

## John 21:15-19 (Frances George Burkitt) 56064

Christian Truth: Volume 8, Peter's Restoration: The Question, Answers, and Commission

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There is much practical instruction in the touching account of Peter's restoration given us in John 21. Three times he had denied his Lord with oaths and curses; but after one "look" from Jesus had touched Peter's heart, he went out and wept bitterly.

But the root which produced the failure had not yet been reached. The root was self-confidence. Peter had said, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I," and again, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death." No doubt he honestly meant it, but how little he knew his own heart!

It is just so with ourselves. If we think we are strong, it is then we are sure to go down. True strength, for the Christian, is to be found in a consciousness of his own utter weakness and complete dependence on the Lord. "When I am weak, then am I strong," is not understood by the man of the world, but the Christian who is going on in communion with God, knows well what it means.

And mark the grace of the Savior; He does not say one word of reproach to Peter. True, He reaches his conscience and probes it to the bottom; but this was in grace so that Peter might be thoroughly restored. True self-judgment and true restoration always go together.

The change of words used in the questions and answers, which is not seen in the King James Version, but which has been pointed out by many scholars, is instructive to notice. It is as follows:

### THE QUESTIONS

Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?

Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?

Simon, son of Jonas, dearly lovest thou Me?

### THE ANSWERS

Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I dearly love Thee.

Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I dearly love Thee..

Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I dearly love Thee.

### THE COMMISSION

Feed my lambs.

Tend (or shepherd) My sheep.

Feed My sheep.

The Lord addresses Peter three times. First He says in effect, "Simon, do you really love Me more than do these other disciples?" The second time Jesus does not bring in the comparison with the others. The third time He takes up Peter's own stronger word, and says, "Dearly lovest thou Me?" In his reply Peter falls back on the Lord's divine knowledge that he did indeed dearly love Him.

Now that the work of restoration was complete, the Lord could entrust to Peter that which was most precious to Him. "Feed My lambs," He says. These little ones of the flock who need special care are the first He commits to Peter. Then, "Tend [or shepherd] My sheep." And last, "Feed My sheep." Peter himself, in his epistle, takes up the second word here used; "Tend the flock of God which is among you," he says to the elders.

For this blessed service Peter was fitted now that he was restored and in the happy enjoyment of communion with Christ. We too may know a little of it if we are walking in communion with Him.