

A Restoration Story (Part 1)

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[0 : 00] When you hear someone talk about a restoration project, what comes to your mind? Maybe trying to restore a house, an old house, or a classic car, or maybe just a piece of furniture, an antique piece of furniture.

When you think about a restoration project, does trying to restore a fallen or broken person come to your mind?

You know, when it comes to restoration projects, from God's perspective, He is concerned with restoring people, fallen and broken people, bringing them to Himself.

We see a good example of that in the way that Jesus restored Peter in John's Gospel, the 21st chapter. If you would, go ahead and turn to John chapter 21.

As you're turning, I want to remind most of you and tell some of you, Peter failed the Lord terribly as the leader of his disciples.

[1 : 14] After Jesus was arrested, before He was crucified, Peter actually denied that he even knew Jesus, not once, but three times.

After His resurrection, Jesus reached out to Peter to restore Him, to bring Him back into a right relationship with Himself, and in the process, with the other disciples.

We see how Jesus reached out to restore Jesus, or to restore Peter publicly, here in John chapter 21, beginning in verse 15.

Now before we read what happened in this restoration, let's put it in context. Chapter 21 begins with seven of Jesus' disciples going fishing on the Sea of Galilee, and they fished all night and caught nothing.

But then as day began to break, Jesus was on the shoreline, and He called out to them. They were close enough. He called out to them, cast your nets on the other side of the boat.

[2 : 31] That's where you're going to catch fish, and they did, and they caught 153. As this was taking place, they were hauling their nets in, they recognized who Jesus was.

They recognized it was the resurrected Jesus calling them, and so they did all they could to get there as quickly as they could to be with Jesus. Well, when they got to Him, they found that He had prepared a breakfast for them.

He had a charcoal fire burning with some fish already on it, told them to bring some of their fish, and they had a great time together. Jesus, seven of His disciples, around an open charcoal fire, eating breakfast, life was good.

But then, Jesus looked at Peter and began the restoration process in front of the disciples.

Let's read it in verse 15. John 21. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

[3 : 44] 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, yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, tend my sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

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. Jesus said to him, feed my sheep. We're going to begin this morning a message about restoration.

We're going to come back next week and then a third week and see all the dynamics involved in Jesus reaching out to Peter, him coming back, him being recommissioned.

[4 : 53] And then the third week, we're going to learn something about minding our own business. But today, let's look at how the Lord graciously works to restore his fallen people to loving fellowship and then useful service.

Our Lord is in the, first thing I want us to say, our Lord is in the restoration business. This is what we're going to focus on today. Our Lord, the Lord Jesus. He is in the life restoring business. Note that Jesus initiates this restoration session. They're on the shore together, having breakfast together, and all of a sudden, they've eaten, they're sort of relaxing probably.

Jesus looks at Peter and says what we've just read. Peter had failed Jesus terribly and there was absolutely no excuse for it.

You think about it. Peter has spent three years living with Jesus, listening to Him teach. Peter had had the advantage of being with Jesus, being taught one-on-one in their group of disciples, their twelve.

[6 : 15] Jesus had chosen him to be the leader of the band. Jesus had made Peter a part of His inner circle along with James and John. Peter had all kinds of advantages in his own personal relationship with Jesus, but it didn't do him any good.

He still failed his Lord when his Lord needed him most. Peter failed Jesus, but Jesus was not going to fail Peter.

Jesus was going to restore him, bring him back, because that's what Jesus does. That's how much the Lord loves and cares about His people. You know, once the Lord calls someone to Himself and does this work of regeneration to make us His child, puts His Spirit in us, He's never going to let us go.

He's never going to let anything take us from Him, and Jesus emphasized this Himself on several occasions, but here's one good example in John chapter 6.

Look at it. Jesus is talking. All those the Father give me will come to me, and whoever comes to me, I will never drive away.

[7 : 33] For I have come down from heaven not to do my will, but to do the will of Him who sent me. And this is the will of Him who sent me, that I should lose none of all those He has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. Paul describes this in terms of how nothing can ever separate us from the love of Christ in Romans chapter 8.

We're not going to look at it this morning, but I'd encourage you sometime. Romans chapter 8 is one of the great chapters of the Bible, and toward the end, beginning in verse 31, Paul writes about how nothing under the sun can ever separate God's child from God.

How nothing can ever separate us from the love of Jesus Christ. Nothing. It is emphasized. God loves His children enough that He's going to do whatever it takes to take care of us, to bring us back to Himself at some point if we ever walk away from Him.

God loves us enough to discipline us. The book of Hebrews talks about this. One of the best examples is Hebrews chapter 12, verses 5 and 6. Look at what the writer says about God.

[9 : 03] My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by Him, for the Lord disciplines the one He loves and chastises every son whom He receives.

Here's the thought. As a child of God, He loves you so much, He's not going to let you ruin your life. He'll let you mess up a lot of things. But sooner or later, God is so going to work in the life of His child to humble you, to break you, to bring you to the point where you will willingly come back to Him just as we see in Peter's life.

Jesus reached out to Peter in love, but Jesus didn't make it easy. This breakfast around the campfire, it was not something like a positive experience like you have at some of your camps. Everybody holding hands, smiling, and singing together. This was tense. This was a stressful scene. Here's some reasons why we should think that.

The fire that Jesus made would have brought back terrible memories for Peter. Look back in verse 9 here in John 21. It was a charcoal fire. That's the same kind of fire that Peter was warming himself by when he denied knowing Jesus.

[10 : 29] John brings that out. All the Gospel writers don't bring out charcoal fire, but John does. Look in chapter 18, verse 18. It says, Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves.

Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself. And that's the setting when Peter denied that he knew Jesus. Maybe Jesus was reminding Peter of how he tried to blend in with a crowd instead of standing out as a real disciple of Jesus.

Maybe that's why Jesus made the charcoal fire, had Peter sitting around it with the other disciples to bring back the memories of the night when he denied his Lord.

You know, this is something that we can identify with if we'll stop and think for a moment. I'm talking about failing the Lord. Aren't there times when you as a Christian, you're in some settings, and maybe there's a discussion about how God wants us to live in this world.

Maybe there's a discussion about some issue, some matter, and the Bible's clear about how a Christian should live, and there's a discussion going on, but you purposefully remain quiet.

[12:07] You don't say a word because you don't want to call attention to the fact that you're a Christian. You don't want people to start talking about what the Bible actually teaches because you don't want to get their wrath.

You don't want them to give you a hard time about that narrow-minded teaching that they know the Bible teaches. Sometimes we can get in situations as Christians.

We don't do exactly like Peter did and deny Jesus. We just keep our mouth closed. We just make sure that we don't speak up and identify ourselves as belonging to Him, as trusting Him, as trusting God's Word.

So sometimes, our just being quiet, our just sort of backing away can be just as much a denial of Jesus as what Peter did.

Second thing that made this such a tense situation is the name by which Jesus addressed Peter would have troubled Peter. Look at it.

[13:12] In verse 15, and it's all three, 15, 16, and 17, all three verses, Jesus called him Simon, son of John. Nothing wrong with that except this.

Simon was His given name. Calling him Simon, son of John was a formal way of addressing Peter. The problem is, that's not the name Jesus gave Peter.

That's not the name Jesus usually used in talking to Peter. That word Peter, that name, that's what Jesus gave him. His name's Simon.

Peter, though, we know him by that name. When Jesus called him to be His disciple, His follower, He gave him this nickname, Peter, which means rock.

But in this setting, after Peter denies Jesus, Jesus deliberately calls him Simon three times.

[14:18] Jesus refuses to call him Peter three times. It seems obvious that Jesus was reminding Peter of His human weakness and His inability to be a rock on His own.

Don't you understand human weakness? Don't we understand that very well? That's why we give in to temptation, isn't it?

We do that. We're tempted. We know the right thing. We know what God wants us to do, but we just, we don't seek His help. We don't seek His way of escape.

And so we just sort of do the best we can, we think, and in just trying to do our best without His help, we fail. Just like Peter, we find that trying to live a Christian life in our own strength, it just doesn't work because we are weak.

When my boys were little, and my grandchildren now, especially my grandson, Will, I tease them about being weak and their inability to beat me in some of the things, some of the games we play.

[15:43] And I call them, I used to call my boys, I call Will sometimes things like rabbit or flea to tease him because he's weak, because he can't beat me.

Now some of y'all wimpy thinking people, you're thinking, oh that's going to destroy his self-esteem. Wake up! Huh? That's right.

You may be some kind of manby-pamby, but my boys and my grandchildren aren't. He can take it because he knows I'm playing and I do that because I know the days are numbered when I'll be able to ever beat him again.

Just like I can't even remember a time when I could beat my own boys at anything. Well when it comes to living a faithful Christian life, if we don't seek the Lord's help and strength, we'll find out that we are weak like rabbits and fleas, we will fail from our own human weakness just like Peter.

Let's look at one other thing why this was a stressful, tenseful situation. The presence of the other disciples. All this takes place, there's Jesus and Peter and there's six other guys, six other disciples, six that Peter has previously led and so Jesus asked him in front of them, do you love me more than these?

[17:30] Now imagine that. Here's Peter, he's already feeling very uncomfortable, he has failed Jesus in front of everybody, everybody knows it and all of a sudden Jesus looks at him in front of

these other guys, do you love me more than these other guys do?

Why in the world you think, would Jesus say something like that? Well not too many days earlier, Peter didn't have a problem lifting himself up as being superior to his peers.

Jesus had told Peter, warned him, you're going to fail, you're going to fall, you're going to deny me. Peter wouldn't have it, wouldn't believe Jesus. Here's what Peter said, look at it, it's in Matthew chapter 26, after Jesus had warned him, Peter answered, though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.

Peter had said that in front of the other guys. So now, this confrontation, this restoration, it's got to take place in front of these other guys.

But let's be honest, no one wants to be called out for their sin, for their failures in front of other people. But when it happens before others or against others, restoration has to include other people.

[19 : 04] Listen, when we just blow it before God, we can confess our sin to God, the restoration can be just between Him and us.

But when we sin against somebody else, we sin in a way that's made known, people know about it, the restoration will have to include those people.

When you've wronged somebody else in order to really be right with God, you seek His forgiveness and also, you go to the person you've wronged and you say to them, I'm sorry. You ask them to forgive you.

That is a part of restoration when other people are involved and Jesus made Peter answer His question in front of these other guys.

This is an important reminder that God takes our sin seriously. And if we are serious about wanting to be forgiven, wanting to be brought back in a close relationship with God, we've got to learn to take sin seriously too.

[20 : 19] Peter did. Here's something I want us to know, a new thought here. Peter actually did understand all this. He did have some time with Jesus before this encounter on the seashore by the fire.

Remember, after Jesus was arrested, he was first taken to the home of the high priest to be questioned. Well, the Scripture says that Peter followed from a distance and was just outside the house where Jesus was when he denied knowing Jesus for the third time.

Luke records what happened like this. It's in Luke chapter 22. Notice this. Peter said, Man, I do not know what you're talking about.

And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed and the Lord turned and looked at Peter.

You think about that. Here Peter is. Jesus is somewhere over here being questioned. He's arrested. He's being questioned.

[21 : 36] It looks bad. Peter is over here warming himself by the fire trying to be incognito, not be, wants no one to notice.

But people notice. They notice his accent. They notice he is one of them. And they question Jesus. Not once, not twice, but three times. And all three times Jesus or Peter denies.

I don't even know the man. Now just think. Peter's here. He's mad. He's afraid. He's telling people, I don't know the man.

As he's speaking, the rooster crows and as he glances this way, his eyes meet Jesus' eyes. He's crushed. Think of the, think of the shame, the humiliation.

He has betrayed Jesus and Jesus heard him. Jesus saw him. His eyes were on him. Peter was broken. And Luke goes on to tell us that in verse, same chapter, verse 61.

[22 : 42] And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord how he had said to him before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times. And he went out and he wept bitterly. Peter was broken, humbled.

He repented of his sin. Now, just because he went out and wept bitterly doesn't mean he was repentant. He could have just had an emotional breakdown because he betrayed his friend and when he got over it just went all about his way.

But that's not what happened. Peter went out and wept bitterly because he truly was broken and repentant. And after the resurrection, Jesus appeared to Peter on several occasions and at least one time there's a special meeting between Jesus and Peter.

Luke tells us about it in Luke chapter 24. Look at it. Two of the disciples made this statement. The Lord has risen indeed and has appeared to Simon.

Paul says that Peter, that Jesus appeared to Peter specifically in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 about verse 4 or 6.

[24 : 01] What we see here in John 21 is more like Peter's public restoration. Not only to a loving relationship with Jesus, a renewed relationship with Jesus, but Peter is being restored to a place of leadership among those disciples again.

Now, as stressful and as painful as this experience was, we need to note that Peter, he didn't hold back in this situation.

Peter was a willing participant and he shows that he had already had an encounter with Jesus that changed him by the way he responded. Look, Peter did not hesitate to profess that his love for Jesus was greater than the other disciples.

Look at it, verse 15. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? That's hard in front of these guys.

He said to him, yes, Lord, you know that I love you. That had to be hard. Peter had failed Jesus.

[25 : 14] He had failed his friends. He was a pitiful leader in their eyes at this point. But one of the goals that Jesus had for this breakfast was to restore Peter to a right relationship with his fellow disciples and to this place of leadership among the disciples, which we know later on as we read in the book of Acts, he did take the lead again.

Even though it would have been uncomfortable for Peter, he swallowed his pride and he cooperated with Jesus in this public restoration process.

Here's what we need to think. When the Lord is working in our lives to restore us, we must make sure that we don't allow pride to be a stumbling block to our being fully restored.

Lord, sometimes God may convict you to make some changes in your life and in making those changes you've got to talk to some people. You've got to admit some past sin, some past problems. You've got to seek to be reconciled, to be right with them. Or you've got to make some major changes that you've got to explain to somebody why you're making the change. And your pride is such, I don't want to talk about it, this is personal, this is private, it's none of their business.

[26 : 38] Well, it is if it previously involved them. It is if that's what the Lord's prompting you to do. And Peter did it.

He swallowed his pride and he spoke up and listened to, did what Jesus said in front of these other guys. Peter also demonstrated his changed life by the way he humbly responds to Jesus' repeated question.

Look at it. Verses 15, 16, and 17. Three times Jesus asked Peter the same thing, basically. Do you love me? And three times Peter responded the same way.

Look at it. Verse 15. Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. Verse 16. Exactly the same. Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. Verse 17. Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.

Peter's showing a lot of humility here. Peter does not boast of his love for Jesus. Peter does not even respond to Jesus with a simple, yes, I love you.

[27 : 52] Peter appeals to the all-knowing mind of Jesus. Peter doesn't have this boastful confidence in himself anymore.

So he looks at Jesus and he says, you know that I love you. And Peter is emphasizing the you part, you, Jesus, know. See, Peter's actions lately had not revealed any love.

So he can't point to that. So Peter, listen to this. You think about this personally. Peter actually says to Jesus, you know my heart. So you know that I love you.

How comfortable would you be to answer that question as Peter did? If the Lord just asked you right now, do you love me?

Would you feel comfortable, confident to say to Jesus, Lord, you know that I do.

[29 : 13] You know what's in me. You know how I think and feel. You know that I love you.

Truth is, the Lord does know everything about us. He knows right now if we truly love him, how much we love him. He knows if we love him more than anything or anyone.

Here's something we cannot forget. If we don't love Jesus more than everyone and everything in our lives, we have a problem. It's a sin problem.

You see, there's one thing Jesus made clear throughout his ministry. I've got to be first. You've got to love me more than your parents, your children, your spouse, even your own life, Jesus said.

And Jesus even said, if you don't, you cannot be my disciple. Look it up in Luke chapter 14, beginning about verse 25, if you have any doubts.

[30 : 22] Our love for Christ must be first. It must be supreme. Or there's something wrong. Right now, let me ask you, is there something that you love more than him?

If there is, just be honest and admit it. But admit to the Lord that's not right. That it's sin.

That you know it's not pleasing to him. And ask him to change your heart. Ask him to so work in you that you want to love him more than anyone or anything.

I want us to be honest as we wind this up. If Peter could experience spiritual and moral failure, so can we. Peter had a lot more advantages than we do.

He was actually with the Lord. Peter saw more, heard more. But he failed. But the good news is just as the Lord restored Peter, the Lord will restore us.

[31 : 44] God does not, never gives up on his broken and fallen people. God will work in all kinds of ways to bring us to a point of humbling ourselves, confessing our sin, and coming back to him in a renewed faith, renewed commitment.

If you are away from the Lord right now, I want you to know he wants you to come back. If you are a child of God and there's something in your life that you know it's not pleasing to him, maybe there's something you've been dealing with for a long time and you just sort of try and put it to the side. It could be that the thing that's bothering you is so much bothering you that you can't sleep. It may be it's so bothering you that you're you're just so eaten up with guilt you're mean as a snake to everybody around you.

If you're a Christian, if you are truly a child of God and dwell by the Spirit of God and you're separated from God, you will never rest easy.

you will never know real peace and contentment in your life until you come back to him. God wants you to come back. God's making your life miserable to the point it's like discipline to bring you back.

[33 : 10] My question to you is will you come back? And you can come back right now. Just admit to God whatever it is he's dealing with you about. Confess your sin. Grieve over it.

Turn from it. Say yes to whatever he's telling you to say yes to. Make a new commitment of your life to Jesus Christ as your Savior, your Lord.

You're trusting him that he paid the penalty for your sins. You're trusting him that his perfect righteous life has been credited to you because you're trusting in him. Come back to a right relationship with God based on your relationship with Jesus.

Your renewed commitment to Jesus as the Lord of your life. If you're not a Christian admit that to God that right now you don't have a relationship with him but if you want one turn from your sin put your trust in Jesus.

Have confidence when he died on the cross he took your place paying the penalty for your sin so call upon him to save you now. Our Lord loves to restore people.

[34 : 19] If you are broken fallen or away from him for any reason he would love to restore you now if you will come to him.

Let's pray together. Dear God show us what we need to do personally right now. Help us to do that. and in an attitude of prayer you listen to the Lord and you just obey him do whatever he's telling you to do. I would be happy to pray with you here in front in the next few minutes.

Let's listen to the Lord and do what he's telling us to do right now. good and