

## ***This Week in the Word***

*Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Ps 119:89.*



v

### **Follow Me** **Study Scripture: John 21:15-25** **Lesson 7 April 14th, 2018.**

#### Key Verse

*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.*

John 21:15

#### INTRODUCTION

Peter is generally regarded as the most prominent or leading Apostle of Jesus. We have a very complete and detailed picture of Peter, vastly more detailed than that of any other apostle, excluding Paul. We have such a rich picture of Peter that we can learn a lot from his conduct, the way Jesus dealt with him, and chart the change in his personality and behaviour.

A look at Peter's life shows us clearly that God can use an uneducated, unlettered, and often uncouth individual, prone to violence and aggressiveness, sensitive to anything that he perceived as adversely affecting his interests, and transforming that life into the model servant of God, completely dependent on God, obedient to his word, and therefore now willing to suffer all kind of abuse and ill- treatment in the service of his master.

Peter is a perfect illustration of the typical kind of person that God normally calls into his service. The warts and weaknesses may vary among persons, but the basic status of the kind of people who are called is very similar. The Apostle Paul stated this fact in 1 Corinthians 1:25-29, that God's power and wisdom makes that of the world pitiful. He states:

***“ For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; And the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things which are, That no flesh should glory in***

***His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God-and righteousness sanctification and redemption-that, as it is written, “ He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.”***

It is very instructive to look at the personality of Peter, how he behaved, how Christ treated him, how Christ transformed him, and then look at the kind of personality that resulted. Let us begin by looking at how Peter came to be associated with Christ. Right from the outset, there is much we can learn about his personality and the behaviour we can expect from him in future.

This will assist us in understanding our own personalities, and weaknesses. We can then look at how God wants to change us, and how he has been acting to change us, to make us over, into the kind of persons that he wants. Let us never forget that the parts of our personality that cater to the flesh, and which are contrary to the fruits of the Spirit are not acceptable to God, and will never be acceptable to God. We must be changed. This necessary change is most urgent, especially if we are in leadership, or aspire to leadership. The foolishness of the flesh will never be acceptable to God. Let us therefore not deceive ourselves. We must learn as Peter did, that love must stand at the foundation of everything we do. Anything that is not done in love and because of love has no value at all.

### **HOW PETER CAME TO CHRIST**

Peter was a Galilean fisherman, originally from the city of Bethsaida. He and his brother Andrew worked together as fishermen in partnership with James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

Galileans were generally simple, rural people, of little education, considered to be rough and impulsive. Their social status was not very high, and their education was such that nobody felt that any good could come out of that area.

The possession of two fishing boats in the partnership would not mean that they were well-off financially at all. These boats would not be large ocean-going crafts, but would be small boats that would transport fishing nets, and from which the fishermen would throw these nets, and collect the catches trapped in the nets.

The Gospel of John tells us that Andrew, Peter’s brother, and John himself, (a likely inference), were disciples of John The Baptist. When John the Baptist pointed out Jesus as the “Lamb of God” in other words the “Messiah, they followed Jesus to see where he was residing, and conversed there with him. (John 1: 25) Andrew then found Peter his brother, told him that he had found the Messiah, and then brought Peter to meet Jesus. (1:42) On that occasion Jesus changed Peter’s name to Cephas, a word which means ‘a stone’.

After Jesus began his Galilean ministry preaching “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17), Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee where Peter and his brother Andrew were fishing. Jesus used their boats as a platform from which to preach. They had toiled all night and had caught nothing. Frustrated, they had beached their boats and were washing their nets. The story is told in Luke 5:1-8. After he was finished preaching Jesus told them to go out onto the sea and launch their nets. The loquacious and irrepressible Peter made it clear to Jesus, probably with some scepticism in his voice, that he had been trying to catch fish at the best fishing time, but had been unsuccessful. Nevertheless, though the best fishing time had passed, he would take Jesus' word for it and obey him, launching another fishing trip.

When Peter and Andrew threw out their nets, they immediately caught so much fish that the nets began to break, and they had to urgently summon their partners in the other boat to come and help them. James and John came, but both boats were so full with fish that they began to sink. Astonished at this catch, Peter, not the other disciples-to-be, fell down at Jesus' feet, and declared that he was not worthy to be in Jesus' holy presence.

Jesus was kind to Peter, and did not drive him away, but accepted his confession of his sinful nature, telling him not to fear, for he would from thenceforth do the work of God, namely, catch men.

Immediately, all the partners brought their boats and catch to land, left their goods and occupation and followed Jesus as his disciples.

Peter, as well as his other partners were thus personally called by Jesus to become fishers of men. They clearly recognized and now accepted Jesus' distinctive authority and status as Messiah.

Now they would begin their training. Their exposure to him would build up their confidence in the truth that he was Messiah.

We can begin to get a good picture of the kind of man that Peter was. He was clearly impulsive, outspoken, rough around the edges, not afraid to speak up, show his feelings, show his humility without fear of mocking, and show his intense feelings and regard for Jesus.

We can therefore now move-on to trace Peter's personality development. Now in our Study Text it is as if the similar pattern of behavior among the disciples would still show itself.

Mark 1: 29 and Matthew 8: 14-15 gives us another interesting insight into Peter's personality. These passages tell us that Peter was a married man, who housed his mother-in-law in his own house. We presume that he saw nothing wrong with that arrangement. Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law and she recovered her strength immediately, so that she could right away serve him and his followers. This miracle of healing would have reinforced Peter's faith in Jesus.

### **PETER'S POSITION AMONG THE DISCIPLES**

Peter's name heads every list of the Twelve in the Gospels. There were many followers or disciples, so-called because they were of course learners or apprentices. Out of these, Jesus chose and commissioned twelve as Apostles. These Twelve had moved from the stage of disciples or followers, who in that status, were merely learning the elementary things of God's word, or the first principles of the kingdom. Now they had graduated, and were given authority, sent out as ambassadors and proclaimers, that Jesus was the Christ, the anointed One, the Messiah of Israel, and the promised heir to the throne of David. Matthew 10: 1-42 and Mark 3: 14-16 records Peter's name first at the time of commissioning as Apostles. See also Luke 6: 14-16. Peter seemed to have been the strongest individual in the group and certainly the most outspoken and impetuous. He was the first to volunteer to walk on the water to Jesus. (Matthew 14: 28). He was not afraid to test Jesus' claim to be Messiah, and thus who would have control over nature.

But then, the impetuous Peter had to learn a lesson in faith and complete dependence on Jesus, keeping his eye always on Jesus and away from focusing on circumstances, which seemed overwhelming and threatening.

When Peter stopped exercising faith, and allowed fear to take over his mind, he began to fail, and he was forced to call out to Christ to save him. He had not yet learned, that trusting in natural forces and considering the strength of the blowing winds, and at the same time worrying at the unnaturalness of walking on water, was incompatible with relying on faith.

He should have relied on God's power over the world, an unnatural power-to overcome natural forces. His failure now forced him to come to rely on God's power, and he experienced Jesus' power to save him from the forces of nature that he had feared.

Peter also was the one who asked Jesus the logical but awkward question of how often he should forgive his sinning brother; following Jesus' teaching on forgiveness which seemed to give a brother an open license to sin and cause difficulty for others.

Peter was not afraid to ask Jesus to explain himself, when the disciples were worried about Jesus giving offence to the Pharisees by his teaching on following the tradition of the Elders. See Matthew 15: 1-20 and Peter's request in verse 15. Peter did not fear to ask Jesus for explanations for things that he did not understand.

When, as recorded in Matthew 16: 13-23, Jesus asked his disciples who men said he was, a rather leading question, and the disciples repeated various rumours, forcing Jesus to put the question personally to them, Peter was the one who immediately confessed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God.

Jesus then declared that it was his Father in Heaven that had directly communicated this truth to Peter. He blessed Peter for this confession.

But almost immediately after this direct revelation from God, Peter listened to the communication of Satan, and spoke words that were clearly against God's will.

It is difficult to imagine it, but Peter actually, boldly rebuked Jesus, the Son of God, for stating that he would shortly go to Jerusalem, suffer many things and be killed.

Clearly Peter did not understand the mission of Jesus properly. He did not want to understand it, for he was caught up in the political, glorious power trip that his nation expected from the Messiah.

The strong Peter could be influenced by Satan in a moment of pride and weakness to say foolish things. He thought he could depend on his own strength, but this weakness made him fall.

Peter certainly could display bad judgment. On the Mount of Transfiguration, in his unclear mind, he wanted to equally honour Moses, Elijah, and Christ. See Matthew 17:1-13.

Luke 9:33 when discussing this incident, comments that Peter did not really understand what was happening, and did not really know what he was saying.

Note though that this was a growing leader, with lots of weaknesses. The important thing about Peter was that he was chosen by Christ.

### **PETER IN THE INNER CIRCLE**

Peter was a part of Jesus' inner circle. Matthew 17 shows that he was in this small group of three disciples who were given revelation and information not given to the rest of the Apostles.

In a Capernaum incident, we learned much about Jesus' attitude toward paying taxes and dealing with government. In that city the tax collectors came to Peter questioning whether Jesus would pay taxes. Peter told them that Jesus would pay.

Jesus had to teach Peter that though as Sons of the Father they were technically exempt from taxes, they would pay the taxes to avoid the tax collectors stumbling, through violating their mandate to collect given by their superiors. Jesus gave Peter instructions on what to do and he obeyed. Matthew 17:24-27. Peter was impetuous, but he learned from Jesus, and was obedient to him.

When the rich young ruler went away sorrowing and the disciples were shocked at Jesus' teaching on the difficulty of the rich being saved, Peter piped up that they, the disciples, had left all and followed Jesus. He questioned what their reward would be for so doing. Matthew 19: 16-13. Because of Peter's fearless questioning, putting into words what others feared to ask, we learned much about how the faithful followers of Jesus will be rewarded. (Vs. 28-29)

Here then we have the picture of a lowly fisherman, not very educated, but called to discipleship and the Apostolic position. He recognized who Jesus was, committed himself to him, and left all to follow Jesus. He was most willing to serve his Lord.

Clearly he was prominent and occupied a position of leadership. But he was impetuous, and always spoke his mind. He was sure of his strength, and the unshakable nature of his commitment to Jesus. He thought he understood what Jesus meant whenever he taught, and sometimes he was mistaken.

But he certainly showed strong leadership qualities, and always stood up first, asking questions, going where others would not tread, saying things, proposing actions, and standing ready to act.

He was always placed first on the list of Apostles. He accepted his appointment as an Apostle, and a member of the inner circle around Jesus.

Note that Jesus understood Peter. He knew his weaknesses, but he knew what was in him.

Peter stands in total contrast to Judas, who was greedy, basically hostile to Jesus, and the will of the Father, seeking primarily earthly glory and money.

Peter stands as a complex character, a man of action, certainly making mistakes, but committed under all circumstances to Jesus. Or so he thought.

Peter's leadership was unquestioned, but note carefully that it was a flawed kind of leadership. It had many weaknesses. This leadership misunderstood many things, and would quarrel for power and position with the other disciples.

We must not think that the restoration of Peter involved restoring him to a similar flawed position. His restoration was one that involved his heart personally, teaching him what was important to God, and then directing and commissioning him to do his work from correct motives, a correct understanding of himself, and a correct understanding as to where his power resided. This did not involve him being any less or any more a leader, for after his personal restoration, he continued to stand up boldly for God.

Our lesson today looks at how Jesus saw him, how he dealt with his weaknesses, and how he transformed his life. These events would reshape him into a complete "vessel of honour", and those

unbelievers with whom he came into contact would marvel at his boldness and fearlessness. His speech was authoritative and his actions straightforward.

He may not have been educated, being “unlearned” and “ignorant” according to the standards of the world, but he had a willing heart, totally inclined toward Jesus, and he had been and always had remained in heart “with Jesus”.

### THE TEXT

**Verse 15.** Try to imagine the scene before us. The resurrection had been established. The disciples had been commissioned and told to meet Jesus in Galilee for what they would think would be a final intimate meeting. All of this small group of fishermen would be preoccupied with thinking about how they would survive when Jesus had left them. Now Jesus would have to deal with one final thing, namely, Peter’s denial of the Lord and enhance his status as an Apostle. Consider that Peter would be under a cloud since news of his denial would have circulated among the disciples. He would need a special word from the Lord. The other disciples would also need this special word from the Lord.

We are dealing with Christ's discussion with Peter after the dinner. Verses 15 to 20, take a deep look at Peter and his relationship with Christ from the time of his denial of Christ to this moment, and some unresolved emotions as it relates to Peter's journey towards the kingdom of God.

Verses 15 to 17 look closely at Jesus Christ’s charge to Peter concerning Peter looking after Christ’s flock. This is an important lesson for believers in general, but even more so for leaders, to understand the charge and responsibility that Jesus Christ has put before them, as He did with Peter.

Christ begins to examine Peter and all of these demonstrations of love he has shown throughout his life to Him and the Kingdom of God, and also gives him a charge concerning his flock. When Christ entered into this discourse with Peter, it was after they had dined. They had all eaten, and were filled, and, it is probable, were entertained with discourse common to that which Jesus had done in the past. Christ foresaw that what He had to say to Peter would give him some uneasiness, and therefore would not say it till they had dined, because it is good practice to not discuss unpleasant and disturbing things until after dinner when people are comfortable.

Peter was certainly conscious that he had incurred his Master’s displeasure, and could expect no other than to be upbraided for his treachery and ingratitude. "Was this thy kindness to thy friend? Did not I tell thee what a coward thou wouldest prove?" No doubt Peter thought that he might be struck out of the roll of the disciples, and to be expelled from the sacred college. Twice, if not three times, did Peter see his Master since his resurrection, and he said not a word to Him of it. We may suppose Peter was full of doubts upon what terms he stood with his Master; sometimes hoping the best, because he had received favour from Him in common with the rest; yet not without some fears, lest the chiding would come at last that would pay for all. But now, at length, his Master put him out of his pain, said what he had to say to him, and confirmed him in his place as an Apostle.

He did not tell him of his fault hastily, but deferred it for some time. Luke 24 tells of a private meeting but there obviously was more discussion to come. Remember also the angels had told the women visiting the tomb of Jesus *“Go and tell his disciples, and Peter”*, Jesus choose a time and

place that would serve to enhance the token of reconciliation which He would direct towards Peter, and in so doing then he talked with him about it, not as with a criminal, but as with a friend.

Peter had reproached himself for it, and therefore Christ did not reproach him for it, nor tell him of it directly, but only by a tacit intimation; and, being satisfied in his sincerity, the offence was not only forgiven, but forgotten; and Christ let him know that he was as dear to him as ever. Herein He has given us an encouraging instance of His tenderness towards penitents, and has taught us, in like manner, to restore such as are fallen with a spirit of meekness.

**Verses 16-17.** In the discussion Christ asked Peter three similar questions,, the same question was asked three times. The same answer three times returned, and the same reply three times given, with some significant but little variation, and yet no vain repetition. The same thing was repeated by our Saviour, in speaking it, the more to affect Peter, and the other disciples that were present; it is repeated by the evangelist, in writing it, the more to affect us, and all that read it. Peter had denied Jesus three times before a charcoal fire and now before a charcoal fire Peter had to face what he was really like.

Three times Christ asks Peter whether he loves him or not. The first time the question is, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? We should heed how Christ calls him: Simon, son of Jonas. He speaks to him by name, the more to affect him, as Lu. 22:31. Simon, Simon. Scholars tell us that the name Simon meant 'weak' and 'unstable', and in light of that Jesus gave him a new name Petros which meant 'rock'. He does not call him Cephas, nor Peter, the name he had given him (for he had lost the credit of his strength and stability, which those names signified), but his original name, Simon.

*Lovest thou me more than these?* First, Lovest thou me? If we would try whether we are Christ's disciples indeed, this must be the enquiry, Do we love him? But there was a special reason why Christ put in now to Peter. Firstly, his fall had given occasion to doubt of his love:

The question from Jesus was "*Peter do you agapeo me?*"

Note that there are two main Greek words for love used in the New Testament. One term is *agapeo*, which means as one writer states:

**"to love with intent and purpose, the kind of love of intelligent purpose that is willing to sacrifice itself for its object. And then there is the word *phileo*, from which we get the word Philadelphia, for example, brotherly love, which is a word that lays a great deal of stress upon the emotions, upon the affections"**

Both are genuine kinds of love but some like to think one is deeper and more important. Now note Jesus Himself not only said He *agapeo* us but He also said He *phileo* us.

Jesus kept using the *agapeo* word in His questions and Peter kept relying using the *phileo* word

"Peter, I have cause to suspect thy love; for if thou hadst loved me thou wouldst not have been ashamed and afraid to own me in my sufferings. How canst thou say thou lovest me, when thy heart was not with me?"

We must not reckon it an affront to have our sincerity questioned, when we ourselves have done that which makes it questionable. The question is affecting; he does not ask, "Dost thou fear me? Dost thou honour me? Dost thou admire me?" but, "Dost thou love me? Give proof of this.

His function would give occasion for the exercise of his love. Before Christ would commit his sheep to his care, he asked him, Lovest thou me? Christ has such a tender regard to his flock that He will not trust it with any but those that love Him, and therefore will love all that are His for His sake. Those that do not truly love Christ will never truly love the souls of men, or will naturally care for their state as they should; nor will that minister love his work that does not love his Master. Nothing but the love of Christ will constrain ministers to go cheerfully through the difficulties and discouragements they meet with in their work, 2 Co. 5:13, 2 Co. 5:14. But this love will make their work easy, and them in good earnest in it.

The third time however Jesus used to Peter the *phileo* word for love.

Secondly, *Lovest thou me more than these?* "Lovest thou me more than thou lovest these, more than thou lovest these persons, Thomas, John Nathaniel and James?" Dost thou love me more than thou dost James or John, thy intimate friends, or Andrew, thy own brother and companion.

It can be used to question Peter on his love for the fishing implements. Or it can be interpreted to question Peter "Do you love me more than these other men love me? Remember that this is a forceful interpretation for Peter had said before, *"Though all men should be offended in you, yet will I not be offended in Thee"*. Now his statement came back to haunt him, but note importantly the now humble and grieved Peter could only reply, *"Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things, you know that I phileo you"*

Those who profess to love Christ must love Christ correctly. We must love Him better than the best friend they have in the world, and make it to appear whenever they stand in comparison or in competition. Those only love Christ indeed that love him better than all the delights of sense and all the profits of this world. As before, Christ said to Peter, if so, leave them, to employ thyself wholly in feeding my flock, so that he would understand he is forgiven and called back to serve in case there was any doubt.

"Lovest thou me more than these love me, more than any of the rest of the disciples love me?" Christ wishes to know, or put the question to Peter, to see if he was still of the same mind he had before when he said he would go anywhere with Jesus! Is this the love you say you have? Or, to intimate to Him that he had now more reason to love him than any of them had, for more had been forgiven to him than to any of them, as much as his sin in denying Christ was greater than theirs in forsaking him.

We should all study to excel in our love to Christ. It is no breach of the peace to strive which shall love Christ best; nor any breach of good manners to go before others in this love.

Thirdly, the second and third time that Christ put this question, He left out the comparison more than these, because Peter, in his answer, modestly left it out, not willing to compare himself with his brethren, much less to prefer himself before them. We cannot say, We love Christ more than others do, yet we shall be accepted if we can say, We love him indeed. In the last he altered the word, as it is in the original. In the first two enquiries, the original word is Agapas me —Dost thou retain a kindness for me? In answer to which Peter uses another word, more emphatic, Philo se —I love

thee dearly. In putting the question the last time, Christ uses that word: And dost thou indeed love me dearly? Three times Peter returns the same answer to Christ: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.

Peter does not pretend to love Christ more than the rest of the disciples did. He is now ashamed of that rash word of his, Though all men deny thee, yet will not I; and he had reason to be ashamed of it. Though we must aim to be better than others, yet we must, in lowliness of mind, esteem others better than ourselves, for we know more evil of ourselves than we do of any of our brethren.

He professes again and again that he loves Christ. He had a high esteem and value for him, a grateful sense of his kindness, and was entirely devoted to His honour and interest; his desire was towards Him, as one he was undone without; and his delight in Him, as one he should be unspeakably happy in. This amounts to a profession of repentance for his sin. It should grieve us to have affronted one we love, not to mention the promise of adherence to Him, our Lord. Peter had forfeited his claim of relation to Christ. He was now to be re-admitted, upon his repentance. Christ puts his trial upon this issue: Dost thou love me? And Peter joins issue upon it: Lord, I love thee.

Those who can truly say, through grace, that they love Jesus Christ, may take the comfort of their interest in Him, notwithstanding their daily infirmities. He appeals to Christ himself for the proof of it: Thou knowest that I love thee; and the third time yet more emphatically: Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. He does not vouch his fellow-disciples to witness for him—they might be deceived in him; nor does he think his own word might be taken—the credit of that was destroyed already; but he calls Christ himself to witness.

First, Peter was sure that Christ knew all things, and particularly that he knew the heart, and was a discerner of the thoughts and intents of it. Secondly, Peter was satisfied of this, that Christ, who knew all things, knew the sincerity of his love to Him, and would be ready to attest it in his favour. It is a terror to a hypocrite to think that Christ knows all things; for the divine omniscience will be a witness against him. But it is a comfort to a sincere Christian that he has that to appeal to. Our witness is in heaven, my record is on high. Christ knows us better than we know ourselves. Though we know not our own uprightness, he knows it.

Jesus then guaranteed Peter's renewal after his fall by instructing and charging him that when he was converted, or brought back as a penitent disciple, he should use his experience to strengthen or fortify his brethren. He would find mercy, and would be in position to encourage others to hope that they would also find mercy. Note that anyone who falls into sin must be converted from it. They must turn aside and return to their first love. They must then be very cautious and careful, become extremely strong in faith, do not let the guilt of their past conduct weaken them or hold them back. The experience qualifies them to strengthen those that are weak or feeble minded. Actually, sometimes God allows us to get into trouble, because when he recovers us we will do all that is necessary to strengthen others and pull them out of the fire.

The rule is therefore, when we have been converted from sin, our job is to strengthen the brethren, and prevent them from falling.

## *Follow Me*

Because it bears repeating from the beginning we should be reminded of a few things. After the resurrection Jesus again repeated a miracle allowing the disciples to catch a great deal of fish despite their previous failure to do so. They had not waited for Jesus and had gone back to their fishing in the meantime. They caught nothing. When Jesus appeared however and told them where to throw the net and they did so, the breaking nets could barely bring in the many fish they had caught.

Jesus asked Peter three times about his love for him. He did not reproach Peter directly for denying him. Jesus called him by his original name, reminding him thereby where he was coming from, showing him the honour that he had been given.

Jesus asked Peter if he loved him more than these, indirectly questioning his sincerity, asking if he thought most about material things such as the food he was enjoying, the kind of occupation that he had just engaged in, or whether he loved the association with his friends more.

Peter now wisely did not list his tears of repentance, the fact he had still associated with other disciples, indicating that he still wanted to work for Jesus, his abilities or his virtues. He simply said that Jesus knew that he loved him. Peter was then told to feed his lambs.

Once again Jesus asked Peter if he loved him affectionately, supremely, again Peter responded that he loved him. He was again told him, *feed my sheep*.

A third time Jesus put the question to Peter, and this time Peter responded by emphatically stating that he loved Jesus dearly.

Three times Jesus instructed Peter to take care of the flock. He was told to feed his lambs, feed my sheep, and feed my sheep.

He was told literally to give them food, and then told to literally do all the offices of a shepherd to them. He was to be a shepherd in every respect, to take care of the lambs, the young members of the flock who are young tender and weak, and also to take care of the sheep that were stronger.

He had to feed, as well as to take care of, guide, govern, and defend.

Jesus was most insistent, and Peter probably felt that Jesus knew something about him that he did not know himself. Jesus reminded him of his past sins. He put godly sorrow in him, which according to 2 Corinthians 7 works carefulness and fear.

Jesus clearly wanted Peter to be exceptionally diligent in meeting his duties as an Apostle. He knew Peter was bold and zealous, and he wanted him to continue to be so in the service of God.

Jesus insistent remarks would teach Peter that he had restored him to his position as an Apostle, and that he was watching him closely to ensure that his confidence in him would always be maintained.

Jesus was a skillful physician. He reopened the wounds, but he led Peter to a position where he would clearly understand what his role was and what this commission meant. By doing so, Jesus

dispelled any gloom that would hang over Peter. Peter was excited to faithfulness and diligence in his work.

He was pointed clearly to the importance of true love, for this was most necessary for the successful conclusion of his work. To properly sacrifice and have this sacrifice be acceptable to God, love would have to be there at the foundation, impelling and guiding everything.

We know from Peter's action that he took up the challenge, and was forthright in building up the Christian faith. He preached everywhere, and challenged men to turn to Christ. He was never afraid of king or peasant. His life after Jesus restored him is a model for what God will do for all those believers who momentarily stumble.

**Verse 18.** At this juncture, Christ has confirmed to Peter the honour of an Apostle. He then goes further, and tells him of further preferment designed for him in the honour of a martyr. His martyrdom is foretold in verse 18. Christ as He foretold His suffering tells the suffering that His disciples must endure as they follow Him, as we must all take up our crosses. Every Christian should be aware that following Jesus entails a life possibly filled with trouble and persecution, especially suffering ill for doing well. To Peter specifically He tells him that he should die a violent death by the hands of an executioner. It is thought that Peter was crucified in Rome under Nero, A.D. 68. However, it is the sense of pomp and solemnity of an execution that tend to add more terror to the death. Death coming to Christians in these forms is the lot of Christ's faithful ones, who yet have overcome it by the blood of the Lamb.

From the point of his imprisonment (Acts. 6:3 Acts. 5:18 Acts. 12:4), to him being led to his violent death, we see that even though Peter came to terms with this as Jesus did, he also thought or asked that that particular cup be removed from him. A natural aversion to pain and death is well reconcilable with a holy submission to the will of God in both. With that Peter continues forward on the path that God has laid out for him (2 Co. 5:4). Just as how Peter was tasked with looking after Christ's lambs and sheep, so too does the maturity of Peter is expressed in how he lived and will die. In the strength of his younger days Christians have the ability to gird themselves with strength and honour that God bestows upon them for the task at hand. Should they live to be old, the strength of body and vigour of mind, changes how we look at the hardship and business of doing God's work. We can only hope that to some degree that as God sheltered Peter from the rage of his enemies, we too can grow old and fruitful as him so that the church might have a good example of Christian service to God.

**Verse 19.** When we die patiently, submitting to the will of God,—die cheerfully, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God,—and die usefully, witnessing to the truth and goodness of religion and encouraging others, we glorify God in dying: and this is the earnest expectation and hope of all good Christians, as it was Paul's, that Christ may be magnified in them living and dying (Phil. 1:20).

The death of martyrs is a special expression for the glorifying of God. The truths of God, which they died in the defence of, are hereby confirmed. The grace of God, which carried them with so much constancy through their sufferings, is hereby magnified. And the consolations of God, which have abounded towards them in their sufferings, and His promises, the springs of their consolations,

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have hereby been recommended to the faith and joy of all the saints. The blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church, and the conversion and establishment of thousands.

As Christ said to Peter *Follow me*, it serves as further confirmation of his restoration to His Master's favour, and to his apostleship. It also serves as an explication of the prediction of his sufferings, which perhaps Peter at first did not fully understand until Christ departed. Christ has set forth examples how our service to Him should take shape. The encouragement we have in both service and suffering to Him is seen the reward we shall have at the end of it all. Those that faithfully follow Christ in grace shall certainly follow him to glory.

**Verse 20.** Jesus asked of Peter to follow him. He renewed His challenge to Peter. Peter's first response was not to answer Jesus directly but to look at the other disciple, that being John, for a task that was assigned to him alone. In this instance Peter mimics the response of most Christians trying to deflect challenges set to us by our Lord, thinking or hoping someone else takes up the mantle or does the hard lifting.

**Verses 21-22.** Note the lessons here. We are not responsible for the way God guides and directs you. The Apostle Paul reminded us that each man must bear his own burden.

The Apostle John, writing approximately 30 years after the death of Peter makes no mention that the instruction given to Peter to fulfill his purpose meant that now there was a successor to Peter. The instruction given to Peter, to Guide, Pasture, Feed, Guard the flock applies to all leaders, and especially to all Apostles. The claims of some churches that Peter had a successor to lead the Church do not add up. John would have had ample time to tell of that successor. The Holy Spirit is the one who chooses.

Verses 23-25. The Lord accepted Peter's answers and gave him a mission. He revealed Peter would suffer and Peter understood and accepted he would die a violent death. There was no uncertainty about himself.

But even then Jesus had to rebuke Peter for thinking about what the other Apostles were doing. He was not allowed input on John's work. The instruction came again to him

### ***Follow me***

Jesus in fact rebuked all the believers who spread rumours that John would not die but would live until Jesus returned to earth a second time. One writer states plainly :

**There's no advantage to comparisons, finding our identity in our roots, or embracing our failures. We need to let Jesus reshape our failures into a new identity based on who he says we are, his servants. Peter's uncertainty about himself and his struggle to believe that the future would be as Jesus predicted was complex. But the Lord's answer was simple. I have a ministry for you, Peter. I have forgiveness and remaking for you. What you need to do is follow me.**

We are again reminded by the Apostle John that Jesus did a lot more teaching, guiding, and healing

That was recorded. There was simply to time to keep track of what Messiah was doing as He travelled though Israel. So we note that the writers concentrated on only a few time lines in the ministry of Jesus. The miracles recorded were chosen for a particular purpose to show who Gos was and how He operated.

### CONCLUSION

**It would be very helpful to the church if there was less of posturing, and comparing persons to each other. The real work, the heavy lifting is being done by God Himself. Verse 25. One writer has a word for the shepherds and a word for the sheep:**

“The word for shepherds, of course, is very plain. Jesus said to Peter, *Pasture my lambs, shepherd my sheep, pasture my dear lambs.*

And it is clear from this that Christ’s sheep are entrusted to those who love him. He is called forth from Peter’s confession of his love. And it’s to these, those who love him, to whom he commits his sheep. We love him because he first loved us. But it is very important that we respond and love him, and into the hands of those who love him he commits his precious sheep. Yes, that’s right, if you are a believer in Christ you are precious to the Lord. And as an elder or a shepherd of the flock, it is our responsibility to recognize that, even though there might be some characteristics about some of his sheep that we do not respond we still should remember that they are precious to him, not perfect but precious.

**The world has a terrible expression “Once burned, twice shy”. We really do not like to be burned, to be disappointed because someone wronged us. We forget of course how we have often treated out Lord. So if you have come to Christ, remember that you must be changed, and much warmer to others than you were before.**