

The background of the entire page is a close-up, slightly draped American flag. The top portion shows the blue field with white stars, while the rest of the page is dominated by the red and white vertical stripes. The flag's texture is visible, with some creases and shadows.

Faith Is Action

July 2015 • USPS 184720 • Volume 54 • Number 7

In This Issue:

LOVEST THOU ME?

The Last Supper

“Now when the evening was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and they began every one of them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I?” And He answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is

RABBAH means *great*, so the title *Rabbi* means *great one*, because in Jewish thinking, a teacher is the highest calling there is. Thus they called their teachers “*Great Ones*.”

However, “*Lord*” connotes *personal surrender*. When you say, “*Lord*,” you are saying, “*All that I am, all that I have, I surrender to You*.” Judas could not say that, because he had not surrendered his sin of covetousness. He had a covetous heart. We see this in John 12 where he was present

LOVEST THOU ME?

BY SHARON HARDY KNOTTS

betrayed; it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said” (Matt. 26:20-25).

When He said, “*Thou hast said*,” it was the same as saying, “*Yes, it’s you*.” But notice the disciples had addressed Jesus as “*Lord*,” but Judas said, “*Master*.” They would have been speaking Hebrew at the table and in Hebrew he said, “*Rabbi*.” Its root

when Mary, Lazarus’ sister, anointed Jesus’ feet, pouring out the precious, costly oil from her alabaster box worth lots of money. Judas said, “*Hmm, that could have been used to give to the poor!*” Jesus rebuked him: “*Let her alone! She’s done this for me for my burial*,” but the writer goes on to explain that it was not that Judas cared about the poor, *but because he held the bag*. He was the treasurer for Jesus and the disciples and was in charge of the

gifts they received from Jesus' supporters. Look how gracious Jesus is: He allowed Judas, the one with the covetous heart, to be the treasurer! He was saying, "Judas, I'm putting My trust in you."

Sometimes when you do this for a person that you know has a weakness, you are saying to them: "I have faith in you," and this so inspires and encourages that person that they rise to the occasion. It becomes a way for them to overcome what ordinarily was a weakness. So Jesus entrusted Judas with the bag of money. But he didn't care about the poor, because "he was a thief" (Jn. 12:5-6). This is why he could not call Jesus "Lord." Jesus said to Judas, "What you are going to do, do quickly" (John 13:27). Then Judas left, because he had already prearranged with the chief priests to betray Jesus.

The Snare of Self-Boasting

When they had finished the meal, and their feet were washed, they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives: "Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended

because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto you, This night, before the cock crows thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples" (Matt. 26:30-35).

Jesus was preparing them for what was about to happen. He was saying: "Once I am betrayed by Judas, everything is going to blow wide open! All men, everyone, including you guys, will be offended in Me." The word *offend* means *to stumble, to fall*. But Peter said, "Not me! No! I will **never** stumble. I will **never** fall. If everybody is offended and leaves you, I **won't**." Jesus persisted: "Peter, before the cock crows, you are going to deny me three times tonight." In his Gospel, Mark said, "But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise" (Mk. 14:31). In John, it says, "I will lay down my life for thy sake" (Jn.13:37). Luke's Gospel is the only one that tells us what happened next, and it's so valuable, I am glad he included it:

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon..." Notice He did not say "Peter;" That was the name Jesus gave him which means *a stone or chip off a rock*. He also doubled the name, which indicated He was being emphatic. It was to intensify what He was about to say:

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both unto prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me” (Lk. 22:31-34).

Jesus revealed a startling fact: *“Satan has desired to have thee,”* and this word *desire* is very strong in Greek. It not only means *to ask for*; but even stronger—it means *to demand!* Think about this: What would give Satan the audacity, the nerve to think that he could go to God and demand to test Peter? Now I must tell you that this does include the fact of *an inferior petitioning a superior*; lest you get the idea that Satan can order God around. That’s not what is happening here, but something gave Satan the boldness to come to God with the demand: *“You’ve got to let me test Peter!”*

Jesus said to Peter: *“He wants to sift you as wheat is sifted.”* During the Gold Rush, gold diggers would scoop up a pan full of dirt and sift it by shaking it from side to side. If there was any gold in it, the gold would stay in the pan and the dirt would fall through the mesh bottom.

This illustrates its literal

meaning, but *metaphorically*, it means *to scrutinize closely, looking for details*. This provides a picture of what goes on in the spiritual realm when God uses the devil, and not the other way around. But God uses the devil, *“the accuser of the brethren,”* to test our faith and our motives. This is what was going on with Peter, but oh, the difference intercession makes! And oh, the difference when the intercession is by your High Priest, the Lord Jesus, when He goes to praying for you in your time of testing! There is no record that He did the same thing for Judas; yet He knew Peter had a good heart, but he had pride that needed to go. He had self-boasted, *“I will never leave You! I will never deny You! I will never fall! I will never stumble!”* And when Satan heard this, it gave him the boldness to run to God and say, *“Did you hear what Peter said?”*

Even when the Lord corrected him, Peter insisted, *“Not me! All these other guys might, but I won’t.”* The devil said to God, *“You have to let me test him to see what his motives really are.”* God did let Satan test him, because He knew that even though Peter would fail, he would repent and come out of it a better Peter!

Jesus said, *“When you are converted,”* and this word *converted* is very powerful. It means

to turn yourself around and become a different person. Jesus said, “When you are *converted*, then you will be in an excellent position *to strengthen your brethren.*” Jesus said, “*When.*” He didn’t say, “*If.*” He was prophesying: “*You will fail, but you will be converted.*”

Satan had succeeded with Judas, because he took the opportunity through his covetous heart. Ephesians 4:27 says, “*Neither give place to the devil.*” He knew Judas loved money, and he fomented the idea in his mind to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. He probably told him, “You know Jesus has always escaped every time any have tried to take Him to kill Him. He always gets away—He’s Jesus! They can’t take Him! He’ll do something, and you’ll get the money.” Satan succeeded with Judas, because he never got rid of his sin of covetousness, and it set him up to fall into the worst sin of all: He betrayed the Son of God! Jesus said, “*Woe unto that man by whom the son of man is betrayed. It would have been good if he had not been born.*” (Mt. 26:24)

Peter had a good heart, but he also had pride, and he boasted in himself. Peter had to be sifted to show Peter himself. He had to see his own weaknesses. This was necessary, because God had big plans for Peter. He had plans for Peter to be a great leader in the

Body of Christ, but he was not ready.

Peter’s Failure

When Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane and taken into the house of the high priest to be tried, Peter followed him afar off. As he waited outside, three times a maid said, “*Oh, I know who you are. You’re a Galilean. You are with Jesus.*” But he denied: “*No, I don’t know Him.*” The third time she said: “*Your speech betrays you! You are a Galilean, and you are with that Jesus group.*” But Peter insisted: “*I don’t know what you are talking about.*” And the third time he began to curse and to swear. This doesn’t mean that he used profanity, but it meant: “*May curses come down on me if I know that man.*”

“*And immediately the cock crew*” (Mt. 26:69-75). So did Peter fail? Yes, he did. He denied Him three times. But even though Peter failed, *his faith did not fail.* There is a significant difference! Unlike Judas, Peter did not give up and throw in the towel and go hang himself. “*He went out and wept bitterly.*” He heard that sound, “*Cock-a-doodle-do!*” And it pierced his heart. It broke him. Have you ever wept bitterly, when you felt like your insides were being wrenched out of you? That’s how Peter felt, and that’s what God wanted. David said in Psalms 51:17: “*A broken spirit: a broken*

and contrite heart, O God, thou will not despise.” Psalm 34:18: *“He is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saves those of a contrite spirit.”*

When we fail our tests, we must submit to the remedial action of the Holy Spirit. When He breaks your heart, go and cry bitterly. Weep and repent. Allow the Holy Spirit to convict you and bring you to *contrition and repentance*, because when you get through this, you come to *conversion*. You will have more humility, and at the same time, you will have greater zeal to do more for the Lord. You will be able to forget the things that lie behind, and say, *“I’m going to press on”* (Ref. Phil. 3:13-14).

And then you get to take the test over! In God’s classroom, if you fail the test, you get to take it over. You don’t get to do that in high school and college. If you fail the test and get a “D” or “F,” it gets figured in with all your other grades, and brings down your GPA. But God allows do-overs!

The main reason Peter failed was *self-boasting*. The Bible says, *“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall”* (Pro.16:18). He also failed to pray ahead of time. In Gethsemane, Jesus took Peter, James and John apart from the others, and three times He said, *“Pray with me. Watch with me. Can’t you pray with me one hour?”* All three

times He came and found them sleeping. Peter failed three times to heed Jesus’ warnings to watch and pray, and he denied the Lord three times.

The Last Breakfast

The Last Breakfast took place post-resurrection. Jesus had been crucified, buried, had come out of the tomb, and ascended on high. Now the disciples were supposed to be the ones to go forth and preach the Gospel. He said to them: *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to all nations, teaching them whatsoever things I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even until the end of the age”* (Matt. 28:19-20). This is the Great Commission. He said, *“Go forth and preach the gospel to every creature, baptizing them in my name and making disciples of them”* (Mark 16:15). This was their commission, what He had trained them for three-and-a-half years to do. The mantle of preaching, teaching, and making disciples had fallen on them, but what happened next was a crisis in the making.

“After these things Jesus showed himself again unto the disciples at the Sea of Tiberius, (The Sea of Galilee); and on this wise showed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, and

the sons of Zebedee (James and John), and two other of His disciples.” So how many do we have here? We’ve got seven out of eleven, because Judas was dead. That’s almost three quarters!

“*Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing.*” Do you see that? I have a King James Bible, and right now I love it! Other versions do not say: “**I go a fishing.**” You may be thinking, *That’s not even proper grammar.* Well, it is in King James English, because if he had just said, “*I go fishing,*” he would have meant “*for today—I’m going fishing.*” But when he said, “*I go a fishing,*” he meant “*I am returning to my occupation as a fisherman.*” It was not a one-time, one-day deal. He was going back to his previous calling as a fisherman!

When Jesus first met James and John, Peter and Andrew, on the Sea of Galilee, He said, “*Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men*” (Mk. 1:17). But here they were going back to being *fishers of fish!* Peter said, “*I go a fishing,*” meaning he was *returning* to his former occupation.

“*They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth and entered into a ship immediately*” (vs.3). When the other six said, “*We also go with thee,*” they knew he didn’t mean *just for that day.* They understood he meant he was going back to his old job, and they said, “We’re going back

to our old jobs too.” In other words, **they all quit the ministry!** And if they quit the ministry after Jesus had personally trained them to take the Gospel to the world, that meant the whole plan had come to a grinding halt, and He had an emergency on His hands. Because if they were not going to follow through on their calling to preach the Gospel, who would? But we will see that whenever you go back on your calling to return to your old lifestyle, or the things of the world, you will fail: “*And that night they caught nothing*” (vs.3). They failed at their own occupation by which they had made their livelihood!

“*But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have you any meat? They answered, No*” (vv.4–15). They had fished all night and caught nothing! This is what happens when a Christian goes back on his calling. If you think you’re going to succeed at Plan B, you’re not. You better stick to Plan A. *You better stick to God’s plan!* They failed at what they did best! They were worn out, wet, cold, hungry, and discouraged, because they had quit on God and failed.

As they got closer to shore, they saw a man standing on the beach. He called out, “*Children, have you any meat?*” which meant: “*Have you any fish?*” And

they said all answered, “**No.**” They were forced to admit their failure! Jesus was rubbing it in on them for a good reason. When He said, “*Children,*” the word in Greek refers to *an uninstructed child who has a lot to learn*. He wasn’t saying “*Children*” affectionately, like we say, “*Children of God.*” The Greek word connotes: *You are a child who’s still wet behind the ears, and you’ve a lot to learn!*

And there’s more: In Greek grammar, when He said, “*Have you any meat?*” it only allows for an answer in the *negative*. It is like saying, “*You don’t have any meat, do you?*” There is only one possible answer, because the person is pointing out the fact that you don’t. Jesus’ question only allowed them to answer in the *negative*. *He knew they didn’t have any fish*. He wasn’t looking for information. He was making them admit that when you go your own way and disobey God’s calling, you’re going to fail. He made them say out of their own mouths, “*No, we don’t have any fish. We fished all night, and we have nothing.*”

“*And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it in for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved*” (John is referring to himself) “*said unto Peter,*

It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girded his fisher’s coat unto him for he was naked” (He put on his outer garment). “*And did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; for they were not far from land, but as it were 200 cubits, dragging the net with the fishes. As soon as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which you have now caught, Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three. And for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken*” (vv. 6-11).

When Jesus said, “*Cast your net on the right side,*” they got so many fish they could hardly pull it in—*Deja vu!* This was an exact replay of an earlier incident in the beginning of Jesus’ ministry when they had fished all night and caught no fish. Jesus had said, “*Simon, launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught.*” Peter, perturbed, said, “*Master, we toiled all night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless, at thy word we will let down the net.*” They dropped the net and caught so many fish, the net broke! (Lk. 5:3-7). Now, suddenly, when John realized who it was, and said to Peter, “*It’s the Lord!*”—Peter had déjà vu! He remembered how it had all played

out before, when Jesus had said, *“From now on, you shall catch men.”*

Then Peter, being as rambunctious as ever, jumped out of the boat and ran to shore, beating everybody else. Jesus said, *“Bring me some of the fish you have caught.”*

Jesus Fixed Breakfast

“Jesus said unto them, Come and dine, And none of the disciples dared ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to His disciples, after that he was risen from the dead” (vv. 12-14). Jesus fixed breakfast for these seven very tired, cold, hungry, wet, and **guilty** disciples. They knew it was Jesus, but nobody opened his mouth. They were under much condemnation, because they had been caught red-handed, not just going out a day to fish, but returning to their old ways.

Now we see a picture of Jesus’ compassion. He didn’t jump all over them right off the bat. He knew that they were physically spent, cold and hungry, and He first ministered to their physical needs. He had a fire going, and He said, “Come, sit down, and get warm and dry off.” He had fixed breakfast for them. (How would

you like Jesus to cook your breakfast? Well, I can’t promise you He’ll do it in the natural, but if you’ll get up in the morning to spend time with Jesus, He’ll fix breakfast for you! He will give you fresh manna, and He’ll put some honey on it to make it sweet!) The first thing He did was minister to their physical needs. He knew this was not the right time to scold them.

David said in Psalm 103:13-14: *“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord has compassion on his children. For he knows our frames; He remembers that we are but dust.”* Jesus understands our physical needs. When Elijah was depressed and ran away from Jezebel and was hiding, the angel of the Lord met up with him and said, *“What are you doing here?”* Then he fed him and let him sleep. He did this twice, and when Elijah was strengthened, then the Lord dealt with him about his *pity-party* and told him to get back out there and not be afraid. (Ref. 1 King 19:1-18).

Jesus had to deal with this situation, and He dealt first and foremost with the *ringleader*, the one who had first deserted and caused the rest to follow. This is a lesson for us when we have problems in the church and divisions and schisms come up. We need to first go to the head, the one who started the whole thing.

“So when they had dined... ” They had eaten. They were warm. They had rested. They were feeling better physically. Now Jesus addressed the motives: “...Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon son of Jonas...” He didn’t call him *Peter* but *Simon*. Peter means, “You’re a chip off the rock, and I’m the Rock.” But Peter was not demonstrating this kind of behavior.

Lovest Thou Me?

“Simon, son of Jonas, Lovest thou Me more than these? And he said unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus said unto him, Feed my lambs. He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of Jonas, Lovest thou me? He said unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.” (The shepherd feeds lambs and sheep, baby Christians and mature Christians. You need to be in a church where they do both.)

“He saith unto him a third time, Simon, son of Jonas, Lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him a third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all these things. Thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus said unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily I say unto thee, when thou was young, thou girded thyself, and walked whither thou wouldst, but when thou shall be old, thou shall stretch forth thy hands, and

another shall gird thee, and carry thee where thou wouldest not. This spake he signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he said unto him, Follow me” (vv.15-19). These were the same words Jesus had uttered to him on the Sea of Galilee over three years before: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

AGAPE VS. PHILEO

Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him, and the third time Peter was grieved and even broke down and cried. What is going on here? Was it because Jesus asked him *three times*? No. The word AGAPE describes the strongest, most intense form of love described in the Greek language. It was never used outside of the Bible, because there really was no call for it. It was used in the N.T. because it signified the kind of love that God has for us, best stated in John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son...” AGAPE love will sacrifice itself for the one loved, even at great personal cost, in order to meet the needs of the one who is the object of his love. The first two times Jesus said to Peter, “Simon, lovest thou me?” He used AGAPE. “Do you love me with AGAPE love?” But Peter answered, “Lord, You know I PHILEO love you.”

PHILEO means *fondness*,

friendly love, buddy-love. It is greater than just an *acquaintance*, but it's not *AGAPE*. If you are married, you may have friends, even of the opposite sex, with whom you are really good friends. You like to talk to and be around them. You are *fond* of them, but you don't *AGAPE* them. You *AGAPE* your husband, you *AGAPE* your wife, your children, etc. So when Jesus said, "Lovest—*AGAPE*—thou me?", Peter said, "Yes, I *PHILEO* you." Jesus said, "*Feed my lambs.*" In other words, "*Prove it. Show me. Feed my lambs!*"

More than These?

The first time Jesus had said "*Do you love me more than these?*" There are different opinions amongst scholars who "these" refer to. Did He point to the *other six disciples*, or to the fish? "*Do you love me more than these 153 fish?*" They represented what Peter was going back to: "Do you love me more than you love your old lifestyle? Than being your own boss? Than doing your own thing? Than having your own business? Than running your own show?" I believe that's what He meant, because Peter could not use Jesus' word: "I *AGAPE* you more than these," when he was caught red-handed going back to fishing.

The second time Jesus asked: "*Do you AGAPE me?*", Peter said, "*I PHILEO you, Lord. You know I*

do." I'm sure by then he had a quiver in his throat. But the third time Jesus actually asked him, "*Do you PHILEO me?*" In other words, this time Jesus used Peter's word *PHILEO* back at him: "Do you *PHILEO* me? Are you *fond* of me?" That's what made Peter break down and cry. He realized he was not demonstrating that he truly loved the Lord, because he had abandoned his ministry.

This served to humble Peter more than anything, even more than his prior failure when he denied the Lord three times. Because for the first time, Peter was forced to be *honest about being honest with himself*. (Read that again!) Often times people say, "Well, I'm honest with myself, and I admit such-and-such," but the whole time they are back peddling, trying to justify themselves, trying to mitigate their behavior. *When you are truly honest about being honest with yourself*, you say, "I see jealousy in my heart. I don't like it; I don't even like admitting it, but it is there. I am jealous of that person." It is the most uncomfortable thing to do, and people don't want to feel that uncomfortable feeling, so they gloss over it, and hurry up and move on to something else. But if you will learn to stay in that moment, as uncomfortable as it is, the truth will set you free.

Peter was uncomfortable, because not only was he getting a

spanking from the Lord, *he was getting it in front of everybody else!* At least God will deal with us personally, in the privacy of our own hearts if we let Him. Right now, as you read this word, God is dealing with some of you about issues, but it is in the privacy of your own spirit. Peter was getting his in front of the other guys, and for the first time he had to be honest about himself.

Get Back to Ministry!

Then Jesus wisely and lovingly reinstated Peter's mandate to preach the Gospel. He had scolded him publicly. He had exposed his heart and his motivation publicly, and at the same time He said, *"Feed my lambs, feed my sheep, follow me."* He was saying, *"Get back in service!"* *"For the gifts and calling of the Lord are without repentance"*—without revocation! (Rom.11:29). He was saying, *"The calling I gave you three years ago still stands if you are willing to get back out there and go fishing for men."*

Jesus publicly reinstated Peter, and it was important He did it in front of the other guys for three reasons: *First, the devil would not be able to accuse Peter, "You can't preach the Gospel. You quit on God. You went back to your fishing occupation, so you can't preach anymore."* Jesus was letting Peter know not to listen to the devil when he comes, because He

was ordaining him to get back out there and preach.

Secondly, the other disciples would be able to accept Peter as their leader. This was important, because once somebody has failed miserably; others may not want to be under his leadership. They think, *You're not telling me what to do! Who do you think you are? I remember when you messed up!* But in front of all, Jesus was saying, *"My hand and My anointing and My call are still on Peter."* This allowed them to accept him again as their leader.

Thirdly, Peter would not allow self-condemnation make him feel unworthy to minister. This is important for people who have failed God and can't seem to get over it. They have repented, they believe Jesus loves them, and God accepts them, but they walk around depressed with their heads down. They can't get that spark and joy back, because they keep dwelling on how badly they failed God. I've tried to minister to people like this, but after so many times of exhorting, I get exhausted. They are hung up on what they did, that sin, the adultery, or whatever it was, and they beat themselves up forever. *You have to get over it!* Even if your marriage dissolved because of *your adultery*, and you never got back together, it doesn't mean that you are over with God. If your spouse says, "I'm done," that is his/her

Biblical prerogative, but you need to go on with God. You can't lose your soul over it. It would be like Judas hanging himself.

Jesus went on to tell Peter, *"You are young now,"* and when you are young, you think you can do anything, don't you? You think, *I don't need anybody. I'll just do it myself.* But when you get older, you need help. Jesus said, "Now when you want to go somewhere, you put on your own shoes, you put on your own robe, you gird yourself up, and out the door you go. But the day's coming when somebody else will tie your girdle on and put on your shoes and lead you where you don't want to go."

"This spake he signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he said, Follow me" (v.19). He was going to die a martyr's death. The Bible does not record the account of Peter's death, but tradition says that he was executed by Nero in Rome. Nero saw Peter as the ring-leader of the Christians, and he was after him, but the Saints were protecting him. Finally, the time came when God said, "Remember what I told you back there on Galilee? Well, this is the time." It is said that they led Peter into the Coliseum to crucify him, but Peter objected, *"I'm not worthy to be crucified like my Jesus,"* so they crucified him upside down.

Follow Thou Me

Now just to show you, before we close this chapter, how hard it is sometimes to get over a competitive spirit of selfish ambition, look at what Peter said after the Lord told him that he would die a martyr: *"Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved (John) following: which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him, saith to Jesus, **Lord, and what shall this man do?**"*(v.20). Can you believe him? The Lord had just raked him over the coals three times, scolded him, and told him, "Okay, now get back out there and preach, and feed My people. And by the way, the day is coming when someone will lead you where you don't want to go, and you will glorify God by dying a martyr's death." Now, don't you think this would have been all Peter could think about? Instead, he said, *"But what about John?"!* What competitiveness was amongst those disciples!

"Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me" (v.22). In other words, "That is none of your business! Suppose I decide that John will never die, is that any of your business? No—You follow me!"

The Aged Apostle

Peter never got over this inci-

dent, and we understand this when we read what he wrote, as an old man and aged apostle, in his letter:

“The elders which are among you I exhort, whom am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly...” This is a throwback to John 21 when Jesus told him three times, *“Feed my people, feed my lambs, feed my sheep.”* He was *constraining* him, because he had quit the ministry to go back on his own. Here Peter was saying, “You elders, you pastors, you bishops, you who are in charge, feed the flock of God! Your number one priority is feeding the sheep! Whatever else you do in ministry, your first job is to feed the flock!”

“...Not for filthy lucre...” Is this up-to-date for this generation of preachers? Money! Not just money, but filthy money! Peter told the ministers: **“You’re not preaching to make money!”** Paul said. *“The Lord ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel”* (1Cor.9:14). They are entitled to be taken care of. He said, *“Muzzle not the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn”* (v.9). But they should not be accumulating personal riches, multi-million-dol-

lar houses, collections of expensive cars. That’s not preaching the Gospel. Paul called it “abuse of power,” and said to avoid allowing the ministry to suffer blame for the abundance of money given; and those who handle the money must be diligent and proven (Refs.: 1Cor.9:18, 2Cor.8:20-22).

Peter said, *“Don’t do it for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.”* If you are a minister, you should be willing and ready. You should be so excited about ministering, it sets off something in your spirit.

“Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock” (v.3). Peter was being stern: “Who made you lord over God’s heritage? They are His sheep, and He has given you the authority and privilege to feed them.” Paul warned about using ministerial authority to destroy the sheep (2Cor.13:10). Ministers are not only to teach by *precept*, but also by *pattern*. Live the life you preach and teach!

“And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (v.4). Give me my glory then! I do receive *sanctified compliments*, but I don’t receive glory of men. When someone says, “Sister Sharon, your messages and teaching have really helped me,” I receive it as personal encouragement that my ministry is effectual, and I reflect it right

back on the Lord. Give me my glory when I get to Heaven when it will be eternal!

“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time” (vv.5-6).

“Due time” means the right time! God’s time is always the right time. We have all looked back in our lives and seen where we were fretful or impatient, because we wanted to do something, and it didn’t work out. Later it did, and we thought, *I am so glad God didn’t do it then, because I really wasn’t ready for it! I thought I was, but I realize now that I wasn’t. I’m so glad the Lord reined me in!* If you are clothed with humility, He will exalt you in due time.

Humility does not work in the world. I say this because, in the world people will walk all over you. They will mistreat and manipulate you for their own gain. But we are talking about the laws of God’s kingdom on this earth. We understand we are humbling ourselves not to men, but to God, because He’s the one who promotes; who takes down one and lifts up another (Ps. 75:6-7). It takes faith to humble yourself, because inside, you’re thinking: *If*

I humble myself, they will walk right over me, or you think: If I humble myself, they will just pass me over. I have to stand up for myself. But God’s saying, “Humble yourself to Me. Have faith in Me, that I’m the one in control of the situation, and I can move on your behalf.”

James 4:10 says: *“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”* God assists the humble and resists the proud!