

A Restoration Story (Part 3)

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[0 : 00] I want you to think about some of the personalities in the Bible that you know well. Don't answer out loud, but Old or New Testament.

Think, this person, that person. With the exception of Jesus, whoever came to your mind, they are, were flawed people, weren't they?

Just about all of the people you read about in Scripture, I'm talking about the major ones. Abraham, Moses, David. The Bible lets you see how they failed God at times.

And it was serious. It was terrible. But God never gave up on them.

And God worked in their lives to bring them back and to restore them to a right relationship with Him. That's something that all of us needs to be thankful for.

[1 : 19] When you read the Bible, you're reading about flawed, sinful, imperfect people just like us. That's who God works in and through to accomplish His purpose in this world.

That means He can work through us. But when we do fail Him, when we do fall, what we need to understand is if we will come back to Him humbly, repentant, seeking His forgiveness, He will always take us back.

He'll always forgive, cleanse us, and give us a fresh start. Because He's in the restoration business. I want you to turn back with me to John chapter 21, where we've been looking at a restoration story now.

This will be the third week. This is going to be the final week. We've looked at how the Lord restored Peter after his unbelievable fall on the night that Jesus was arrested.

Peter denied that he even knew Jesus three times. But the Lord brought him back. And we've been studying that. And let's look at it one more time.

[2 : 37] John chapter 21. Let's read this event. It takes place. Jesus and seven disciples around a breakfast campfire beside a lake.

Verse 15. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, 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. He said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me? He said to him, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, Tend my sheep.

He, that is Jesus, said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me? Well, Peter was grieved because he said to him, The third time, do you love me?

He said to him, Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you. Jesus said to him, Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted.

[3 : 50] But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go. This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.

And after saying this, he said to him, Follow me. Well, Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them.

That's John. The one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, Lord, who is it that's going to betray you? When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, Lord, what about this man?

And Jesus said to him, If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me. Two weeks ago, we looked at how the Lord's in the restoration business, how he didn't let Peter stay in that fallen condition but brought him back.

Last week, we looked at how the Lord's restoration is both relational and practical. Jesus restored Peter to a real loving relationship with him.

[5 : 08] That's why there's such an emphasis on the word love. Jesus asking him, Do you love me? But also, Jesus restored Peter to his place of leadership among the disciples and restored him to the ministry or the service that Jesus had for him.

We spent last week looking at that restored relationship. Just note very quickly, a true relationship with the Lord is built on the foundation of love. A true relationship with the Lord is built on a foundation of love.

His love for us, our love for him. Restoring Peter to this loving relationship with himself was Jesus' first priority.

That's why I ask him three times, verses 15, 16, and 17, Do you love me? What we see in this is that God puts a priority on our relationship with him.

Certainly, God wants us to obey him. He wants us to serve him. He wants us to do his will. But God wants us to do that because we love him and we want to please him like a little child wants to please their parents.

[6 : 31] Now, I said little child. You remember when you were real little? Three, four, five maybe? And it was your desire to please your parents.

You liked to get their attention. You liked for them to watch you because you wanted to show them something. You were wanting to connect with them. That's what that's all about.

You have a relationship with them. You love them. You want them in your life. You want them to approve. You want to bring a smile to their face. God wants us to do his will.

He wants us to serve him because we really and truly do love him. He's our heavenly father. And we want to bring a smile to his face by what we do for him.

But let's move on in that passage. Jesus did more than just restore Peter to a loving relationship. Jesus recommissioned him.

[7 : 36] Let's look at it now. A true relationship with the Lord involves committed service. Peter was recommissioned by Jesus to this special ministry that Jesus had for him.

Notice how Jesus did it in verses 15 through 17. Each time Peter expressed his love for Jesus, Jesus told him to take care of his sheep. Notice that.

Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep. Peter was called and gifted by the Lord to be a leader in the early church. He was a great preacher and teacher.

You can read through the first 12 chapters of the book of Acts and see all that. You see, he was a leader. He made a difference in Jerusalem and the outlying areas as that new church started and was beginning to flourish.

He was also used of God to preach. Thousands of people believed, became Christians under that kind of preaching. But every Christian is gifted to serve the Lord in some kind of ministry.

[8 : 52] It may not be the kind of ministry that Peter had. You know, if our relationship with the Lord is healthy, we'll have a desire to serve Him in the ways that He has gifted and equipped us to serve Him.

If we have a right relationship with the Lord, we will want to be involved in serving Him as we are able to serve Him.

But we'll do it differently. That's what I want to emphasize here. Now, we're not all called to do the same thing because we're not made the same. We have a different gift and skill set.

You have a different gift and skill set from the person sitting beside you wherever you are seated this morning. But we all should want to serve the Lord as we can if we really have a loving relationship with Him.

Now, if you're not involved in some kind of ministry right now, when I say this, the way we serve Him, it varies. Some people do it publicly.

[10 : 02] Some people serve the Lord faithfully, but nobody ever sees them. Some people are involved every Sunday, maybe singing in the choir, playing an instrument, teaching a Sunday school class.

Some people are involved less frequently because what they are gifted and involved in, it doesn't need to be done every week. We're not talking about how much you serve or anything like that.

The question now is, are you serving the Lord in some way as you ought to, not like somebody else? If you're not, why is it?

If you're not serving Him, my first guess is, the problem, the source of the problem is, there's something missing in your relationship with Him.

I'm not saying that you're not a Christian. I'm saying something is not exactly right because if you're really in fellowship with Him, sensitive to His Spirit who indwells you, aware of the gifts He's given you, you're going to want to please Him by doing what it is that you know He wants you to do.

[11 : 23] So if you're not serving Him, what's wrong? What needs to change? You talk to the Lord about it and ask Him to help you, maybe to have a greater desire or maybe to show you what it is you need to be doing.

If your relationship with Him is good, it's close, you're going to want to serve Him out of your love for Him. But it may not be easy.

Now some ministries are. Some things people are involved in that are needed to be done, it doesn't take a whole lot of time, it doesn't take a whole lot of sweat, if any. And I'm not minimizing that. But some Christians are called to very difficult service and Peter is at the top of the list in the difficult service he was called.

See, Peter did more than just preach and teach. He did more than just lead people who loved him and wanted to follow him. Peter served the Lord in such a way that it eventually required or led to his painful death.

[12 : 42] And that's what verses 18 and 19 is talking about. Look back in verse 18. Jesus described Peter's younger days basically as just a life of freedom. Look at it. When you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted.

But Jesus describes Peter's later years in opposite terms. Look at it. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.

Now he's not talking about, Jesus is not saying, Peter, when you get old, you're just going to be old and decrepit and people are going to have to lead you around. That's not what he's talking about because verse 19 tells us what Jesus was talking about.

Look at it. Jesus was explaining that Peter's going to die a martyr's death. It's a parenthetical phrase. This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.

Commentators say that describing death as a way of glorifying God was a standard Christian way for describing martyrdom, dying for your faith.

[13 : 53] They also point out that that phrase, stretch out your hands, in this kind of context, talking about death, is a reference to crucifixion. The New Testament does not tell us how Peter died.

In fact, the New Testament doesn't even tell us he died. But early church tradition tells us that Peter was put to death because of his faith, that he was put to death by crucifixion.

Now, obviously, all Christians are not required to die as a part of their service for the Lord. I personally have never known of someone who had to die in order to be faithful to the Lord.

But thousands of people have died in the 21st century all because they were Christians, they were open about their faith, and when persecution came, they didn't renounce the Lord.

We have all read about Christians who have been executed by such terrorist groups as ISIS just recently, recent past. That's happening.

[15 : 04] It's always happened throughout the history of the world. It is still happening. But most of us, unless you leave this country, we're not going to be called upon in all likelihood to have to die as a result of being faithful to the Lord.

But the Lord does call us to be willing to die, to have that kind of commitment to Him, that we're willing to die if necessary. Jesus made it clear on many occasions, the way that He talked to His disciples, the way that He had talked to people who were sort of inquiring about what it took to be His disciple.

Jesus gave very strong statements about what it meant to follow Him. Look at one good example in Luke chapter 9.

And He said to all, that is Jesus, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. You see, Jesus, He never watered down the message that following Him would not be costly.

Jesus never said anything like Joel Osteen would say. Jesus never talked about this health and wealth, that if you really have the right kind of faith and you really trust God, He's going to make you healthy, He's going to make you wealthy.

[16 : 28] That's garbage. That's trash. That is absolutely, 100% contrary to the teaching of Scripture about what it means to live as a Christian in this world.

Some of the most godly people who've ever lived have suffered physically, have suffered economically. They've had a hard life. And the reality is the Bible does not promise that it won't be that way for you and me.

To follow Christ requires a total commitment to Him, to knowing, loving, serving Him regardless of what it takes.

How can a person do that? How can we do that? Well, the Apostle Paul explains what motivates Christians to give their life in service to the Lord.

He's explaining himself, he's explaining how we can do this in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. Look at it. He says, For the love of Christ controls us.

[17 : 39] Christ died for all that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who for their sake died and was raised.

You see, Paul was motivated by the love that Christ demonstrated in dying on the cross to pay the penalty for his sins. And because he knew the Lord gave his life for him, because he knew that Jesus loved him that much, he loved Jesus in return.

He gave, Christ gave his life for him, Paul gave his life back. There was love both ways. That's what motivated Peter as well.

That's what will motivate us. us. Having a loving relationship with the Lord is the key to faithfulness. Some of you have read of a famous missionary named Hudson Taylor.

He gave his life in mission service in China. On one occasion he was introduced to a group of Christians as a great missionary who had given his life to the Orient because he loved the Chinese.

[18 : 58] Well, Taylor when he got up to speak he shook his head and answered thoughtfully this, no, not because I loved the Chinese but because I loved God.

Now, he did love those people but the reason he left home and family and an easier life was because he loved God and he believed that God had called him to serve him in China and so because he loved God and he wanted to please the God that he loved that's why he did what he did and we can relate to that.

I want you to think with me. we can relate to this idea of doing things that we don't want to do but we do it for the one that we love.

A lot of people in this room you have sat up at the hospital or maybe in a home maybe at a hospice house you have sat up with someone who didn't have it all together and they were trying to take the IVs out of their arm they were trying to get up out of the bed they did not cooperate but you stayed there standing up part of the night maybe on the edge of the chair part of the night you stayed there and did all that not because it was fun not because you wanted to do that make that person stay into bed hold their hands back now you didn't want to do that but you loved the person you were caring for enough to be willing to do that you did something that was hard you did something that was uncomfortable you did something that caused you great stress not because of anything you got out of it joyfully emotionally but because you loved the person the parent the grandparent the friend that you were trying to take care of

I'm going to guess that some of you work a job that you don't really like I know some people work a job that they basically just hate and the reason they work that job is to make a living for the people in their home that they love they don't get up in the morning and go to work because they enjoy what they do they get up and go to work because they love the people that they are going to support you see we do understand and we do things in our lives that are hard that are painful sometimes that we absolutely don't want to do we never choose to do but because we're motivated by love for a person we do whatever it takes and so if we have the right kind of relationship with the Lord we should be willing to do whatever it takes to be faithful to him and as we have this right kind of love for him and put forth that effort the Lord is going to give us what we need to remain faithful that's what

[22 : 50] Paul talked about in Colossians chapter 1 verse 29 see Paul talked about he was motivated by his love for Christ Christ's love for him but look what else he said here to this verse from the New Living Translation that's why I work and struggle so hard depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me the Spirit of God lives within us and it's the Spirit of God who gives us the desire and the ability to hang in there to be faithful if we want to be because we love our Lord let's look at one more lesson in this restoration story sort of switching gears a little bit here our Lord calls us to focus on the ministry he has assigned to us not the ministry he has assigned to others that's what he's talking about verses 20 through 22 at some point after this breakfast Jesus and Peter got up and took a walk down the beach well Peter noticed over his shoulder I guess that John was walking along behind them and so he asked Jesus the question look at it

Lord what about this man I want you to think Jesus had just told Peter you're going to die a martyr's death how would you feel when you heard that for the first time well Peter now he wants to know what's going to happen to John who also has a close relationship with Jesus you understand what Peter is doing Peter now is going to compare himself what he's got to do with John and what Jesus has in store for him but I want you to look at how Jesus responds if it is my will that he remain until I come what is that to you you follow me Jesus is being very blunt here he's saying what I have in store for John is none of your business makes no bones does he you just do what I told you that's what

Jesus is saying if I want him to stay alive until I come again you're going to die Peter but if it's my will that he stay alive and healthy and well until I come back what's it to you you don't worry about him you take care of you that's what he's saying in effect Jesus is telling Peter M-Y-O-B mind your own business Jesus was not telling Peter that he shouldn't care about others but he is clearly telling him not to compare himself or his ministry assignment with other people this is the lesson we need to learn don't we personally on a personal level we are tempted to compare ourselves with other people and we sometimes like to grumble and complain we might say something we might think it Lord I am trying to be faithful I'm trying to live a faithful life I'm trying to do what I know you want me to do I'm being faithful in my giving I'm being faithful in serving you but I'm struggling and my neighbors who are not Christians who don't really care about you they seem to be just having it great in life no struggles why is this happening we like to grumble and complain sometimes we like to whine like a child demanding equal treatment I will never forget the time when my son David who was about four or five years old and Michael was two or three and Lisa had them both in the bathroom getting them ready to go somewhere and in all the confusion she said to David uh oh David I just brushed Michael's teeth with your toothbrush and David quickly shot back well I'm using his so intent so intent we are sometimes to have everything equal to make sure someone is not one up on us we say and do foolish and immature things that happened many many years ago Lisa and I still laugh how a little child would say I'm going to use somebody else's toothbrush don't you think really and truly don't you think God is our heavenly father looks at some of the things that we do some of the foolish things that we do and say don't you think he laughs at us because we do things just like that and we don't understand just how immature how crazy it is you know in our church ministry if you're involved in the life of the church in some way we can be tempted to think that my gifts and my talents and my abilities that's what's most important we may even suddenly try to minimize the value of other people's ministries their gifts or even worse we would never say it but we might sometimes smile when they fail or when they don't do so well whenever we think like that we need to call it what it is it's pride it's selfishness it's jealousy it's envy whatever it is the root cause is sin and you know

[29 : 16] God hates sin Chuck Swindoll helps us to see that when we compare ourselves with others or complain about our differences we are really criticizing God and the way he works look at what Swindoll says God's calling is personal and his leading is unique all Christians enroll in the same school but our individual curricula is vastly different because we have different needs different gifts and different callings our coursework is tailor made to match we're not cookie cutter Christians although we're cut out of the same dough we're not cut out in the same size or shape as even our closest friends or co-workers we are all predestined to become like Christ that's what it says in Romans 8 29 the route God takes us to get there however varies significantly from one person to another instead of us looking around at someone else this morning criticizing or comparing let's close this out by just looking at ourselves how would you describe your relationship with the Lord right now do you really and truly have a relationship with Him as your

Savior and Lord if you don't do you want one if you do you can have one if you'll admit your need the fact that you don't have a relationship with God admit your sin and truly repent of it change your mind humble yourself before God grieve over it turn from it and put your trust in Jesus that when He died on the cross He died to pay the penalty for the sins you've committed if you'll believe that when God raised Him from the dead that was God's way of saying I've accepted His sacrifice if you'll put your faith in Jesus call upon Him to save you He will He'll forgive you He'll give you a fresh start a new start right now so call on Him now if you have a relationship with Him as a Christian is it healthy right now are you really enjoying a close personal relationship with Him if you're not would you like to if there's something that has interrupted broken your fellowship with

Him admit that to God confess that come back to Him humbly again trusting in Christ the penalty for your sins has been paid recommit yourself to living in fellowship with Him in obedience to Him do that right now you know if you have a right relationship with the Lord you're enjoying good fellowship just thank Him thank Him for the grace that He's showing you thank Him for the way that He is working in your life right now final thought final question are you serving the Lord with the gifts talents and abilities He has given you are you serving Him without comparing yourself someone else are you serving Him without complaining if a change needs to be made in that make that ask God how He wants you to serve

Him ask God to give you the right attitude but what I want everyone in this room to understand is our Lord is in the restoration business and if you have a relationship with Him that is not right it can be repaired or if you don't have a relationship it can begin right now either way whatever your need is call upon Him trust Him obey Him let's pray together Father show us now how we as individuals should respond to Your Word to Your message give us wisdom give us a desire help us to obey You as You speak now let's just all be still and quiet and listen to the Lord and do what He's telling us to do during the next few minutes I'll be at the front here if you would like for me to pray with you I'll be here I would love to do that you come but listen to the

Lord do what He says in these next few minutes o an 6 2 o o o o o o b o o o o o o o