

A Restoration Story (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] In this room, you like to do projects. Sometimes it's a restoration project. Why do you do it? Why do you go to all that trouble?

I talked to someone last week who was involved in restoring a house because they want to live in it. It's an old house, it's got a lot of character, they said, and they're working hard to restore it to live in it.

Some of you may have restored a car, an old car, a classic maybe. Because you want to drive it. Maybe you want to take it to a car show. People who go to the trouble of that kind of work, restoring things.

They do it for a reason. They have a purpose for that work. You know, God is the same way. God is in the business of restoring fallen and broken people because He's not finished with them.

I want you to think about it. When God makes a person His, when God works to call a person to Himself by trusting in Jesus as their Savior and Lord, He makes them His son or daughter.

[1 : 26] God will never wash His hands of them. No matter what, God will love, He will care, He will intervene.

Sometimes He will make His child's life miserable to get their attention, to wake them up, to bring them back to Himself. But God never gives up.

Our God is in the restoring life, restoring business. And every person He restores, He has a purpose for.

He has something, when we fail Him and come back to Him, He has something for us to do. He wants us to serve Him. But what I want us to really think about this morning, He wants us to serve Him from a heart of love.

Now we saw last week how God rescues people. For example, in John chapter 21, when Jesus restored Peter. Now I want you to turn back with me.

[2 : 34] John chapter 21, beginning in verse 15. This is part two of a three-part series on a restoration story.

All coming from John chapter 21. Let's read. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

Remember from last week, this is a breakfast around an open fire with seven disciples, six Peter and six more. And so He says, do you love me more than these guys?

He said to him, that is Peter, 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?

Peter said to him, yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, tend my sheep. feed my sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

[3 : 43] Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, do you love me? And he said to him, Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.

And 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. But when you were 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, that is Peter, was going to glorify God. And after saying this, he said to him, follow me.

And we're really going to get into that verse 18 and 19 next week. What I want us to see first, sort of a quick review from last week.

Our Lord is in the restoration business. Jesus took the initiative to reach out to Peter. Peter had failed Jesus the night that he was arrested by denying that he even knew him.

[4 : 58] He did it not once, not twice, but three times. Well, you can imagine how Peter felt when he realized what he'd done.

But Jesus right here, he reaches out to Peter to publicly let the other disciples know it's all right now.

Peter, he denied me three times. I'm making him say three times that he loves me.

To let the others know Peter's forgiven. He's been restored now to fellowship with Jesus. He's now trustworthy again.

And this is Jesus' way of restoring him to be the leader of disciples. Now, he is a leader among equals. Peter is not special. He's not unique among the 12 in terms of giving any kind of special authority or power.

[6 : 04] He is simply the leader among equals in this group. This is just one example of how God never gives up on his fallen or broken children.

A lot of you, you've read through the Bible, you've read a lot of the Bible, you know that throughout the Bible, there are story after story of people who sinned against God, who failed him miserably, but God brought them back.

I've been teaching a study of chapter 11 of the book of Hebrews on Wednesday nights called Models of Faith. Hebrews chapter 11, it's a long list of men and women from the Old Testament who are being held up as real examples of people who trusted God and just lived faithful lives serving God.

But you know, every single one of those people, every single one in that long list of Hebrews 11, they also failed God. If you go back and read about every one of them, some of them are more well known and remembered because of their sin, because of their failure, not because of their faithfulness, but in the big scheme of things, they're being held up as examples.

Fallen, broken, imperfect people that God didn't give up on, but worked in their lives to bring them back after they had fallen.

[7 : 39] And they've become examples of faithfulness. That encourages me. It should encourage each one of us because we do fail the Lord in a lot of ways, don't we?

And if you don't really understand how you fail God more often than you really feel comfortable talking about, if you don't find that and ring a bell with you, something's wrong.

It could be that you don't have a high enough view of God and His holiness and His perfection, His majesty. Maybe you've got too high of an opinion of yourself.

You don't really understand how you don't love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, which is how we're supposed to love Him. And so, most of us in this room, I think, we don't have a problem understanding.

I fail the Lord a lot. I don't live up to what I know. I don't always put into practice what I truly believe.

[8 : 49] And so, to hear all these stories, to read all these stories about how God doesn't give up on us, how He doesn't throw us away, how He works to bring us back to Himself and restore us, that should be encouraging to us.

You know, back in that Hebrews chapter 11, King David, he is probably the most well-known of those who were restored from failure.

David failed God terribly when he committed adultery with Bathsheba, then tried to cover it up by having her husband killed. What made David's moral and spiritual failure so bad is that he knew better.

He knew he was wrong. That was wrong from the very beginning. You know, that's just sort of a reminder. Most of the time, just about all the times, our problems are not that we don't know.

Isn't that right? Our problem is not that we don't know what we ought to do or what we ought not to do. We know. Our problem is doing what we know.

[10 : 03] And that was David's problem. I want you to notice Paul, the Apostle Paul, he quotes a passage of Scripture in the Old Testament to describe David as a man after God's heart.

Look at it on the screen. It's in Acts chapter 13 and he is quoting from the Old Testament. 1 Samuel chapter 13. Look at it. God raised David up to be their king of whom he testified and said, I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my own heart who will do all my will.

David was truly a man of God. But that didn't prevent him from failure. That didn't make him immune from temptation.

David was tempted this man after God's heart. He was tempted to give in to sexual immorality and he did. He was tempted to try to cover up his sin by killing someone and he did.

David failed God in a very public and shameful way and he knew better. But God didn't give up on him.

[11 : 26] God actually worked in his life. It took some time. But God actually worked in David's life to bring him to a point where he realized just how terrible his sin was.

And he was humbled. He was broken. And he truly repented of that sin and turned from it and changed his mind about it. You can read about that in 2 Samuel chapter 11 and 12.

David humbly and sincerely confessed his sin to God sought God's forgiveness he sought to be restored.

And he wrote about that in Psalm 51. Here's what some people may need to hear right now. God will God desires to restore us when we fail him if we will humbly confess our sins and come back to him with a renewed commitment renewed faith and trust and confidence in him.

But let's move on in Peter's story and see what follows the restoration. Number two our Lord's restoration is both relational and practical. What happened around that breakfast campfire is intended to show us that first Peter was restored to a loving relationship with Jesus and then secondly he was recommissioned to serve the Lord.

[13 : 11] You think about what you're seeing there is what we've read. Love is the one thing that Jesus questioned Peter about before he commissioned him to serve him again.

Jesus kept at Peter emphasizing the relational nature of what needed to happen. Peter do you love me? Do you love me?

Do you love me? It's only when he responds yes that he says then feed my sheep take care of these I'm giving to you. Restoring Peter to a loving relationship with himself was Jesus' first priority. Love is the indispensable quality of our Christian faith. Look with me. Our relationship with the Lord is built on the foundation of love.

I want you to understand our relationship with the Lord is built on the foundation of love. I think sometimes we put too much emphasis on serving God and not enough emphasis on loving God.

[14 : 18] You think with me. there's a lot of people in our church who are involved in some area of ministry doing certain things a variety of things in our service to God and that's good we should but think with me.

Can't you teach a lesson sing a song complete a project meet someone's need and not think so much about why we're doing it and maybe not even think so much about we're doing it because we love the Lord and we're seeking to honor Him with our service.

Let's be real honest now. Standing up here and preaching a sermon that can be an ego trip. you standing up in front of a Sunday school class teaching or standing up here singing a song that can go to your head.

It can be your stage your opportunity to perform. now I figured out this weekend that my granddaughter is the smartest stone of all because she told me Friday when I was singing one of my songs she said you ought to be on the stage didn't she listen smartest stone best ear of all but here's the thing we can serve God in visible ways meaningful ways helpful ways but God's not really a part of what we are doing as we do it.

It's all about us or all about something else besides Him. We need to understand that before we preach or teach or sing or do a project or meet a need our motivation needs to be right in order for it to really count in terms of honoring God and serving His purpose.

[16 : 55] Kent Hughes points out in his book on John commenting on this section of Scripture by quoting Roy Hessian about what I'm talking about.

I want you to look with me at what he says. He says to concentrate on service and activity for God may often actively thwart our attaining of the true goal God Himself.

At first sight it seems heroic to fling ourselves away in the service of God and of our fellows. We feel it is bound to mean more to Him than our experience of Him.

Service seems so unselfish whereas concentrating on our walk with God seems selfish and self-centered but it is really the very reverse. The things that God is most concerned about are our coldness of heart towards Himself and our proud unbroken natures.

Christian service of itself can and so often does leave our self-centered nature untouched. That's what I was talking about.

[18 : 07] We can do what we do and it's all about me and there's no love for somebody else.

We can still be jealous and envious. We can still be proud. We can still be just unconcerned about those we are up before trying to serve and not even think even about what we're doing.

It's supposed to be for the Lord. God is most concerned that we know Him and love Him and He wants us to do what we do from a relationship of love for Him.

You know, this is really taught and illustrated throughout the Bible. The Bible is not just a rule book. Some people think that it is. It's not. The Bible in telling us how God wants us to live tells us before anything else how God wants us to relate to Him in a relationship of love.

One of the earliest confessions of the Jewish people is found in Deuteronomy chapter 6 verses 4 and 5. Some of you know it's called the Shema. It's something that good Jews in Jesus' day repeated twice a day.

[19 : 41] They memorized it. But it was something they were supposed to to hear, to believe, to memorize, and to take with them as they went into the promised land to guide them how to be God's people.

Look at it. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. The focus is God's people.

Focus on loving Him, our one and only God. Well, Jesus stressed this priority this priority of loving God by declaring it to be the greatest commandment.

For an example, in Matthew chapter 22, a teacher or somebody came up to Jesus and addressed Him as teacher, teacher, which is the greatest commandment, which is the great commandment in the law?

And He said, that is Jesus to Him. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. Again, Jesus is reinforcing it. Love God.

[20 : 43] And then, Jesus illustrated the priority of a relationship over service in the home of two of His friends, two sisters, Martha and Mary.

It's found in Luke's Gospel chapter 10. Martha was working in the kitchen, actually preparing a meal for Jesus. Mary, as Martha, her sister, was working, Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to Him teach, the passage tells us.

Well, that bothered Mary. Made her mad. She got upset. Look at how Luke describes it. Chapter 10, verse 40, I'm reading from the New Living Translation.

But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all that work?

Tell her to come and help me. Doesn't that sound like a child? That's not fair. That's what really happened between two grown adults.

[21 : 51] Notice how Jesus responds, verses 41 and 42. But the Lord said to her, my dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details. There's only one thing worth being concerned about.

Mary has discovered it and it will not be taken away from her. Now, understand, Jesus was not discounting what Martha was doing. What she was doing was important.

He was going to benefit from it. She was fixing dinner and he was going to eat it. So he's certainly not complaining. But what he is doing here, he is explaining to Martha, Mary's got it right.

Mary understands the priority of a relationship with me over just doing something for me.

God wants us to be doers. The whole theme of the book of James is be a doer of God's word. God wants us to serve him from a motivation of love.

[22 : 58] Service is important. We're going to look at it next week. But God does not want us to serve him like a slave or like an employee.

God wants us to understand we're his children. He wants us to have such a loving relationship with him as our father that we do what we do for him motivated by a love for our father.

We're working as children, not hired hands. That's what we need to think when it comes to service. For right now, I want us to think, if we were in Peter's place, I want you to think, just imagine for a moment, you are face to face with Jesus.

Imagine him looking you in the eye and asking you, do you love me? What do you think you'd say? How would you respond? Would you be able to respond like Peter? Lord, you know everything. You know the truth.

[24 : 18] You know that I love you. Would that be true? Would you want it to be true? God, you know what I love you?

How can we make our love for the Lord the highest priority of our life? Well, if that's going to happen, if loving him is going to become our number one priority, we've got to first be totally honest about where our love relationship with him is right now.

If you're going to start loving Jesus with all your heart, you've got to stop right now and think, what do I love with all my heart if it's not him? Or who is first in my life if it is not him?

And settle that. But if we want to grow in our love for him, we're going to have to spend time with him. You think about the people in your life that you have a good, close, loving relationship with. How did that come about? Didn't it come about because you started spending time with them? You got to know them? You got invested with them?

[25 : 25] They got invested with you? It took time, but you developed a loving relationship. And you have good fellowship with them because you've developed it over time.

How much time have you actually spent with the Lord this past week? Think about it, seriously. How much time have you spent with the Lord this past month?

Truth is, we spend time with those we love. Now we may not get to spend all the time we want, but we make at least some time for the people in our life that we really love and care about.

We all do. And if we love the Lord and we want to have a healthy and growing relationship with Him, we'll make time for Him.

We may have to cut out some other things, but we'll make time for Him a priority. We need to make sure that when Jesus asks us, do you love me?

[26 : 44] We will be able to say, Lord, you know all things. You know I love you. You know, the main focus of this passage and this message is that God will restore His fallen children who come back to Him.

And that includes you right now if you are away from Him. The way back to Him, the way to have a right relationship with Him is the same for everyone.

Admit that you are away from Him. Confess the sin that has caused this problem. Change your mind about it.

Turn from it. Turn from the selfishness. Turn from the worldly attitude. whatever it is. Humble yourself before the Lord as you confess and turn from your sin.

And then trust Jesus. Trust that He has paid the penalty for your sin. You don't have to do penance. You don't have to try to undo what you've done. You don't have to try to work your way back over a period of several days or months to be right with the Lord.

[28 : 00] Once you realize you're away from Him, whatever the reason, if you'll just stop and admit it, humble yourself, turn from it, and just trust Jesus has already paid the penalty for that sin.

Acknowledge that. Thank Him for that. Renew your commitment to living in obedience to Him. Showing your love to Him.

Scripture is real clear. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He'll give us a fresh start.

And when He gives you that fresh start, ask God to give you the desire and the ability to obey Him day by day, situation by situation, so that you can just walk in a real relationship and have good fellowship with Him every day.

Now, if you are living in a right relationship with the Lord this morning, just thank Him. Thank Him for the grace that has allowed you to do that.

[29 : 08] Stay close to Him by spending time with Him in His Word, in prayer, listening to Him as He speaks through His Word, talking to Him as you pray.

That's what prayer is. We all need to learn to stay in a close relationship, being sensitive to the Spirit of God who indwells us, and then obeying the Holy Spirit as He prompts us to obey God, to resist the temptation, to do what we do from a motivation of love.

Final thought. Do you love Jesus? What does He say as He examines your heart?

Let's pray together. Father, Father, show us now just where we are in our relationship with You.

Father, if there are people in this room who do not know You, so work in them to help them to understand that, that their sin separates them from You.

[30 : 31] And so work, dear God, to give them a true desire to be forgiven, to be made right with You. Help them, dear God, to not just confess and agree with You over their sin, but to turn from it,

to change their mind, to grieve over it.

And help them to understand, Father, that when Jesus died on the cross, He died to pay the penalty for their sin, to suffer the punishment that they deserve.

Help them to trust Jesus and call upon Him right now to save them. Help them to understand, dear God, that trusting Jesus and surrendering to Him is the most important response they could make this morning.

But then, dear God, help all of us as Christians to understand that no matter how long we have been Christians, our greatest need in life is to trust You and obey You.

Help us, dear God, to do it because we love You. Overwhelm us right now with an awareness of Your love and Your grace and Your mercy.

[31 : 51] If there's anyone in this room who is truly in a state of rebellion or indifference or hard or cold-heartedness, awaken them, break them, humble them, bring them back to Yourself.

Help us all, every single one of us, dear God, right now to be open and honest with You. Help us to understand what we should do.

Help us to do it. You just pray and talk to the Lord and do what He's telling you to do. I would be happy here at the front to pray with you in the next few minutes if you want to come forward.

But you listen to God and you do what He's telling you to do knowing that He loves you and He wants you to leave here today in a close, loving, personal relationship with Him.