

## **BOB – DO YOU LOVE ME?**

“Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you really love Me?’” (*John 21: 15*)

The background of this question was Peter’s failure. When the rest of the disciples were hiding in fear; Peter, the brave one, had the courage to go where Jesus was being tried. But when people heard his dialect, like that of Jesus, and asked him if he was His follower; he denied knowing Him and used some old curse words to prove it. Just as he did this, Jesus turned and looked right at him, and he ran out into the night sobbing. (*Mark 14:72\**)

Jesus is the God of the “second” chance and the third and the one hundredth, etc. He always stands ready to forgive us, to help us grow stronger and to use us in His service. After He rose from the dead He told the women, “Go tell My disciples *and Peter*” (*Mark 14:8\**) that you have seen Me. In other words, especially Peter, because I want him to know that his failure is not final, that I love him and have a job for him to do. {\*Most believe Mark’s gospel came from Simon Peter’s sermon notes.}

Then Jesus did something special. Somewhere in the frenzy following the resurrection, He met and talked with Peter, all by himself (1 Corinthians 15:5). We are not told what was said, but whatever it was, Jesus let him know that He stilled loved him and wanted to use him.

Peter’s problem, as it would be for you and me, was; “Doing what I did, do I really love Jesus?” That is why, later on, when Jesus appeared to some of His disciples and cooked breakfast for them, He said, “Peter, do you really love Me?” We will never understand this question if we see it as an interrogation. This whole scene is positive, not negative. The storm clouds of anger were not casting a shadow over Jesus and Peter; the sunlight of a new day was dawning. Jesus wanted Peter to know that he, Peter, did love Him. (We shouldn’t judge ourselves or others by one moral or spiritual failure; by what we do in our lowest moments.)

Jesus does not shoot His wounded soldiers. He doesn’t trample us when we are down. He picks us up and begins our new journey for Him. I’m sure many of you, like me, after some profound failure, or group of failures, have felt like you don’t love Jesus. I have failed the Lord many times. I have responded with a harsh word to my family, friends and fellow church members. In stressful moments, like Peter, old curse words have come flying out of my mouth. I have neglected to make a visit or have made it out of sheer duty rather than love; etc.

But friends, Jesus has never failed me. Times without end I have crawled into my payer closet, broken because of failure, and have come out singing and shouting because the Lord has showered me with His forgiving love.

A pastor called upon an elderly member of his church and she, painfully aware of her shortcomings, said, “Oh, pastor, I’m afraid I don’t love the Lord. How could I be this way and love Him?” The wise pastor took a sheet of paper and wrote upon it the words, “I do not love Jesus Christ.” He handed it to her and told her to sign it, and she said, “Pastor, I would die before I would sign this.”

Love is something we “do”. Jesus said, “*If you love Me, you will keep My commands*” (*John 14:15*). Serving Jesus is the proof of loving Jesus. Jesus told Peter to be a shepherd, a Pastor of the people of God; and he did this until he died (1 Peter 5). In other words, “Peter, if you love Me you will serve Me; and the way you serve Me is to serve others, especially My people.” Jesus told him, after the service there would be the sacrifice – death by crucifixion. He didn’t ask him *if* he would do it, or *tell* him to do it. He told him he *would* do it. Why, because Jesus knew Peter loved Him, even if Peter didn’t.

We are not to wonder if we love Jesus enough to die for Him. The question is, do we love Him enough to live for Him now? If we don’t live for Him today, what makes us think we would die for Him tomorrow?