

7/7/24

[Connection] Good morning Cornerstone! It is good to be with you this morning. Thank you for joining us. If this is your first time worshiping with us, I want to invite you to fill out our connection card. It just lets us get to know you a little more and be able to connect with you more. If Cornerstone is home for you, you can use our app to check in and let us know you are here. There you can also fill out a prayer request so we can be praying for you throughout the week.

[Title] While you're doing that we are going to dive into our sermon series called 'Before You Give Up'. We are going to take a short break from our sermon series in first Corinthians to give us a little change of pace for a couple weeks before we dive back into it. In this series we are going to be studying a few stories in the bible to address the human condition that cause us to run. This week we are going to be talking about dealing with and grieving over our failures.

Today we are going to be looking at the story of Peter so we will be focusing on John 21, but we will bounce around quite a bit through all four gospel accounts to get the fullest picture of the events of this story. If you have your bibles go ahead and turn John 21, so when we get there you can follow along with us. If you do not have a paper bible and would like one, we have some available for you in the back. You can also follow along with us today on the app with the scripture and our sermon notes available to you there.

But before we dive in the teaching today, lets read a part of our passage this morning together which comes from the book of **John 21:18-19**. So let us stand as you are able, out of reverence for God's word as we proclaim the truth in His Scripture.

[1] SCRIPTURE John 21:18-19

"Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, 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." ¹⁹ (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."

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

INTRO

[2] When we think about the Christian life, we often will default to all the positive things about it. We don't focus on the suffering or persecution, because it's not the fun part. When we are witnessing to people, to believe in Jesus, no one sees the suffering and persecution, high standards and commandments of god as selling points for their conversion. "Hey you should believe in Jesus, because man it's a hard road. People are going to hate you because of your beliefs. They are going to persecute you because of them. You are going to have to deny yourself, be ready to lay down your life. Die to yourself so that you can go against what you desire so that you can follow God's commands. It awesome. So you want to come to church with me Sunday?"

Right no one says that. Even in our churches, we have Pastors and leaders that are flooded with positive thinking and encouraging messages that make you feel good. Scripture even supports these claims. We will refer to passages like...

[3] 2 Corinthians 5:17

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

Ephesians 2:10

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Romans 8:28

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

We constantly reassure ourselves that we are to live in victory. Now all of these things are true, but what do we do when we do not feel victorious? We start to have doubts, or we might even draw conclusions like, if I feel this way maybe I just don't have enough faith. Or even worse we start to have doubts about our faith entirely, like if I am feeling this way does that mean that I am not truly saved?

[4] These questions all stem from the way that we deal with failure. What are we supposed to do about it as Christians, for ourselves and what are we supposed to do about it for others. Many of us are willing to point out and acknowledge that we have a sinful nature. We know that in concept we will fail we will struggle with sin, but when it comes to the reality of failure in our lives and in others, we handle it poorly, in a way that is less than ideal or we handle it in a way that is catastrophic and it feels like there is no in-between. We often have such a fear of dealing with or acknowledging our own failures that it creates this dichotomy of reactions.

So what are we supposed to do with failure. Do we dismiss it because we are new creations in Christ. Gloss over the failure because that is just a sign that the old life is dying? Or do we just pretend that it doesn't exist, like failures are unimportant because they are opportunities for us to “fall forward” and the Holy Spirit is working these things out in us. For those that want to constantly live in only the positive parts of the Christian walk, this is the mentality they take. Not going to lie this is super active, is it not? In this mentality, when I fail I don't have to acknowledge it. People can continue to see me in a positive way. As long as I am genuinely trying to be like Christ, there is nothing that I can do where I will be afraid that someone is going to reject me because of my failures.

On a personal level the impact of this mentality can be relatively small. Lack of disclosure of failures can impact a family or may only a few, the church as a whole is relatively uninvolved. What happens though if this mentality is carried over to those that are lets say in leadership over a church?

[5] Look at what just happened with Pastor Robert Morris at Gateway church. For those that don't know Robert started in ministry in 1982, with his wife and son at the age of 19. 2 year later he sexually assaulted a 12 year old girl, that continued for 4 for years and would happen frequently till she was 16 years old. In the early 2000's she finally got the courage to tell her parents and they told the leadership of the church. Robert resigned under a disciplinary plan to remain out of ministry for 2 years, which he did not complete. And in less than a year and a half he was back speaking at events and Pastoring a new church. He continued on in ministry, writing books, speaking at conferences, his new church eventually bought the build of his old church and made it one of their campuses, where thousands of people came ever Sunday.

In this story, are we supposed to look past the failure, because we are to look forward in victory? Not dwelling on the mistakes. Can we separate someone's humanity from their spiritual journey? Saying that they are growing in their spiritual journey and the actions of the flesh are dismissed?

If yes, then does someone's spiritual journey in growing to be more like Christ, nullify the accountability of the fallenness in their humanity. Can someone truly be growing to be more like Christ if they still engage in the sins of the flesh? Is there a scale by which we determine what sins the spiritual journey can write off and the ones that it can't?

Even in my Dad's church just last week, their youth pastor confessed that he had been having an affair with the church secretary. The same woman who had been his wife's best friend. The affair had lasted for over 2 years. Is his failure in the flesh excusable because he is a new creation? I could probably tell thousands of stories just like this, some of you may have even lived through stories like this.

These are all cases of failures of people in leadership. And you may say that those in leadership are held to a higher standard, and you are right. But if the standard is higher for leaders, does that mean for someone who is just a believer, that there is no standard?

[6] We have to know how we are supposed to deal with failure.

Because failure happens for leaders and everyone else. When it does, we have a baseline standard of how to deal with failure at every level of the church, from leaders to congregation. That standard has to deal with 2 things, first, we have to be held accountable for the error, and second we have to deal with it in a way that has the goal of restoration. The best way to figure out how to approach this is through the examples found within scripture. I think the perfect example of this is with the case of the disciple Peter.

BODY

[7] Peter

Peter was a faithful follower of Jesus. He was with him from the very beginning. Peter and his brother, Andrew, were the first disciples that Jesus called¹. Peter was with Jesus when He gave his sermon on the mount in Matthew 5 through 7. Jesus said that anyone that denies him before men, he will deny him before his father². For Peter at the time, the thought of denying Jesus in any circumstances was inconceivable.

Peter was there when Jesus walked on water. Peter was the only one that stepped out of the boat³. When Jesus asked who do the disciples believe him to be, Peter responded with the affirmation that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God⁴. Jesus said to him that it was Peter that God was going to build the church. He was going to be given authority and not even hell would prevail against what God was going to do through him⁵.

Peter sought to protect Jesus even when Peter was doing it the wrong way. Jesus predicts his death and Peter denies this saying that Jesus should not come to this fate. Jesus replied get behind me Satan

¹ Matthew 4:18-20

² Matthew 10:33

³ Matthew 14:25-29

⁴ Matthew 16:16

⁵ Matthew 16:17-19

because Peter was thinking in the human mind and not the spiritual redemption that would happen through his death⁶.

Jesus again predicts his death in Matthew 26 at the last supper. Jesus tells his disciples that they will all fall away, meaning that they will abandon him. Peter reassures Jesus that even if everyone else abandons Jesus, that Peter is going to follow him even into death⁷. Jesus says to him that tonight is the night that he is going to be delivered to death. Before the rooster crows, that Peter will deny him 3 times. Again, at this point Peter believes this to be inconceivable. From his perspective it was impossible for that to be true.

Truly I think in that moment Peter believed what he said, but in that moment, it was only hypothetical. Something that wasn't real or at least for Peter he believed it wouldn't happen. Peter also knew that Jesus was the Messiah. Even the disciples believed in this hypothetical that even the people would not stand for Jesus being condemned. In the case with Peter even when the hypothetical began to feel real and the guards came to arrest Jesus, Peter took out his sword and cut off the ear of one of the guards⁸.

Peter was there in all these great moments. He proved himself to be faithful to Jesus and had all the experience in the world to assure him of his faith. He had all the courage and follow Jesus to death.

Christians

[8] As Christians we have all the biblical truth and all the reason in the world to live in victory. Jesus' death gave us hope. We have been forgiven and redeemed in the blood of Christ⁹. We have been equipped with the righteousness of Christ¹⁰. When we stand before the Father, he does not see our sins, but the holiness of his Son¹¹. We have been given the promise of Heaven¹².

Through our belief in Jesus, we have been given the Holy Spirit¹³. The ministry of the Holy Spirit within us is to convict us of sin¹⁴. We are in Christ, so there is no condemnation from our sin¹⁵, because our sins have been wiped away and have been washed clean by the blood of Jesus¹⁶. Through the conviction of sin, the Holy Spirit builds Christ-like character within us¹⁷. The Holy Spirit helps us to understand the Word of God¹⁸. The Holy Spirit also equips us to do God's will¹⁹.

These are the things that make us into a new creation. Where all of these things are true, it focuses completely on the positive and the glory, but it depicts nothing of the struggle. Because even though all these things are true, we still fail, we still fall short, and we are still human.

Peter, despite all the good, was still human

⁶ Matthew 16:21-23

⁷ Matthew 26:31-35

⁸ John 18:10-11

⁹ Romans 5:9, Ephesians 4:32

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 1:30, 2 Corinthians 5:21

¹¹ Ephesians 2:13, Hebrews 8:12

¹² 1 Corinthians 2:9, John 5:24, 1 Peter 1:4

¹³ Ephesians 1:13, 1 Corinthians 12:3

¹⁴ John 16:8

¹⁵ Romans 8:1

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Hebrew 8:12

¹⁷ Galatians 5:16, 18, 25

¹⁸ John 16:13, 1 Corinthians 2:9-11, Hebrews 3:7;10:15

¹⁹ 2 Timothy 3:17, 1 Corinthians 12-14

After Jesus was arrested in the Garden, right after Peter cut off the ear of the guard, Jesus was taken to stand trial before the high priest. Peter was following the group as they led Jesus to the High Priest's house. Almost in the shadows, he wanted to see what was going to happen to Jesus. All along the way, Peter would have been a witness to the guard beating, mocking and harming Jesus. For Peter following behind seeing to all of this, Jesus' death, that he predicted, was no longer a hypothetical. It was very quickly becoming a reality. While in the temple scripture Luke's account says

[9] Luke 22:55-57

"Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. ⁵⁵ And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. ⁵⁶ Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." ⁵⁷ But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him."

Mark's gospel says that this servant girl was a servant of the High Priest²⁰. This servant girl recognizes him, and Peter is now put in a position to fulfill his word, if Jesus is to be killed, would Peter follow him to death²¹. The ones who arrested Jesus were witness to the accusation against Peter sitting around a fire warming themselves in the cold of the night.

[10] Peter claimed that he didn't know what she was talking about. He pleaded ignorance. I have no idea what you are talking about.

In Matthew's account Peter left from the fire and walked over to the porch.

[11] Matthew 26:71-72

"And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." And again he denied it with an oath: "I do not know the man."

[12] This time he receives the accusation again of being a follower of Jesus, and he denies with an oath. This is Peter saying God as my witness, I do not know this man. The first time he denied from ignorance. This second time Peter denies with disassociation. He blatantly says that he does not know who Jesus is and says it as a promise.

Now he has been accused twice and has denied twice. Peter does not leave the home of the High Priest, which means that he still wants to know the fate of Jesus. But someone in the crowd saw Peter and accused him again of being a follower of Jesus. Matthew's gospel says that it was Peter's accent that gave him away²². Mark and Matthew both say that Peter began to curse and swear²³. This was Peter invoking a curse upon himself. To say if what he says is false that he be judged by God for it. Which is pretty powerful to think of Peter's passive words to get him out of earthly trouble and the eternal implications of what he said. Jesus even taught his disciples in Matthew 5 not to invoke such curses, because the one that says such a curse places themselves in danger of hellfire.

²⁰ Mark 14:66

²¹ Matthew 26:33-35

²² Matthew 26:73

²³ Mark 14:71, Matthew 26:73

[13] His first denial was out of ignorance. His second was out of disassociation. Peter's third denial with a curse he says "I do not know what you are talking about". In his adamant denial of Christ he establishes complete abandonment of his ties with Christ, invoking the judgment of God on himself.

Lukes gospel says...

[14] Luke 22:60b-62

"And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. 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.' ⁶² And he went out and wept bitterly."

For Peter the disconnect that Jesus continued to point out between the hypothetical boldness of Peter and the reality of his lack of courage finally clicked. Not only was Jesus right, not only was Peter confronted with his lack of sticking to his word, but the one who he knew to be Lord and Savior, he denied three times before people. Jesus knew the moment that it happened, and Peter could not escape his failure.

After proclaiming he'd be there to the end, even if it meant death, Peter like all the other disciples was unwilling to follow Jesus to the cross. Peter's failure is never more apparent than when Jesus' prophecy comes true.

This passage is a parallel to what Peter did and what Jesus was currently going through being questioned by Caiaphas and the counsel. Jesus is faithful when confronted about who he is and is put to death, Peter denies him and is spared, but breaks down.

[15] R.T. France says, "The reader is invited to choose between two models of how the man of God behaves under pressure, the one who escapes death but with his spiritual reputation in tatters and the one who will be killed only to live again in triumph"²⁴.

Christians

[16] When we fail, we often react in one of two ways: we blame others for our failures, or we internalize our shame. When we feel shame over our mistakes and our failures, we may try to encourage ourselves and say will I am not supposed to feel shame because there is no condemnation for those that are in Christ. The problem is when we do not deal with the shame. We shift the blame to someone else. We don't want to wallow in shame, so we blame others for our failure.

Our overwhelming sense of justice causes us to seek retribution and if we are unwilling to blame ourselves, someone else needs to be held responsible. So instead of accepting failure, we tend to protect ourselves by being defensive. Peter's reaction suggests that he retreated, ashamed. He had no one else to blame. His failure was his words and no one else's. Now he faced another problem, in his shame he was alone. Who could he go to now for comfort? Jesus was gone and his friends had also abandoned the cause.

[17] When we deal with failure, the only way that we can address it, that hold us accountable for our humanity, but also has the goal of the gospel which is restoration and unity, is for us to deal with failure through compassion. Failure and brokenness require vulnerability. We have to find the deep places

²⁴ R. T. France, "Peter's Failure: 26:69-75," in *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], eBook

where we are afraid to admit when we were wrong. We have to trust others to see our true insecurities in our failures. The deep places that force us to admit we are not enough, we are not perfect, and we honestly never will be.

[18] Henri Nouwen, Donald P. McNeill, and Douglas A. Morrison in their book on Compassion said this, "'asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into the places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human."²⁵

Failure is a part of the human condition, that is always a factor and reality on this side of heaven. We desire and strive for perfection. Right? Matthew 5:48 even says, "Be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect." The reality is that we all fail. To admit that we fail does not place you at a deficit to everyone else around you. Meaning if you admit to failure it does not mean that you are the only one that has failed and everyone else around you is now better than you because of your failure. Yet we treat it like a sickness that we have to hide. Because we cannot let anyone else know that we fall short.

[19] When we have a culture of compassion, failure is not okay, it is not acceptable, we always want to strive to improve, but when we do fail, we have to have a compassionate community to fall into that will help us in our brokenness. The community helps by pointing out where we need to grow and walks alongside us to be restored to the glory that we find in Christ. We see this in Peter. Because even though he retreated into his shame and even in the gospel of Matthew Peter disappears until after Jesus resurrected.

This denial of Jesus is not the end of Peter's story. Even Peter is not a lost cause, and truly neither are we. Peter knew Jesus's warning that Jesus would deny those who disowned him (Matthew 10:32–33)! Yet, paradoxically, Jesus knew Peter was going to deny him (Matthew 26:34, 75) and loved him anyway.

Peter's Restoration

Peter was so lost in his shame that he could not know or feel the love of Jesus. We know this by Peter's reactions. When Jesus appeared to the 11 in the upper room. Peter was just one of the group. The only one that was identified as having a specific interaction with Jesus in that moment was Thomas. Peter never piped up, never fell at Jesus' feet, nothing. This is completely unlike Peter in all of his previous interactions.

[20] When Jesus washed the disciples feet, Peter immediately exclaimed 'No! It is us that should wash your feet'. When Peter was called to be his disciple he was fishing and Jesus told him to go out again and they had a load of fish that was too big for their boat. Peter fell before Jesus feet ashamed telling Jesus to go away from him because he was a sinful man. Jesus called him to follow him and be fisher of men. Peter left his nets to follow Jesus. When Jesus asked who they believed him to be, it was Peter that exclaimed you are the Christ. Peter always had something to say. He was one of the inner circle, being Peter, James and John. He was always by Jesus side, but not anymore.

²⁵ McNeill, Donald P., et al. *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*. Image Books/Doubleday, 2005.

Jesus appeared to them in the upper room twice and both times there is no notable interaction from Peter. This was an incredibly miraculous event. Jesus was dead and now he is back from the dead appearing before them in Spirit and in Flesh.

[21] John 21:1-3

“After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.”

Peter wanting to go fishing is noteworthy. Fishing back then was not a past time. It was not sitting out on a lake with a fishing rod relaxing by the water. This was fishing with nets, it was work. Peter was going fishing to make money. We can guess Peter's mentality, he probably believes that he has been disqualified as a disciple, so he might as well go back to what he knows. He has failed Christ, all is lost, he feels he cannot be here anymore. The disciples may not have known his failure, but he did. He did not trust his community to fall into the compassion of the other disciples, so he retreated even further.

He goes fishing and some of the other disciples join him. They fish all night and they catch nothing.

[22] John 21:4-6

“Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any fish?” They answered him, “No.” ⁶ He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.”

As the sun starts to rise, they call it quits and are heading back to the shore. They see a man on the shore, and he begins talking to them. He calls them children, which is a weird thing for a stranger to say, but he asks if they caught any fish. We know because the scripture tells us that this man that they see is Jesus, but they do not know this at the time.

They respond 'no' because they caught nothing. Starting to sound a little familiar? The man tells them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat. Now they have been out all night fishing and caught nothing. You can imagine that at some point one of them thought to cast the net on the other side of the boat right?

I don't know how many of you have ever been fishing before, but if you are on a boat, you never cast in the same spot twice unless you got a bite. You casting all over the place hoping to find something anything. You have to imagine that the disciple probably thought this guy might have sounded condescending to them. Like oh on this side of the boat, man why didn't we think of that. Right?

No matter why they did it maybe to prove a point that there are no fish they cast their nets again. They catch a haul of fish that they cannot bring into the boat. This is the exact situation that Peter was in when Jesus first called him and his brother to become his disciples.

[23] John 21:7-8

“That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the

sea. ⁸ The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards^[a] off."

John then recognizes that it is Jesus. Without hesitation Peter puts on his outer coat, abandons the fish the other disciples and throws himself into the sea to swim to shore where Jesus is. It says they were about 100 yards. The other disciple came in the boat hauling the fish and Peter says I can't wait on you and jumps in. swimming the length of a football field to get to Jesus.

When they get to shore Jesus is sitting there with a charcoal fire, cooking fish and bread on it.

[24] John 21:9-14

"When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead."

Jesus is setting the stage for Peter notice peter doesn't say anything. He hauls the load of 153 fish in the unbroken net and eats around the fire with Jesus and the other disciples. There are 2 things that are being combined here Peter's calling and Peter's denial

[25] Peter was called while he was fishing. He fished all night, and caught nothing. Jesus told him to go out and try again and the nets were filled beyond what they could pull into the boat. Peter fell before Jesus and he was called to be a disciple. Peter responded in shame but was called to righteousness by being a follower of Christ.

[26] Peter when he denied Jesus 3 times, it started over a charcoal fire in the middle of the night. 3 times he was accused of being a follower of Jesus. He first denied Jesus in Ignorance, secondly he denied him in Disassociation, and finally he adamantly denied him in complete Abandonment. In Peter's denial he disqualified his righteousness as a follower of Christ and responded with shame.

What was done in his calling, Peter felt was undone in his denial, but now We see Jesus compassionately restoring Peter through the same cycle.

[27] John 21:15-17

"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." ¹⁶ 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." ¹⁷ 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."

[28] Jesus when he is asking this question there is a three-fold restoration that is taking place. The first 2 times Jesus asks Peter if he loves him he uses the word "agape" which would have asked Peter do you love me with a deep and unconditional love. Both times Peter responded with Yes you know I love you, but Peter uses the word "Phileo", which communicates more of a friendship/brotherly love.

Both times Jesus used the agape love it would have been referencing the teachings he left with his disciples before he died, when he said love is laying ones life down for his friends (13:15-23). Also, that they are to love one another (John 13:34). These teaching Jesus was talking about this agape love. Jesus when he is asking Peter about his love he is addressing that the kind of love that is necessary to care for the believers in the ministry set before him (i.e. feed my sheep) requires sacrifice.

Now Peter's response was not a denial of love for God, John uses Phileo to describe the love of the Father to the Son. So Peter was genuinely responding that he did love Jesus, and not as some superficial way. There would not have been an unusual part of the conversation. This was not like Peter is giving Jesus a Pepsi when he asked for a coke.

That is until Jesus asks for the final time. This third time Jesus asks if he loves him but he now uses Peter's word Phileo. Which Peter again responds with Phileo but it would have pointed out Peters need to recognize the sacrifice that would be required of him. Which is why Jesus ends this exchange saying...

[29] John 21:18-19

"Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, 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." ¹⁹ (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."

He showed Peter that he would have to sacrifice, a sacrifice that would be similar to Christ in that he would have to give up his life in order to care for the believers to feed the sheep. Then he calls Peter to once again follow him.

[30] This is now the cycle of Peter's restoration. Peter had been fishing all night and caught nothing. Jesus tells him to try again, and they catch a net full of fish. Peter throws himself at the feet of Jesus. Jesus meets him over a charcoal fire, Jesus feeds Peter fish and bread. 3 times he asks Peter if he loves him and Peter affirms his love 3 times. Jesus calls him out of shame and into righteousness to follow him with agape, sacrificial love.

Peter is more than his failures—even his most epic failure. It's not a bad mark on his resume, but a catalyst for what is to come. Our failures don't have to define us, but they can shape us. This comparison Jesus and Peter of How we handle pressure, show Jesus demonstrating that under pressure, the way to live as Christ requires sacrifice.

That is what agape love is. That sacrifice might be the glass house that we have everything figured out. It could be the desire to always be right or it could be sacrificing our desire to hide who we truly are because we are afraid that our true self will be rejected, like our humanity is not like the humanity of others. Which is why we need a fresh, biblical perspective on this issue of failure.

Perspective — we all need it. How often do we look around at work, church, or school and believe that everyone else has it together while we don't? We then fall into the trap of faking, masking, and becoming hypocrites because of the perceived horror we might face if people knew we weren't actually perfect, accomplished, or into whatever makes people popular. In a world that asks us to always be at our very best, there is something wonderful about letting our rough edges, mistakes, failures, and

imperfections show. That vulnerability forms true community. It is there we can find hope to press on in the faith.

God is a God of restoration, but we must be willing to see his purposes even if our restoration is not what we thought it would be here in everyday life.

[31] Failure isn't always falling forward. Sometimes its just failure.

If we handle failure with compassion, meaning the full immersion in the condition of being human, we address our failure and the failures of other, especially if their failure affects us, with balance the human accountability and the goal of restoration. We accept that we fail. Sometimes that failure comes with consequences.

Sometimes a pastor cannot and should not be able to return to full-time ministry. You may not be able to keep your job. You may not be able to hang with the same friends or lead the team to victory, but God is able to use you for his good purposes in any space—whether you view it as menial, unimportant, or boring.

[32] Redemption and Restoration

We must understand that the ultimate act of redemption is found in Christ death. Christ through his sacrifice overcame our sin so that we can be in right relationship with him. He paid the ultimate price for our sins, failures and humanity. Because of this we are not defined by our sin, it is not our identity. Despite all our messiness, we can be in right relationship with him and ultimately redeemed and restored for all eternity. In him we are forgiven and loved.

We cannot take advantage of God's grace and forgiveness by being permissive and dismissive of our failures. Pretending that they do not exist because we are in Christ and moving on. Which is why we need the accountability of our struggles with out humanity.

We also cannot act like we do not need God's grace and forgiveness by pretending that we never fail or never fall short. If we do that then we never need restoration and continue to live the lie that we never fail and Jesus really didn't need to forgive us because we are already perfect.

[33] We hold each other accountable, by pointing out the sin, not with condemnation but with love, the agape love, the love with sacrifice to be united in Christ as his followers and disciples. When we point out the sin accept the consequences of it both natural and implemented but we move forward to be restored.

We have to fall into the Christ centered community like Peter. We acknowledge our failure but run to the compassionate God and compassionate community with hopeful abandon swimming football fields to be restored. Gathered with the same people in the same church in the same community and circumstances where we failed, to be restored.

[34] Before we give up, in our shame over our failures, or give up and blame everyone and everything else for our failures, we come to Christ and his church to share in the Human experience. We push each other to grow in our Spiritual Walk despite our humanity, and we encourage each other to be restored and live again in victory in the kingdom of Heaven.

PRAYER AND REFLECTION

COMMUNION