

Restoring a Fallen Saint

John 21:15-19

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, 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."

16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?"

He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You."

He said to him, "Tend My sheep."

17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, 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 all things; You know that I love You."

Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep.¹⁸ Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."¹⁹ This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me." NKJV

John has just one more story to tell us. It is about Peter. Peter was primary among the disciples. He was the first to speak up and the boldest of the 12. But then there was the fall. Peter had denied even knowing Jesus three times. Even though he had sworn that he would die with Jesus that night, when push came to shove, Peter utterly failed.

Now what will he ever accomplish for the Lord. Even though Jesus was alive, Peter was on the sidelines. He is on the bench and it doesn't look like he'll ever make it into the game in any meaningful way.

But Jesus is not going to let that happen. Jesus is the great healer. He not only heals broken bones but broken lives. Let us look at this wonderful passage.

I. Three questions, three responses.

A. First.

1. Simon, son of Jonah

2. Do you love Me more than these.

a. There are two different words used here for love.

b. Agapa and philao

(1) Agapa is the highest form of love, the love of God.

- (2) Philao is family love or friends love.
 - c. In this first question Jesus uses the former and Peter uses the later.
 - (1) Peter who once boasted
 - (a) John 13:37 (NKJV)37 Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake."
 - (b) Matthew 26:33 (NKJV)33 Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble."
 - (2) Now there is no more boasting.
 - (3) Peter knows himself now as Jesus knows him, that will always humble us and bring us to repentance.
 - d. More than these.
 - (1) That had been what Peter had said.
 - (2) "Even if all"
 - (3) "I will never"
3. Yes, Lord; You know that I love You
- a. Peter prefaces his response with the fact that Jesus knew more about Peter's love and devotion that Peter did.
 - b. And he cannot bring himself to use that higher word for love.
 - c. See the humble fallen saint.
 - d. He is no longer somewhat arrogant and boastful.

B. Second

- 1. Jesus moves closer to Peter's answer.
 - a. This time He leaves off "more than these"
- 2. Peter gives the same response.
 - a. "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You"

C. Third question.

- 1. This time Jesus even uses the same word for love that Peter has been using.
- 2. The fact that Jesus has asked the question 3 times is enough but now He has even went to the same word that Peter has been using.

3. He is saying' "Simon, do you really even love me with that lower type of love.
4. What a blow to Peter.
5. Peter's final answer. "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You."
 - a. Unlike before Jesus arrest, Peter knows that he may not know himself as well as he thinks he does.
 - b. He also acknowledges that Jesus knows him fully.
 - c. He knows Peter better than Peter knows himself.
- D. Think of that. God knows how weak we are but He still wants and loves us.
- E. We can hide nothing from Him.
- F. We need to be humble for pride goes before the fall.
 1. God knows how to humble the proud and to exalt the humble.
 2. But that goes so much against our rebel nature.

II. Three charges.

- A. You mean God is still going to use Peter??
 1. I thought that if you fell you were done.
 2. Isn't that what some churches hold to.
 3. We need to follow Paul's exhortation.
 - a. Gal 6:1-4 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.³ For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. NKJV
- B. Feed My lambs
- C. Tend My sheep
- D. Feed My sheep
- E. The Catholic teaching on this passage is that Jesus is transferring the power of Himself to Peter the bishop of the "whole" church.
 1. What our protestant and catholic friends fail to see is that there is not one big church but only churches, each one with its own bishop.
 2. That is the teaching of the New Testament.

III. Peter's final act to glorify God. V-18-19

- A. 18 Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."19 This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God.

IV. The final command; "follow Me."

The church is to be a healing community. Not that we heal cancer but that we heal hurt feelings, betrayals. Healing relationships is more complex than healing most physical ailments. If God can take a fallen saint like Peter and restore him back to fellowship and service then that is what He wants of us today.

This does not mean that we pretend that nothing happened. For it did. Jesus did not pretend that Peter had never denied Him. That would never have given back to Peter the place and power that he had before. The church is good at doing nothing.

Too many of the rebels of Stark county are outside of Christianity and the church. They are there primarily because either their parents or grand-parents or even great grand-parents fell into some sin in generations past. But the church failed to restore them, failed mostly to love them and work to bring them back.

Let labor to bring them back into the fold.