](#)

**And when they had sung an hymn, they went out** into the mount of Olives.

**31** Then saith Jesus unto them, **All ye shall be offended because of me this night:** for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. **32** But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

**Luke 22:31** And the Lord said, **Simon, Simon,** behold, Satan hath desired *to have you*, that he may sift *you* as wheat: **32** **But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.**

**33** And he said unto him, **Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.** **34** And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that **thou shalt thrice deny** that thou knowest me.

Convert = ἐπιστρέφω *epistrephō* *ep-ee-stref'-o* **to revert** (literally, figuratively or morally): - come (go) again, convert, (re-) turn (about, again).

**NKJV – returned to me.**

It is interesting to note here that **JESUS DID NOT PRAY THAT PETER WOULD NOT FALL-**

WHAT JESUS PRAYED FOR WAS THAT PETER'S **FAITH FAIL** NOT IN SPITE OF HIS FAILURES.

**AND PETER HAD indeed FALLEN.**

"Do you truly love me more than THESE? Jesus is probably referring to the other disciples who had been gathered in the upper room. After all, they had heard Peter's strong affirmation of his total commitment to the Lord.

**"Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. . ."**

Peter said in effect, **no matter what others do - I will never fall away**. But yet, he had fallen away, he had **thrice denied his Lord**.

John 18:17-18 , (**fire of coals**) 25 , 27 .

John 18:17 Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also *one* of this man's disciples? He saith, **I am not**.

18 And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a **fire of coals**; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and **Peter stood with them**, and **warmed himself**.

25 And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, **Art not thou also one of his disciples?** He denied *it*, and said, **I am not**.

26 One of the servants of the high priest, being *his* kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?

27 **Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.**

Luke 22:61 **"and the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.**

And PETER REMEMBERED THE WORD OF THE LORD . . .

And now, (**John 21:15, cf. 21:9**) around another **FIRE OF COALS**, Peter is **once again under the gaze of the Lord**.

The maids and guards at the trial at Caiaphas' house had desired to know who Peter was, and if he was a follower of Jesus.

There, **before witnesses**, Peter had three times denied that he even knew the Lord.

**Jesus here asks again about the identity of Peter and his affiliation with the Lord!**

(the identity of a believer is his love for the Body of Christ - **John 13:35**

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, **if ye have love one to another.**"

Peter had boasted of his love for the Lord. He had been proud to say that he would follow him to death - **yet when the time came to demonstrate the power of his commitment, he failed miserably**. (Note: Peter's death would have served no purpose at the trial of Jesus.)

Peter had been a **PROUD MAN** - and in his pride he had forgotten

Proverbs 16:18

**"Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a FALL.**

Paul would later remind us all of this principal again in

I Cor. 10:12

**"Wherefore, let him that think he standeth TAKE HEED LEST HE FALL."**

Self-confidence is a characteristic of the flesh - not of the spirit. Paul clarified this for us in

II Cor. 12:9-10 "Most gladly therefore will I rather **glory in my infirmities, THAT THE POWER OF CHRIST MAY REST UPON ME.** Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: **FOR WHEN I AM WEAK - THEN AM I STRONG"**

Paul also reminded us that:

**It is not "I" but "Christ" who liveth in us.** Galatians 1:20

We are more than **conquerors THROUGH CHRIST** - but it is **only THROUGH CHRIST that we are conquerors.**

**ROMANS chapter 8** BEGINS AND ENDS WITH US IN CHRIST

**8:1** *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

**and 8:38-39** For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, **39** Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But it is important that we realize (as Peter eventually did) that even though we are **in Christ** - even though we are **more than conquerors** - **we can still fall.** And when we fall - there is chastening at hand.

Heb. 12:6-11

**For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. . . .**

**Jesus spoke directly to Peter** to allow Peter **the chance to CONFIRM his love** to the Savior. He wanted all who witnessed this to see that Peter was **restored to full fellowship**, and apostolic standing. **He was not useless or unprofitable in the kingdom of God because he had fallen!**

**WHY? Because Jesus prayed for Peter.** Do you remember that Jesus specifically told Peter that He would pray for him that his faith fail not?

**Luke 22:32** But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren

How could Peter have forgotten these words of Jesus?

More importantly, Do you think you could forget it if Jesus had told YOU that He would pray for you?

**John 17:20** neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."

**THAT MEANS YOU AND I**

Jesus prays for us even as He prayed for the apostles. He knows that we will fall. But he knows also that he is able to lift us up again. And to do so in such a way so as to make us able ministers of the gospel.

Three times Jesus asked Peter to CONFIRM his love - three times he told him to "Feed" my lambs/sheep.

NOTICE: They are "Jesus' Lambs, Jesus' sheep." They belong to the great shepherd. We are the **under shepherds**.

We are to "FEED" the sheep. Two words used for FEED.

βόσχω *bosko* *bos'-ko* A prolonged form of a primary verb (compare G977 and G1016); to *pasture*; by extension to *fodder*, reflexively to *graze*: - **feed, keep**.

ποιμαίνω *poimaino* *poi-mah'ee-no* From G4166; to *tend* as a shepherd (or figuratively *supervisor*): - feed (cattle), rule.

One word means to provide food and pasture - the other means **not only to provide food and pasture** - but also **TO LEAD AND DIRECT - TO DO THE WORK OF A SHEPHERD**.

**FEED MY LAMBS.**

Well Has The Poetess **Isabel Gray** Written:

Some would gather money - along the path of life;  
Some would gather roses - and rest from worldly strife.  
But I would gather children- from among the thorns of sin,  
I would seek a golden curl - and a freckled, toothless grin.  
For money cannot enter in - that land of endless day,  
And roses that are gathered - will soon wilt along the way.  
But o the laughing children - as I cross the sunset sea  
And the gates swing wide to heaven - I can take them in with me!

**FEED MY LAMBS.**

APPLICATION TO ALL BELIEVERS - (BY PETER HIMSELF).

**I PETER 5:2** "FEED THE FLOCK OF GOD WHICH IS AMONG YOU . . . "

COMMUNION – Have you failed – then confirm your Love for the Savior via confession. He will restore you to full fellowship.

**1Jn 1:9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

*I read an article just this week about Church Growth in Canada. The fastest growing churches have **Modern Music – and strong theological teaching.***

*Our nation's failures will not be laid at the feet of the politicians – but at the feet of those who fill her pulpits.*