

## 1-19-25 Should've, Could've, Would've

### Week 2

**Text: John 21:1-19**

**Topics:** Regret, Redemption

**Big Idea of the Message:** Jesus redeemed Peter after Peter denied him three times, but that reconciliation required Peter to face his past and profess his love for Jesus.

**Application Point:** We can't suppress the reality of our past mistakes, but they need not hold us captive for the rest of our lives. We must accept Jesus's redemption and allow him to make us holy.

Have you ever failed at something? (Duh!)

Isn't it SO easy to blow it?

How good are you at putting your past mistakes behind you and moving forward?

How are you about putting others past mistakes behind them?

Are you a forgiving person? Can you forgive yourself?

As followers of Christ, this is one of our greatest challenges in life ... especially in the life of the church. Because so often our sin problems are not only between us and God ... many times the sin in our lives is known by others. It has consequences that go beyond self. As believers, our failures and our sin can affect our families, our friends, and our church. Therefore, it is appropriate that we look together as a church to God's word to find the guidance for surviving the failure of sin.

### **Read John 21:1-19.**

Peter was a bold, brash, straight-talking fisherman. He was as honest as he was rugged. From my study of the life of Peter, I have the picture of a man who said whatever came to his mind. I also have a picture of a man who, when he committed himself to something, committed all the way. There was no wishy-washy half-heartedness to Peter. He left his life of fishing to go with Jesus and become a fisher of men. He was a sold-out follower of Jesus ... and he didn't hesitate to tell anybody.

Even when Jesus warned him that he would someday deny him, Peter said, "**Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.**" (Matthew 26:33) When Jesus attempted to explain his coming death, and how the disciples could not go with Him, but that they would follow later, Peter said, "**Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.**" (John 13:37)

Yet we know that despite his enthusiasm and claims ... when the moment of truth came ... Peter did just as Jesus warned he would do.

Peter did just as Jesus warned he would. He failed Jesus. He publicly denied him three times at that ultimate moment of decision. And as we look at that, we must think, "What a failure! He denied Jesus! How could he ever be restored? How could he ever be forgiven?" Yet he was forgiven, and he

was restored. The Bible tells us so. And so, today, as we look to God's word for instruction on how we might survive the failure of our own sin, we can find no more perfect example than that of Peter.

So, what must you know so that you can survive the failure of sin?

### **1. Nobody is perfect... everyone fails.**

- I must remind myself of various quotes, "Show me someone who doesn't make mistakes and I will show you someone who does nothing, Failure is not the opposite of success, it is part of success. Success is not final, failure is not fatal, it is the courage to continue that counts. And my favorite, to succeed you have to get up one more time than you fell."
- The Bible is full of individuals who failed, sinned and made colossal mistakes. The Bible keeps record of how those failures, sins and mistakes were used for God's glory.
- Whatever you might be facing or about to face, God is not done, He is writing His story.
- Turn with me to **John 18 and read verses 15-18, and 25-27.**
- Notice in **verse 18** it says the Peter stood around a "**fire of coals**" to warm himself.
- None of us are immune to sin. None of us are immune to letting Jesus down, not even the people who were closest to Him on this earth.
- Peter walked, talked, laughed and ate with Jesus for three years. He was in the inner circle of disciples. You might even say that he was one of Jesus' best friends. Yet he let Jesus down. Three times he denied even knowing Jesus, all within view of Jesus Himself.
- **Luke 22:61 says, "And the Lord turned and looked at Peter..."**
- So, should we be surprised by the failure of sin that enters our lives? No. Is God surprised when we fail in our sin? No! Does He stop loving us? No!
- God knows our tendency to sin all too well. He created us. He was there when man rebelled and took that step from holiness into sin. He recorded it in His word in **Romans 3:23 that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."**
- All of us...every single one of us have sinned.
- Despite what we may think of ourselves or what we may think of the believers who surround us, we are all just human. We are not perfect. We will fail. We will all make mistakes. We will sin. We will step into it. Some of us are just delusional and think we have it all together.
- So, perhaps the first important step is to stop being beating ourselves up. There is nothing to be gained in that. There is no forgiveness or restoration in hating and punishing ourselves for the sin we commit that is absolutely no surprise to Jesus.
- Indeed, if it is truly forgiveness and restoration that we seek, then we need to go directly to the giver of life and forgiveness ... our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **2. No matter how bad you fail, Jesus still chooses you!**

- Where do we find Peter after he miserably fails? Hint, the answer is found in **John 21:3.**
- What do we notice in **verse 3**? Peter had influence. The others followed him.
- **Read verses 4-14.**
- What is so amazing about this to me is that Jesus is watching, reaching in, waiting, and continuing to provide while His followers are lost in their failure.

- The disciples hadn't caught anything, and Jesus tells them to try the right side of the boat, and they pulled in 153 fish.
- Peter had denied Jesus when it counted. He had publicly turned his back on Christ. Yet the risen Jesus enjoyed watching Peter catch a net full of fish. He cooked breakfast for him. He invited him to sit down and eat. He enjoyed time and fellowship with Peter.
- The same goes for you. No matter how you have failed, no matter what sin you have allowed into your life, the Savior who died for you still loves you. He is still your friend. And He still wants you to sit down with Him, talk with Him, and be with Him.
- Because, friends, it is only through those moments of sharing and communication that failure can be addressed and resolved. So, please understand, no matter how you might fail, Jesus is still near and seek after you. He still loves you. He still wants to be near to you.

### **3. Sins have consequences.**

- **Read John 21:15-19.**
- Often those circumstances go far beyond yourself. Your sin does affect those who are close to you ... your family, your friends, and even your church. But, more important than anything else, your sin failure affects your relationship with Christ.
- Even though God forgives us, he doesn't necessarily remove all the consequences. He forgave Adam and Eve but still made them leave the garden, work hard, start aging, and have babies in pain.
- Just look at Peter and Jesus. Yes, Jesus still loved Peter. He was still His friend. But that relationship needed restoration. It was strained. And the damage to that relationship had to be dealt with. Jesus confronted Peter. He said, "So, Peter ... I remember all that stuff you said ... how you would always stick by me ... how you would never fall away ... how you would die for me. But look at what you did. Do you still think you love me more than all these other guys?"
- Peter had to be confronted. He had to understand the consequences of what he had done. He had to realize that he just couldn't go back to fishing, he just couldn't go back to the way things had been before. His choices, and his sin, had forced a change upon his relationship with Jesus, and that change had to be dealt with. He had to understand that the consequences of his actions went far beyond himself.
- Brethren, this is a lesson that we must never forget. Our sin has implications with our families, our friends, and our church. We must acknowledge those implications and deal with them. We must understand that our own choices and actions do not just affect us, they affect everyone around us, especially those we care about the most.
- For Peter, he had to live with today's story recorded in scripture. It must have been embarrassing for all to know how quickly he turned to self-preservation mode.
- But his story is important because we can identify with him. We also seek self-preservation. And Peter's story gives us hope of forgiveness, hope of recovery from guilt and shame and a healthy shift to serving God by serving others.
- You know, our first inclination when faced with the failure of sin in our lives is to try and hide it. Somehow, we think that if we just put it out of sight and out of mind, and if enough time

passes, that won't matter anymore. But I hope that you know that approach won't work. Sin that is hidden is sin that fester and grows and infects.

No, to survive the failure of your sin ...

**4. We MUST confront our sin, admit it and confess it.**

- Remember **John 18:18?** “**Now the servants and officers who had made a fire of coals stood there, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves. And Peter stood with them and warmed himself.”**
- **Read John 21:9-10, 15-19.**
- This is an incredible moment! I have pointed out these verses to you because I want you to understand how Jesus has set up the circumstance.
- Note how Jesus sets the stage: three denials before, and now three questions of Peter's love; a charcoal fire in the servant's area of the High Priest and a charcoal fire on the seashore.
- Did you know that these two occurrences are the only mentions of a “charcoal fire” in scripture? Do you think Jesus might have been making a point? He has brought Peter right back to the setting of the betrayal, but this time with an important twist: As Peter affirms his love, Jesus challenges him to serve.
- God's Word promises us in **1 John 1:9** that, “**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**”
- But we must admit, we must confess. No amount of hiding, no amount of pretending, no amount of “sweeping under the rug” can resolve our sin problem. The only solution is openness and confession with Jesus.
- Jesus still loved Peter. Several days had passed since that horrible night when Peter denied Him. But that failure, that denial, that sin was real. It had to be confronted. It had to be brought out in the open. It had to be addressed.
- The message to Peter is unmistakable: “Not only do I forgive you,” Jesus says, “but I have important work for you to do. The time for pity parties is over. Get off the bench and back in the game!” Jesus restores Peter to his team.

**5. Despite our sinfulness, and failures, Jesus has a mission for us.**

- **Read John 21:17.**
- Peter had failed miserably. He had denied his Lord. But he saw that Jesus still loved him, he understood the consequences, and he confronted his sin. So, by giving Peter this three-part affirmation, he let Peter know that he was still valuable to the cause. He was useful. He did have a purpose. In fact, he would still be a great leader.
- I want to flash forward a few weeks in the Scriptures. I want you to see the rest of the story, what happened with Peter after the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit.
- It is fifty days after Jesus ascended into heaven. The Holy Spirit came upon the group of believers in a violent wind and with tongues of fire. They began to speak in other languages, languages that they did not know, but that God gave them so the people nearby could understand.
- But look at what happens in **Acts 2:13-14**, and **40-41**.

- The same Peter who cowered in the darkness and denied Jesus on the night before he was crucified stood boldly in front of the entire population of Jerusalem and told them all about Jesus Christ!
- Isn't that amazing?! Isn't that powerful?! Please hear me, no matter how you have failed, no matter how you have allowed sin to infect your life, Jesus has the remedy for that sin.
- He wants to restore that relationship with you. He wants to forgive you. He wants to be your very best friend.
- But there are some steps that you must take, confronting your sin, admitting it, and confessing it. Once you resolve that, God can and will restore you and use you in mighty ways to make a difference in His kingdom.

## **Conclusion**

You will fail. You will make mistakes. You will sin.

Can you forgive yourself?

Biblically, no. God forgives your sin, and you are to forgive others, but the Bible never tells you to forgive yourself.

But you can let Jesus' forgiveness wash over you until you finally believe it, until it sinks in, until you know without a doubt that Jesus forgives you, and even gives you new ways to serve him.

Think about this: If you have honestly brought all your sin to the foot of the cross, given it to Jesus, and repented of it—i.e., turned the other direction, then where do you think those messages of guilt are coming from?

Not from God! He promises to throw your sin into the deepest ocean, to remove it from you as far as the east is from the west, to choose to ... remember it no more! Your guilt is not from God. It comes from the evil one, who would love to see you wallow helplessly in your guilt and shame, thus robbing you of joy and rendering your testimony worthless.

So, stop buying it! Once you confess and repent of your sin, act on faith as if you're forgiven, because God says you are!

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