

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Love Me More . . . ?

Jerry Fite

The third appearance of Jesus after His resurrection was a soul searching one, especially for Peter. Peter led six other apostles on a fishing expedition. After fishing all night without success, the disciples heard a call from the bank for them to cast the net over the right side of the boat. Following the specific instructions led to the catch of 153 fish. The one calling from the bank was Jesus. Learning this, Peter quickly put on his outer garment and jumped into the water some one hundred yards away from the bank. He, with others from the boat, dragged the heavy net to the land, emptied the net, and accepted Jesus' invitation for breakfast. Adding the new catch to the bread and fish already being prepared by Jesus, Peter and six fellow disciples ate on the beach.

After breakfast, Jesus asks Peter a probing question: “*Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?*” (John 21:15). Jesus uses the word for love, *agapas*, emphasizing the “value” one places upon things. Jesus uses this term two of the three times He asks the question. However, the third time Jesus asks the question

of Peter, He uses the term, *phileis*, denoting the feeling of *affection* that one might feel for someone or something rising from a sense of *belonging* to that person or object. Peter responded with this word all three times when asked the same question. The last time was especially grievous for Peter because Jesus was actually questioning Peter's affection due to his sense of belonging to the Lord. He said, “*thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love (philo) thee*” (John 21:17).

The probing question for Peter was reaching into the private recesses of his heart. Why would my Lord after my bitter tears of denying him question by loyalty to Him? He asks me to make a value judgment between Him and this business of fishing. He knows that my love is deeper than a value judgment, I belong to Him. I have deep affection for Him. Yet, my Lord asks me the question. Why does He even go there?

As we enter a new year, it might be good for us to pause and answer the Lord's question. When many have been inundated with new material gifts; when some are thinking about their jobs and how important such employment is for

them and their families, do we value the Lord more than these?

Jesus even demands we value Him above our families. “*He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me*” (Matthew 10:37). We must love Him or value Him above the sense of belonging and the consequent affection we feel for our family members.

What an important question for a new year! The answer will have much to do with determining how diligent our service will be in 2010. Will we let material things, even jobs and family come before our Lord?

Jesus demanded more than an answer from Peter, He implored action. “*Feed my lambs*”; “*tend my sheep*”; and “*feed my sheep*” were the appropriate responses for Peter if he truly loved the Lord more than things. My we not only answer, but may we act appropriately in 2010.