

THE LAST WEEK OF THE LORD JESUS ON EARTH
IXd. PETER'S RESTORATION AND JESUS' SEARCHING
QUESTION 5 (cont.) Early Iyar (late April), A.D. 33

John 21:14-18

“¹⁴This is already ⁰third |time| /Jesus was-displayed to-His /disciples after-being-raised-up out-of ⁰dead-ones. ¹⁵Then when they-finished-eating-breakfast, /Jesus says to-the Simon Peter, Simon of-Jonah^[Yōnāhs], [§]Are-you-persistently-loving^[sovereignly preferring over self and others] Me more than-these^{[men or things (fish, nets, and boat) or both]?} He-says to-Him, Yes, Lord! Yourself, You-perceive^[are-aware] that I-am-persistently-fond-of^[tenderly-affectionate-toward] You[§]. He-says to-him, Persistently-feed the lambs of-Mine! ¹⁶He-says to-him again, ⁰second |time|, Simon of-Jonah^[Yōnāhs], [§]Are-you-persistently-loving^[sovereignly-preferring-over-self-and-others] Me? He-says to-Him, Yes, Lord! Yourself, You-perceive that I-am-persistently-fond-of^[with-tender-affection-toward] You[§]. He-says to-him, Persistently-shepherd the sheep[&] of-Mine! ¹⁷He-says to-him the third |time|, Simon of-Jonah^[Yōnāhs], [§]Are-you-persistently-fond-of^[with-tender-affection-toward] Me? /Peter ^[ingressive-aorist-passive]became-grieved because He-said to-him the third |time|, Are-you-persistently-fond-of^[with-tender-affection-toward] Me? And he-said to-Him, Lord, Yourself, You-are-persistently-perceiving all-things[~]. [§]You-know^[from-experience] that I-am-persistently-fond-of^[with-tender-affection-toward] You[§]. /Jesus says to-him, Persistently-feed the sheep[&] of-Mine! ¹⁸Amen, amen, I-am-saying to-you[§], When[§] you-were-younger, you-were-repeatedly-girding yourself[§]. And [§]you-were-repeatedly-walking where you-were-determinedly-willing. But whenever you-grow old, you-shall-extend the hands of-yours and another^[same-kind] shall-gird you[§] and he-shall-bring |you[§]| where yourself, you-are-determinedly-willing not |to-go|. ¹⁹Now He-said this, signifying by-what-kind-of death he-will-glorify^j The God. And after-saying this, He-repeatedly-says to-him, Persistently-follow Me!” (John 21:14-19 APT).

Introduction: What question did The Resurrected Lord Jesus Christ ask Peter on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, which brought to his remembrance his boast and denial? How does this question pertain to us all today? What is the highest and most effective motivating force in human life? (*ἀγάπη*) **Ahgáhpay Love!**

After His Resurrection-Ascension during the following forty days, The Lord Jesus very specifically and deliberately took steps to restore Peter to fellowship and discipleship before He ascended to Heaven the second time after His Resurrection-Ascension, which occurred on the third day after crucifixion. Previously we considered Peter's Conversion and Restoration to discipleship

When professing believers in The Lord Jesus Christ seriously go astray from Him, they must go back to where they first started to follow Him as Peter did. Most often those who seriously go astray in publicly denying The Lord Jesus Christ as Peter did, want to just pick up where they left off thinking they did accept Him once, but without seriously considering the consequences that their previous behavior invoked. Now they need to go back to where they first started to follow the Lord and be converted and regenerated as Peter did and this time the persistent following must not have a long interruption. But immediately an interruption takes place repentance and confession must be forth-coming in order to be restored without delay.

We considered three facts in The Process of Peter's Restoration - his

Spiritual Conversion (21:2-22) and Considered the Circumstances:

1. A Frustrating Morning in Galilee after spending the whole night casting and dragging nets fruitlessly, having caught nothing.
2. A Familiar Miracle: multiplication of fish to feed the eight tired and hungry disciples. One hundred-fifty-and-three equals fifty times three plus three more, a total of 153 great fishes.
3. A Forceful Manifestation of Jesus' power and insight - miraculously fed for the third time.

Then The Lord Jesus persisted with Peter until Peter recognized and confessed his lack of true love, sovereignly preferring The Lord Jesus Christ above all others (both people and things) and substituting the word meaning 'affection' for '*ἀγάπη* (ahgáhpay) Love'.

We then considered The Lord's Confrontation with Peter and the question asked three times, each of which He used to cause Peter to consider his need to 1/Recognize the Inadequacy of his Love, his self-denying, self-renouncing, self-surrendering, and self-sacrificing love; 2/ Reverse his Indifference to the meaning of 'Love'; and 3/ Reverse his Direction in love i.e. his affection, by insistently asking The Question that Searches: Sin, Stubbornness, and Selfishness within and calls for: Sacrifice, Surrender, and Complete Submission.

Then we considered the five results of The Searching Question that The Lord Jesus Christ asked of Peter (Jn. 21:15) the first of which question Searches the Depths of the Heart and Reveals the Inadequacy of Love. 'Loving' is the translation of the present indicative tense Greek verb *ἀγαπάω* (Ahgáhpáhō) which indicates linear (progressive) action which never ends nor stops. Its literal meaning is 'persistently-sovereignly-preferring-over-self-and-others.' Jesus used this word which is the highest level of emotion in His question to Peter, but Peter answered Him with a word which is the next level lower than Ahgáhpáhō or as it is recognized in English ahgáhpay love (refer to Chart of "The Continuum of Love in The Greek Language" on Happy Heralds' Web-site under Charts). This highest level of love has four aspects in order to identify it. Each of these aspects were prevalent in the Life of The Lord Jesus Christ in order to provide Salvation, Eternal Absolute Life, and the enabling power and ability to implement them in the regenerated human, therefore The God expects these to be demonstrated in the life of those who appropriate His Salvation and Eternal Absolute Life in exchange for, and as a result of, receiving His gift of Ahgáhpay-Love. These four aspects are not produced by human effort but by appropriating them by faith even as Salvation and Eternal Absolute Life is appropriated. They are produced by The Holy Spirit in demonstrating gratitude that is motivated by Him. Then we considered the question that The Lord Jesus asked Peter.

- I. This question Searches The Depths of the Heart in four aspects, which were examined and carefully observed in the life of The Lord Jesus Christ. These four aspects of *ἀγάπη* (ahgáhpay) Love are: Self-denying (Jn. 8:28,29; Rom. 15:3; Phil. 2:7,8), Self-renouncing - giving up one's will, interests, and desires (Jn. 5:30; 6:38). Self-surrendering of: the will, the emotions, and control (Phil. 2:5-8), and Self-sacrificing (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 1 Jn. 3:16; 4:9,10; Eph. 5:2; Jn. 15:13 cf. Rom. 5:10). The Lord Jesus Christ came Earth out of *ἀγάπη* Love for the purpose of giving Himself as a sacrifice through an intense agonizing death on the cross of Calvary for you and me and the whole world including all of the sinful humanity of all time.

II. This *ἀγάπη* (ahgáhpay) Love Searches the Desires of the Heart (Ps. 37:4)- This Question Reveals the Incongruity of Love, “Loving **Me**” in three aspects.

A. Rejection of Truth Displayed.

Peter displayed Rejection of Truth when Jesus revealed to His disciples what suffering and death was to come upon Him in ten months time. Peter rebuked Jesus for even thinking that such a thing would happen to Him. Then in response to Peter’s behavior, The Lord Jesus expressed rejection to Peter’s reaction and indicated it was motivated by Satan.

B. Erection of Building Desired (Mt. 17:4,5).

Peter was caught up in a wordly concept of the populace concerning erecting a building as a memorial for famous religious leaders who have impacted their religion. But he was instantly rebuked by God The Father, calling out loudly from Heaven and called attention away from their action toward erection to put all their attention upon His Beloved Son. Then He caused them to see no one, neither Moses nor Elijah, but Jesus only.

C. Recognition Deprived (Jn. 18:10,11 cf. Mt. 26:51-54).

When the Jewish leaders and the Temple Militia came into the Garden of **Gethsaymahnáy** to arrest Jesus and take Him to the high priests’ houses for trial before crucifixion, Peter struck the high priest’s bondsman with a short sword and cut off his outer ear. Instead of recognizing Peter’s loyalty and bravery, The Lord Jesus rebuked Peter and told him to put his sword into the scabbard. Then He asked Peter. “⁵³Do-you-suppose that I-am- not -able at-this-present-time to-entreat My Father to-stand-alongside Me more-than seventy-two thousand angels? ⁵⁴How then should The Scriptures be-fully-fulfilled? Because it-is-absolutely-necessary to-come-to-pass in this way” Mt. 26:52-54 APT).

III. This Question Searches the Delights of the Heart and Reveals the Intensity of Love. “^SAre-you-persistently-loving[sovereignly-preferring-over-self-and-others] Me more-than these?” (v. 15 cf. Mt. 26:31,33; Mk. 14:27,29).

The pronoun ‘these’ is genitive plural and indicates men or things or both i.e. disciples, fishing equipment, and fish, all were the delights of Peter’s heart. What are the delights of your heart which draw you away? which draw me away? In order for us to benefit from Peter’s experience, we each must apply this question to our own hearts! There are three things that draw away from our intensity of *ἀγάπη* Love: Pride, Profession, and Possessions, just like Peter was drawn away from his lack of *ἀγάπη* Love by these very same attractions. We particularly discussed how he was turned back by such lack three times (Mk. 1:16-20; Mt. 4:18-22; Jn. 2:12; Lk. 5:1-6,11; 21:1-3).

A. His Pride “I” (Lk. 22:33; Jn. 21:3). That terrible ‘I’ gets in the way too often. Peter displayed that he had a problem with this. During the evening following the Seder observance and the introduction of The Lord’s Supper to the twelve disciples and Jesus announced His betrayal and gave Judas the morsel of dipped bread. Then Judas was excused and departed (Jn. 13:21-30). Then The Lord Jesus announced that he was continuing with His disciples only for a little space of time and then He was slipping-away to where they are not able to come (Jn 13:33). Peter interrupted and asked, “O-Lord,because-of-what am-I- not -able-to-follow You^S at-this-present-time. I-will-lay-down the natural-life^[soul] of-mine in-behalf-of You^S” (Jn. 13:37 APT). We know that

Peter did not fulfill his boast, but denied The Lord three times twice, before the first and after the second cockcrow that very same morning. B. His Profession 'Fishing' (Jn 21:3 cf. Mk. 1:16-18).

When Jesus found Peter first being brought to Him by Andrew, Peter was an experienced fisherman who owned his own boat and fishing equipment including all kinds of nets. The fishing business was his means of livelihood before he became a disciple of The Lord Jesus Christ. At first Peter was attracted to keep his hand in fishing while attempting to follow The Christ. Then in Luke 4 he abandoned fishing and faithfully followed his Master, Jesus, until the arrest and abduction of his Master, then he fell apart. When he learned of His Resurrection-Ascension and then lost daily contact with The Lord Jesus, he decided to go back again to his old life-style. But that proved fruitless. However Jesus persisted to dig deep into the root of Peter's problem until Peter acknowledged the difference between two kinds of love. And as many have done down through the centuries and continue even in our day to mistake the true meaning of *ἀγάπη* (ahgáhpay) love meaning 'sovereign-preference-over-self-and-others' and instead substitute, in their mind as Peter did, *φιλέω* (feeléō) love meaning 'kind affection, fondness, or friendship' for *ἀγάπη* love. It is vitally important that every regenerated disciple realize what is the true meaning of *ἀγάπη* love and all that The God expects us to demonstrate in response. He requires us to put Him, His Son, and The Holy Spirit first and foremost as Master before oneself and others in everything we do.

It took three probing, heart searching questions to bring Peter to recognize the difference and acknowledge that he fell short of this love by finally acknowledging that what he meant in this matter of love was less than The Lord Jesus expected? How do you answer this question? How do I?

IV. This Question concerning *ἀγάπη* love Searches the Deceit of the Heart and Reveals the Inconsistency of Love in three areas: selfishness, stubbornness, and sinfulness which covers worldliness.

A. Selfishness (Jer. 17:9,10).

Jeremiah the prophet wrote concerning The heart that:

“⁹The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? ¹⁰I The LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings ” (Jer. 17:9,10).

It is The **LORD Jehovah** who searches the heart to determine the inner thoughts and intents of every individual. But the individual human reflects the inner thoughts and intents by his overt actions. Simon Peter reflected such thoughts by means of his boast when The Lord Jesus told him that Satan demanded them all for Himself to sift them as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith fail not (Lk. 22:31,32). Peter's answer was,

“³³. . . O-Lord, I-am ready to- journey [in-company-] with You^s both unto a-protective-guardhouse and unto death. ³⁴But He said, I am saying to you^s, Peter, ⁰A-rooster will-positively not crow today sooner-than three-times ^syou-shall- utterly-deny-for-yourself that you^s are-aware-of Me” (Lk. 22:33 APT).

Peter never dreamed he would have done this. But we all have some selfishness dwelling within. Remember that Jesus taught, “¹⁹For out of-the heart exit: wicked contrivances, murders, adulteries,

sexual-immoralities, thefts, false-testimonies, blasphemies” (Mt. 15:18 APT). These things all stem from selfishness. Most of us would think that we would never do such things, but become surprised when we discover the reality of this Truth which Jesus taught. And out of astonishment question, if only silently to ourselves, What have I done?

But when the love of and for The Lord Jesus Christ shines in, things are different! Have not you found it so?

B. Stubbornness (Ps. 139:23,24; Mt. 16:22,23).

The Psalmist, David recognized that The God knew all about him and submitted himself for close examination by searching his heart to reveal to himself what displeased The Lord and needed correcting to give him clear access to The God. He wrote,

“²³Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23,24).

Now Peter needed such searching in order for him to be restored to the position of discipleship and in order that Peter would be able to be regenerated and indwelt by The Holy Spirit in c. a month later as Jesus had promised. Peter’s stubbornness stood in the way of that happening, just as it hinders The Holy Spirit from regenerating and indwelling anyone to day. Remember what The Lord Jesus said to Peter when Peter rebuked Him after He informed His disciples of His soon coming arrest, abduction, trial, condemnation, and dying by crucifixion followed by Resurrection on the third day! Get away from Me, Satan (Mt. 15:23).

C. Sinfulness - Worldliness (Lk. 5:8; 1 Jn. 2:15,16).

Peter recognized his sinfulness when he experienced the miraculous catch of fish (Lk. 5:8). Sinfulness is akin to worldliness because it satisfies the flesh. Worldliness is the quality of loving the world and that which pertains to it which results in Sinfulness and distracts from the *ἀγάπη* love for The Lord Jesus Christ. John wrote in his Epistle what sinfulness is in the sphere of the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

“¹⁵Never love [sovereignly-prefer-over-self-and-others] the world, nor even the~ things in-the-sphere-of-the-world. If (and-it-may-be) anyone love[sovereignly-prefer-over-self-aand-others] the world, the love[sovereignly-prefer-over-self-and-others] for The Father is-continually not within-him.

¹⁶Because the everything in-the-sphere-of-the-world: the passionate-lust of-the flesh, and the passionate-lust of-the eyes, and the arrogant-display of-the manner of life |without The God| is-continually not of TheFather,but-on-the-contrary,it-is of the world.

¹⁷In-fact the world is-progressively-passing-away and the passionate-lust of-it, but the one continually-doing the determined-will of-The God is-continually-abiding for /ever [unto-the- ages]” (1 Jn. 2:15-17 APT).

Worldliness involves preferring anything and everything ‘in-the-sphere-of-the-world,’ which includes: the passionate-lust of-the flesh, and the passionate-lust of-the eyes, and the arrogant-display of-the manner of life without consideration of The God!

We now resume our study of Searching Question that The Resurrected Christ asked Peter on the shore of Galilee.

V. This Question Searches the Devotion of the Heart and Reveals the Insincerity of ones Love.

A. Surrender - Repent at once, constantly commit persistent trust and repeatedly confess that Christ is your Lord and Master in place of

Satan, and to be your Savior (Rom. 10:9,10; 6:12,13).

“⁹If and-it-may-be) ^{\$}you-repeatedly-confess Jesus with-your^{\$}
⁰mouth, Lord! you-repeatedly-commit-trust in-the heart of-yours^{\$}
that The God raised-up Him out-of dead-ones, ^{\$}you-shall-be-saved.
¹⁰For ⁰with-heart He-is-persistently-being-trusted unto righteousness
and with mouth He-is-repeatedly-being-confessed in-regard to salva-
tion” (Rom. 10:9,10 APT).

The very first step to Salvation, Regeneration, and Eternal Absolute Life is Repentance and Surrender to The Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, Lord, and Absolute Master of your life and all it entails. Repentance is an 180 degree turnaround to begin and continuing to pursue life in the opposite direction. Without repentance these wonderful blessings cannot be obtained. Repentance shall be followed by immediate surrender of all one is and has and ever will have unto The Lord Jesus Christ and The God, His Father. Surrender is not just a word to which one casually grants assent without really understanding and giving serious consideration wholehearted attention consistently. It requires the full use of our minds and consciences to keep at full surrender perpetually. And that is only possible if we really mean it and give our all over to The Lord Jesus Christ, Who in turn provides His Holy Spirit to provide enabling power to completely fulfill all that He expects of us. How sincere is your love? How sincere is my love? The next step to Salvation, Regeneration, and Eternal Absolute Life is Sacrifice.

B. Sacrifice (Rom. 6:12-14; 12:1,2).

“¹²Therefore the Sin is-to-stop-reigning in-the mortal body-of-yours[&]
in-order-to-stop-continually-obeying it in-the cravings-of-it! ¹³In-fact-
stop-habitually-offering the members of-yours[&] as-weapons^{[imple-}
^{ments-of-war]} of-Unrighteousness for-the Sin! But-on-the-contrary^{[techni-}
^{cal-term, literally:to-stand-alongside]} offer-at-once yourselves ^{as-sacrifices}^{[cf.}
^{Rom. 12:2]} to-The God as Absolutely-Living-ones out-of⁰dead-onesand
the members of-yours[&] as-weapons^[implements-of-war] of Righteousness
for-The God! ¹⁴For ⁰Sin shall- not -exercise-lordship over-you^{&?”}
(Rom.6:12-14APT).

In his Epistle to The Romans, Paul refers to ‘sacrifice’ twice, in chapters 6 and 12 as the offering of the disciple’s body back to The God not as a dead sacrifice but rather as a living sacrifice. A living disciple wholeheartedly living for The Lord Jesus Christ is of far more value than a dead disciple, unless the will of The God is such that He engineers the circumstances for the disciple wholeheartedly serving Him to become a martyr for Him. But otherwise He gets more glory from the living disciple wholeheartedly serving Him than the dead disciple who was indiscreet and put himself in an imprudent position to die presumptuously for The Christ. Note that Paul refers to the members of the bodies of regenerated saints as weapons or implements of war in the spiritual battle that Satan and his bondslaves (unregenerated people constantly rage against The God and His Christ. Paul made it clear that the members of the bodies of all people are used as war implements for God and beneficial good for Him or for Satan and for evil for Satan’s beneficial good to the detriment of The Gospel.

Again before closing his Epistle, Paul refers to sacrificing the body of the disciple as an-Absolutely-Living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1,2).

“¹I-repeatedly-entreat you[&] therefore, O-brothers, because-of the
compassions of-The God, ^[technical-term, literally: to-stand-alongside] Offer-
at-once the bodies of-yours[&] as-an-absolutely-living sacrifice, holy,

well-pleasing to-The God, [namely| the spiritually-reasonable^[Wordly, controlled-by-The-Word] sacred-service of-yours&. ²And stop-fashioning-yourself-together to-this [world's]age, but-on-the-contrary persistently-be-being-transformed-by-the renewing of your& comprehension! in-order-that-you-prove^[after-testing] what [is| the beneficially-good and well-pleasing and perfectly-complete^[Jas. 1:4,17,25], determined-will-of-The God (Rom. 12:1,2 APT).

Here Paul entreats the disciple-saints because of The God's compassions upon us to offer by standing alongside The Lord Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest to offer as a living sacrifice our bodies as He offered His Perfect Sinless Body for us on Calvary to return in *ἀγάπη* Love our bodies as sacrifices and stop fashioning together with the world and its sensual attire. Do you *ἀγάπη* Love Him enough so that you will offer Him your body to live for Him as Paul exhorted us to do? Do I?

We must suspend the remainder of the searching question until next time.

Conclusion:

Today we began considering the fifth searching question that The Lord Jesus asked Peter after He served the eight disciples on the shore of Galilee. After reviewing the first four questions that The Resurrected Christ asked Peter which also pertain to us, we began considering the fifth aspect of the Searching Question, Do you *ἀγάπη* Love me? We dealt with The matter of the first step to Salvation, Regeneration, and Eternal Absolute Life which is Repentance and Surrender to The Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, Lord, and Absolute Master of your life and all it entails and become His bonds slave, no longer rendering bondservice to Satan. The next step is sacrifice. Paul referred to the members of the bodies of regenerated saints as weapons or implements of war in the spiritual battle that Satan and his bondslaves (unregenerated people) constantly rage against The God and His Christ. Paul made it clear that the members of the bodies of all people are used as war implements for God and beneficial good for Him or for Satan and to be war implements of evil for Satan's beneficial good to the detriment of The Gospel. He entreated the disciple-saints because of The God's compassions upon us that by standing alongside The Lord Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest, to offer as a living sacrifice our bodies as He offered His Perfect sinless Body for us on Calvary to return in *ἀγάπη* Love our bodies as sacrifices and then to stop fashioning together with the world and its sensual attire. Do you Love Him enough so that you will offer to The God and The Lord Jesus Christ your body to live for Him as Paul exhorted us all to do?

Application:

What will you do beginning today to properly respond to Paul's exhortation to offer The God and The Lord Jesus Christ your body?

Dr. Fred Wittman

For next week: Read and meditate upon: the fifth searching question asked of Peter by The Lord Jesus Christ concluded: Succeed in order to Win (Jn. 21:1-23).