

72 Minding our own business!

After the Lord's resurrection, Simon Peter was desperate. Here he was, the leader of the Twelve, this big, lovable, impetuous man, devoted to Jesus yet who had so dreadfully let His Lord down. Probably by now everyone knew of his denials, so Peter would be very sensitive to the looks and comments from his fellow-disciples.

So as the disciples were finally getting the message that the Lord was indeed truly risen from the dead, Peter's longing was to put things right between him and the Lord - and to be seen by the others to have been restored by Jesus to his leadership position. Oh for a few quiet minutes, just the two of them, when he could cry out his anguish and beg for the Lord's forgiveness and restoration!

But he had to wait. It was some days later, after the trek back north to Galilee, that Peter's time came (John 21). They were tired after a barren night's fishing when they saw that lone figure on the beach. It fell to John - "It would have to be John wouldn't it?" perhaps Peter thought! - who recognised Jesus.

At once Peter was in the sea, splashing and struggling to get to the Lord. He was pathetically keen to show Jesus that nothing had changed, that he was still "good old Peter", at the heart of all the jobs needing to be done (verse 11).

We can assume that the breakfast passed unhurriedly, perhaps a strangely intense, largely silent time (verses 12-14); and finally Jesus turned to Peter.

Jesus' three-fold question (verse 15 -17) exposed Peter before the others, but enabled him at last to affirm his love for the Lord, and hopefully to have those awful denials put behind him.

Then, (verses 20 - 22), Peter asked the Lord about his fellow disciple, John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved". Why? Did this question not spring from Peter's own insecurity, and perhaps from jealousy or rivalry?

In reply, Jesus rebuked Peter - as he had done several times already over the years - for getting things wrong. The Lord basically told him, "Mind your own business"!

We learn much from this little incident over how the Lord wishes us to treat our fellow Christians. How easy it is for us to be envious of them! - perhaps over their gifts, their successes, their popularity. So indeed, in this one vital sense we are all to "mind our own business" when it comes to allowing the Lord to deal with others as He wishes, irrespective of us.

Now this has nothing to do with disinterest on our part over our fellow Christians. After all, we are members together of the body of Christ. We are family, we belong to one another, we are all on the same side. It is therefore only natural that we should "look out for one another" - "rejoicing with those who rejoice, and weeping with those who weep" (Romans 12.15).

The Epistles are filled with instructions to build one another up, to appreciate each other, to recognise the worth and the gifts of others. The Holy Spirit, in His grace, has allocated gifts to each of the Lord's people, gifts that have nothing to do with fostering rival, spiritual "ego-trips"! (see for example I Corinthians 12). Rather, they are for edifying, for contributing to the general health of the body of Christ.

So the key point in all this is that there is no place for us to feel in competition with our fellow Christians, as Peter seems to have been feeling over his fellow disciple John. The Lord was saying "Peter is Peter, John is John, and I will deal with each of you as I wish".

For, within the body of Christ, praise God, each one of us *belongs*, each one of us is *unique*, and each one of us is *needed* - entrusted with a particular role which no-one else can fulfil, and with a particular set of gifts which no-one else possesses.

Just as this unique, individual belonging guarantees each one of us our own place in the body of Christ, so also it guarantees the place of everyone else in the body too. This recognition of "bodyness" frees us from being competitive, and gives each of us the space to grow and serve as the Lord intends.

Best of all, the body then functions as it truly should, and Christ the Lord, the Head of the body, is given all the glory!