

## PETER AND THE RISEN LORD.

– JUNE 16, JOHN 21:4-17. –

**Golden Text – "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." – John 21:17.**

IN addition to the special teachings of these several narratives of the Lord's appearance to his disciples after his resurrection, which were, first, to convince them of his resurrection; and, second, to convince them of his change of nature, which teachings we have noted in previous lessons, we would here call attention to the thrice repeated question of our Lord to Peter – "Lovest thou me?" – and Peter's reply, and his renewed commission to preach the gospel.

Thrice had Peter denied the Lord – though under extreme temptation – and the denial was sincerely repented of with bitter tears; and now thrice would the Lord have him reaffirm his devotion to him, and receive three additional assurances of his ample reinstatement in his love and favor.

"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.'"

The question arises, With what did our Lord bring himself into comparison in Peter's mind when he said, "Lovest thou me *more than these?*" Could he have referred to the other disciples present on that occasion? We think not; for the Lord had no disposition either to embarrass Peter and the others with a tone of sarcasm, nor to inspire nor encourage boastfulness. And Peter's prompt affirmative answer indicates nothing of either embarrassment or boastfulness, but instead, a loving sincerity, which was glad of the opportunity to respond

promptly and warmly [R1824 : page 136] – "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

With what then did the Lord institute the comparison? Evidently with the fishing tackle and the business prospects represented in them. Once, in obedience to the Lord's call, he had left these to follow him; and then, in the interval of perplexity since his resurrection, not knowing what else to do, he had gone back to the old business. So the Lord inquired how he felt about it now, since the reproach of the crucifixion. It was as though he had said, Are you willing again, Simon, in the face of all the public prejudice and hate and the reproach of the cross to leave all your business and social prospects and go out again to preach the Kingdom of God and the return in glory and power of the crucified One? Are you willing, too, to incur the additional reproach and persecution which zeal and faithfulness in my cause are sure to bring?

Yes, Peter was ready, and so were all those dear disciples, again to forsake all and take up the cause of their crucified and risen Lord, and boldly and openly to proclaim the coming Kingdom and glory of him whom the Jews had taken and, with wicked hands, had crucified and slain. Only the doubt which seemed to be implied in the third repetition of the question grieved Peter. His was an ardent, warm nature, and he wanted the Lord to be fully persuaded of his love and zeal. It grieved him, therefore, to feel that possibly yet there was a shadow of doubt, a little cloud, between him and the Lord which his repentance had not fully removed. But the Lord quickly removed the cloud and enabled him to realize his full reinstatement as an accepted and beloved disciple, in full fellowship and cooperation with himself.

The question thus addressed to Peter – "Lovest thou me more than these?" is the question addressed to every consecrated follower of the Lord, without a single exception. If we have given ourselves unreservedly to the Lord, the necessities of his work are before us, to prove the sincerity and strength of our love. Nor has the reproach of

the cross yet ceased: indeed, in this end of the age, as in the beginning, the reproach of the cross is bitter and determined; and it is more and more so every year as prominent ecclesiastics lead the way toward the ditch of open and avowed infidelity. So to each of us comes the testing question, "Lovest thou me *more than these*" – more than the business pursuits and prospects, more than the social ties and pleasures, more than ease, or comfort, or friends, or fame, or wealth, or a good name, or any earthly good?

Ah! it is truly a test question, and a question which no one can sincerely answer in the affirmative who has not the inspiring incentive of love in the heart. But pure, fervent love to Christ does quicken zeal, and enable those who have it to respond gladly and promptly, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee," and sends them forth with joy to prove their love by their works. "If any man love me, let him take up his cross daily, and follow me." "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." "The servant is not greater than his lord: if they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace." "Feed my sheep; feed my lambs."

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