What About John?

John 21:18-22

I have a message for every one of us, including myself. I promise you, if God the Holy Spirit will enable me to deliver what I feel he has spoken to my heart about, you will hear something you need. After almost 39 years in the ministry, I have more questions than I do answers about most things. There are many things I wish I had learned earlier. I have learned that a pastor can embarrass, humiliate, and brow beat people into attending services, giving, and doing things they ought to do, but, unless the love of Christ constrains people, all their outward compliance is but the hiding of rebellion. If the preaching of Christ crucified does not inspire and motivate godliness and faithfulness, there is nothing within to be inspire and motivate. I want to share one of those things that I have learned after years in the ministry. It is illustrated in the life of Peter. Have you ever notice that in the New Testament, every time anyone came to our Lord and complained to him about what someone else was doing, was not doing, what someone else might do, or might not do, that He rebuked them sharply.

Consider the disciples and those who followed not with them (Luke 9:49-50).


Consider our text with Peter and John (John 21:18-22).

Let me began by saying that Simon Peter is so much like most of us. First, he was very impulsive. He often opened his mouth and inserted his feet. Second, he was very inquisitive. Third, he was very inflammable, very temperamental. Let us observe the time that the Lord told him to mind his own business.

I. THE CONCERN THAT IS DANGEROUS - "what shall this man do"

In verse 18 the Lord predicts the death of Peter. The predicted the manner and character of Peter's death. This must have been a shock to Peter to have the Lord discuss his death. The language the Lord used suggest that Peter's death would be by crucifixion. Peter was crucified upside down and the reason for it was that he felt he was not worthy to die like Christ, so he persuaded them to crucify him upside down. However, on the occasion of the announcement Peter portrays a concern that is dangerous. For as soon as the Lord had finished making his prediction about Peter's death, Peter looked away from Christ and looked at John and then said to Christ, "Lord, and what shall this man do?". "Well, what about John? What will happen to him?" Simon Peter made a great mistake when he started looking at and thinking of other people. We must learn to leave God's servants and God's people to God's care. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand," (Romans 14:4) God's children are God's children. They're not yours; and they're not mine. They're His! God's servants are God's servants. They're not yours; and they're not mine. They're His! I sure am glad that I finally learned that. They are not to be judged by us. The Lord God Almighty is perfectly capable of taking care of His own.
A. A concern born from disdain

The question may appear to be a perfectly innocent question; but it was horribly evil. It was a question that arose from Peter’s proud heart. He was looking down at other if this is going to happen to me what about John! Peter was probably jealous of John always being so close to the Lord and seeming to have been a favorite.

B. A concern that breeds division

I am convinced that all the strife and division that exists among believers can be traced to this one, proud evil. We all concern ourselves with what others are doing and not doing, when we ought to concern ourselves only with what the Lord would have us do!

II. THE CORRECTION THAT IS DEFINITE – “what is that to thee”

Jesus offers hard words to Peter. He makes no apology. "What is that to thee?" "If I be the Lord, and you are My servant, your chief aim should be to do My will. If I decide that John should linger till I return, that is no business of yours.” Jesus was telling Simon to attend to his own affairs and keep his focus on Jesus. How we need to master the art of minding our own business! Jesus’ answer to Peter is the answer to all those who try to excuse their lack of living for the Lord by blaming the “hypocrites” of this world. We need to get our eyes off of other people, our nose out of their business, and make SURE WE are doing what the Lord would have US to do! Just as our salvation experience is individual to each of us, so is our accountability to God. When I stand before God on Judgment Day, and He opens the books, He won’t judge me from the records of all the hypocrites of the world—I will be judged on my own personal, individual record. The concern of Peter distracted him from doing what he should have been doing! YOU CANNOT DO A GOOD JOB OF FOLLOWING CHRIST IF YOU ARE ALWAYS GOING TO BE TURNING ABOUT LOOKING AT OTHERS. We need to keep our focus on the Saviour. To serve the Lord effectively, you will need to concentrate on doing our duty the best you can regardless of what others are doing or how well they are doing their task. Do not let the delinquency of others keep you from performing faithfully. Do not give less because others are not giving as much as you think they should. Do not be slack in your efforts just because others receive more honor and accolades than you do in service. In serving Christ, be chiefly concerned about what Christ told you to do. Any parent can relate to Peter's concern here just in observing their own children's reaction to orders. Tell one child to do something, and that the child often wants to know what a brother or sister is going to be told to do. Sometimes they ask that question to make sure they are not asked to do more than the brother or sister.

A. Rebuked for too much concern for other people

Lest some become confused here regarding the rebuke of Peter's concern about John, we need to note that there is a concern about other people we can and need to have that is not wrong. We need to be concerned about the souls of others and about the needs of others. That, however, was not Peter's concern here. His concern was only one of curiosity. It was something he did not need to know—the Lord made that plain when He said, "What is that to thee?"

B. Rebuked for too little concern for his own person

Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:16, "Take heed unto thyself." Oh, that's tough. We go through life, "Oh, look at her, she fell again." "Look at Fred over there, slipping, slipping." See. "So-and-so's not committed." "What about them, where are they going?" "Well, Lord, you asked me to do this, she never does anything around the church. I get all the dirty..." There's no sense in running around with your nose in everybody's business. When I go to face Jesus Christ, I'm not responsible for whether or not everybody else did it right. I am responsible for whether or not in obedience I followed Jesus Christ. So quick are we to be busy in other men's matters, but negligent in the concerns of our own souls. Unhappily, the Bride, in Song Of Solomon, is not the only person to say—"They made me keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard I have not kept," (1:6).

III. THE COMMAND THAT IS DEFINITE – “Follow thou me”

When Peter heard this command, his mind must have gone back to the morning years before when the Lord first
called him, when after borrowing Peter's boat, Chris said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Again the Lord says to him, "Simon, follow Me." It is only when following Jesus that will you succeed.

A. Principal responsibility - “follow thou me”

The main business of your life, the primary, all-consuming business of your life and mine, is to follow Christ. We are to CONFINE OURSELVES TO THIS ONE LIFE LONG OCCUPATION – "FOLLOW THOU ME!" Peter was a believer, a preacher and an apostle. This was our Lord’s command to him—"Follow me…Follow thou me!" 1Peter 2:21- For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: If I am a child of God, I am not to be a follower of Spurgeon, John R. Rice, Curtis Huston, or any other mere man. I am to be a follower of Christ, I seek to mold my doctrine, my thoughts, my words, my character, and my deeds after the example of Christ. Christ himself is the rule and pattern of my life (John 13:15 - For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.)

1. Follow Christ - This is the command for life.

2. Follow Christ - This is the consummation of life.

B. Primary reason

The biggest problem I have is keeping myself focused; it is hard enough to make sure I am following God as I should! Paul said, "This one thing I do." D.L. Moody one said, "It is better to say, 'This one thing I do,' than to say, 'These forty things I dabble with.'" Spurgeon said, "Divided aims tend to distraction, weakness, disappointment. The man of one pursuit is successful."

Conclusion

O, that we would learn to be occupied with our own responsibilities, our own ministries, our own calling, and our own faithfulness. We must not concern ourselves with how, when, or where God is pleased to use others. We must not seek to govern others in their service for Christ. We leave them in the hands of God. We must not allow ourselves to be turned aside by others from our own responsibilities. I am not responsible for what God has called you to do, but I am responsible for what he has called me to do.