

John 21:15-19

~ Good News for Failures ~

Introduction

He **once walked** on water...

He had witnessed the raising of his friend Lazarus from the dead!

He watched Jesus as **rebuke** a storm on the mast of boat – **heal** an official's daughter – **give** sight to the blind – **cleanse** many lepers!

He even got a glimpse of the **heavenly glory** of Jesus when He was transfigured on the Mount!

It would be his famous confession in Matthew 16: *"you are the Christ the Son of the living God..."* on which Jesus would build His kingdom/ His people/ His Church/ and His empire!

In fact it was **only hours** before the horrendous beating/and the mocking/ and the scourging/ where he would **boldly declare** his **undying allegiance**:

Before hundreds of Roman soldiers!

No follower of Jesus was more **outspoken or devoted** in his commitment to faith – than Peter!

3 Times

And yet it was **only hours after** those events in the Garden – where Peter would **deny** – and **cower** – and **capitulate** – and **reject** Jesus:

NOT once – NOT twice – but 3 painful times!

And it's difficult to know (as one pastor has said) **which situation** for Peter was inevitably worse:

Was it the denials of Jesus in front of a crowded fire!

Was it the **swearing** and the **oaths** attached to the promise of *"I will never deny you Lord!"*

Or was it the fact that he was part of the **inner circle** of men who received the **most intimate** of insight & fellowship?!?!

All Gas – No brakes

I like what one pastor has said concerning Simon Peter – he said:

*Reckless Peter was **all gas and no brakes!***

That is:

Whatever he was **doing**...**wherever** he was **going** – Peter was all in!

Whether he's confessing Jesus as the Christ; He's Jesus to the max – if he's denying Jesus he's using promises and oaths – if he's having his feet washed he's having a full-bodied shower!

There's just **no in-between** when it comes to Peter!

There's no 2nd gear!

He's all gas – He's no brakes!

Whatever he's does – He's doing **to the max!**

Which is probably **part of the reason** I think God put Peter on the pages of the bible!

Because whether we like it or **NOT** – whether we realize it or **NOT**:

Peter stands **as the shining example** to men of what true **restoration** and **repentance** looks like when the grace of God refuses to let us go!

Reckless Peter stands as the kind of example – and the **kinds of people** that God loves to bring into the Kingdom of His Son!

And specifically in our passage of Scripture here this morning – we’re going to see one of the **chief ways** that God loves **repairing** and **restoring** those of us who think that:

We have out sinned the grace of God!

Main Point

And so the Main Point I want us to see as we come to John chapter 21 is this:

God is the one who keeps covenant with us even when we are unfaithful to Him!

And rather than giving you the typical **3-point outline** – I’m just gonna walk through the text – **highlight key/significant details** that I think are important to see!

John 21

So John 21 beginning at verse 15 – just let the word of God **wash over you** this morning as we read – John writes:

When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said to Him, “you know that I love you.” “Feed my lambs He told him...

A second time He asked him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” “Yes, Lord,” he said to Him, “you know that I love you.” “Shepherd my sheep,” He told him..

He asked him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved that He asked him a third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” “Feed my sheep,” Jesus said.

Truly I tell you, when you were younger, you would tie your belt and walk wherever you wanted. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will tie you and carry you where you do not want to go.” He said this to indicate by what kind of death Peter would glorify God. And after saying this, He told him, “Follow me.”

Opening Gambit

One of the things that makes the gospel such amazingly good news for fallen sinners – is that:

The gospel **NOT** only *forgives our past mistakes* – but the gospel:

restores our past failures!

Another way to say that is:

The gospel **NOT** only **redeems** broken sinners – it **restores** broken sinners!

It **NOT** only saves us – it secures us!

And part of the restoration process God uses to bring us back to the Person of Jesus time and time again **after we've sinned** and grieved the Holy Spirit – is the **sovereign pursuit** of a gracious God!

The sovereign pursuit of the Good Shepherd!

The one who promises to **never leave** nor **lose** any of His sheep that the Father has given!

And that's really where the text of John 21 begins for us here this morning – the first observation that I want us to see from the text is that:

Jesus sovereignly pursues Simon's heart!

Jesus goes after Peter!

Verse 15:

When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

So this is **after** the meal that **He had just prepared** for them earlier in verse 12 – this is after **their miraculous** catch of 153 fish!

And Peter **as you know** has denied Jesus **3 painful times...**

And yet Peter up until this point in John's Gospel has **NOT yet** reconciled with Jesus!
In fact He's had **3 opportunities** to reconcile with Jesus (twice in John 20 and once in John 21) and yet **in all 3 accounts**:

Peter has **NOT** come to Jesus in confession!

He has **NOT heeded** the advice given by Jesus in Matthew chapter 5:

If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there and be reconciled to your brother...

And so Peter having 3 golden opportunities to make it right with Jesus – **Jesus comes to Peter!**

It is Jesus who arranges the circumstances – **it's Jesus** who starts the fire – **it's Jesus** who cooks them breakfast – **it's Jesus** who sovereignly makes sure they didn't catch one solitary fish – **it's Jesus** who told them to cast the net on the other side – **it's** who calls out – **It's Jesus** who provides the fish – **it's Jesus** who takes the initiative!

Jesus throughout this **entire discourse** is sovereignly pursuing Peter's heart!

After Breakfast

And notice the context in which He comes to Him – verse 15:

*Jesus came to Peter **when they had eaten breakfast...***

After eating breakfast!

Jesus approaches Peter in the **ordinary rhythms** of life!

Which is often where Jesus meets His disciples!

Jesus often meets us in the **ordinary rhythms** of daily life...

Drunkard/Glutton

And throughout the Gospels Jesus is constantly getting **accused & beguiled** of being *a drunkard and a glutton* because He was always eating and drinking with people!

Jesus loved to do ministry when food was involved!

And now here in John 21 – the resurrected Lord is **once again** eating and drinking with His disciples!

Jesus loves to be around those who love to be around Him!

And Jesus know that **the best meals** and the **best conversations** often happen in the ordinary rhythms of daily life!

So friends – might there be a meal that you could share this week – or a dinner you could cook – or a lunch you could prepare for your neighbour – or co-worker – or family/ or friends – or people in your street!

Might there be a BBQ – or bake stand in your yard that your children could run?!?!

Whatever it is:

Let's use hospitality and food to bring people closer to Jesus!

Because that's what Jesus did **time and time again!**

Jesus uses food to come to Peter!

Jesus will NOT allow Peter to go on in un-confessed sin!

He loves Peter too much to let this continue any longer!

And so:

Jesus comes to Peter – seeking Peter’s heart!

The Good Shepherd **leaves the 99** to go after His one lost sheep!

Observation #2

Second observation:

Jesus addresses Peter’s old way of life...

Notice the **3 times** when Jesus addresses Peter **he uses**:

His old name!

Simon Son of John – verse 15

Simon Son of John – verse 16

Simon Son of John – verse 17

He doesn’t use Peter – He doesn’t use Rock – because Peter had NOT been a rock in his action –
Peter had been a coward – He had deserted Jesus!

Full Name

This is an **almost universal** principle in most common cultures when addressing someone’s sin or addressing them seriously we **often use their entire name!**

A parent correcting their child – a judge giving a sentence – a court issuing a fine:

We often use people’s full names when addressing a **serious issue!**

First called

But I also think Jesus was using his old name to encourage Peter’s heart – Jesus seems to be reminding Peter of **where he actually came from!**

In fact I want you to notice that this **entire chapter** is set up in such a way that Jesus was reminding the other disciples – but **specifically Peter**:

Where it was that He had first called them to ministry!

Remember in Luke chapter 5 that:

Jesus had first called them on sea!

He had first called them while they were fishing!

And He had called them through catching lots of fish!

And now in John 21 Jesus parallels that account to remind them of **just how far** they had come!

And sometimes that's an encouraging thing to do – looking back over the years of **your walk with** the Lord and seeing all of the ways of **just how faithful & kind** He's been in **calling you out of darkness!**

Seeing just how far **you've come** from your old way of life – and how He has changed & restored you back to the **fullness of His grace!**

It's what Paul does for the Corinthians in 1st Corinthians 6 when he says to the Corinthians after giving that list of sins that will NOT inherit the Kingdom of God – He says:

And such were some of you... But you were washed, and you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God...

He's reminding them of just how far they've actually come **by God's grace!**

It's what I think Jesus does here with Simon Peter!

It was a humbling reminder that Christ **could change** Peter!

And that He **did change** Peter!

And He **was changing** Peter!
Form one degree of glory to the next!

Christ had changed his name!

He had changed his status!

He had changed his vocation!

And his very nature!

And now he was about to change His guilt and shame!

Jesus was reminding Peter of **just how far** he's actually come!

Observation #3

And that leads us into our **third observation** here this morning:

Jesus directed Peter's heart to the topic of love...

Verse 15: *Peter, do you love me?*

Verse 16: *Peter, do you love me?*

Verse 17: *Peter, do you love me?*

The reason Jesus does this to Peter is because:

At the heart of Christian **rebellion** and all Christian **sin** – is the denial of our **fundamental confession** that:

We love Jesus Christ!

1 John 4:8 says:

*Anyone **who does not love**, does not **know God**, because God is love...*

1st Peter 1:8 says:

Though you have not seen Him, you love Him...

And then Peter goes on **in that letter** to speak about:

A true love for Jesus is manifested in obedience to His word!

The Puritan Pastor Thomas Tuke once said that:

Love is the character and badge of True Christianity...

And **that's why** Jesus (when dealing with Peter's sin) goes right to the heart of the issue – because:

Jesus knows (as much as Peter does) that all Christian sin is a **painful denial** of our **fundamental confession** that *we love Jesus Christ!*

1 John 1:6:

If we say we have fellowship with God but walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth...

When we are sinning against God in any way, shape, or form – we are at that point **NOT** loving God with our **hearts** – NOT loving God with our **soul** – NOT loving God with our **mind** – NOT loving God with our **strength!**

Or as one pastor says:

When we are at peace with our sin – we are at war with God!

Remember how Paul ends the book of Corinthians:

Let those who do not love the Lord Jesus Christ be accursed!

And so to be a Christian is to be someone who loves Jesus – to love the Lord!

And so Jesus **in restoring** Peter back to repentance & faith – He directs Peter's heart **to the affection** of His soul:

Peter do you love me like you claimed that you did?

More than these

And the way that He does this is actually **very interesting & penetrating** – notice the way He asks this:

*Simon, son of John, do you love me **more than these***

Now the obvious question that is probably in our minds is:

What does Jesus mean by these?

What are the these that He's referring to?

Love the disciples

And many have given their opinion – it could be that Jesus was asking:

Simon Son of John, do you love me more than you love these other disciples?!?!?

Remember the disciples are there present with Jesus at this point – they're all **eating breakfast together** in verse 13...

And so the conversation seems to begin **in verse 15** with all the disciples present – but **by the time** we get to **verse 20** it becomes a **private conversation** between Peter and Jesus alone!

And so Jesus could be asking in front of **all the other men**:

Simon son of John, do you love me more than you love these other disciples?!?!?

But that's **NOT** really a theme that we see in John's Gospel!

Maybe in some other portions of Scripture – but certainly **NOT** in John's famous Gospel!

And so I don't think Jesus is asking that question!

Fishing Gear

A second option though could be:

Simon Son, do you love me more than these fishing nets?

Or this fishing gear?!?

They have just come up off the beach – all of the **boats** and the **nets** are still probably **close to them**!

And so Jesus says – Peter:

Do you love me more than your old way of life?!?

But again there's **really nothing** in John where Jesus seems **overly negative** about fishing or fishing gear!

In fact if anything – Jesus is actually **pretty positive** toward fishing!

He uses fishing a number of times as a **positive analogy** when referring to the Kingdom of God – or the gospel going forth – or people being saved!

Now I know some of you are only going to hear that this morning:

See Pastor Rhoi says fishing is biblical – I don't have to give up fishing to love Jesus – Jesus loved fishing – therefore honey I need to be out fishing more!

No that's **NOT** what I'm saying – wives let **do NOT let him** misquote me on the drive home today!

And it's certainly NOT what Jesus is saying here!

More than their love

But I think the correct way **to interpret this** is to say that Jesus was asking Peter:

*Simon Son of John, do you love me more than **these other disciples** love me!?!?*

Do you love me more than these other disciples **claim** to love me!

Now why would Jesus ask Peter such a **penetrating question?!?**

Why would He put Peter on the spot like that?!?

Well remember this is what Peter claimed to say **before his denial** in John 18!

Remember Peter claimed that he **did love Jesus** more than these!

Boasting

I mean **doesn't that make sense** given everything we've seen in John's Gospel regarding Peter?

Peter was **always the one** who had expressed the strongest personal devotion to Jesus throughout the Gospels!

It was Peter who said to Jesus – in John chapter 13:

I will lay down my life for you!

It was Peter who said to Jesus in Matthew 26:

Even if all these others fall away from you – I will never fall away!

It was Peter who **drew his sword** in John 18 cutting off Malchus' ear in the Garden!

It was Peter who said to Jesus:

*I will go **to my death** for you!*

Peter was **always the one** who expressed the **most amount** of love for Jesus Christ **over all** the other disciples:

To the neglect of the other disciples!

And so Jesus is **calling Peter out** in this very first question to say:

*Simon, son of John, do you **still claim to love me** more than the other disciples?!?!*

In other words:

How did that turn out for you?!?!

Are you still arrogant...and boastful...?!?!

Are you still full of pride and vanity?!?!

Are you still stubborn... and rebellious...?!?!

Or have you learned a thing or two?!?!

Have you been **humbled** by your sin?!?!

Have you **been chastened** by your arrogance and pride and foolishness?!?!

Has lady wisdom brought you to the knowledge of your depraved heart?!?!

Sin Humbles

It's a penetrating question isn't it...

Many have said:

*There are **few things** that are **more painful** in the Christian life than **coming to the knowledge** that we are **NOT as spiritually mature** as what we once thought...*

Sin has a way of **doing that** friends!

Sin has a way of **humbling** the Christian!

It has a way of **sobering** the mind!

It has a way of **demonstrating** our hearts!

I wonder if you've been humbled your sin recently!

Because when we are **humbled** by the reality of **sin** that **still resides** deep down in the recesses of our hearts – then we start to realize:

There but for the grace of God go I...

Peter has been humbled by his sin!

Peter has been grieved by his sin!

The process of restoration has begun...

Do you love Him

And notice how Peter responds in all 3 questions:

Yes Lord you know that I love you...

Yes Lord you know that I love you...

*Yes Lord, **you know all things**, you know that I love you...*

He **doesn't** boast – he **doesn't** brag – he **doesn't** promise with oaths!

But he **simply** and **humbly** responds by pointing to:

The goodness of God!

The goodness of Christ!

And the knowledge of Jesus that He has of Peter's heart!

Lord... you know me – you know my heart – you know my mind – you know my soul – you know
everything there is to know about me...

What can I say but that I really do love you!

NO more oaths!

NO more promises!

No more bragging!

Only the truth!

Peter has been humbled by sin... have you?!?!

Different Love

Now while we're **at this juncture** on love – let me just **briefly say** that **many** have come to this passage before and tried to make a big point about the fact that John is using *different words* for love!

So in the *first two questions* the word Jesus uses for love is the word *agape* (agapao) – which is kind of like:

A self-sacrificing love!

Or a selfless love!

It's an unconditional love!

Some have even called it:

*It's the **highest form** of love!*

So Jesus was saying:

*Peter do you love me with the **highest form** of love?*

Phileo

And then Peter responds with a Phileo kind of love!

That's a **brotherly kind** of love – or a **friendship kind** of love – or **love by association!**

And so some people make a big deal of this and say:

*See, Peter **couldn't even** bring himself to expressing the highest form of love! He only could only love Jesus with a **phileo kind** of love...*

Interchangeably

Well the problem with that approach is that **these words** [phileo/agape] are **used interchangeably** to refer to the same very thing:

All throughout the bible!

So in **John 15** when Jesus speaks of His love that He has for His disciples – He says that He loves them with an **agapao** love – but then in **chapter 16** with a **phileo** love!

John is called *the disciple whom Jesus loves* with **agape** in **chapter 13** – and then with **phileo** in **chapter 20!**

The Father loves the Son in John chapter 3 with **agape** – and in John chapter 5 with **phileo!**

And so it seems to be that it's **the same idea** used 3 different times interchangeably in this discussion!

And I think He does this for **stylistic reasons**!

Sheep vs. Lamb

It's the same reasons he uses the words:

Tend & shepherd – and sheep and lambs!

Verse 15: *Feed my lambs*

Verse 16: *Shepherd my sheep*

Verse 17: *Feed my sheep*

Now are we to make a distinction between *tend & sheep* – and *shepherd* and *lambs*?

NO – It's simply a **stylistic instrument** used to **emphasize** the exact same thing!

Knowledge

It's the same reason the word *know* is used **3 different times** – 2 are the same and one is different!

So in Peter's response to Jesus:

Lord you know that I love you – the words are:

Oida – Oida – Ginosko

The first 2 are the same the last one is different!

So are we to say that the **first 2** are somehow **different** to the last one?!?!?

No only if you want to make a **complete butchery** of the Greek text!

It's simply a **stylistic tool** used for **variation** purposes!

3 Denials

And the reason Jesus is doing that – asking the **same question – 3 different times** to Peter is because:

How many times did **Peter** deny **Jesus** in John 18?!?!

3 different times!

I think Jesus does this **to match** Peter's 3-fold denial in John 18!

So that Peter gets the point!

Tedd Donnelly from Banner of Truth says that:

*Jesus' questioning is both gentle but relentless...3 times by the fire in the courtyard of the High priest Peter denies his Lord & God – and yet **now beside another fire** he is asked again 3 different times about his relationship with Christ...Each question makes him relive the bitterness of his betrayal – and yet with each trembling profession of love it wipes out another stain of cowardice...*

For every rejection that Peter gave to Jesus – Jesus was **calling Peter back** to repentance and faith!

That's why Jesus asks this question 3 times – because He was demonstrating in the words of Richard Sibbes:

There is more mercy in Christ, than there is sin in us!

Observation #4

Alright – **fourth observation** that we see here this morning:

Jesus recommissions Peter to ministry

Notice that after Jesus **secures Peter's repentance** with **3 demands** of His love – Jesus then gives Peter these **3 affirmations** of his love by restoring him back to ministry:

Peter, Feed my lambs!

Peter, Shepherd my sheep!

Peter, Feed my sheep!

What we see here is that:

*Our love for Jesus is to be **demonstrated primarily** by love for His people*

And notice too that they are **never referred to** as:

Our lambs – or our sheep – or our people!

But **it is always:**

Jesus' lambs – Jesus' sheep – and Jesus' people!

These are people that Jesus has purchased with His own precious blood when dying on the cross!

These are the people He is leaving to the care of the pastors/elders/ and shepherds of the church!

And that goes for **all Christian ministry** by the way – this is **NOT just** in pastoral ministry – or campus ministry – or college ministry – or evangelistic ministry:

But this goes for all Christian ministry in the church!

All Christian discipleship!

This goes for mums raising children to trust and fear the Lord!

This goes for dads raising boys on how to kill and slay their dragons!

This goes for teachers teaching students!

Or students teaching peers!

It is **never** our **kingdom** – and our **ministry** – and our **sheep** – and our **people**!

It reminds me of Paul's statement in Acts 20:28 to the Ephesian elders – where he says:

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, be shepherds of the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood...

The idea there is that if God alone has gone to such **great lengths** to purchase the Church of God, with His own blood, through Jesus Christ – then we **cannot be surprised** that He would **call us** to Christian ministry **and to love** one another:

In the **very same way**!

Pastoral Ministry

Now for Peter this looked **suspiciously like** pastoral ministry – or what pastors are called to do!

Peter was to shepherd the flock of God – by caring and guiding God's people!

Peter was to feed the flock of God – by preaching and teaching God's people!

In the ancient the world **one of the most loving things** a good shepherd **could do** for his sheep – was to **lead them out** into green pastures to nourish their souls!

And one of the **most loving things a good pastor can do** in the local church is to **feed you spiritually** from the Word!

The Word of God is always to be **the regular diet** of the Church

Elders are primarily called to preach, teach, and exhort the sheep, with **the Word of God**, in both **public** and **private** settings!

Jesus' reiterates this point in Mathew 4:

*Man shall not live by **bread alone**, but by **every word that proceeds** from the mouth of God...*

Paul could say to Timothy in 1st Timothy 4:

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, & to teaching....

And so God's Word has always been the **primary means by which** God **creates**, and **convicts**, and **converts**, and **conforms** His chosen people to the image of **His beloved son!**

Word of God

The word of God **convicts** – Acts chapter 2!

It **converts** – Acts chapter 8!

It **regenerates** – 1st Peter 1!

It **comforts** – Psalm 119!

It **reproves** – Hebrews chapter 4!

It **sanctifies** – John 17!

It gives **wisdom** – Proverbs chapter 2

It **cleanses** – Ephesians chapter 5!

It **produces fruit** – Colossians chapter 1!

It **creates faith** – Romans chapter 10!

It **manifests His presence** – John chapter 1!

And it **certainly corrects sin** – 2 timothy chapter 3!

Friends it is always the Word of God that God uses as the primary means by which He saves and sanctifies and secures His people!

And that's why after restoring Peter back to office – Jesus then commissions Peter in the **active ministry** of the word of God!

Switched Metaphors

By the way did you notice that we've **switched metaphors!**

They've gone from **last week's text** of being *fishers of men* to now this week's text of being *Shepherds of sheep!*

So from fishing to farming!

And in the local church – we need both sets of people:

We need the evangelist and the pastor!

We need the teacher and the preacher!

Both the outward focus and inward focus!

Those catching fish and those shepherding sheep!

And one of the **biggest problems** of the modern evangelical churches is that they can focus **too much** on reaching the lost **to the neglect** of feeding the sheep!

The modern church-growth movement has done a lot of damage in turning churches into businesses that simply cater to the outside world!

So that they become a **seeker-sensitive movement** trying to appeal to modern senses – and that's how you get Star Wars characters **on stages** at Easter – and Santas coming in in sleighs at Christmas!

Because the modern church today has **wrongly** been focused on:

Reaching the world with worldly vices!

And on the other end of the spectrum – churches can focus too much on **inward growth** to the neglect of doing evangelism altogether!

And so we need both fishermen and shepherds who can lead the Church of God and do it rightly!

There's so much more I want to say about that – but we don't have time!

Final Observation

So then finally in verses 18 and 19 we have the **final observation** of the text this morning which is this:

Peter would suffer for the glory of God by giving His life for the God of glory

Notice verse 18:

Truly I tell you, when you were younger, you would tie your belt and walk wherever you wanted. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will tie you and carry you where you don't want to go...

Now the irony of course is that it was **only a few minutes** ago that we saw Peter dressing himself **for action** before jumping into the sea to get to Jesus!

*And so Jesus says ironically that when you were younger (like just a few minutes ago) you would **tie your belt** and walk around wherever you wanted – but when you **grow old** [at the end of your life] you will stretch of your hands and someone else will tie you and carry you where you do not want to go...*

And then John says:

Now He [Jesus] said this to indicate by what kind of death Peter would glorify God...

Now we know from Church tradition that Peter (after watching his wife) get crucified on a cross – Peter would later demand that he be crucified **upside down** on the cross – because he was **NOT worthy** to die in the **same manner** as His Lord and King had died for him!

Now whether or NOT that's true is another thing – a lot of people say that's probably embellished!

But we do know that Peter was killed for Christ – and we know that he never again denied His lord and King – in fact Acts chapter 5 says that:

After Peter and John had been beaten and flogged for preaching the gospel:

They left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name...

Peter would **never again** suffer the shame of denying His Lord and God before men – but he would go on to glorify Him **through his death!**

Our Death

Now if there's one thing we **don't know** when it comes to our death in this life – it's that you and I don't know **the method of death** that we're going to face!

We **don't know** how we're going to die!

We know that we're going to die – the only question is:

Will your death glorify God or NOT?

Are you going to die well – like a Christian?!?!?

Or will you allow your death to get the final say?!?

I love what John Wesley said to his critics during the second great awakening in America – he said:

The one thing you cannot deny is that our people die well!

Christian is your life glorifying God right up until your death – will you die well knowing that God gets the glory?!?!?

Peter would suffer for the glory of God by giving His life for the God of glory!

Application #1

So what can learn from Peter's life here?

What do we learn in terms of application?

Number one this text teaches us that:

God's people are capable of committing some pretty serious sins!

And we need to **hear** that – and we need to **say** that this morning!

Because those of us who believe wholeheartedly in the doctrine of Total Depravity – and the Purity of the Church – and the Holiness of the gospel – and the Perseverance of the Saints – must **also have room** in our theology – for this idea that:

God's people are capable of committing some pretty serious sins!

In other words – you better have room in your theology:

For a David and a Peter!

And for you & for me!

Spurgeon said:

*Oh that it were **not too sadly true** that God's people are liable to be overtaken by the worst kinds of sins!*

The first lesson we learn from our passage this morning – is that:

God's people are people who can commit the worst kinds of sins against God and yet somehow still be allowed **to remain in** the fold of God!

It's the paradox of the gospel!

How can Christians be born again to a new and living hope – have the Spirit of God dwelling in them – and have a completely brand-new nature – and yet **still fall back** into the old patterns of sin?!?!

I have no idea but it's just what the bible says!

Application #2

Second I want us to see this:

Your past failures do not have to be your future legacy

Your past failures do **NOT** have to define who you are!

Now our failures remain with us to this day – at least in our **minds** and in our hearts – **we remember** our failures – but the amazing news of the gospel is that:

Jesus does **NOT** ever bring those past failures up in our face!

Jesus **never once** throws our old sins in our face!

But in Jeremiah 31 God comes to the nation of Israel and says:

For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more...

Now just think about this idea that:

God remembers our sins no more!

We remember

Now that's an amazing verse to recognize because:

We remember our sins **all the time!**

And we remember **other people's sins** all the time!

And even when we forgive other people's sins – and place it under the blood of Christ:

It's still **kind of with us** in the back of our minds – that hurt never really goes away!

We've forgiven it – but it's always **kind of stays** with us!

It's forgiven – but we remember it!

And if we were asked about it – we'd probably be able to give the **details** & the **circumstances!**

But God does something **totally different** in the gospel!

In the gospel God promises to:

Never remember our sins anymore!

The infinite Creator – the one who has **limitless power** – the **all-knowing** – **all sovereign** – **ever present** God of the universe says:

I'll never remember your sins!

Final Chapter

You know Peter was probably known in the early Church **for many things**:

Apostle with the foot-shaped mouth!

The disciple who walked on water!

His famous Caesarean confession!

And certainly, denying Jesus would be **on that list!**

Everyone knows Peter for denying Jesus!

But the amazing reality of John chapter 21 is that this was **NOT** the **only chapter** in Peter's earthly life – and it **wasn't** even the **most important** chapter – and it certainly **was NOT the last!**

And so the good news of the gospel friends is **NOT** how we **begin** in the Christian life – but the good news is how **God preserves us** and keeps us **till the end!**

Your past failures do not have to be your future legacy!

There is forgiveness and grace found in the cross of Christ for even the most wicked of sins that you have committed here this morning!

Application #3

And then the last point of application is simply to say:

*God is far more **gracious** and far more **willing** to forgive us of our sins than even we are!*

There is far more grace and mercy to be found in the cross of Christ than there is sin in us!

I mean if there is one thing that Jesus could have said to Peter when He saw him on the beach that day was:

Well look at you ya flop!

Don't trust you anymore!

Not only did you fall asleep on me – but you denied me 3 times!

Didn't you hear my sermon on discipleship!?!

*Didn't you hear my thing about **taking up your cross** and following me!*

Where were you then Peter!

Big talker!

Jesus could have said **so many things** to Peter – but thanks be to God that He:

Does NOT DO THAT!

But He uses the failings of Peter – to make His grace all the more brighter to see!

He uses our failings and our sins to make His glory shine through!

Conclusion

And so do you know what this passage does for us here this morning:

This passage highlights the goodness and the grace and the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ!

It gives us **tremendous hope** for anyone who has **ever failed** the Lord Jesus Christ by denying Him!

And failing Him!

Have you ever failed Jesus Christ friends?

You ever denied Him before men!

I'm not talking about forgetting to read your bible – or leading family worship – failing to make a stance on gender issues – I'm talking about **failing Him in a big way!**

In a Simon Peter kind of way!

In a way where there is **immense guilt & shame** – and **regret** that has followed you around **for the past 20 years!**

Those of you who have wept bitter tears in the night!

Or felt the guilt of hidden sins being exposed!

Those of you who have denied Him before men...

This passage teaches us that God's purposes & God's plans **do NOT ultimately fail** – and they **cannot ultimately fail** because we serve a God who far more gracious – and far more willing – and far more loving to tend to His sheep because He loves us!

Oh how He loves us and He refuses to let us go!

And every time we sin and fail **like Peter** – there is a call in the gospel to come back to Jesus – and:

To lay – our – sins – upon – Him!

Amazing Grace

We often sing the words *amazing grace how sweet the sound **that saves** a wretch like me* – But how many of us forget the **reality of that hymn** when we sing the words:

*Tis grace that brought me safe thus far,
and grace **will lead me home.***

Grace does **NOT just** get us into the Christian life – but grace **keeps us** in the Christian life!

It sustains us!

And preserves us to the very end!

And so the good news of this passage friends is that:

even when we are unfaithful to God – God is the one who keeps covenant with us...

And that is really really good news!

John 21:15-19

Discussion Questions

[Read John 21:15-19].

Main Point: *God is the one who keeps covenant with us even when we are unfaithful to Him.*

Q1. What do you think is at the heart of this conversation between Jesus and Peter? – In other words: Why was this conversation even necessary for Jesus to have? – What is the basis of Peter’s forgiveness after he had rejected Jesus 3 times? **[See Psalm 103:10-12; Isaiah 1:18; Romans 5:18-21; 8:38-39; 1 John 1:9].**

Q2. Do you think it’s significant that Jesus refers to Peter as “*Simon, Son of John?*” – why or why not? – Reflecting back over your journey as a Christian believer, do you see demonstrable progress? If not, does that encourage or discourage you? – Reflect back over all the ways that God has been faithful to you in your Christian journey thus far. Do you believe He has preserved you/sustained you? Why or why not?

Q3. [Read verses 15-17]. Why does Jesus point Peter back to his love for Christ? – What does this tell us about the nature of sin? – How do you understand Peter’s reply to Jesus: “*Yes Lord you know that I love you*” **X3...?** – Why do you think Peter was grieved the third time Jesus asked Him this?

Q4. [Read Luke 22:33-34; John 13:37-38]. How is Peter’s response in John 21 different to his earlier & bold declarations? – What does this teach us about the nature of the Christian when they sin?

Q5. What does Jesus' command to "*feed my sheep*" reveal about the nature of Christian leadership and discipleship? – Are there sins that disqualify a man from ministry? – If so, what are they?

Q6. What does this passage teach us about the connection between love for Jesus and obedience to His commands? – What are some practical ways to demonstrate our love for Jesus daily?

Q7. How has failure humbled you and brought you closer to Christ? – Why is this passage such good news for people like us?

Q8. [Read verses 18-19]. What are these verses saying? – How should they encourage us to die well as Christians? – What do these verses tell us about the sovereignty of God in death?