

What is That To You?

Joh 21:18-22 I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!" Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?") When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?" Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, ***what is that to you? You follow me.***"

This is one of those passages that we read 25 times and each time something else stands out we missed the last time.

This re-commissioning of Peter is filled with the fruit of the Spirit manifested by Jesus towards Peter. After Peter's abject failure to confess Christ and be faithful to His Lord, denying Jesus three times in succession, Jesus restores Him & recommissions Him. Jesus' love, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control are unmistakable in this interaction. We also see from Jesus a clear and forthright confrontation of Peter's failure each time accompanied by a recommissioning to serve Him by serving His sheep.

Then Jesus foretells Peter's suffering and death and offers him an opportunity to show renewed faithfulness in the face of past failure. Peter even refers to it in his last letter as a mark of confidence in His Savior's faithfulness. (2 Peter 1:13-14)

Peter reacts as anyone one would react when first confronted with such hard truth regarding the end of his earthly life. He turns around to see who else is there and to see what they will have to go through. We want to know that if we have to suffer, everyone else will have to, too. We automatically think that if I have to go through the valley, everyone else better have the same route on their spiritual GPS. It's not fair if I have to go deeper or stay longer in the valley than you! So Peter asks as he sees John following... "Lord, what about him?" Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me."

OUCH! Not what Peter expected! But just what Peter needed... A call to refocus on Christ!

Step 1 - John 21:1-17 Peter is called to stop fishing and start feeding sheep and following Jesus all over again. This recommissioning is so similar to his first call in Luke 5, that the connection is unmistakable.

Step 2 - John 21:18-19 Peter is confronted with his coming martyrdom and called to follow Christ unto death. (He had already said he was ready to die with Jesus back in the upper room. Now he is given the opportunity to make good on the commitment.)

Step 3 - John 21:20-22 Peter wants to compare his future with John's future. Jesus confronts Peter with a "what if" for John. This is in total contrast with his own future! Then Jesus says to Peter in so many words.... "So what! It's none of your business! You follow me!" (Ron's paraphrase: "What if I want him to do beach evangelism in the Bahama's until the rapture? It's none of your business. Your business is to follow me!")

I have to admit the first time I read this exchange it seemed really hard. And make no mistake, many of the sayings of Jesus are really hard... so hard that many of his followers stopped following when he said them! (John 6:60-66) But in retrospect, I think that while this really was hard, it was also wonderfully healing. Peter needed a radical reorientation of focus.

Stop fishing, start feeding sheep! Stop comparing, start embracing My individual, perfect plan for you!

When I take these words to heart, I begin to realize that there are a whole lot of things that seem so important to me, but that are, none the less, none of my business!! God's plan for God's people is God's business, not mine! It's not up to me to plan your life. It's not up to me to determine your course. It's not up to me to weigh your motives. It's none of my business what God chooses for you. It's His business. And He does His business well! This doesn't mean you don't matter to me. You do! This doesn't mean I have no responsibility towards you. I do. But it does mean you and I must not be distracted by dwelling on that which is not our calling. We are called to follow Christ, no matter what, no matter where, no matter how long or how hard.

What a liberating reality: "What is that to you? You follow me!"

Self Check

- 1) Are there any failures in your past that you think disqualify you from following Christ today? How does Jesus' dealing with Peter encourage you to stop regretting and start renewing following Him?
- 2) List at least 5 things that you tend to dwell on that really are "none of your business" and you need to let go of and start focusing on following Christ?
- 3) As you read this entire exchange between Jesus and Peter, what most strengthens your faith and confidence in Christ?

For Further Study

- 1) Compare this recommissioning passage (John 21) with the first commissioning of Peter in Luke 5. How are they similar? How are they different?
- 2) In 2 Peter 1:13-14, check out the absence of fear or regret or unfair comparisons as Peter anticipates his soon martyrdom. How did knowing his future prepare Peter for even more effective service? Note how in Acts Peter seems to be fearless when facing severe threats again and again, even when knowing someday it would result in excruciating execution. Jesus didn't tell Peter his future to punish him, but to prepare him and to enable him to experience overcoming power by the Spirit that would be the complete opposite of his old, self-empowered life of failure and denial.

"Lord, I confess I make way too many things my business, when they aren't. Forgive me and renew my mind that I might focus on following You, not constantly evaluating my fellow followers. You have mapped out my life for me and each of your disciples. That map is individual and sovereignly assigned. I receive it, not knowing the outcome in earthly time, but knowing the outcome in eternity. Lord, keep me faithful to the last step. Use me up for Your glory. Have Thine own way, Lord. In Thy Name I pray, AMEN."

Remember, you are very special to us and we pray for you.

Living with leaving in view.... John 9:4

Ron & Val

Seeing The Invisible, embracing The Unapproachable, declaring The Unexplainable,
changed by The Immutable, running after The Irresistible
with inexhaustible joy in our inexpressible sorrows,
spending our time on eternity,
owning nothing yet possessing everything
that matters and lasts.
We are Pilgrims in Paradox.
Welcome to THE JOURNEY

