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## John 21, Part II

### The Love Factor

This is the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples as a group, when he addresses Peter: **John 21:15-17: 15.** *When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John (Jonah<sup>h3124</sup>), do you love<sup>(g25)</sup> me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love<sup>(g5368)</sup> you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." 16. Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love<sup>(g25)</sup> me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love<sup>(g5368)</sup> you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." 17. The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love<sup>(g5368)</sup> me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love<sup>(g5368)</sup> me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love<sup>(g5368)</sup> you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep (NIV expresses meanings of certain words more clearly than the KJV).*

Peter only used the word *phileo*<sup>(g5368)</sup>. Jesus used *agape*<sup>(g25)</sup> in the first two questions, while in the third, he used *phileo*<sup>(g5368)</sup>. I have never understood why he did this, and had to seek the Lord for the specific reason. *Agape* expresses the enthusiastic, intense and passionate feelings toward another, and does not normally include sexual. It is the principle of love by which graciousness is always manifested toward others. *Phileo* is the tender affection that a person would have toward a friend or loved one, or the act of friendliness toward a stranger. The Hebrew word *ahab*<sup>(h157)</sup> (aw-habe) incorporates both ideas. Therefore, Jesus asked the same question twice, using two Greek words that would encompass both the principled and the sentimental love.

Verse 15: *Simon, do you love<sup>(g25)</sup> me more than these?* The gender of Greek nouns and pronouns are denoted by the ending of the word, and varies between any particular case, and with single versus plural words. The word for *these* is a plural pronoun in the Genitive case, and has the same ending in the feminine, masculine and neuter. So, Jesus could be asking Peter, *Do you love me more than your boat, fishing equipment and other possessions?* Or, *Do you love me more than the other disciples?* Or, he could mean both possessions and friends. I am inclined, based on his interaction with the rich young man (Lk 18:22-24) that Jesus meant both. However, Peter made a specific statement to Jesus concerning others that would lend credibility to more of a reference to Peter's friends: **Matthew 26:33:** *...Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.* The main point of the question applies to all who would profess Christ, "Do put Jesus Christ foremost and above all worldly possessions, family, friends, jobs, etc?"

Verse 16: *Simon, do you love<sup>(g25)</sup> me as first in your life, with those intense, passionate feelings?* Peter often expressed those feelings in an unsanctified way by his actions (cf Jn 18:10).

Verse 17: *Simon, do you love<sup>(g5368)</sup> me?* Are your eyes only for me; are all your affections first and foremost toward me as your Lord, Savior and the guide of your life?

When Jesus was asked concerning the first of all commandments, he use the Greek word for the principled love, which includes being gracious: **Mark 12:28-31:** *...28. Which is the first commandment of all? 29. And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:30. And thou*

*shalt love<sup>(g25)</sup> the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. 31. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love<sup>(g25)</sup> thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*

What does it mean to love God with all the heart, soul and mind? **Mark 8:15-17:** *15. And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. 16. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. 17. And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?* The heart is a figure for a person's understanding. **Mark 6:52:** *For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.* The metaphor that describes our hearts before we had a correct understanding of an idea, is that of a hard heart. Anyone who will not hear and search out a matter is said to have a hard heart, or a lack spiritual (God's) understanding.

**Leviticus 19:10-11:** *10. And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eats any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul<sup>(h5315)</sup> that eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. 11. For the life<sup>(h5315)</sup> (soul) of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls<sup>(h5315)</sup>: for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul<sup>(h5315)</sup>.* The blood is the soul of the flesh. The blood literally carries a record of what enters the body. Metaphorically, the flesh is man's corrupt way of thinking, and man's corrupt thoughts of which the blood is a figure, and makes us who we are. Therefore, the soul is a figure for the record of who we are.

Metaphorically, the statement to *love<sup>(g25)</sup> the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind* is telling us to manifest passion and enthusiasm toward God with every thought and all of our understanding, every fiber of our being, and all that we are. Make God our priority in all that we do to serve Him, letting our lights shine brightly in this world so that others may come to know the Son of God by means our testimony and conduct. Everyone needs to examine personal motives to ensure a commitment of the *agape* and the *phileo* love for our heavenly Father, and praise Him for all that He has done and given us by means of His only begotten Son, Jesus, the anointed One. Amen!