

Fordoche 03/23/03 Morrow 11/13/03 Monroe St. 04/21/03 Chataignier 03/19/06 Faith-Livonia 03/12/06

**REVIVAL
BOOK**

The Return of a Backslider

John 21:15-17

In the novel, *Point of No Return*, J. P. Marquand says of one of his characters,

**"He knew all the little answers,
but he missed the large questions of life. "**

The big questions,
are presented to us in scripture.

They are:

"If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14);

"What shall it profit a man,
if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"
(Mark 8:36);

"For what is your life?" (James 4:14);

"What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"
(Matt.27:22).

**The biggest of all questions for a Christian
was posed by Jesus to Simon Peter
when he asked,**

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" (John 21:16-17).

The events that led to this question started days earlier.

**The night Jesus was betrayed
he met with his disciples to observe the Passover.**

**He startled them with the announcement,
"... one of you shall betray me" (Matt. 26:21) .**

**While the other disciples realized their own weakness
and asked, "Lord is it I?"**

**Peter, in his characteristically impulsive way,
boasted that he would never do such a thing.
"Others may fail you," he said, "but not me."**

**It was then that Jesus told Peter
that he would deny him three times
before the rooster crowed the next morning.**

**Peter assured the Lord
that he would be faithful to the point of death.**

**Sure enough,
that very night Jesus was betrayed,
arrested,
and put through the mockery of a trial.**

As the trial proceeded,

Peter stood on the fringes of the crowd as an observer.

**Three times he was asked about his relationship to Jesus
and three times he denied even knowing the Lord.**

Just as he made his last denial, the cock crowed.

With tears in his eyes:

**Peter realized what we all need to realize,
that the Lord knows us better
than we know ourselves.**

**Then followed the blackness of crucifixion
and the glory of his resurrection on the third day.**

After his resurrection

Jesus appeared to his disciples numerous times.

It was after his second appearance

that Peter said to his friends,

"I am going fishing. "

They replied,

"We will also come with you" (John 21:3 NASB) .

And off they went to the Sea of Galilee.

**The trip proved to be as disappointing
as the events that had transpired in the past few days.**

They toiled all night long and caught nothing.

**Towards the dawn, as they neared the shore,
a voice called out to them,
asking if they had had any luck.**

**When they said they had not,
he told them to drop their nets
on the right side of the ship
and they would have success.**

**They did as the stranger suggested
and they caught so many fish
their nets were tested to the limit.**

**By this time John realized it was Jesus talking to them
and told Peter,**

"It is the Lord! " (John 21: 7) .

Without waiting for the ship to dock,

Peter jumped into the water and swam ashore.

**There he found Jesus cooking breakfast
for them over an open fire.**

**Earlier Jesus had instituted the Lord's Supper,
now he had prepared the Lord's breakfast.**

**It was after he had dined with his disciples
that Jesus posed his question to Peter.**

**In all probability
he invited him to walk along the shore for a while.**

**Then, with his arms around Peter's shoulders, he asked,
"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? "**

**Peter answered, "
Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."**

Jesus then said to him, "Feed my lambs."

**Jesus asked a second time,
"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"**

**And again Peter answered,
"Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."**

This time Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. "

Then the third time Jesus asked,
"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

It grieved Peter that Jesus should ask him the third time,
"Lovest thou me?"

This time he replied,
"Lord, thou knowest all things;
Thou knowest that I love thee."

Then Jesus said once again,
"Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17).

**This experience amounts to what I believe
to be Simon Peter's rededication to Christ.**

**In it he reaffirms his love for and his devotion to Christ

and receives a re-commission
from the Lord
to his apostleship.**

**It is the example of
a man whose fellowship with God was renewed.**

**He sought Peter out,
drew from him a threefold confession,
and then recalled him to his former position.**

**As a result of his denial,
Peter had NOT lost his relationship with the Lord,
but he had lost his fellowship with him.**

That question is the crucial question for you and me.

Jesus does not ask Peter if he loved sheep.

Nor, if he loved shepherding.

**What he asked was,
"Do you love me? "**

It is our love, also, that Christ wants.

And everyone is capable of giving that to him.

**It isn't brains God wants
-it is the heart. "**

Some of you are like Peter.

**You have known better days with the Lord
than you have now.**

And what Peter did, you need to do.

You need to make a rededication of your life to Christ.

You need to affirm again your love and devotion to him.

**This passage, better than any in the Bible,
reveals what we must do to return from backsliding.**

**We must recommit ourselves to love Christ
in three ways:**

We must love him SUPREMELY. .

We must love him ACTIVELY. .

We must love him OPENLY.

Love Supremely

First, Jesus wants us to love him supremely.

Jesus' initial question to Peter was,

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"
(John 21: 15)

That little phrase, "more than these,"
has been the subject of debate since it was first written.

What did Jesus mean by it?

He may have been saying,
"Simon, do you love me more than these boats and nets?"

**Peter had been a fisherman by trade
before Jesus had called him to be an apostle.**

The boats and nets represented his old way of life.

They represented his former occupation.

And they represented his principal form of recreation.

**When life pressed in on him
he always thought of the cool breeze,
the rolling waves,
and the thrill of a big catch on the Sea of Galilee.**

It may be that Jesus was saying,
"Peter, do you love me more than your old way of life?
Do you love me more than you love your profession?
Do you love me more than your favourite recreation?"

Others have suggested that the phrase, "more than these," referred to the **other disciples**.
Jesus may have been saying,
"Simon, do you love me more than these other men?"
His brother, Andrew, was in that group.
James and John, his former fishing partners, were there also.

**And the rest of the men
who had been his closest companions
for the past three years
were there.**
**They had been through the kinds of experiences
that weld men into a brotherhood.**

Perhaps Jesus was saying,
 "Simon, do you love me more than your brother?"

More than you love your business associates?

More than you love your closest friends?"

Others have suggested that by the phrase,
 "more than these,"

Jesus was saying,
 "Simon, do you love me more
 than these other men love me?"

That's what Peter had boasted of in the upper room.

**And now he was being called on to examine his boast
 and the genuineness of his devotion.**

We can never be completely sure what Jesus meant
 by the phrase, "more than these."

However, we can be sure of one thing.

Whatever he was referring to, Jesus was saying,
 "I want you to love me supremely."

Is there any contention between you and the Lord?

**Is there anything God is asking of you
 that you are withholding from him?**

Love Actively

Second, he wants us to love him actively.

Three times Jesus asked the question,
"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? "

Three times Peter answered in the affirmative.

Then, in every instance,
Jesus gave Peter a work assignment.

First he told him, "Feed my lambs. "

The second and third times he told him, "Feed my sheep."

Lambs represent little children
who need to be taught, trained, and guided.
Sheep represent adults who need to be fed and matured.

Jesus was saying in essence,
"I am reassigning you as an apostle.
Now, go to work. "

Bumper Sticker: "Jesus loves you and so do I"
It never gets beyond words.

They have a bumper sticker religion.

We not only tell lies,

We also sing lies:

We sing "Sweet Hour of Prayer"
and are content with 5-10 minutes a day.

We sing "Onward Christian Soldiers"
and wait to be drafted into his service-

We sing "0 for a Thousand Tongues to Sing"
and don't use the one we have.

We sing "There Shall Be Showers of Blessings"
but do not come to church when it rains. .

We sing "Blest Be the Tie That Binds"
and let the least little offence sever it. .

We sing "Serve the Lord With Gladness"
and gripe about all we have to do.

We sing "I Love to Tell the Story"
and never mention it at all.

We sing "We're Marching to Zion "
but fail to march to Worship or Sunday school.

We sing "Standing on the Promises"
while most often we are sitting on the premises.

**It may be that the greatest curse of the modern church
is that when all has been said and done,**

a whole lot more has been said

than has been done.

We talk a better game than we play.

John expressed the kind of love Christ wants

" My little children, let us not love in word, neither in
tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

Unless we feed his lambs and tend his sheep,

we do not love him as he wants to be loved.

Love Openly

Third, he wants us to love him openly.

**The last time Jesus asked the question,
"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" (John 21:17),
Peter was grieved. Why?**

Because three times he had denied Jesus.

**Grief is often the price we pay
for disappointing someone we dearly love.**

**Peter replied, "Lord, thou knowest all things;
thou knowest that I love thee."**

The fact is, Jesus does know all things.

Why, then, did he keep asking Peter the question?

**Because Jesus wanted to hear it,
and Peter needed to say it.**

My wife and I have been married forty years.

She will want to hear it again and again.

**We never tire of hearing people say sincerely,
"I love you. "**

And saying it yesterday is not sufficient for today.

**On her dying bed, My MOM said to My DAD, "
Bill, tell me one more time you love me."**

STORY

Carter Holmes Jones,
a great preacher of another generation,
had a small room in the attic of his home
that he used as a place of prayer.

When he was especially burdened, he would make his way
up the winding staircase to that room
to spend some quiet moments with God.

The members of his family knew
that when he went to the attic room for prayer,
they were not to bother him under any circumstances.

One day, under heavy burdens, he climbed the stairs,
went into the room,
and knelt beside the chair to pray.

He had hardly begun his prayer
when **the door to the room swung open**
and there stood his little girl.

The moment his eyes met hers,
she knew she had done wrong.
She knew she shouldn't be there.

But she said, "Daddy, you've been so busy lately
I haven't seen you much
and **I just wanted to tell you that I love you.** "

And with that she threw **her arms around her father's neck,**
gave him **a big hug,** wheeled around,
and was gone as quickly as she had come.

**The big preacher, still on his knees,
wiped a tear from his eye and said,
"Father, I've been so busy lately
that I haven't had much time for you.**

I just want to tell you again that I love you. "

**Unless we say it as well as feel it,
and show it as well as confess it,
we do not love him as he wants to be loved.**

**There is not a believer here whose fellowship with God
is exactly what God wants it to be.**

**God wants you to feel it in your heart
and to know it in your mind,
and to live it in your life,
and he wants you to be right with him.**

**And you can do it now
if you'll rededicate your life to him**