

Do You Love Me? - 2

by Anton Bosch

The sermon emphasizes the importance of loving Jesus and highlights the significance of Jesus' question to Peter, 'do you love me?'

Scripture: Isaiah 6:1, Matthew 25:40, Mark 14:29, Luke 7:47, John 21:15, Acts 9:5

Topics: "Humility In Ministry", "Love For Jesus"

Description

Anton Bosch preaches on Jesus' interaction with Peter after his denial, emphasizing Peter's journey from overconfidence to humility and the importance of genuine love for Jesus in ministry. Jesus' repeated question to Peter challenges him to acknowledge his human weakness and rely on God's strength. Peter's shift from claiming divine love to admitting brotherly love signifies a deep spiritual transformation in his heart. The sermon urges listeners to prioritize their love for Jesus above all else, emphasizing that ministry should flow from a sincere love for the Lord.

Transcript

The fact that Jesus asked Peter three times "do you love me" (John 21:15-17), is probably connected to his thrice denial of his Lord. Jesus challenged Peter specifically, because Peter was the one who in his usual impetuous manner, said: "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not" (Mark 14:29). Jesus called him Simon son of Jonas, a name which He had only used on two other occasions. First at Peter's calling in John 1:42 and second after Peter's inspired confession as Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:17). At both Caesarea Philippi and here on the beach, Jesus was reminding Peter of the fact that Peter was just a man and the son of a man. It is a great comfort that He does not expect us to be super-human. He reminds Peter that he is human and that an integral part of being human is being weak. This is not an excuse to continue in sin, but when we do fail, the loving and gracious Shepherd seems to understand our frailty and gives us yet another opportunity to be restored.

In the first two questions Jesus asked Peter whether he had agape (divine) love for Jesus. Peter replied that he had philio (brotherly) love for Jesus. On the third occasion Jesus asks him whether he had philio love. Many readers have missed the real point of the different words and frowned on Peter because he only had a second-rate love. But the fact that Peter confessed to philio and not agape love is indicative of a deep spiritual work that had taken place in Peter's heart. Before the cross Peter would no doubt have responded; "of course I agape You - what a question". This would have been Peter's natural reaction just like he said "all will forsake you but I will never".

The very fact that Peter uses the word philio shows evidence of a man who had come face to face with the weakness of his flesh. After denying his Lord the third time, it is recorded that Peter went outside and wept bitterly. To me, this was the changing point in Peter's life. Peter was changed because he, probably for the first time in his life, saw how weak he really was. Thus the Peter at breakfast with Jesus is no longer the brash super-confidant Peter, but a broken, humbled man - one who knew that he could not claim agape, but simply philio love.

Do you still feel confident in your ability to stand by the Lord, to agape Him and to follow Him even, when others are weak? Or will you like Paul, rather glory in your weakness, realising that it is only when we are nothing that His strength can be made perfect in our weakness. This lesson cannot be learnt in the comfort of the church but this reality only dawns on us as we weep before the Lord in the loneliness of failure and disaster. It is sad to say, until we have come to this point, our praises, words of commitment, and promises of fidelity are empty words, untested by the fire of persecution and temptation.

As a result of Peter's confession, Jesus commissioned him. Jesus was not waiting for the perfect response, all He wanted and still wants is a real and honest response. On the strength of Peter's honesty He entrusted lambs and sheep to Peter's care. It would be good for us to ask this same searching question of all who would seek to exercise a pastoral, elder's or shepherd's ministry today. Before someone is commissioned to any kind of ministry we should make sure they are qualified. And while skill, theological knowledge, people centeredness, giftedness and training are all very important qualifications there is one qualification which supersedes them all. It is simply this question: "do you love Me?" A man can have all the gifts, skills and abilities in the world, if he does not love Jesus first and foremost, then he is disqualified from any and all ministry.

Peter was to demonstrate his love for Jesus by caring for the sheep. This is because whatever we do to the church, we do to the Lord. Saul was persecuting the church, but Jesus said that he was persecuting Him (Acts 9:5). Jesus said "...inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me..." (Matthew 25:40). It is impossible to truly love Jesus and not put that love into practice by loving the saints. But, again, if our love for the brethren does not flow from our love for the Lord first, it is dead works and of no value.

May I ask you that same question? Do you love the Lord Jesus. Is He number one in your life? Can you truly echo the words of the song "take the world but give me Jesus"? If you had to choose the one thing or person for which you would be willing to trade everything and everyone else - would your choice be Jesus?

Maybe you recognise that you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ first and completely. And maybe you are waiting for some emotional experience that will grip your heart or maybe you are looking for the initial infatuation you had with the Lord, to somehow return. I think you are wasting your time. Love is a decision and we need to choose to love Him first and to love Him most of all.

One of the reasons people do not love Him as they should is because they don't know Him. They have a romanticised view of Him based on sentimental choruses and shallow preaching. When we truly get to know Him, as He has revealed Himself through His Word, we cannot help but love Him. When we begin to understand His great grace in saving us and understand that we were wretched and miserable and bound for hell without him, then love has to be the only reasonable response. But we don't love Him because we often, in our arrogance, think that we deserved being saved and that we contain some goodness that was

worthy of His death. But that is a lie. We need a fresh understanding of God's great plan of redemption in order to return to our first love.

Jesus said that those who have been forgiven much will love much. We have all been forgiven much, it is just that we don't realise how much and how great the price was that Jesus paid on the cross. Only when we allow the Holy Spirit to reveal these great truths to us through the Word, can we begin to get a grasp of God's great love towards us. When that begins to happen, we will not be able to help but respond in deep love and appreciation for such great grace, mercy and love.

See, from his head, his hands, his feet,

sorrow and love flow mingled down!

Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,

or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,

that were a present far too small;

love so amazing, so divine,

demands my soul, my life, my all.

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