

Peter 3 of 10

What Is That to Thee?

#0377

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—August 2, 1969

Here we are in the 21st chapter of John. Jesus is showing Himself to His disciples on one of these occasions after the resurrection.

You remember that Peter and the other disciples had decided to go on a fishing trip. Their future, as I say, was very uncertain at this time, in their eyes. They were poor, and they needed something to put in the treasury. Things were pretty slim. Naturally, they turned to the line of work that they were best acquainted with, which was what? Fishing. So Peter said, "I am going fishing." So these others said, "All right, we'll go with you."

Well, they worked all night, but they didn't catch a thing. Poor luck, somebody would say, but this was all in God's providence.

But as they were coming in from the night's work, there on the shore in the distance they saw a lonely Figure. And Jesus looking at them coming in said, "Children, do you have anything?"

"No," they said, "We don't have a thing, haven't caught a thing."

And He said, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship and ye shall find."

So they did what He said, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

This, of course, recalled vividly to the mind of Peter the miracle that three years before Jesus had worked in a similar situation. You remember that early in the experience of Peter in his work with Jesus, Christ had suggested that they launch out into the deep and let down the net. And Peter said, "Even though we have toiled all night and caught nothing, at Your word, we will let it down." Luke tells us about that in Luke 5.

Back there, there was a great draft of fishes that filled the net. And here again, three years later, the miracle is repeated. This all came vividly to the mind of Peter. And John said to the other disciples, "It is the Lord," 17th verse. "That's Jesus there on the shore." He recognized Him.

You know it's interesting these pen pictures of different men that we get in the Bible. You read on here, and you get the picture of Peter, energetic, quick to react. As soon as John said it was the Lord, he threw off his outer coat, and jumped into the sea—he couldn't wait for the boat to get to shore—and he *ran* to Jesus.

Well, when they all got there, they found a little fire there on the beach and fish and bread. Jesus had fixed breakfast for them. You know I've thought of it, friends, the loving care of Jesus for individuals. There the Lord of glory, in His resurrected body, He'd already been to Heaven the morning of His resurrection and received the acceptance of His Father, the adoration of the angels; He had all power in Heaven and in earth, and there He is fixing breakfast for a few poor, weary, discouraged men on the beach there at Galilee.

And remember dear ones, He thinks just as much of you as He did of them. Yes, He does. He loves to do things for us. He loves to go out of His way to do things for us. And He did for those men back there. Let's trust Him. What do you say?

So, Jesus said in the twelfth verse:

"Come and dine" John 21:12.

They knew it was He, and He gave them bread and fish.

So in the 15th verse, after they had eaten, Jesus said to Peter with the other disciples there, "Simon, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes Lord," he said, "You know I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Feed My lambs."

Then in the 16th verse, the second time He asks him, "Do you love me? Do you really love Me?"

And I imagine that Peter was hanging his head a bit, as Jesus asked him the second time, "Do you love Me?"

But he said, "Yes, Lord, You know that I love you."

He said, "Feed my sheep."

The 17th verse, the third time now Jesus comes right back to it, "Oh Simon," He says, "Do you love me?"

John in writing it, says Peter was grieved because Jesus had asked him now three times. But how many times had Peter denied the Lord? Three times. And now three times he's given the opportunity of *affirming* his love, his faith, his loyalty. But he says humbly, "Lord, Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love Thee.

Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep."

You know it is a wonderful thing that the Lord let Peter back in. Who let him out? Peter let himself out. Think of it. Peter denied that he was one of Jesus' disciples. He denied that he knew the Lord. And in a sense, he certainly was telling the truth. He didn't know the Lord, did he? No. He'd let himself out. He had

abandoned the Master in the crisis hour. And the pain of it was *still* torturing his heart. As Jesus was asking those questions, it was like probing a wound that was already deep and painful. But all this was necessary, wasn't it?

You know, friends, we do almost anything we can to keep from being embarrassed. But Jesus embarrassed Peter there in front of the other disciples, didn't He? Wasn't it embarrassing? But he needed it, and in after years, he appreciated it.

There's an expression in the world about losing face. Had Peter lost face? He sure had. That isn't the worst thing that can happen to us. Our pride needs to be crucified if God's going to use us. And if something happens either through our own fault, or whatever the cause, that causes us to lose face, lose our reputation, never mind. If we'll be humble and lie low at the feet of Jesus, God has something for us to do, my friends.

Now, Jesus is saying to this man who has failed so miserably, who has denied his Lord with cursing and swearing, He's saying to the repentant Peter, "I've got a job for you. There's something I want you to do for Me. I want you to feed My lambs and feed My sheep. I want you to be an undershepherd. I want you to be My helper."

I say, Peter, in spite of his embarrassment and his pain at those three questions of Jesus, still there must have been deep in his heart an appreciation for the Master in giving him once more a job to do. Don't you think so? Oh, yes.

Well, then Jesus began to tell Peter something about, not only his future work, but the end of the journey, his death by crucifixion. The 19th verse says:

"This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God" John 21:19.

Peter, you remember, was finally crucified as his Master had been. And he made one request. He felt that to die as his Master had would be too great an honor, and he asked that he be crucified upside down in token of his sorrow and repentance and humility.

So when Jesus had told him this, He said to him, "Follow Me." Now, again, we see something harkening back to that miracle by Galilee three years before. What had Jesus told Peter and John and Andrew and James that morning by the sea of Galilee when the first time He filled their nets with fish? What had He told them? "Follow Me, and I'll make you become fishers of men." And here again, Jesus speaks to him and says, "Follow Me."

Oh friends, as far as I know, and I believe it is so, this was the last fish that Peter ever caught. Three years before, he had left his fishing boats and nets and gone with the Master. Now, for a brief interval he's been catching fish. But this time Jesus says, "Follow Me," and Peter gets the full import of it, and thank God, he never faltered from that time on.

You know sometimes in this work that is so precious to you and me, we see that men come into it and drop out, come in and drop out. But we must not be discouraged with men. Like Peter, there may be a great destiny for them, a great work for them. We want to echo the words of Jesus to Peter, "Follow Me."

"Ah, but we already invited him, and he came and he left."

"Never mind," Jesus says, "Follow Me, follow Me."

Keep sharing the invitation.

Apparently, at the time Jesus spoke these words in the nineteenth verse, He was walking down the beach with Peter. Peter and the Master were walking side by side, perhaps arm in arm. And I see them there in the early morning walking along the shore, and Jesus is telling Peter about his future work, his life, and his death.

Ah, my friends, I believe there's many a time if you and I, in the early morning would take a walk with Jesus, there are things that He would like to share with us as He shared with Peter that morning.

Well, now notice. Here again we see Peter, the individual, blurting out what's in his mind. What does he say? Peter, turning about, sees somebody following. Who is it? Well, it's John.

"Peter seeing Him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?" John 21:21.

Yes. "Lord, You've been telling me about my work, now what's John going to do? You've been telling me about my future, what's John's future?"

"Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me" John 21:22.

Oh, what a lesson. Could Jesus have answered Peter's question? Could He have told Peter, and John too listening, what John's future would be? But He didn't say a word. He just said, "Even if I will that he tarries until I come, I've already told you, Peter, that you're going to die. But even if my wish is for John to live until I come, what is that to thee?"

"Oh, but I'd like to know."

"Well, never mind. Follow thou *Me*."

This is the lesson that I'd like to have us meditate on especially this morning, friends. Even the repentant, converted Peter needed to learn this lesson of, shall I say, minding his own business. That's the way we'd put it, isn't it? Just mind your own business. And there are three reasons I'd like to give you this morning why this is good counsel.

In the first place, every moment we spend, like Peter, wondering about this man's work, his duty and so forth, is that much time lost from doing what? Our own business. We have our own row to hoe, our own garden to weed, our own kitchen to work in, our own work for the Master to do. The enemy seeks to divert us. And if he can't divert us with things out in the world, he may divert us by an undue curiosity concerning the duties of others, an undue concern with how they're doing that work. He knows that thus he will *distract* us from our own responsibilities. In driving, it's important to keep my eyes where? On the road.

There's a second reason. If Jesus has told me, "Follow Me" (that is, follow Jesus), the only way I can follow Him is to keep looking to Him. And if I start looking at someone else, I may follow them.

There is a church, you know, that claims to be built on Peter. And I am afraid some have followed him in his failures instead of in his successes. Did the Lord give Peter as a pattern to follow? Or John, or any human being? We have just one Pattern.

There is great danger, my friends, in work where we're associated closely together in becoming so influenced by some human being, this one or that one or the other one, that even though we learn many excellent lessons, we copy their failures. And every human being has weaknesses that it's fatal for us to copy, right?

There's a third reason that Jesus doesn't want us to be unduly concerned with what others are doing. Just as there is danger of our worshiping them, shall I say, by looking at them, there's also danger of our criticizing them. One danger is on one side of the road; the other is on the other side of the road. The middle of the road is to just keep looking to Jesus, straight ahead.

Frequently we are involved with the same individual in both of these extremes. The very man that today we're ready to do anything for, tomorrow we may be ready to give him a kick as we find that he's made of mud just like other human beings. Look how it is in the political world. A man may be way up there today. His Gallop pole may be running high. Everybody thinks he's doing a wonderful job. But tomorrow, watch it; they're ready to kick him out.

So, my dear friends, in turning our eyes off Jesus, we either unduly praise men or else we criticize them, condemn them, find fault. The answer all the way through is just what Jesus said to Peter:

"What is that to thee? *Follow thou Me*" John 21:22.

Now, we were studying yesterday morning about not taking the sword. And what sword especially did we study? The tongue. Jesus said to Peter, "You'd better put that sword up. You'll get hurt. If you use the sword on others, you're going to get the sword on yourself. Not only that, My Father can take care of things. And not only that, this must be, and you mustn't interfere."

The question was asked yesterday morning, and I promised to answer it this morning. What about the sighing and crying that Ezekiel speaks of in the ninth

chapter of his book? It's plainly stated there that the only ones who will get the seal are those that do what? Sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the land. How can we sigh and cry for the abominations that are done in the land and still not be critical and faultfinding?

Well, my dear friends, the two are not incompatible. In fact, the only way you can succeed in one is to do the other. The sighing and crying is a sign that our hearts are knit with Jesus in sorrow over sin. And I want to tell you something, friends, if we're really sorry about sin, we're not anxious to talk about it.

When somebody comes and says: "Oh, did you hear what so and so did?"

"Why no. What did they do?"

"Oh, they did this. They did this. They did this."

Believe me friends, whether that individual knows it or not, he may not even be conscious of it, deep down in his heart there may be something that really is feeling, "Oh, I wish I could do that and get away with it." That's why the Bible says:

"Thou that judgest doest the same things" Romans 2:1.

God looks at the motive.

No. If we are really sorry for sin and we sigh and cry before God in prayer about it, we'll want to keep the knowledge of it in as small a circle as possible.

Let me illustrate it. Here are a father and mother and several children. Something happens in the home. Maybe one of the children has been disobedient and has had to have a spanking. Suppose the other children run off to the neighbors and tell all the other children about the spanking that Johnny got. Is that a good spirit?

"Well, what did he get a spanking for?"

"Oh, he wouldn't do what Mother told him to."

No. If we have love, we will do what? Let's turn to something Peter wrote over here in 1 Peter 4:8:

"And above all things have fervent charity [love] among yourselves: for charity [love] shall" 1 Peter 4:8,

Do what?

"Cover the multitude of sins" 1 Peter 4:8.

Can you cry and sigh about something and still want to cover it? By all means. That's why you want to cover it. You're sorry, you're ashamed for Jesus

that anything wrong should be in your family, in the church. And so the spirit of sighing and crying and the spirit of covering sin through love's sake go right together.

Let me read you something very interesting on this:

"In this world we shall become hopelessly perplexed, as the devil wants us to be, if we keep looking upon those things that are perplexing; for by dwelling upon them, and talking of them, we become discouraged. In criticizing others because they fail to manifest love, we shall kill the precious plant of love in our own hearts" *Our High Calling*, page 246.

Think of it, friends. Here's something going on, some trouble, some problem. Some people aren't being loving. They're criticizing one another. And if I get to criticizing them because of their criticizing, I'll do what to the plant of love in my own heart? I'll kill it.

"Let us fear to dwell upon, to behold and talk of the great mistakes that others are making by not manifesting love to their brethren and sisters" *Ibid*.

So, my dear friends, we can sigh and cry over sin, any sin that we see in others, or in our own hearts. We can get down on our knees before God and sigh and cry—I was going to say, as long as we want to. There's no danger, friends, of doing too much of that. But I'll tell you this, the more we will in secret prayer plead with God over the sins of the church, the less we will want to get up from our knees and go out and publish to the world, or even to our brothers and sisters, the mistakes that others are making. I *repeat*, the two things go together.

Now this morning, let's have prayer again as we did the other morning in which a number take part. Wouldn't you like to do that this morning? Let's ask God to help us to learn the lessons that Jesus taught Peter. Shall we do that?

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