

Feed My Lambs

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

Selected Scripture:
John 21:15-25

devotion to him, so that he might receive assurance of his full reinstatement to divine love and favor.

As stated in our Key Verse, Jesus asked Peter, “Lovest thou me more than these?” By this question, the Lord alluded to Peter’s apparent desire to return to the fishing business. In obedience to the Lord’s call three and a half years earlier, he had left these things to follow the Master. (Luke 5:10,11) Now, Peter’s affirmative answer indicated he was again willing to forsake all, and to boldly proclaim the coming kingdom and risen Lord. He said, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee,” to which Jesus responded, “Feed my lambs.”

ALTHOUGH THE PRIMARY purpose of Jesus’ appearances to the disciples after his resurrection was to convince them of the fact that he had risen from death, he also provided them with certain lessons which would serve them well in their future ministry. In today’s lesson we call attention to the thrice repeated question of the risen Lord to Peter, “Lovest thou me?” (John 21:15-17) Three times Peter had denied the Master, though under most stressful circumstances. Now three times the risen Lord desired that Peter reaffirm his

The doubt which seemed to be implied by the Lord's repetition of the question two more times at first grieved Peter. He was an ardent follower of the Master, having claimed him as the Messiah, and he wanted the Lord to be fully persuaded of his love and zeal. Thus, it grieved him to feel that possibly there was a shadow of doubt, resulting in a cloud between him and Jesus which his repentance had not fully removed. The response, "Feed my lambs, ... feed my sheep," however, enabled Peter to realize his full reinstatement as an accepted and beloved disciple.

The question addressed to Peter in our Key Verse is also asked of every consecrated follower of Christ Jesus. If we have given ourselves unreservedly in consecration, the privileges of the Lord's work are set before us to prove the sincerity and strength of our love. In addition, as with the early disciples, the reproach of the cross has not ceased, and can often be bitter and determined. Do we love the Lord and his work more than business pursuits and prospects, more than social ties and pleasures, more than ease, comfort, friends, fame, wealth, a good name, or any earthly gain?

This is truly a question which no one can sincerely answer in the affirmative who does not have the inspiring incentive of divine love in their heart. Pure, fervent love toward Christ quickens zeal, and enables those who have it to respond gladly and promptly, "Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." Such a response sends them forth with joy to prove their love by their works, remembering the many encouragements to faithfulness given by the Master. "If any man will come after 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 have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." "In me ye ... have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation." (Luke 9:23; John 15:18,20; 16:33) Let us, then, as Peter did, answer affirmatively to the call, "Feed my lambs, ... feed my sheep." ■