

## JOHN

Stories Related To The Last Days Of Christ

June 23, 2019

- I. Today, we are going to look at **John 21:15-25**, and I am dividing these verses into three sections, **vs 15-19**, **vs 20-24**, and **vs 25**. Now because I am dividing these verses into three sections, we will read each section as we get to it.
  - A. From the first section, we will look at the proof of love, the cost of love, and the supreme example of love.
  - B. From the second section we will look at faithfully serving, even if no one joins you.
  - C. And the third section will bring our study of John to a close.
  - D. Pray
- II. The proof of love. The cost of love. The example of love.
  - A. **John 21:15-19** . . . So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love (**agapaō**) Me more than these?" [Peter] said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love (**phileō**) You." [Jesus] said to him, "Tend (*feed*) My lambs (*little or young sheep*)."  
[16] [Jesus] said to [Peter] again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love (**agapaō**) Me?" [Peter] said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love (**phileō**) You." [Jesus] said to him, "Shepherd (*lead, guide, look after*) My sheep." [17] [Jesus] said to [Peter] the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love (**phileō**) Me?" Peter was grieved because [Jesus] said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And [Peter] said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love (**phileō**) You." Jesus said to him, "Tend (*feed*) My sheep. [18] "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." [19] Now this [Jesus] said, signifying by what kind of death [Peter] would glorify God. And when [Jesus] had spoken this, He said to [Peter], "Follow Me!"
  - B. I suspect most of us have enough familiarity with this story to know that there have been some great sermons preached and good books written about it.
    1. And if you are familiar with the Greek language or C.S. Lewis' book, **THE FOUR LOVES**, then you know that in the Greek translation of the NT, two of the Greek words for love – agape and phileo – are used in this story.

- a. For example, the first two times Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him, Jesus uses the Greek word, **agape**. However, the third time Jesus asks the question, He uses the Greek word, **phileo**.
    - b. In all three of his responses, Peter uses the Greek word, phileo, when he says, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.”
  2. Now it is possible there is great significance in Jesus’ and Peter’s use of two different Greek words for love, and that knowing this opens us up to some of the deeper truths God has for us in this story.
    - a. But what if you don’t know Greek or have access to a Greek NT, or what if you have no commentaries to tell you about the different Greek words for love used in this story? What then?
    - b. Does that mean you will miss out on the true message or the deeper message God has for you in this story?
    - c. I don’t think so, and the reason I don’t think so is because I believe that God’s word is living and active, and therefore speaks to whomever will read it carefully, thoughtfully, and prayerfully. And I believe the Holy Spirit teaches whomever wants to be taught. In other words, I am convinced that God speaks through His word regardless of the tools we have or don’t have.
  3. So with that in mind, I will leave it up to the Bible scholars and Greek students to figure out the implications brought out in this story by the use of two different Greek words for love. And today, I want us to focus on three aspects of love. **First**, the proof of love. **Second**, the cost of love. And **third**, the example of love.
- C. However, in preparation for looking at these three aspects of love, I want to bring to your attention three other things.
1. **First**, in His first question to Peter, Jesus asked, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me **more than these**?” So what was Jesus asking when He asked if Peter loved Him “**more than these**?”
    - a. My conclusion is that Jesus was asking if Peter loved Him more than the fishing business or fishing with his buddies. Some think Jesus was asking if Peter loved Him more than he loved his fellow disciples. And there are those who think Jesus was asking if Peter loved Him more than the disciples with Peter loved Jesus.
    - b. Regardless of the exact purpose Jesus had in mind, it is a question we all have to answer. Do you, do I love Jesus, or do we love God more than anyone or anything else?
    - c. Imagine Peter and John considering this question in light of how they had lived the past few weeks. You see, John showed that he

loved the important position in Jesus' kingdom more than he loved Jesus. And Peter showed that he loved personal safety more than he loved Jesus. So did they love Jesus more than anyone or anything else?

- d. Which raises the question: What do my recent choices and behavior, and what do your recent choices and behavior show about our loving Jesus and the Father more than anyone or anything else?
  - (1) Answering this question requires an honest awareness of your recent choices and behavior and what they say about who or what you love the most.
  - (2) And so I will leave it to you to consider the answer to this question for yourself.
2. The **second** thing I want to point out is that when Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him, Peter responded with, "Yes, Lord; **You know** that I love You."
  - a. In the Hallmark movie, Heart Felt, there is a statement that accurately describes reality, and it is, "**Love is often spoken, but seldom found.**"
  - b. Now consider, in spite of what some of his previous behaviors showed, Peter was so certain that Jesus should know he loved Him that he said, "**You know that I love You!**"
  - c. Well, if Jesus knew Peter loved Him, why did He ask? And why did He ask three times?
  - d. My point here is that it is easy to say "I love you!" And it is just as easy to say, "You know that I love you!" But it is quite another thing to show it so consistently and in so many ways that the person we claim to love has a valid reason to know they are loved.
  - e. It is my opinion that those nearest and dearest should not have to ask if we love them, even though they might. And we ought not quickly or easily tell those nearest and dearest that they know we love them, because maybe our behavior says something else.
  - f. May we be among those who love as they ought, for in so doing, our love will speak for itself, and our words of endearment will ring true because of our actions.
3. The **third** thing I want to point out is that Peter was grieved when Jesus asked a third time, "Do you love Me?"
  - a. How easily we are hurt, saddened, or even offended when those nearest and dearest question our love for them. Rather than being grieved, think about how much better it would have been for his

relationship with Jesus if Peter had openly expressed remorse, sadness, and repentance over failing to love Jesus as he ought in the recent past.

- b. For example, rather than feeling grieved, Peter could have humbly said, “Lord you have good reason to question my love for you, for I have treated you badly while you have continued to be good to me. I want to love you as I ought, and I will keep working at it. Please forgive me for failing to do so!”

#### D. The **proof of love**.

1. In **vs15-17**, three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him. Three times Peter affirms his love for Jesus by telling Him that He knows Peter loves Him. And three times Jesus responds by asking Peter to verify his love through the kind of actions that shows he loves Jesus.
2. The reality is, the **proof of love** is not in what we claim, but what we do.
3. One of the greatest challenges to feeling loved or knowing that you are loved is the claim of whole-hearted love by someone whose love for you is partially unsupported, or even contradicted by how they live.
  - a. You see, most of us live what I call “partial love.” We love in some areas and in some ways, while remaining selfish or insensitive or uncaring in other areas and in other ways.
  - b. It’s not that we don’t love, it’s that we don’t love fully. That is, we love in certain ways and in certain areas but not in others.
  - c. And this happens because the when and where we love is controlled by what we want, rather than by what love says we ought to be.
4. For example, Jesus said that we are to love God with a love that takes in all our being, and we are to love our neighbor with a love that is equal to the love we have for ourselves. Paul said that love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. And in another place Paul said that love never fails.
  - a. From these kinds of scripture statements and from the Biblical and experiential examples of God’s love for us, I define love as **seeking the good of everyone who is in any way affected by my choices and behavior**.
  - b. My point is that in each of these statements or definitions of love there is no place or room for partial love or self-selected areas of love that leave us free to have one or two areas of selfishness.

- c. And yet, most of us, if not all of us, love partially rather than fully even though most of us want to claim we love fully.
- 5. Which brings me back to the fact that the **proof of love** is not in what we claim, but what we do. It is the actions of love that prove the existence and the presence of love. And it is for this reason that the quote from Hallmark's movie rings so true, "Love is often spoken, but seldom found."
- 6. In **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**, Paul affirms that the proof of love is in love's actions when he says, "Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, [5] does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, [6] does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; [7] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

E. The **cost of love**.

- 1. In **vs 18-19a**, Jesus describes what will eventually happen to Peter should he validate his love for Jesus through his behavior and the direction of his life. And we see from church history that Peter's love for Jesus cost him dearly – and especially so in his death.
- 2. If this is the way of love – and it seems it is – why is love so costly?
  - a. Love is costly because we live in a broken world where sin abounds. Therefore, in seeking the good of everyone – and that includes God – in seeking the good of everyone who is in any way affected by our choices and behavior, love will become costly to the one loving.
  - b. You cannot love God supremely and love your neighbor as yourself and persistently deal with sinful people in a godly way without having to pay the price of dying to such things as self-rule, selfishness, and pride, and without having to put up with foolish, selfish, uncaring, irresponsible, fickle, and sinful people, and without have to deal with things or situations that no one should have to deal with.
  - c. And you cannot love fully without eventually offending or angering those who selfishly want their own way – and want it without being criticized or having to feel as if they are doing something wrong. So here again, love is or will become costly.
- 3. We see how quickly love becomes costly in the life and death of Jesus Christ. And we see this same reality in God, who first created us and then paid the ultimate price of giving His son to die for us.

4. If love is this costly for God and for Jesus, you can be assured that loving others as you ought will – sooner or later – be costly to you.
  - a. For example, it is costly to turn the other cheek when slapped. It is costly to go two miles when forced to go one. It is costly to give more than is being asked for when unjustly sued. And it is costly to do what you can to be at peace with those around you.
  - b. And in a somewhat lesser way, it could cost you public shame for loving your enemies. It might cost open disapproval from those who think you are a fool for showing mercy to someone who has hurt you or who has hurt someone you love. And it will cost having less for yourself or your family when you share what little you have with someone in need.
5. There is no getting around this reality, love is often costly when lived out in a fallen world. Therefore, may we be just as willing to pay the cost of love as we are to receive the gracious and loving, yet costly gift of redemption from God through Jesus Christ.

F. The **example of love**.

1. In **vs 19b**, Jesus said to Peter, "Follow Me!"
2. The way of love is exemplified by God and shown in its most practical ways through the life and death of Jesus Christ.
3. We often speak and sing of God's love for us, and we quote scriptures describing God's love for us, but do we use His love as an example of what our love ought to be?
  - a. Do we measure the current state of our love against His love so that we can honestly see where we are loving as we ought, and where we need to improve, and where we need to start loving as we ought?
  - b. Do we do the same with Jesus and His teachings? We ought, for Jesus is our premier example of what love looks like and how it ought to act in a fallen world.
4. If we will follow Him and learn from Him, if we will read the gospels and ponder the how and whys of the ways He thought, spoke, and acted, and if we will learn to think and reason and desire and speak as He did, we will learn how to love and prove our love through how we live.

G. **John 21:20-24** . . . Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" [21] So

Peter seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" [22] Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" [23] Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?" (*How easily we miss the truth by careless listening, drawing quick conclusions, and treating our assumptions as fact.*) [24] This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

1. There are two things I want us to see here.
  - a. **First**, it is the immature child in us that wonders why so-and-so isn't helping when we are being asked to do something!
  - b. And **second**, too often, the followers and servants of Jesus Christ end up serving alone or with a small group of faithful believers. It shouldn't be this way, but it often is.
2. I grew up singing the song, "I Have Decided To Follow Jesus." The words of the second verse fit perfectly here because they say, "Tho' none go with me, still I will follow!"
  - a. And this is the important lesson here. What God asks of me, I need to do even if I have to do it alone.
  - b. And the same is true for you. For example, God asks you to love your spouse, even if your spouse doesn't love you or love you all that much. God asks you to care for the needy, even if you're the only one doing it. And this line of reasoning can go on for hours, for God's asks much of us – even if we are the only ones doing it.
3. Faithful service says much about our character, our commitment to God, our love for God, and our zeal for godliness. May we be faithful, even if it means being faithful alone.

### III. Conclusion

- A. **John 21:25** . . . And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.
- B. Communion
  1. Do you love God more than anyone or anything else?
  2. Are you willing to join Jesus in paying the cost of love?
  3. Will you join Jesus in giving faithful service – even if it means serving alone?