

John 21:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Analysis

Christ's second question intensifies the examination of Peter's love. The command changes from 'lambs' to 'sheep', possibly indicating care for both young and mature believers. The repetition emphasizes the centrality of love in ministry—without genuine love for Christ, shepherding His flock becomes mere profession. Peter's response 'thou knowest that I love thee' appeals to Christ's omniscience rather than claiming great love.

Historical Context

The shepherd metaphor was familiar to Peter, who later writes about elders as shepherds (1 Peter 5:1-4). Jesus is the Chief Shepherd; under-shepherds must love Him to properly care for His flock.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does love for Christ motivate and sustain ministry in difficult times?
2. What is the difference between 'feeding' (teaching) and 'tending' (caring for) God's sheep?

Interlinear Text

λέγει αὐτῷ πάλιν δεύτερον Σίμων Ἰωνᾶ ἀγαπᾶς
He saith to him again the second time Simon son of Jonas lovest thou
G3004 G846 G3825 G1208 G4613 G2495 G25

με λέγει αὐτῷ Ναί κύριε σὺ οἶδας ὅτι φιλῶ σε
me He saith to him Yea Lord thou knowest that I love thee
G3165 G3004 G846 G3483 G2962 G4771 G1492 G3754 G5368 G4571

λέγει αὐτῷ Ποίμαινε τὰ πρόβατά μου
He saith to him Feed sheep my
G3004 G846 G4165 G3588 G4263 G3450

Additional Cross-References

Acts 20:28 (Parallel theme): Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

1 Peter 5:2 (Parallel theme): Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

1 Peter 2:25 (Parallel theme): For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Psalms 95:7 (Parallel theme): For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice,

Psalms 100:3 (References Lord): Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

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