

EXEGETICAL STUDY OF JOHN 21:15-19 AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE 21ST

CENTURY BAPTIST MINISTERS

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ABSTRACT

Exegesis today is one important aspect of biblical tools to reach the hearts of the writers of the biblical books in order to understand their intents for writing what they have passed across to our generation today. Discipleship is equally an important aspect of the ministry of the church to make a viable and efficient church. The work of a minister does not stop in the aspect of preaching the gospel of Christ undiluted but also to reproduce oneself to carry on with the work already started; accurate exegetical analysis of John 21:15-19 shows an example Jesus laid down for us to learn how to relate with our disciples, fellow ministers and community at large. However, this project focuses on how Jesus restored Peter after his threefold denial of Him, and how He (Jesus) confronted him with the challenges of faith involved in the new assignment to be committed to Peter's hands, not neglecting the relevance of this pericope to the twenty-first century ministers of the gospel. It also explained the two kinds of love mentioned in this passage and how important it is for a minister to be selfless in service to God. The major responsibility of every minister of the gospel is to feed and tend the flock and sheep of Jesus Christ in his care as discussed in the latter part of this work and how appropriate Baptist ministers should relate with their fellow ministers who are tilting towards backsliding is also discussed in the light of this research's pericope. The researcher has adopted historical-critical and exegetical method for this research work. Also, contextual tools have been used together with internet materials and textbooks from J. C. Pool library of The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso. The findings of this project are; the question of Jesus in this passage (John 21:15-19) is conditioned by the relationship that had existed between Jesus and Peter during the ministry of Jesus and the peculiar rupture of it at the trial of Jesus brought about the restoration attempt Jesus made towards Peter. The threefold questioning of Peter by Jesus is highly unusual due to the fact that Jesus is not satisfied with Peter's avowals of his love for Him; the renewed question of Jesus hence, queried the quality of Peter's protestations of love. The researcher however recommends that; the church should understand and believe that the pastor is acting on behalf of the chief shepherd (Jesus Christ) and should be given authority to lead and administer the church. The Pastor must understand that one major role expected of him is to guide the church rightly. Finally, Pastors should encourage one another as they do ministry together and if any is tilting towards destruction, the rest should carefully draw him back in with love.

5.2 CONCLUSION

It is true that the Holy Spirit equips people to serve as shepherds, and gives these people to churches (Eph. 4:11 ff). It is also true that each individual Christian must help to care for the flock. Each of us has a gift or gifts from the Lord, and we should use what He has given us to help protect and perfect the flock. Sheep are prone to wander, and we must look after each other and encourage each other.

Jesus Christ is the good shepherd (John 10:11), the Great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20-21), and the chief shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). Pastors are under-shepherd who must obey Him as they minister to the flock and the most important thing the pastor can do is to love Jesus Christ. If he truly loves Jesus Christ, the pastor will also love His sheep and tenderly care for them. Our Lord's sheep are dear to Him and He wants His ministers to love them and care for them personally and lovingly. A pastor who loves the flock would therefore serve it faithfully, no matter what it costs.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Every Pastor in a Baptist church is called first to shepherd the lambs, sheep and flocks of God which is the church. The church should understand and believe that the pastor is acting on behalf of the chief shepherd of the church (Jesus Christ). Hence, the pastor should be given authority to lead and administer the church.
- The pastor must understand that one major role expected of him is to guide the church. For this to be done effectively, the pastor must be ready to lead the church by example. According to Tidwell, leadership implies "going ahead of those who

are being guided (28). That is; going ahead of the followers is the best way to lead, and this he can do by deliberate effort to lead the flock of God (the Church) in the right direction through exemplary leadership.

- Each time Peter responded with the word translated into Greek as Phileo, Jesus does not settle for quick, superficial answers. He has a way of getting to the heart of the matter. Peter had to face the true feelings and motives when Jesus confronted him. How would you respond if Jesus asked you the same question today, “Do you love me? Do you really love me?” When every Pastor is working because of his love for Jesus Christ, taking care of his master’s sheep, lambs and flocks would not be difficult to do because the work would be done from inner motivation and conviction that he is representing Jesus Christ. The two Greek words used for love in this pericope are Agape and Phileo; thus, established volitional, self-sacrificial love and affectionate, affinity and brotherly love which should be a pastor’s motivating factor in carrying out the works of a shepherd expected of him. Pastors should also learn to confront their colleagues in the ministry with undiluted truth when there is a trace of backsliding, but this should however be done with love.
- Despite what Peter’s future was, Jesus told him to follow him. A pastor may be uncertain and fearful about his future, but if he knows that God is in control, he would confidently follow Christ without distractions. Jesus knew that there were difficult times ahead for Peter, when he would not be in control of events (21:18-19). Our life plans are in the Lord’s hands; what matters is not whether we are martyred for Christ or keep serving Christ into old age, but doing the Lord’s will

is profitable. Christians who have met their deaths at the hands of unbelieving leaders and fugitives of various kinds should stir up our zeal to present the gospel to the lost as pastors in our communities and churches.

- Pastors should also encourage one another as they do ministry together and if any is tilting towards destruction, the rest should endeavour to draw him back in the love of Christ. Ngewa said that the Lord can use us to encourage others in the present, and at the end he will honour our stand. So as He (Lord) gives us life now, let us serve him faithfully so that the Lord will greet us with “well done, my faithful servant” (452).