

What About This Man?

John 21:15-24 -So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My lambs.” He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Tend My sheep. 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.” Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me!” 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?” So, Peter seeing him said to Jesus, “Lord, and what about this man?” Jesus said to him, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!” 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?” This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

Introduction:

- A. When a congregation is working as God would have us do, we avoid many of the pitfalls that can befall us spiritually that can come from idleness in God's service.
- B. But even at that, problems can arise, even when we are doing our assigned work, which can trouble us in Christ. Some may refuse to work (2 Thess 3:4-13). They were working (but some would not) to provide for their families and selves. Other problems may come up that may divide the believers, even while they work for unity (Acts 6:1-7). Like the widows in Jerusalem.
- C. Such a problem is found among the apostles as Jesus predicted their future service as recorded in Jn 21:15-24. It is this problem we want to study and derive a lesson from.

I “What About This Man?”

A. The context of the question:

- 1. Peter had been informed that he must come to “Love” Jesus beyond a fondness of friendship to the devotion of the selfless love He had shown to them that they might “FEED HIS SHEEP” - Jn 21:15-17
- 2. Peter is informed he will die a terrible death in old age for the name of Christ - Jn 21:18-19
 - a. Later, he saw it coming and remembered the prophecy - 2 Pet 1:14

2 Peter 1:14 - knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

- 3. Peter refers to another disciple - Jn 21:20, 24

B. The question was:

- 1. “What about this man?” - Jn 21:21
- 2. Some thoughts on the question...
 - a. If Peter would die a terrible death for Christ's cause, would it be unfair if John didn't also similarly suffer?

- 1) Which of us hasn't felt the unfairness of suffering when we have to face it, and others do not?
- b. If Peter suffered and John didn't, would that make Christ one who has favorites, protecting John in a way he did not protect Peter?
- c. Can God be fair, and yet tolerate or allow some unfair thing to happen in this world?
- d. We have to recognize that such questions go beyond the realm of our understanding, and we dare not question God's wisdom

C. Consider Jesus' answer

1. The implication that Jesus would have favorites did not receive an answer – it was not worthy of one
2. Peter understood later God is no respecter of persons - Acts 10:34-35

Acts 10:34-35 - Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.

3. But there was an issue of personal responsibility here - Jn 21:22

- a. Why did it make a difference to Peter what burdens John would be asked to bear?
 - 1) If one could not bear the burden laid upon another, is God unfair by giving him only what he can bear, and no more?
 - 2) Do we have any right at all to question God's wisdom and judgment in this or anything else?
- b. We must be careful to avoid such evil, unfair judgment.

- 1) Jesus condemned it in personal matters - Matt 7:1-5

Matthew 7:1-5 - "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

- 2) It is not allowed in spiritual matters - Rom 2:1-11

Romans 2:1-11 - Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.

- 3) Practicing MERCY is required or else we sin in our favoritism toward men - Jas 2:8-

James 2:8-13 - If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,” you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. For He who said, “DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY,” also said, “DO NOT COMMIT MURDER.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So, speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy, mercy triumphs over judgment.

4) Beware lest you be found putting yourself ABOVE God's law as a JUDGE - Jas 4:11-12

James 4:11-12 - Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

c. Jesus' words still ring today with authority: “You follow Me!”

1) With heart, soul, mind, strength - Lk 10:25-28

Luke 10:25-28 - And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” And he answered, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” And He said to him, “You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE.”

2) It is thus not our place to question, but to obey!

3) Focusing on the conduct or shortcomings or blessings of others in no way affects our personal responsibility

II. *What Must We Conclude From This?*

A. We have personal responsibility before God for things done in our lives

1. Personal conduct - 2 Cor. 5:10

2 Corinthians 5:10 - For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

2. Doing good - Gal 6:4-10

Galatians 6:4-10 - But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. For each one will bear his own load. The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. (NAS95)

3. Edifying others - 1 Thess 5:11

1 Thessalonians 5:11 - Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

4. Love - 1 Thess 4:9-10

1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 - Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it

toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more

- B. This is not changed ONE BIT by those who shirk their duty or are not faithful o their responsibilities
- C. There is a right way to deal with shortcomings of others, which is NOT what Peter did
 - 1. Rescue him - Jude 22-23

Jude 22-23 - And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

- 2. Convert him - Jas 5:19-20

James 5:19-20 - My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

- 3. Restore him - Gal 6:1

Galatians 6:1 - Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

Conclusion:

- A. Have you hid behind the supposed unfairness of God in trying to escape your personal responsibility to God?
- B. There will be plenty of hypocrites in Hell--would you enjoy being with them there?
- C. Why not be delivered from the terrible consequences of your own sins by being cleansed in Christ's blood!