

More Than These

John 21:15A

By

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So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, “Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” John 21:15A

The key word in today’s discussion is “More”. More, as defined by Webster, means “greater in amount, quantity, or degree; a greater number of persons or things, something of greater importance and to an increasing degree.” As we can see by the richness of the definition of the term, that the application of the meaning will have not only a great, but broad influence on the message that Jesus imparts to us through Peter in His use of the phrase **MORE THAN THESE**.

The value judgement implied in this phrase is what draws our attention to it. It is my opinion that within these three words lie a deep potent message about not just the status of Peter’s relationship with Christ, but also about the current condition of our

relationship with Christ as well. I believe that this phrase “**MORE THAN THESE**” reveals the quality of the value system that we use in the building of our relationship with Christ.

Theologians have long debated over just what Jesus meant when He put this question to Peter. In order for us to fully appreciate the challenge that Jesus confronts Peter with, we must first have a better idea of the circumstances that led to this challenging question in the first place. The disciples had just completed an all-night fruitless fishing expedition. They had not been able to catch one single fish. Then Christ appears before them as a stranger and asks them if they have any meat. They replied no. So, the Lord told them to cast their nets on the right side of their boat and when they did they could hardly handle their nets because they were so full of fish. These were not just any size fish, according to John they were great fish,

153 to be exact! Looking at the catch and then looking back at the stranger, John realized that it was the Lord and said the same to Peter. Peter immediately put his clothe back on and jumped out of the boat to grab the net. Jesus invited them to come ashore and have a meal with him and of course they were only too happy to oblige. This was the third time that Jesus had appeared to His disciples since his resurrection and it was on this occasion that Jesus chose to restore Peter back to his right relationship with God and his responsibility as a servant.

Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him **MORE THAN THESE**. First notice that Jesus addressed Peter as Simon son of Jonas. This was Peter's old name, his given name, the name before Christ had come into his life. Peter had reverted back to his old nature and Jesus was there to help him overcome that old nature, thus restoring him. "Do you love me

MORE THAN THESE? Some theologians feel that **MORE THAN THESE** was a gentle reminder that there had been a time when he had been an arrogant, self-righteous, legend in his own mind. He used to think that he was foremost in zeal, boldest in faith, and truest in love more than the other disciples. Well, now he had been tried by fire, weighed in the balance and found wanting. He had now come face to face with his own frailties, short comings, and weaknesses. Peter now knew the ugly truth about himself and he realized that he was at best the least of his colleagues. Life had given Peter a taste of humble pie and he ate the whole thing. He would not dare to compare himself with the others now and yet it was Peter who had said, if you will recall, ***“Though all should deny thee, yet will I not!”*** Now when he invites the Lord to read his heart, and see its love, Peter with true modesty hesitates to use the same value of love which the Lord uses to describe his measure of

affection. “***Peter do you have Agape for me More Than These?*** Do you have the love for God in you more than you have for your brothers? Peter replies “I have Philos for you. I love you like a friend. Matthew Henry, in his commentary, applies another level of meaning to this phrase: First he says do you love me more than you love the other disciples? Those that do not love Christ aright, that do not love Him better than the best friend they have in the world are not worthy of a relationship with Him.

And then there are those theologians who think that what Christ meant with this question was: one day I called you Peter, and then you responded, rose up at once, left all, and followed me, but you are back now, back at that old life once again. That old nature hath taken control of you again. Are you going to abandon me again? Are you pulling out of this great adventure, having put your hand to the

plow, are you now looking back? Do the old ties tug at your heart strings more than your affection for me? Or do you still love me **More Than These?** I must say that as I consider the arguments put forth by these various theologians, I find merit in all of their interpretations of the question. It is a question that pierces deep into the soul, so deep in fact it took that boastful spirit out of Peter and replaced it with a meek and humble spirit.

I know what you are thinking. You are thinking to yourselves this was a good story preacher, but what has that got to do with me? Well, let me hurry to answer that question for you. If you live long enough life will take you places that you never thought you would go. You will get to see things that you never want to see and go through stuff that you will never want to go through. And sometimes when you find yourself in those situations your faith will be shaken to its core. Jesus wants to know

where your faith is or will be in times like this. Where will your loyalties be and most importantly where and how deep is your love. Do you love me **More Than These: More than your stuff, More than your circumstance, More than your broken heart, More than your family, More than your friends, More than your popularity, more than your health, more than your wealth, More than life itself. Do you Love Jesus More Than These?**