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How Do You Love Jesus?—P2

“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’” (John 21:15 NASB).

Today, when the world talks about love, it means an emotional “feeling” that is a passionate fire one moment, and the next as cold as ice. People fall in and out of this self-serving “love” every day. This is not the love of God. He cares little for an emotional experience that cannot weather the challenges of life.

In John 21:15, the Greek word for “love” that Jesus uses is not the same word Peter uses. Jesus is asking Peter if he “agapas” Him. Peter responds that he “philo” Jesus. What’s the difference? Everything. Jesus asked Peter if his love was committed and obedient, but Peter replied that his love was affectionate and emotional. Twice, Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him with commitment, and both times, Peter replies that he loves Jesus with “fondness.”

He could not say that he loved Jesus with commitment, so Jesus *“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’”* (Jn. 21:17). This time, Jesus switched his question to “philo”—in essence, He is asking Peter if he even really loves Him with fondness and affection. This grieved Peter, but he just couldn’t seem to confess a committed love for Jesus. At this point, Jesus tells Peter, *“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!’” (Jn. 21:18-19) Jesus’ point here is that the days of Peter’s self-serving love are over, and he must love Jesus with an obedience, commitment, and faithfulness that will endure the tough times ahead.

The reality is that true Biblical love endures through trials, temptations, and difficulties—it does not walk away. You stand by your love even when it is the last place you want to be at the moment. Rather than a “love” that needs self to be “happy,” it is a love that sacrifices self for the other person. This is what it means to *“love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength”* (Mk. 12:30). This is the only love that is genuine, and it is the only love God cares about, for in such manner He *“demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom. 5:8). The love of God and the love He desires from us is **demonstrated** love.

The Bride of Christ is to love Jesus with a deep, committed love that obeys, holds fast, and follows through in difficult times. This is why Jesus says, *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments”* (Jn. 14:15), for *“He who does not love Me does not keep My words”* (Jn. 14:24a), and *“He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me”* (Matt. 10:38). This is far from unreasonable, for *“we know love by this, that He laid down His life for us”* (1 John 3:16a). Jesus bore our cross for our sake—it wasn’t His cross to bear, yet He bore it FOR us with great personal cost to Himself, so we might be saved and be joined to Him. May we grow to love Jesus with the same *“steadfastness of Christ”* (2 Thess. 3:5b) - the true love that *“endures all things”* (1 Cor. 13:7b). Amen.

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