



endeavor to live a life of holiness, to come together as the body of Christ – and not seek a building some place, but seek Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of the Lord God Almighty, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of Israel – in our lives daily.

Let me share with you an excerpt from the historical novel, *Quo Vadis*, a book I read early in my life. This book had its affect on me as I realized this historical novel gives to us as best as can be done – the life of that time in Rome. The scene I see is where innumerable Christians are lying on crosses, tied to them and then set afire. You can hear them whispering "Our - Fath - er, - Who - art - in - heav - en . . ." When so many are whispering, it becomes an audible voice that is heard. I do not know about you, but I can not fathom myself burning on a cross, repeating the Lord's Prayer (the model prayer). It is then I see Peter leaving Rome to go to Jerusalem. He is old; he is bent; he is weary and worn. As he has left Rome and has miles behind him, he is encountered by a lad with a basket on his arm. The lad asked him, *Quo Vadis*? "Where are you going? What say ye?" to which Peter responds, I am going to Jerusalem. As Peter is old – and bent, and weary, the lad asked Peter: Could it be that you are hungry? Peter realizes that he has been encountered by the Bread of Life. Peter makes a 180 degree turn, and I see him standing straight, firm with conviction, making a turn to return to Rome.

In my heart, as a youth, I asked Peter: Peter, why would you return to Rome? Why? You know what they will do. You are free to go to Jerusalem. They will do to you what you saw done to the brethren as you were leaving. Why – Why would you return to Rome?

It was then I saw, in my heart, Peter's arms lifted and his wrists together as though they were tied, and I heard him say, in my heart,

**"Because – I – Love – My – Lord."**

Mrs. Bettie L. Lowery, M.R.E., Deaconess    The Rev. Mrs. Dr. C. S. Cole, Pastor, Ret.

*Co-laborers together for Jesus Christ*

*Come apart and rest (Mark 6.31).*

## Mighty in the Word

of the  
Lord  
Jesus Christ

For **the preaching of the cross** is to them that perish foolishness;  
But unto us which are saved **it is the power of God**" (1 Cor. 1.18).

Edifying the Body of Christ (Eph. 4.10-16)

The Wise Still Seek Him

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## Because I Love My Lord!

**T**he disciples, sitting in the presence of Jesus Christ, heard Him say,

And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.  
And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him,  
**Lord, is it I?** (Mt 26.21-24)

If we had been one of the twelve disciples and heard the words of Jesus Christ, "one of you shall betray me . . ." I have no doubts but what we would begin looking around to the others and saying, *Oh-h-h, bet I know who it is . . .* But hear the disciples response, **"Is it I?"**

Let's go to Luke 22.31-33 and experience the strong words of Peter in response to the Lord's words to Peter when he said,

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired [*to have*] you, that he may sift [*you*] as wheat:

But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Hear Peter's response to the Lord, hear it, feel the strength of his heart's cry in his response to the Master (Lk 22.33, 34).

And he said unto him, Lord, **I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.**

The response of Peter is best expressed, to me, with Peter holding his two arms together in front of himself as though the wrists are tied together, saying to the Lord, **I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.**

And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

Hear the words of Peter and let them *play* over and over in your head at this moment:

**I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.**

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**I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.**

Now, let us go to John 21.14-19, a very powerful passage. Read these verses and reread them before reading further. **STOP and READ.**

Now, stop and let the Lord speak to you!

Now, that you have read the passage above, I ask that you try not to explain, but that you listen with your heart what the Lord is saying to YOU as you reflect with St. Peter.

Open your heart to the Lord in this passage. Know that what you hear must align with the Holy Word of God.

"Jesus saith to Simon Peter ... lovest thou me more than these?"

"He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

There are times we need to look at the language in which the Word of God was written as translating from one language to another is most challenging to convey what is said. One language may take ten words for one word in another language, for example.

When Jesus asked Peter, do you love me, Jesus is using the Greek word is ἀγαπάω.

The only way this word may be expressed is, as I said earlier, with the two arms brought to the forefront and held as though they are tied at the wrists, Peter indicating he is ready to be bound rather than deny the Lord.

**However**, Peter is now standing before the Lord with head bended low, heart broken, in pain, as he recalls his denying the Lord Jesus Christ three times, hearing the cock crow, his eyes meeting the eyes of the Master whom he betrayed, weeping bitterly at his failure to stand with the Lord Jesus Christ, as he so strongly believed, and said at an earlier time that he was ready to go to prison with the Lord and to die with Him.

I do not know about you, but, oh-o-o, to stand in the presence of the One I had denied remembering seeing Him as He was beaten and, yet, denying the Lord, remembering my boast: **I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.** Oh, as those words ring over and over in my own ears as I stand before the One Whom I betrayed, and to answer His question, Σίμων Ἰωνᾶ, ἀγαπᾷς με πλεον τούτων?

Peter's response "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee" does not have in it the same word the Lord used. Peter responds with φιλῶ. This word is not synonymous with ἀγαπάω. When Jesus asked Peter if he loved (English word) Him, Peter understood what the Lord was asking. However, the response Peter gives to the Lord is **NOT** the same.

I believe, Peter, with head bended low, wanting to find a hole through which to fall, is almost crushed by his failure to love the Lord Jesus Christ with His life. I can almost hear Peter saying in his heart, "Lord, you know I made a vow which I did not keep, why are You asking me this?" People today talk about love, but it is not a holy, sanctified love, that is willing to lay one's life down for another, John 15.13.

Note that Jesus asked Peter the same question the second time (Jn 21.16) and Peter in response to the same question the second time, repeated his answer with a different word than the Master used.

I recall the first time I read this in my Greek New Testament at the age of 18. Reading verse (17), Jesus asked Peter the question once again using Peter's word of φιλῶ. I could hardly wait to hear Peter respond to the Lord in verse 17 with ἀγαπάω. Oh, I wept when Peter could not affirm his love for the Lord with his life, but could only say φιλῶ.

I am reminded almost constantly of my brothers and sisters all through the centuries, not only in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament as well – such as Isaiah.

However, we live a day and age, as has always been, of persecution of the body of Christ. I pray daily for them wherever they may be as I know how weak and frail I am.

I believe it was Fr. Maximilan who offered his life for another man in Auschwitz whose life was to be taken and would be leaving a family behind. Oh, the love the martyrs had and do have for the Lord and the Persecuted Church.

Oh, I stand with Peter as the Lord Jesus Christ asked Peter twice, lovest thou me (ἀγαπάω). I am weak.

The third time (v 17), Jesus asked Peter φιλέω. Perhaps "brotherly affection" is a valid definition for the usage of this word. Peter responds with the same word the Lord uses in this verse, φιλέω.

Notice that each time the Lord asked Peter if he loved Him, the Lord responded with, "Feed my sheep" – though Peter failed the Lord miserably.

Can you imagine standing with Peter as he knew he had failed the Lord. But, oh, how I stand with Peter as I, also, have failed the Lord. Oh, how my heart aches as I long to be all that the Lord wants me to be, to be obedient to Him, and walk with Him all the way, to walk *The Via Dolorosa, The Way of the Cross*.

Though we are not faithful to the Lord, He is faithful Who has promised to be with us, to direct us, and guide us. He is forgiving, but lest we believe we can do whatever we want and then ask forgiveness, know that we cannot walk in disobedience with intent believing the Lord overlooks our disobedience.

The Lord Jesus Christ knew the heart of Peter, his love for the Lord. He knew what Peter did not know. Let us read on in John 21.18, 19.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry [thee] whither thou wouldest not.

This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

Jesus knew what Peter did not know. Jesus knew Pentecost was just around the corner; Pentecost was soon to come. And, the strength of the Lord would come down upon Peter in a powerful way – as it did all who were present on that glorious day. Jesus knew that Peter would keep his vow, but at a later time.

Jesus told Peter "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest." Peter, when you were young, you did what you wanted. "... but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry [thee] whither thou wouldest not."

Peter, you will keep your vow and will indeed be able to "go to prison with Me and to die with me." Read Acts 12.3-11 and you will find where Peter was imprisoned for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He did keep his vow to "go to prison with the Lord."

Peter's sermon in Acts Two is recorded for our hearing. Hear the powerful sermon he preached and the response to the Word in verses 37-40. Another powerful response is found in verses 41-47. Oh, that today we would hunger for the Word of the Lord and