

The Four Questions of God Part Three - Two Questions From the New Testament

by John Follette

The sermon explores the themes of obedience, love, and restoration through Peter's encounter with Jesus after the resurrection.

Scripture: Matthew 4:19, John 21:10-15, 1 Peter 5:2

Topics: "Obedience To God", "Sacrificial Love"

Description

John Follette preaches about Peter's struggle with obedience, unbelief, and self-will when Jesus calls him to leave his fishing enterprise to become a fisher of men. Despite Peter's initial disobedience and lack of faith, Jesus patiently guides him back to obedience and reinstates him with a command to feed His sheep, emphasizing the importance of sacrificial love and devotion in serving others.

Transcript

I can't spare myself for the sake of people in a single thing. Why? Because of people. Peter does not think of that.

What is it? And they said, we go also. How many of you get it right away? We will go along with you.

He didn't ask them. You don't have to, your attitude draws them. Do you get it? Your attitude will draw them and they go along with him too.

Now listen, listen. Jesus has called him away from this fishing enterprise. He said so. He called him out from among that group and said, I will make you a fisher of men. I want you with me in this new spiritual economy that I am establishing. I want you. There is potential in you that I can get a hold of if you will ever let me. Now, you leave these nets, leave that alone. You see, he is now in disobedience because Jesus has called him away from this vocation. He is in unbelief rather than in faith. He is in unbelief because his faith will not carry him, he slinks back in unbelief and even in disobedience. So he

says, one thing I can do. I can fish. So away he goes in the boat.

Now, he can rationalize this. See, I am in the will of the Lord. He has provided a boat for me and my friends are all with me, going to get right in the boat with me. Now how delicious that would be. And let us sail. No. No. All the boats in the world will not correct your disobedience or your lack of faith.

That is a substitute - something that you rest in - because you don't want to say, I can't stay put. So he goes out to fish. How long does he fish? An hour or two? No, he fishes all night. Well, it is always night then. Isn't it always night when you go out like that? Don't make you night too long beloved.

The Lord would like a morning. Yes He would. He longs for the sun to break. He longs for the daylight to come. But you persist in holding on to your night. A lot of people do that. I meet people all the time that are in night. I wish God - well, you won't let Him come! I wish the sun would shine in my soul - He wants the sun to shine in your soul, but you won't let Him. You prolong the dark night.

So, he fishes and fishes and fishes. And he tries all the little tricks of the trade. He tries them all, he knows them all. Do you ever hear people trying to bless themselves? I think one of the most hopeless things I have ever seen is a person trying to bless themselves when the Lord doesn't bless them. Well, they know the certain techniques that if they do certain things they can stir up a certain emotional reaction which is purely physis, but they don't know it. And finally they say, hallelujah!

Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh, and God is not within a million miles of it. Well, I am going to bless myself if God doesn't bless me. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, glory to God, glory to God. I believe that it is coming soon now. Glory, a real peak! Sure you can. I know lots of people bless themselves because they don't know what it is all about. Isn't it nice to be dumb sometimes?

They say, let the ignorant folks alone, where ignorance is bliss, tis folly to be wise! But I would rather be wise if I fell down, wouldn't you? Sure, be wise and fall down and get up again and go on.

So, they fished all night. Well, don't you thin the Lord knows about that. The Lord knows so much about it that He is down on the shore waiting, longingly to contact them if He only could. But they keep dabbling around in the boat, in the nets and everything and he says, aren't they tired yet? Aren't they tired yet? No, No, let's try once more. Now, let's fast and pray. Now let's get everybody to pray. Now let's fast 72 days and see if it won't work. No, it won't work dear. None of that works. None of that

stuff works.

The only thing works is to come to the conclusion that you haven't got any fish and that is a terrible conclusion to reach. That was the question which the Lord asked. Did you get any fish? He knows all about those fish. Is He asking for information? Why He knows every nail in the boat and every scale on the fish. He isn't asking for information at all. What is He doing? The little principle that I put up here the first lesson - a question asked provokes an answer - the answer becomes the platform upon which the blessing is released. He will ask you, you answer the question, and the answer makes a platform and upon that, he will pour a blessing.

Now, he doesn't start rebuking them. That would be fatal. Well, I hope you are satisfied now. You have been out there fishing all night. Will you believe me now? They all know, let's go back out, farther out; I don't want to go near him. How many know you drive them right away from the Lord. You know people are like that. That is why God can't deal with all people alike. He does this so gracefully, tenderly, artfully. How this conversation turns. The conversation is so delicate and so beautiful. So he says, did you catch anything? In other words, now you have had your fling in self-will, unbelief, and disobedience because you would not stand still until faith could be built up in you to bridge this gap. I am going to bring you into this thing. I promised it, but can't you wait a day or two, can't you wait until I can come back and work with you? Can't you wait until I pour out my Spirit upon you and this whole thing will take an entirely different swing, because it will be like a pivot upon which the whole thing will change? Can't you wait with me? Can't you watch with me one little hour? Flesh never can, it can't do that.

That is the way we are made until we come to a place in God where we say, Lord, for heaven sake deliver me. That is the way we are.

Now, you have had your fling. What did you get out of it? Did you catch any fish? I know people - in the work today - preachers and ministers who are enacting this all the time. Some of them come to me for advice and council. I know people today who are yet fishing because they don't have faith and courage and restraint that they say, by thy strength Lord, by thy grace.

You have had your fling. Did you get anything? No, of course. Nothing. To make a confession and

look up to God and say, you know it anyway Lord. No, I didn't. I did not get one fish. Oh God, help me. This gives God the greatest chance in the world that lovely opportunity. Well, what does he say? Well, now, act in obedience. Cast your net on the right side of the boat and you shall find. They had cast their net in unbelief and disobedience. Now, they are going to cast their nets in faith and obedience because God has spoken to them. The Lord has spoken. Now get this - people think you have to have a change of environment and a new fresh set up, an entirely new program to get the thing going. No, you don't. You stay in your same little ole boat, in the same water, and there is the same fish and the same net. The set up is exactly identically the same thing.

There is only one thing that makes a difference. Now, in obedience, you are still in the same boat, most people say, I want to get in another kind of a boat. No, it is the same boat, the same water, these are the same fish that couldn't possibly get into the net, they were swimming around there, he didn't make anything new in the situation at all. You want everything changed. A new sort of a change someway. No, stay right in your same ole plug. You who have been praying so long to have another boat. Stay in your own boat. Act in obedience.

Even though He slay me, yet will I trust Him, yet will I stay put. I refuse to go fishing. Well, here is a boat? The devil has a whole fleet of them. Stay put.

After he had answered them, "As soon as they were come to land, they say a fire of coals there and fish laid thereon and bread. Jesus said unto them, bring of the fish which you have now caught. (Don't be too interested in this miracle that I made having some fish here, but let us deal with the thing that you have caught. Let's get what you have found. What have you discovered? Let's work with that. I can make plenty of fish, but I would like to deal with the fish that you have caught. You would have been obedient with me until you have produced this lovely effect in life, in your spirit, in your moving, in your living, let's deal with that.)

Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, and hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus said unto them, come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him who art thou knowing that it was the Lord.

They are not going to come out with a big confession, don't worry. They are going to be masked as

long as possible.

This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead. So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

The beauty of this thing has been absolutely ruined because of the poor words in your translation. This was spoken originally in Aramaic. It was put over into Greek, then from Greek it is put over into English. So, you have to go back to find out what Jesus said to him. It used to bother me because I thought it was one of the funniest little verses that could possibly be, loveth thou me, yea Lord thou knowest that I love thee. Feed my sheep.

I used to think that was such a funny thing. What in the world was he talking about? Loveth thou me..... Of course, I let it go for years because sometimes you have to let things go for years before you get any light on them.

So finally, I got some light on it. I want to share that with you. Now the beauty of this whole conversation is in the subtle lovely hidden way in which he handled the proposition. Do you notice he asks him three times concerning his love and devotion? Loveth thou me? Why? Well, the beginning of this chapter tells you. After these things, Jesus brings them this dramatic picture. After what things? You will never understand why this takes the flare that it does, unless you find out its antecedent. After these things, Jesus has this little episode with them. How many commence to see something? All this little drama reverts to something which has happened before. After these things, well then, what are they? Well, I will tell you. Three times, Peter has declared his devotion and love to Jesus. Three times. In every time, he measures it by the law of love and death and surrender and all though all forsake you I will - the extravagant testimony of Peter - I wouldn't forsake you Lord for the world.

I will die for you. Oh, will you? Tomorrow afternoon at 2:00 o'clock you will be so ashamed of your lying and swearing that you will want to hide your face. But I won't tell you that just now Peter.

No, three times he has declared his love to the Lord. Now in your Greek text, we have two words for love. Both are translated love, love, but not in your original and not the way he is spoke it. In your original, agapao and Phileo. Agapao is your stronger word. It is not an emotional word. Phileo is an emotional word. Phileo is, I am very fond of you. I love you in the sense that you are very dear to me. You are very precious to me. I love you. It is an emotional word. It is less than agapao.

Agapao is the strongest word that we have to express love. Why? Because the word agapao in your Greek is the word that expresses love measure by sacrifice even unto a death. It doesn't say, and God loves the children on earth so dearly that he gave his son. He did not say that. He said, God so loved the world, agapao, that he gave his son. How many see a sacrifice was included instantly. You can't use your word agapao unless it is measure by some law of sacrifice. It is a sacrificial word. Love in its strongest form that is only measured by a law of sacrifice, even unto death. That is agapao.

Now when Jesus talks to this man, I want you to see how very clever he does this? How very sweet he is in it. So he says to Peter, Peter, loveth thou me more than all these? And he is talking to these other disciples? What word does he use? Agapao. The word that Peter had used - I will die for you - agapao. All right, do you really love me more than these other disciples? What is his answer? He is beginning to crack. He is beginning see the light. How does he answer him?

Yea Lord, I Phileo, thou knowest I am very fond of you. How many see a difference? See how clever that is? Yea Lord, thou knowest that I am very fond of you; you are very dear to me. All right, he says. He speaks a very first thing of his lambs. Feed my little lambs. You know why? Taking the child when he is young, you cannot do much with an old sheep, but you can do something with a little lamb. His first concern was not with those old sheep. You have all your patterns fixed; your philosophy is all settled. Your reactions are all established.

He has three classifications of the people to be fed, and two words that he uses for their feeding them. Graze and feed. To graze means the shepherd has to pay attention to the food which is distributed. The shepherd has to go ahead and find the place where these little lambs and sheep may feed. It depends on

the shepherd - God's woe is never upon his sheep. His woe is always upon the shepherds who lead the sheep. It is a very dangerous thing to be any kind of a leader with people.

I never sought it; He had to bring me into it. I try to be faithful. He has taught me never to thrash my sheep, but to feed them. For me to thrash you, where is your faith! How many know that will never feed you in God's word.

So he says, Peter, agapao, loveth thou me? Yea Lord, thou knowest that I am very fond of you. But that is not what he asked him. He didn't ask him that. But Jesus doesn't mind, he rides right over it. Now you take care of my lambs, because a lamb is a potential sheep.

That is why young people should be taught now. You now our young people should be taught not after they have skipped five, ten or twelve years and then come back and want to retrace it. I am giving truth here that every teenager ought to have to start with. It is not too heavy.

All the people I should love to reach, they are never around. There is always something going - there is a boat out there for them. I get used to it. It is rather disturbing in my spirit because I don't think it is the way.

So he says, graze my lambs. That means, the shepherd has to take the responsibility of the food, of the drink, of the culture, of the care of that little lamb, because he can't do it himself. And he puts that burden on him.

So, he turns again and says, Peter, agapao again? He is going to rub it in you know, gently. How many know he has a way of pressing things in very gently. How many know the Lord can kill you with kindness? I have had him be good to me when I say, Lord, why don't you thrash the daylights out of me. He says, I don't want to, I love you. I could hardly take it. Because he has a technique with us.

So he says a second time, agapao - loveth thou me? Poor Peter, he is getting it for sure. He looks up and says, yea Lord; thou knowest thou art very dear to me. He can't quite reach the peak you see.

Well, feed my sheep. That is about all we can do with them anyway, give them something to eat. There is fixation in them already. I can't do much with them.

So he tries him a third time. Now Peter, you precious dear Peter, now Jesus comes down to where Peter is because he can't bring Peter up to the place where he dares to say it again. So Jesus says, well

really Peter, am I very dear to you? Are you really fond of me? And Peter says, oh Lord, you just know everything. Just broke him all to pieces. Yes Lord, you just know everything. That is right. Now, graze again, graze my little sheep. Those who are between the lamb, the little sheep and the sheep. Milk, Meat, and strong Meat! How many get it? Sure, that is all hidden in there. So, he reinstates Peter beautifully. Do you think those disciples listening in got the drift of that whole thing? Don't fool yourself. He is dealing with Peter and now he is telling him to go and do this and everything, doesn't he know what Peter is? Reinstating him now and giving him authority and a command to feed the people, oh dear! Do you suppose the Lord really knows?
end.

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