

"THOU KNOWEST ALL THINGS"

"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep." John 21:17.

Simon Peter had sinned grievously in denying his Lord, but he had shed bitter tears over his sin and had made frank and full confession of it, whereupon he had received forgiveness and had been taken back into sweet fellowship with Christ.

Peter and the other disciples left Jerusalem, the city which spoke so poignantly of their cowardice and denial, and returned to their home towns in a spirit of disappointment and frustration. What could they do except return to their old craft? Peter said, "I go a-fishing." "We will do the same," echoed the rest.

So, seven of the disciples went down to the Sea of Galilee to resume their former trade as fishermen. Of these seven, five are named -- Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John. All night long they dragged their nets, and when the morning came they were still without fish. So, the seven tired men made for the shore in a mood of despondency.

In the uncertain light of the early morning, they discerned the figure of a solitary man standing on the shore. They were hailed by His voice from the distance, saying, "Children, have ye any meat?" Hating to admit defeat, Peter shouted "No." Then the One on the shore called back to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship," assuring them of better luck. On their obedience they got a record haul of 153 fish. John said, "Peter, it is the Lord." Peter inquired, "Are you sure?" When John answered in the affirmative, Peter leaped overboard with a splash, and swam and waded to the shore, without any misgivings about his reception. The others rowed on to the shore.

After breakfast was finished, Christ put the most pointed question of all to Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" This solemn and searching question was asked for Peter's self-examination, and not for Christ's information. "Do you love me more than these other disciples love me?" "Do you love me more than you love these disciples -- your companions in pleasure and your partners in business?" "Do you love me more than you love these boats and fishing tackle?" Our Lord was emphasizing the fact that it is the first business of every Christian to love his Saviour more than he loves anybody or anything in all the world. He rightfully demands the first place in the affections of His people. Nobody will ever be much of a spiritual force until he puts Christ first in his life.

In view of his previous terrible denials, Peter could not very well stand there in the presence of the other disciples, who knew about his great sins, and claim that he loved the Lord. So, in replying to the Saviour's question, Peter said, "Lord, thou knowest all things." Henceforth, he did not intend to rely upon himself, but upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter's acknowledgment of the Lord's omniscience or knowledge of all things was another expression of his faith in the deity of Christ. You will remember that Peter confessed Christ at Caesarea Philippi in these words: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). On another occasion "Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69). Then, here in our text we have Peter's statement, "Lord, thou knowest all things." During their days of fellowship with the Lord Jesus, Peter and the other apostles had received abundant evidence of His attribute of deity of His omniscience.

Christ manifested divine omniscience. He knew all things. He knew the innermost thoughts of His questioning and disputing followers. He knew the secret plottings of His enemies. Nothing that was going to take place in the hour of sacrificial death was hidden from Him. Jesus Christ knew all about Judas, who would betray Him, and about Peter, who would deny Him. Long before Nicodemus became concerned about the kingdom, the Lord knew all about him. He laid bare the secrets of the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. He knew all about all the men whom He contacted, "and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man." (John 2:24-25).

God's knowledge of all things is described by the psalmist in these words: "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (139:1-6).

"Lord, thou knowest all things." Thou knowest: - -

I. Our Thoughts.

"For the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts" (I Chronicles 28:9).

II. Our Weaknesses.

"For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14). Since He knows about all of our failures, we need not hesitate to approach Him and confess all of our mistakes. To bring these things into the light of His countenance, and to confess our sins and failures, is well-pleasing to the Lord. Because He knows our infirmities, we can be assured of His gracious sympathy, for "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

III. Our Temptations.

Christ said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31). Satan not only desired to sift him, but he received permission to do so. Before Satan began the sifting process, Christ prayed for Peter, to the end that he might be delivered from his temptations and strengthened for service to his needy brethren. The Lord knows all the wiles of the devil and is able to deliver His followers from the snare. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13).

IV. Our Sins.

Christ knew us long before our sins were committed and bore them in His own body on the tree. With Paul we can say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." Surely such knowledge is wonderful, even though it transcends our finite reason. Knowing all about us, the depravity of our nature, the corruption of our hearts, the defilement of our consciences, and the sins we would commit, He loved us and redeemed us.

V. Our Burdens.

All of our cares, anxieties and burdens, which are due to temporal things or circumstances, are known to the Lord. He is interested in them. That is why His Word

says, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee" (Psalm 55:22). Knowing all of our cares, He careth for us. The Bible says, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (I Peter 5:7). Let us obey the scriptural injunction: "In nothing be anxious; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6).

VI. Our Sorrows.

The Lord knew all of the sorrows and griefs of the Israelites when they were suffering in Egypt thousands of years ago. He appeared in the burning bush as the Angel of the Lord, the great I Am, and said, "I know their sorrows" (Exodus 3:7). In His life on earth He was "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isaiah 53:3-4).

Therefore, we can come to Him at all times with our sorrows and grief, for He knows, and is able to give us the comfort which we sorely need. Without Christ you will be left baffled and helpless in the presence of sorrow. You can see the reign of sorrow as you stand beside the caskets and the open graves. But the Lord is the very person to turn the shadow of death into morning. He can take one's tears and attune them to the sweetest music. Without Christ one cannot be comforted when his heart is broken.

VII. Our Service.

"The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous" (Psalm 1:6). "He knoweth the secrets of the heart" (Psalm 44:22). He knows our very motives. He knows every service which we render in His name and for His sake. He appreciates everything which we do for His honor and glory. It is truly a wonderful and blessed thing to be able to look up and to say with Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things." What peace and rest that should bring to our hearts! For us, who are His people, this is a truth of unspeakable blessedness and comfort. That He Who loves us, Who is our Saviour, Friend and Lord, knows all things should give us daily cheer, assurance and peace, and should teach us to walk daily in His sight. Knowing the way we should take, He has said to us, "I will teach thee in the way which thou shalt go" (Psalm 32:8). What assurance of safety! Let us trust Him accordingly. In every trial we can say, "The Lord knows all about it." In every sorrow and affliction we can claim the comfort that He knows. Whatever the perplexity, or however mysterious providence appears, we can meet it all by saying, "He knows." Then shall we be able to order our lives in such a way as to please Him and to honor His matchless name. "Lord, thou knowest all things."