

Two Ransoms #4 Do You Love Me More than these Things?

There is a little story at the end of the book of John (John 21) about Peter and some of the disciples that went fishing after Yahshua had resurrected. Now Peter loved fishing. It was something that he really had to give up. He loved it and he really wanted to go. He was leading the charge in this fishing venture (Jn 21:3). So here was Peter and some of the other disciples, taking up the nets again after *they had left them* (Mt 4:18-22; Lk 5:5-11) to follow Yahshua. For them to go back fishing was just like going back to their old life and occupation, to the nets they had left, to the *things* Yahshua had called them away from. He had called them to do something else. But here they were, fishing the whole night, not catching anything. It was probably already in their conscience, and they wondered if they were doing the right thing.

There He was, our Master, standing on the shore, but they didn't know yet it was Him. He was calling to them, "Hey boys, did you catch any fish?" It was almost as if He was making fun of them. Then He told them to cast their net on the other side of the boat. That sounded familiar. They had a catch so large that they couldn't haul it in. Then they understood who it was who was talking to them.

Yahshua asked Peter, "Do you love Me more than these *things*"— these nets that he had taken up again? He asked him three times if he loved Him. Peter was grieved. He understood. He had just denied our Master three times, and now he was out here again, doing *things* that the Master didn't really want him to do, engaging himself in *things* that he had given up and ransomed in order to follow Yahshua. Once again he was brought back to the foundation of discipleship — that following the Master requires a complete ransom of your past life — "The old things have passed away; new things have come" (2 Cor 5:17).

This story brings the cost of discipleship really into focus. What was the Master trying to get Peter to understand? What is the Master trying to get across with this story?

Jn 21:15 — Yahshua didn't ask Peter if he loved Him *more than these*, meaning, "Do you love Me more than these other disciples love Me?" No, that's not what He said and meant at all. He asked Peter whether he loved Him more than *these things* as verse 3 describes — the fishing occupation, the nets, boats, etc., things which Peter had already left behind to follow Him (Mt 4:18-22). Because if Peter did love these things more than he loved Messiah this would preclude or prevent feeding Messiah's lambs the spiritual food they would necessarily need to live a spiritual life. So if Peter took up his nets again the lambs Messiah spoke of in verses 15-17 would not prosper with the spiritual food only the apostles could give His sheep. Also if Peter had his nine to five job or all night fishing job the community would not flourish spiritually (Acts 6:2-4). From this we can see where Peter and the eleven other apostles drew their confidence from to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word, and to establish deacons in the community. They got it from what they learned in the object lesson the Master gave some of them about their lawless fishing venture.

Our Master just happened to be on the shore that morning (Jn 21:1-6). It was a very familiar incident reminiscent of when He first called some of His disciples (Lk 5:4-11). So the question in Jn 21:15 was, "Do you love Me more than these nets (fishing gear) you love so much?" A ransom was required here. What would Peter do? Did he take up the nets again? Or did he feed His sheep? One can't do both.

A disciple is a disciple because he is a disciple of Yahshua. Does what you do preclude you from becoming or being a disciple? *Preclude* means prevent one from following Messiah, from being a disciple of His, from becoming worthy of Him. Do you love anything or anyone more than Him? Your job? Your friends, your family, your possessions? The gospel, if obeyed, sets a person free from all things as the commandment of Yahshua in regard to becoming a disciple of His and following Him is obeyed by a person (Lk 14:26-33). Just as Lk 5:11 says, "They left *everything* and followed Him." That's why Peter, speaking for himself and those who had obeyed the call for discipleship, said to the Master in Lk 18:28 "Behold, we have left behind our own *things* and followed You."

Yahshua asked Peter three times whether he loved Him more than these things which, if he had loved these things more than Yahshua, would have precluded his worthiness of Him (Mt 10:37-38) keeping him, preventing

him from doing His commandments (Jn 14:15).

If one loves anything or anybody more than Messiah it shuts out the possibility of eternal life being granted to him since he is not willing to do His will. Such a person cannot receive faith to be saved, like the rich young ruler in Mk 10:17-30. Peter said in Mk 10:28 that they had left everything and followed Messiah. Yahshua's words in verses 29,30 confirm what Peter and the other disciples had done, and make it totally clear that eternal life cannot be separated from giving up everything for His sake and the gospel's sake.

Mk 8:37 — What will a man exchange for eternal life? His job? His parents? His wife? His children? His house? His farm? His brothers or sisters? Mother or father? His own life? (Mt 10:37-38; Mk 10:29-30; Lk 14:26-27).

Peter had to take up his own cross here in Jn 21:15-17. To love Messiah more than these things, even his own life, required a ransom of his own life and occupation. Peter loved those nets! Peter loved those nets as God loved His own Son (Jn 3:16). But a ransom was required. If God had loved His own Son more than us it would have precluded the only way by which God could save us. It would have prevented salvation from happening, and so it is with us if we do not ransom — exchange what we love — it would also preclude our own salvation. God cannot save anyone who does not see His Son more worthy than their own life, possessions, family, or fishing gear. This is the context in Jn 21:15. See verse 3. “Do you love Me more than these things, the nets?” (2 Cor 5:15,17).