

### Priorities of a Shepherd

Peter had already seen Jesus alive after the crucifixion. He knew his eternity was secure in Jesus. He probably knew he was forgiven, but I wonder if maybe he wasn't so sure Jesus would ever let Him be on the team any more. Maybe Jesus would rather just let Peter sit in the sidelines and no longer minister for Him.

I imagine many of us have felt like that a time or two in our life.. but I have hope. Why? Because Jesus wasn't done with Peter. In fact, Jesus strengthened Peter and he went on to do great things for God.

I am going to share with you today from my heart what I believe God taught me as I looked at this text. Our outline today is like my personal journal, and my prayer is that you might find this interesting and helpful for you. So here's what I wrote down:

#### **EVEN THOUGH I AM INCONSISTENT IN MY WALK WITH CHRIST, HE HAS CALLED ME TO SERVE HIM AND I CAN STILL BE USED BY HIM IN GREAT WAYS.**

The natural question that follows is How? How could I still be used greatly by Jesus even though I'm fickle, sinful, and inconsistent?

Well, here's what I gather from these verses. Christ will use me (and anyone) greatly if I focus on 7 priorities found from Jesus' discussion with Peter:

#### **Priority #1 - I must make my love for Jesus be the compelling reason for everything I do. 21:15-17**

First of all, you'll notice in verse 15, Jesus asked Peter, "do you love me more than these?" The question is: what does Jesus mean by these?

There are three proposed ideas. (1) Do you love me more than people? (2) Do you love me more than your job? (3) Do you love me more than others do?

Honestly, I don't know which of those three He was emphasizing. It could be one. It could be all three. We could make a good Biblical case for any of those. So here's what I am going to say today: I'm going to keep it general and propose to you that Jesus is saying, "Peter, I have plans for you. I have plans for you that are beyond being a fisherman. I have plans for you that are beyond pleasing people. I have plans for you that are different than the plans I have for others, but my question to you is: Do you love me above all else? Do you love me no matter what the cost? Do you love me no matter how much you might have to give up? Do you really love me Peter?"

Why would Jesus be asking that question? Because this is no longer a question of salvation. This is a question of service. Salvation is a matter of faith. The question of salvation from Jesus is: do you believe in me? The question of service is: Do you love me?

I believe this goes far beyond Peter. If anyone, including you or me, who is saved by faith in Jesus, would go on to a life of service for Jesus, the only glue that will suffice to keep that person going is love for Him.

#### **Priority #2 - I must own up to my own fickleness and place my confidence in Jesus. 21:17**

Three times Jesus asked Peter, "do you love me?" Now in verse 17, John writes that Peter was grieved because Jesus said to Peter the third time, "Do you love me?"

Why was Peter grieved? I think there are two reasons.

The first reason is because Jesus asking Peter a third time would surely remind Peter of His third denial of Jesus.

The second reason I think Peter was grieved was because of the Greek wording that John used. If the variances in the Greek text are significant, then we can understand why Peter was grieved. It's like Jesus may have been asking on the third question, "Peter, do you even love me at all?" And Peter had to admit, "you know that I love you, and I do love you, but when I was put to the test last time, I failed.."

I think the lesson I've learned from this is that as a person called into ministry, I need to know my own fickleness and put my confidence not upon me, but upon Jesus.

**Priority #3** - I must feed Jesus' "lambs" the Word of God (preach the Word). **21:15**

I certainly believe Jesus was commanding Peter, "feed my people the word of God", just like how Paul told Timothy to preach the Word.

There are a lot of responsibilities on the plate of a pastor, but above all, the number #1 responsibility is to feed God's people the Word of God.

**Priority #4** - I must tenderly guide Jesus' "sheep" in godliness (shepherd the flock). **21:16**

Sheep are grown up lambs. I believe this could be referring to more mature believers - those who are growing in their walk with God and have been learning for quite some time the things of God.

What Jesus tells Peter is that he is to tend to Jesus' sheep. I think this implies something deeper than feed. This is to look out for, to care for, to rule, and to govern. In other words, the role of the minister is not only to preach the Word and feed the flock, but to tenderly and carefully guide the church in the things of God.

**Priority #5** - I must feed and care for even the most mature of Jesus' "sheep". **21:17**

In verse 17, Jesus changed the phrase once more to Peter, telling him, "feed my sheep." In others words, a minister of Christ must not only teach the new believers the basics of Christianity, look out for the maturing believers, but also he must study hard enough and prepare thorough enough to feed even a mature knowledgeable Christian a well balanced meal of the Word of God on a regular basis.

Peter had his work cut out for him. It's no walk in the park to be called to the roll of an under-shepherd in the flock of God.

**Priority #6** - I must rest in God's sovereignty all my days. **21:18**

The term stretch out your hands appears to be a direct reference to crucifixion.

Peter was fickle just like the rest of us, but Jesus never gave up on him, and over the years Peter matured greatly.

A priority of a pastor needs to be resting in God's sovereignty. We don't have all the answers. I need to trust in His sovereignty and let Him be God while I simply am His servant.

**Priority #7** - I must personally follow Jesus daily. **21:19**

The call on Peter's life, the call on my life, and the call on your life is all the same: Follow Jesus. I need to personally be following after Jesus - keep on following. I can try to look out for you and I can try to preach the Word, but if I am not personally and seriously following Jesus, I won't last as a productive servant of Christ.