

What About This Man?

Joe Slater

In rather cryptic terms, Jesus told Peter that he would be martyred in his old age (John 21:18, 19). Peter's reply intrigues me. Looking back at John, Peter asked Jesus, "*But Lord, what about this man?*" How strange! Yet how utterly typical of humanity.

We have a penchant for minding just about everybody's business except our own. By no means are we unique; that tendency has characterized people throughout history. Even in the first century AD, Paul warned the Thessalonians to "*aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your hands as we commanded you*" (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

A short while later, Paul repeated that admonition to the same church: "*For we hear that there are some among you who walk in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort . . . that they work in quietness and eat their own bread*" (2 Thessalonians 3:11, 12).

Peter evidently learned his lesson in this regard, for he also wrote: "*Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody (meddler) in other people's matters*" (1 Peter 4:15).

This cannot mean we are to ignore sin in the lives of our brethren. In these very passages, the apostles were rebuking sin in brethren's lives! We are to limit our involvement, however, to matters that legitimately concern us. Did the time and manner of John's death have any bearing on Peter's service to Jesus? None whatever! Clearly annoyed, Jesus replied to Peter, "*If I will that he (John) remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow me*" (John 21:22). Three verses earlier He had told Peter simply to "*follow Me*" (the subject

being understood from the verb). This time, however, Jesus added an emphatic "you" – not just "*follow Me,*" but "*you follow Me.*" Peter needed to focus on his own discipleship, especially considering that he had just been called to account for his triple denial of Jesus only a few days earlier.

For every follower of Jesus, the first priority must be personal discipleship. Unfortunately, those who are least active in the church may be the most vocal critics of the ones carrying the bulk of the load. They know just how others ought to do, but their own involvement consists of criticism and complaint.

"*Lord, what about this man?*" is not the right question! Your duty to God remains, regardless of what the Lord has in mind for anyone else. If each of us will focus on serving Jesus as He has instructed, to the very best of our ability, we will have neither the time nor the desire to mind other people's business.

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It's A Fact!

Take a leaf from a branch, lay it aside, and watch! Slowly the color fades, the leaf goes limp, curls up, and dies!

Take a fish out of a lake, lay it on the sand, and watch! Frantically it twists and struggles, gradually weakens, then quivers and dies!

Take a Christian away from the fellowship and worship of the church, let him remain home on the Lord's day, and watch! Gradually he will stop praying, miss the Lord's Supper, and participate in activities that keep him from assembling with the saints. Soon there are "too many hypocrites in the church," or the church is always asking for money, or there is some other excuse. Eventually he takes his stand against the Lord and His church, and he dies!

A Seeking Love

For the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).

The apostle John in his letters tells us plainly, and over and over, that God is love. Jesus taught and went to great pains so that we could grasp what kind of love God is. God is a seeking love.

In Luke 15, we find three parables in sequence. The first is the lost sheep, the second the lost coin, and the third is the lost son. In the first, one sheep out of a hundred is lost. In the second, one coin out of ten, and in the third, one son out of two.

Jesus reveals that the Father's attitude is not, "If, and when, you are ready to come to Me, I will greatly bless you." The Father's attitude is, "I will seek you, I will look for you, and when I find you I will bless you, if you will let Me. I will bless you beyond what you can imagine, beyond your comprehension, and beyond anything you could deserve."

First, understand that God suffers loss over every single person who departs from Him. Parents understand this, for they suffer the most when a child goes wrong. Second, the one who has departed from God is precious in His eyes. The shepherd forgets the ninety-nine to seek the one. Third, there is great joy in God's heart when the lost is found and returned. The shepherd calls his friends to share in his joy. The woman calls her neighbors to rejoice with her. The father cries, "Let us eat and celebrate."

God's love is a seeking love. He is hurt by the loss of one single child. The Father will leave no stone unturned to seek His missing child. The Father will rejoice greatly when the lost child is restored.

--Ed Wittlif (Denver, CO)