

. . *Was it for me?*

“Do you love Me,
. . *more than these (things)?*”

. . *Was it for me?*

John 21:15-17

15 So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter,

*“Simon, son of Jonah,
do you love Me more than these?”*

He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”

He said to him, “Feed My lambs.”

16 He said to him again a second time,

*“Simon, son of Jonah,
do you love Me?”*

He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”

He said to him, “Tend My sheep.”

“Do you love Me?”

This is the most critical question,

. . in all of life!

17 He said to him the third time,

*“Simon, son of Jonah,
do you love Me?”*

Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?”

And he said to Him,

“Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.”

. . *Was it for me?*

Dear Friends -

To properly frame the answer to our question, we must begin in the Garden of Eden:

Truth:

Genesis 1:1. In the beginning, God created.

Genesis 1:31. Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.

Genesis 3:9-11 Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "*Where are you?*" So Adam said, "*I heard Your voice in the garden, and was afraid.*"

Commentary:

God loves us and desires that we love Him. *Love cannot be coerced, love must be voluntary.*

God wanted a family. He could have created individuals, robot-like, to serve Him. But, God desired that His creation choose to love Him voluntarily. To do this, they would need a "free-will" choice . . . *because love cannot be coerced.*

"For God **so loved** the world he gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" [John 3:16].

No outside force could compel God to do anything, much less to love us. God, chose to love us, because He wanted to love us! For this love to come about, God the Son had to die in our place as our perfect righteous substitute to pay the death penalty mandated for our death-causing sin.

Yes, God so loved and wanted to be loved, He died for me and for you . . . and for anyone who would accept His offer of forgiveness by trusting in His Son, Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 2:3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all.

We want God to love us, we want all our children and all our friends to love us . . . that is the way it is with all people, all families and all neighbors. You want us to love you, and we want you to love us.

Love must be voluntary!

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But, love cannot be coerced, it must be voluntary.

God wanted Adam + Eve to love him. Like everything else in creation, the reality of the true value of something is always clearly declared by testing.

God provided everything for Adam + Eve to be totally, completely joy-filled, but, would they love Him without reservation?

With perfect wisdom and in perfect love + kindness, Sovereign God established One and only One Law as a Test for Adam and Eve to know, for themselves, whether their love was true and founded upon a true **love of the Giver**, not merely a love for His **gifts**.

Yes, Adam + Eve needed to know if their love for themselves was greater than their love for their Creator!

Genesis 2:16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Adam + Eve already knew the good as they had perfect, unbroken intimacy with Holy God in the Garden, but, if they ate of that Tree of Knowledge, evil would now become a known reality to them.

What would they do? *Would they, or would they not, eat the forbidden fruit?*

The devil, by asking Eve a simple question, cunningly tempts Eve to question God,

Genesis 3:1 “Has God indeed said . . .?”

Because Eve did not flee from the horrific thought of questioning her loving Creator, the sin of pride was sown, fertilized and came into full bloom as a sin-filled thought.

Idolatry definition: The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts that are unworthy of Holy God. Idolatry, always begins in the mind and may be present where no overt act of worship has yet taken place.

At that very point, Adam + Eve became idolaters! They elevated themselves and their own emotional desires over the clear logic of obeying Holy God, their Creator and the authority over all creation.

Pride and wanting to become independent of God is a holocaust-producing, infectious disease, a veritable cyanide pill. Without fail, sin, as God had forewarned, brought death to Adam and Eve and to every person born since that one moment in time.

Love must be voluntary!

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The terrible free-fall into fear, pain, separation from God began by this wrong thought and their subsequent choice.

Then the devil introduced this inconceivably tragic lie:

Genesis 3:4-5 Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Yes, the devil **called God a liar** and received absolutely no rebuke from Eve or Adam!

The first two people on earth, chose, with their free-will mind and emotions, to disbelieve God, and take their own way by thinking they knew better than their Creator what was best for them and their happiness.

James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

You and I, and every human being since Adam + Eve are born into this world as God-rejecting creatures who disbelieve God.

People disbelieve God’s truth about Himself, even though He **daily** proclaims His existence and the reality of His loving compassion and provision for them. God clearly makes Himself known by the order and provision of Creation and His Creatures [Romans 1:20-25]. Even more intimately, God makes Himself known to individuals by the individual’s Conscience [Romans 2:15-16], and by the inspired Written Word (the Bible). In addition, God gave us the irrefutable testimony of His very own Son, Jesus Christ.

Because, this sin-virus was passed down from Adam + Eve to all their descendants, all of mankind has sinfully desired to be “independent from God” and can only be reconciled back to God through the one and only acceptable sacrifice for sin, the shedding of blood.

Hebrews 9:22 without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness [for sins].

Jesus came to earth some 2000 years ago to give us a perfect view of God in the flesh as a perfect, sinless Man. Jesus came as God to specifically, intentionally to die as our substitute and pay the death penalty due for our sins.

John 15:12 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 **Greater love** has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

Love must be voluntary!

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But, this sin of wanting to be like God, who is completely independent, will plague us all of our lives. *We want to **direct** our own steps [Isaiah 53:6] and we do not want anyone to tell us what to do, even if it means that we call God a liar to be able to take our own way!*

Following is the lie [paraphrased in thought] which the devil introduced. This lie has catapulted every person into the depths of pain and suffering, since the day it was first spoken and believed:

The lie: *You will not be happy until you are independent, directing your own way and are free from being under the control of God."*

Happiness vs Joy.

As stated earlier, Adam + Eve had the fulness of joy, total, unbroken intimacy with God and all their physical needs were satisfied beyond imagination, yet, by their free-will choice they wanted to *pursue their own happiness!*

The devil, by his question, implied that Creator God was untrustworthy and was trying to keep something "emotionally rewarding and good" from them. He suggests they would be so much happier, if they would throw off God's commands which restrains them from their pursuit to be fulfilled in their own power. The devil is implying, "If you become your own god [paraphrase in thought behind Genesis 3:4,5] you will have ultimate happiness and fulfillment."

Since that sin-filled moment, men and women have desperately sought to pursue their own happiness, which is temporary at best and guaranteed to leave only dust and ashes in the mouth at the end of their life on earth.

We do this by stimulus of our emotions through drinking, eating, drugs, sex, money, ambition, materialism [acquiring things], etc.

All of which leaves us with a bag full of holes . . . *life runs out and we are empty, emotionally destroyed and filled with despair as death stalks our every step.*

But, God, in His great love and mercy, has not left us in that lost, horrible, hopeless condition.

God tells us, return to Me and I will give you something better than happiness, *I will give you joy, which is everlasting!* God then put this in writing. The Bible is simply God's written historical record of His work in the past and the foretelling of His future working out of His plan of redemption and reconciliation of lost men and women to Himself.

For me, the best phrase explaining God's Plan of Redemption, Reconciliation and Regeneration of mankind is this: Jesus Christ, the Greatest Love Story Ever Told.

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But, as always, for this Plan to be brought about, we must be tested, just like Adam and Eve.

*God still asks each one of us, "Will you **now** trust me for everything and obey what I ask you to do? Do you now truly love Me?"*

God's ways are not hard to see nor understand because they are so plain.

God asks us to simply [paraphrased in thought from various Bible references].

1. Love. *"Will you love Me? Do you want to be alone with Me ["walking with Him in the Garden" - Genesis 3:8] by reading My words and talking [praying] with Me?"*

Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His [Jesus] blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

"If you do this, I will give you joy on earth. As a new Christian, your joy will still be incomplete and imperfect while on earth, because you are still mixed with fallen humanity and the gift of the Holy Spirit. But, through faith, I will finish in my perfect timing, My work of re-creation. I will make you into a completely new creature and will give you eternal Joy after you die, having left your old body in the dust" [Genesis 3:19; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58].

2. Trust. *"Will you trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and that His death and shed blood paid the "death penalty" required for your sin?" [Isaiah 50:10; 2 Corinthians 1:9]*

3. Obey. *"Will you obey My directions for your lives as written in My words, the Bible?"*

This covenant is perhaps illustrated best using our own Marriage Vows:

*I take You, Jesus Christ,
to be Lord of my life,
to have and to hold from this day forward,*

*for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish and to obey,
according to God's holy law,
in the presence of God I make this vow.*

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Luke 7:36-50

Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood

at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil.

"Simon, I have something to say to you."

So he said, *"Teacher, say it."*

"There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?"

Yes, Jesus my Savior,

. . *I love You!*

Simon answered and said, *"I suppose the one whom he forgave more."*

And He said to him, *"You have rightly judged."*

Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon,

"Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.

Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."

Then He said to her, *"Your sins are forgiven."*

And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves,

"Who is this who even forgives sins?"

Then He said to the woman

"Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

Love must be voluntary!

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When you have heard God's voice asking as He asked Adam, "*Where are you?*" (Genesis 3:9); when you have been arrested by your conscience and have been convicted by God, the Holy Spirit (John 16:8), of your sin, this page is your declaration of that event.

When God has spoken to you and you have asked Jesus Christ to be the Savior and Lord of your life, you will feel compelled to make it known (Romans 10:9).

Salvation is a private event occurring in the heart and no one except you and God can confirm it has happened (cf. Mark 4:13-20).

Even though salvation is a private event, being a follower of Christ requires a public profession. Jesus makes no option available to His followers to be undercover Christians (Romans 10:9).

"So everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before My Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32).

When you have heard God's voice,
. . *tell somebody!*

Asking Jesus Christ to save you: [or similar words expressed by your own personality].

Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner, and my sin separates me from God. Because God, the Father, loves me, He sent You to pay the penalty for my sin by dying on the cross to restore me to fellowship with Himself (1 John 1:9).

I ask you to forgive my sins and give me eternal life (Luke 11:13).

It is my deepest desire to love You and obey Your Words (Romans 10:9-10).

Name: Sign above / Print below

Date:

Hour:

"Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

Please email us a copy when this is completed, and we will regularly pray for you. Tell Somebody!

Name of Person Told:

Date:

Name of Person Told:

Date:

Email to: WasItForMeRom832@gmail.com

Love must be voluntary!

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. . *Was it for me?*

More love to Thee, O Christ, more love to Thee!
Hear Thou the prayer I make on bended knee.

This is my earnest plea:
More love, O Christ to Thee;

Once earthly joy I craved, sought peace and rest;
Now Thee alone I seek, give what is best.

This all my prayer shall be:
More love, O Christ to Thee;

More Love to Thee,

. . O, Christ!

Let sorrow do its work, come grief or pain;
Sweet are Thy messengers, sweet their refrain,

When they can sing with me:
More love, O Christ to Thee;

Then shall my latest breath whisper Thy praise;
This be the parting cry my heart shall raise;

This still its prayer shall be:
More love, O Christ to Thee;
More love to Thee, more love to Thee!

Elizabeth Prentiss (1856)