

PETER . . . who was told to mind his own business
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(JOHN 21: 21-22)

The nature of Simon Peter might have been described under three heads-(i) He was very impulsive. His fellow disciples hardly knew what to expect from this big fisherman, for while they soberly considered the pros and cons of a matter, their colleague enthusiastically pronounced a verdict. (ii) He was very inquisitive. He was susceptible to the opinions of other people, and more often than not this led to trouble. (iii) He was very inflammable, very temperamental. He could be alternately joyful and sad ; inspired and carnal. Yet in spite of that fact, we all like Simon Peter.

A Dangerous Concern

The sea-side breakfast had ended, and the disciples were watching the silvery waves moving along the beach. Surging emotions filled their souls, for they realized that the Stranger who had awaited the incoming boat was the Lord. It was wonderful to see Him as He gracefully sat watching the hungry men eating the meal He Himself had prepared. Tenderly He had spoken to Peter, and the thrice-asked question, " Lovest thou me," had stirred them deeply. Their colleague had been moved almost to tears, for the denials of an earlier occasion were still present in his mind. Then, after a while Peter looked at John and said to Christ, " Lord, and what shall this man do?" "You tell me that when I am old another shall gird me and carry me whither I would not. Well, what about John? What will happen to him?" And the Lord answered, " If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Simon Peter, your greatest mistake is that you are often looking at, and thinking of, other people. Do you remember how I sent you to take money from the mouth of the fish? You were upset then because other people's opinions had overshadowed your outlook. Do you remember how you denied knowledge of me? That happened because you permitted other people to influence you. Peter, be less concerned about other folk, and think more of your Master!

A Delightful Correction

" What is that to thee?" " If I be the Lord, and you are My servant, your chief aim should be to do My will. If I decide that John should linger till I return, that is no business of yours, is it? Simon Peter, if you are to feed My lambs, and shepherd My sheep, you will need to look constantly to Me. The days ahead will be difficult, and if you lose sight of your Master anything can happen. Therefore do not be unduly inquisitive concerning John. Attend to your own affairs." Thus did Christ correct His disciple, and we all realize how necessary this had become. Even in after days Simon still permitted the opinions of others to sway his actions, and on one occasion Paul rebuked him because he compromised with the exponents of circumcision. Peter was always getting into trouble because he had not mastered the art of minding his own business,

A Definite Command

" Follow thou me." When Peter heard this command, his thoughts probably went back to the morning when the Lord first called him, when after borrowing Peter's boat, Christ said, " Follow me, and I will make you to become a fisher of men." Now another commission has been given. He has been told to shepherd the flock of God. " Simon follow Me,

PETER . . . who was told to mind his own business for only thus will you succeed." (i) The Follow Me of Enlightenment. The Christian pathway is beset with many dangers, and problems will arise to confound those who are not prepared for the emergencies of the way. Follow Me, and you will learn of Me. (ii) The Follow Me of Endeavor. To follow Christ means to emulate His example. It means more than accompanying Him. When a soldier follows an officer into battle, he does so to help his leader in the conflict ahead. To follow Christ means to fight for Him. (iii) The Follow Me of Endurance. " 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." Tradition asserts that Peter was crucified for his faith ; and that at his own request he was crucified head downwards, for he considered himself unworthy to die as did his Lord. Thus the fearful disciple who failed before the taunts of a servant girl, eventually reached unprecedented heights of personal loyalty. He followed his Lord to a cross ; he was faithful unto death.

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