

## I. INTRODUCTION

Many of us have encountered Jesus at one time or another. We may have experienced a “spiritual high.” But somehow, the excitement subsided. Then we went back to our old ways. Old habits. When we do this we feel so far from our Lord. Sometimes we would like to come back to Him, but feel ashamed to do so. Today we will study a passage dealing with this problem.

## II. BIBLE READING

John 21:1 After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself: 2 Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. 3 Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We are going with you also.” They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. 4 But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Then Jesus said to them, “Children, have you any food?” They answered Him, “No.” 6 And He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. 7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. 8 But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish. 9 Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. 10 Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have just caught.” 11 Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken. 12 Jesus said to them, “Come and eat breakfast.” Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are You?”—knowing that it was the Lord. 13 Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. 14 This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead. (NKJ)

## III. DISCUSSION

### A. Sliding Back

1. Jesus had resurrected and appeared to the disciples several times (vv. 1, 14). What were the disciples doing when Jesus saw them this time? In John 20:21, during the second appearance of Jesus to the disciples, He specifically sent them to preach the Gospel to the world. Peter and his companions had in the past given up their fishing careers and followed Jesus (Luke 5:11). But now, instead of going and preaching the good news of salvation, they had gone back to fishing.
2. What are the possible reasons they did so?
  - a. Some may say that it was out of necessity to meet their daily needs. But during the past two years or more, they had followed Jesus full time and had not engaged in fishing, yet they had enough to eat. God provided for them, apparently through other followers of Jesus. After Pentecost, they also preached full time without fishing.
  - b. One likely explanation is that they had backslidden—forgotten their commitment to our Lord to serve Him full time; followed old ways, and attended to their daily routine only.
3. In what ways are we like them?

### B. Marching Forward

1. Did Jesus forsake or rebuke them?
2. What was Jesus’ attitude towards them?
  - a. Loving and humble instead of waiting for the disciples to go to Him. He went to them (vv. 1, 4, 5).
  - b. Gentle and caring (vv. 5, 6, 9, 11 )
  - c. Patient going to so much trouble just so that they could learn one lesson. Jesus seemed to tell them: “If fish is what you want, I will give them to you. But is this what you really want?”

## C. Helping The Backslider

1. What is often our attitude towards a brother who has backslidden?
  - a. Condemnation and criticism
  - b. Disgust/frustration
  - c. Avoidance of him
2. What should be our attitude?
3. What should we do? Share your experiences. (The best way to help a backslidden brother is not to immediately talk about going to church/fellowship/Bible readings/prayers. First, be a friend to him. Visit him. Let him know you care for him whether or not he comes to church. Gradually, as he feels more and more accepted by other Christians, you may begin to talk about church/fellowship/Bible readings/prayers.)
4. Let us put ourselves in the situation of a person who had backslidden. What usually are our feelings and actions?
  - a. Shame and guilt
  - b. Trying to avoid God not praying, not reading Bible
  - c. Trying to avoid other Christians
5. What should be our attitude and response when we have backslidden?  
(Aware that our Lord still loves us and is patiently waiting for us to come back to Him—that He will accept us. Then drop to our knees and really return to Him.)

## IV. CONCLUSION

Our Lord loves us very much. Even when we have backslidden, He still loves us and patiently waits for us to return to Him.