

John 21:18-23

18 Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." 19 (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me." 20 Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" 21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?" 22 Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!" 23 So the rumor spread in the community that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?"

Jesus had died and was resurrected, then he met the disciples and they get to experience being with Jesus once again. After that encounter, everything is different for them. They are no longer sad, depressed, or in a state of mourning. They get the Jesus experience; peace, happiness, and love. A week later they meet him again in the same house. The disciples have gathered together and they are not hiding anymore because there is no more fear. That is because they get to experience the living Jesus.

Then Peter and some of the other disciples go back to fishing. Now this is problematic; Peter and his companions have gone back to the old life instead of going forward with the mission of Jesus. This is not what Jesus called them to do. Jesus trained them to go out into the world with the gospel message. When they finish breakfast Jesus challenged Peter on the extent of his love for the Lord. If Peter loves the Lord then he will fulfill the wishes of the Lord. The challenge to Peter is which one he loves the most. In order to get through to Peter, Jesus challenges him three times, about the obvious disparity between the life he has gone back to and the life he is called for.

Then Peter is told two important things; his mission of serving Christ and his death will glorify God. Peter has some difficulty in wrapping his head around this. So, Peter asks "What about him?" Peter's concern is not the well being of the other disciple; Peter's concern is one of fairness. Peter's thinking is off track. Am I the only one? Am I being singled out? What about the other guy? Well, what about him? What does that have to do with you? It is not your concern. It is not about you and someone else. It is about you and your relationship with the Lord. Peter does not fully understand his role in the divine-human relationship. Peter is responsible for the actions of Peter. His responsibility is to follow Christ, to continue the mission of Christ, and take the gospel to the world.

In the call to Peter, Jesus is thinking about the rest of the world, including us. We are called by the Lord to receive his offer of salvation and join him in the divine-human relationship. A lot of people have a hard time getting this lesson. It is never about the other person. It is never about someone else. Your relationship with the Lord is personal. I don't use the term "personal Savior" because Jesus is the Savior of the world, but it is a personal relationship. Your calling is between you and the Lord. What you do is between

you and the Lord. The fundamental duty and responsibility is to feed the lambs. In other words be a disciple and bring the gospel to the people.

When Jesus challenges Peter the question is one of love. If you love me you will respond out of love; you will shepherd the flock. Love is the motivational factor. There are things we will do out of love that we will not do otherwise. I remember in high school I had a friend that hated school and struggled to pass. He seldom studied, hardly ever took notes, and skipped a lot of homework. I walked by a classroom one day and saw him sitting there copying the chalkboard. I thought what is he doing? So, I entered the classroom and asked. He said that he was copying the notes for his girlfriend. He was doing schoolwork for her that he would not do for himself. When you love someone; when you care about someone else, you do things for them that you will not do for yourself. You will follow their wishes, act on behalf of the other one, be there for them, and even sacrifice your own wants.

Now Peter is ready to follow the Lord and act as a pastor for Jesus' sheep. Peter's love for Jesus is demonstrated by his care of the flock. What Jesus is looking for is a response, a specific response of love. If you love Jesus, you will obey Jesus. It is not about the other person, it is about you and your response to Jesus.