

From Failure To Forgiveness

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[0 : 00] Now, all four Gospels record this particular event with Peter. We know the story well. Mark's Gospel is unique, at least, if not for any other reason, for this.

I want to remind you that Mark is actually writing Peter's eyewitness account. Do you remember that? It's been about two years since we talked about that.

But that is the case. We go back to the early church fathers, and we see a number of them, beginning with a man named Papias, who was born in AD 60.

So Papias is coming up at the end of the apostolic era. He personally knew the apostle John, who had passed on to Papias that the Gospel of Mark was actually written by Mark as a result of Peter's preaching.

It was Peter's eyewitness account. And then that testimony passes on to many other early church fathers, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Clement of Rome, certain manuscripts, some of the oldest manuscripts we have notate this.

[1 : 05] So when we come to Mark's Gospel here, we're not reading Mark's perspective necessarily. We're reading his structure, but we're not reading his testimony necessarily.

We're actually reading Peter's, which makes this a little bit more significant as we come to this particular part, doesn't it? It doesn't make it more or less reliable. That's not what I mean.

But it does help shape our thoughts about Peter himself. Because for Mark to have recorded this with such detail and with such clarity indicates that in the decades following Jesus' resurrection, as Peter went through the places that God would send him preaching the Gospel, he routinely tells this embarrassing story of his own failure.

Do you see that? The only way this becomes such a prevalent story is if Peter's actually the one sharing it, because none of the other apostles were with Peter in that moment. The only way anybody knows about Peter's denial is either if Peter tells them or Jesus tells them.

And so Peter goes on preaching the Gospel and he begins to open up. So it would seem then that the spiritual pride we so often characterize Peter by is ultimately transformed to sincere humility by the loving restoration that he experiences by Jesus.

[2 : 35] Isn't that interesting? Isn't it amazing the transforming power that Jesus has on our lives? That in a moment of forgiveness, as we'll get to at the close of our study, in a moment of forgiveness and restoration, this one thing that we often regard Peter as being, which is kind of rash, passionate, but rash, not really thinking clearly, certainly prideful, is actually the very thing that probably in the early church he wasn't known for.

In the early church, he's probably known for humility, known for meekness. So then this story, as we come to it, is not so much a story of failure, it's a story of forgiveness.

It's a reminder that even the strongest of us have the potential for great sin, great defeat, but the faithfulness of Jesus here provides the gift of restoration, the gift of reconciliation to all who will love and follow him.

So it's a lesson then for any believer who falls short of Jesus' call to discipleship. In other words, it's a story meant for all of us to learn from.

Let's jump into it. Number one, first thing is very simple, just one word, failure. Failure. Now all of us have experienced failure in our discipleship, perhaps even catastrophic failure.

[4 : 14] No one else may be aware of all the events of your life, but perhaps there have been times in your life where your sin was so severe that you would categorize it as catastrophic spiritual failure.

But perhaps it's maybe just you and a couple others who have to really think about that, or whoever would even know that some of those things unfolded in your life. Can you imagine being Peter?

And there is someone who has come along the way and taken perhaps your greatest failure in life and written it down for the sole purpose that for the next 2,000 years people can gather on Sunday mornings and they can study the details and scrutinize your particular failure.

We haven't experienced it quite like that, have we? There is some irony here. Peter is what we refer to him as. His name was Simon. Jesus is the one that began to call him Peter, which means rock or the rock.

Jesus calls him that. And then it's ironic that in this moment, what we actually, maybe most of us know Peter most for, is actually crumbling rather than being firm, steadfast.

[5 : 28] But let's remember, Jesus didn't give Simon the name Peter because of what he was, but because of what he was going to make him into, what he's going to make him to be.

And before we begin to examine his sins, let's at least acknowledge that Peter was faithful enough to find his place in the courtyard of Caiaphas at considerable personal risk.

There's only one other disciple who is even in the vicinity and it's John. You'll have to go to John 18 to see how his story begins to unfold. He has some connection. It actually gets him inside the courtroom to see what's actually unfolding with Jesus.

But Peter perhaps is there not because he knows anyone, but because he just loves Jesus. No other disciple followed along.

No other disciple on the runaway stopped and realized what they were doing and decided to follow along. This is in one sense, his commitment to Christ making his fall so dramatic.

[6 : 37] And we don't need to forget that. That had he not been so faithful to the Lord, and he wouldn't have fallen so severely. That sounds a little backwards, but this is kind of what's unfolding here.

Let's just work through the denials here. There's three of them. Let's work through the narrative itself and then we'll draw an application. Denial number one is verse 66. As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, you also were with the Nazarene Jesus.

But he denied it, saying, I neither know nor understand what you mean. And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. So as Jesus is upstairs in the courtroom, Peter is just outside downstairs in the courtyard.

And with his face illuminated by the fire, it's not very surprising that someone recognized him as one of Jesus' followers. Now Mark says that it was one of Caiaphas' young servant girls.

She immediately accuses him of being a follower of Jesus. Now she's not just trying to strike up some chit-chat with Peter here. We get that, right?

[7 : 52] At this point, she views him as an outsider, perhaps even an imposter, who has worked his way into the crowd in order to disrupt the proceedings and defend his teacher.

If she was among the crowd that went to the Garden of Gethsemane, she would have perhaps recognized Peter as the one who has already drawn his sword and tried to take care of business himself. Maybe she wasn't there.

We don't really know. But at some point, she recognizes him as being one who has been with Jesus and she immediately is on guard and accuses him of being a follower of Christ.

So recognizing that his cover has been blown and understanding the danger that he was in, Peter denies the accusation and he just brushes his off as if he didn't even understand what she was talking about.

This is kind of a sly way. You notice his phrase here. I don't even know what you're asking me. What do you mean? He's playing a little dumb here, isn't he? I don't even know who that guy is. Now, I don't know why nobody stopped and asked Peter, then why are you here at two in the morning at a trial at the high priest's house?

[9 : 07] He doesn't make a lot of sense, but he's just kind of casting it off as if, no big deal, I just kind of wandered in. Maybe you'd get to this point and you'd think, well, you know, Peter's just acting in self-preservation.

All of us would probably do this. We're just trying to save our own lives. Not really that big a deal. But that's precisely what makes it a big deal.

At the very least, it was a blatant lie, a sinful behavior, unbecoming of anyone who would say that they're following Jesus. But more than that, it was an outright denial of the one who he had committed his entire life to serve.

This is a terrible sin. The moment of self-preservation is actually the worst part of it. That he's saving his own hide in order to deny Christ.

Sinclair Ferguson said that our personal weaknesses need only the least pressure from temptation to bring us to our knees. The inquiries of a servant girl were enough to draw out from him the horrible realities of his own heart.

[10:26] So despite Peter's bombastic insistence that he would follow the Lord to the death, he falters and stumbles at the meager opposition of a young servant girl.

It's not even one of the soldiers. It's not one of the leaders of the Jews. This is a slave. She's responsible to clean the house, to wash people's feet.

And it takes this one meager opposition from the young servant girl for Peter, the rock, to completely fall apart.

That's why I think Paul writes to the Corinthians that we are to take heed if we think much of ourselves lest we fall.

Mark's the only gospel author to record this first rooster crow. And perhaps it was an important element of Peter's testimony about the moment.

[11:38] Maybe that's why Mark includes it because maybe Peter mentioned it so often. I point it out because it should have served as a warning to Peter. Jesus had already told Peter that there would be three denials before the second crow.

Surely this was one of God's gracious warnings meant to get us to recognize our temptation. So this Peter goes to the first denial.

He hears the first rooster crow. Perhaps that's meant by God to get his attention. Peter, what are you doing? Stop. Listen to yourself. Listen to what you're doing.

And maybe that's why Paul follows up that earlier verse with this in 1 Corinthians 10. No temptation has overtaken you. That is not common to man. God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability.

But with the temptation he will also provide a way of escape that you may be able to endure it. Maybe that's what God's doing here for Peter. Here's rooster crow number one.

[12:45] Here's your warning, Peter. Don't go any further. You've already messed up. Don't go any further with it. Do you remember in the whole scenario with David and Bathsheba? David looks out of his window and he notices Bathsheba and he sends one of his servants to go and get her for him.

And remember what his servant does. This is not right, king. You shouldn't do this. What is that? It's an early warning in temptation, isn't it?

Don't go there, David. Don't go there, Peter. Doesn't God do this for us? We get to moments of weakness and we're beginning to move forward in a moment of temptation and God through his spirit perhaps just brings to mind and calls us to recognize what we're about to do or how we're about to fall.

Or perhaps it's a spouse that steps in and says, hey, I've noticed this going on here. You need to think about this. Or maybe it's someone that you go to church with and you have coffee and they just hit on the one thing.

Or maybe it's a church service and you hear the one passage and it's just the Lord sending these warnings to you. Don't go there. Don't do that. Watch what you're doing.

[13:56] I think that's the graciousness of our God. This also might be why Peter would later write that vigilance was so necessary for defeating the attacks of Satan.

Satan is indeed fierce but God is faithful, Paul says. And with every temptation there is grace to persevere. And I think this is an evidence of that being true.

That's denial number one. Look at denial number two. Verse 69. And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, this man is one of them. But again, he denied it.

So Peter withdraws from the fire at least. He gets away from the crowd a bit. The servant girl can't let it go. We know people like that, right? They just can't let stuff go. She follows along to where Peter goes at maybe the door of the courtyard.

And she says, no, I think you're one of them except this time is different. This time it's not just the servant girl questioning Peter. This time she's accusing him and she's accusing him to the others.

[15:03] So she's not looking at Peter now. She's looking at the others. She says, he's one of them. So the threat is taken up a notch, isn't it? And Peter again denies it.

Look at denial number three, verse 70. And after a little while, the bystanders again said to Peter, certainly you are one of them for you are a Galilean.

But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, I do not know this man of whom you speak. So a little time passes by. I don't take it that Peter was a very introverted, quiet person. He seems very extroverted in the scriptures. I imagine he can't go very long without talking to somebody. And maybe that's what's happening here. He begins to talk and his accent betrays him. This would be like, you know, a trial taking place maybe up in the Northeast in New York and one of us is the outsider and you step in to testify and everyone knows you're not from around here. [16:08] And there's something like that going on with Peter here. He's talking and the group now, it's not the servant girl anymore, it's the whole group. Now they're saying, you're one of them. We can tell by the way you're talking. You've been with him.

You follow him. You're one of them. And with each circumstance, the accusations intensify and so do Peter's denials. He passionately, his passionate personality finally explodes in this moment. Only this time it was to deny the Lord rather to defend him. It's a complete 180 now with Peter. He swears that he doesn't know Jesus not in the sense of using profanity but in the sense of invoking a curse upon himself.

And maybe he used profanity. He was a fisherman. We have no idea. But that's not the point of what Mark was saying here. It would be akin to one of us saying I swear to God or with God as my witness except in that culture a statement like that, an oath like that was very serious. Peter's essentially saying to them, if I'm lying to you, I'm calling God as my witness and he can deal with me. He can kill me if he so chooses.

[17:25] And if you're lying, he can kill you too. And he brings about this oath. He invokes this curse upon himself. And think about that for a moment. Not only is he denying Christ, not only is he lying, but now he is invoking a curse upon himself saying God can kill me if I'm lying, knowing full well that God knows he's lying.

He's making a mockery, foolish mockery of the God that he's supposed to love and worship. Do you see how quickly our temptations and our sins can begin to snowball?

And we don't listen to the warnings. And we continue on chasing the thing that we really want or maybe out of fear we refuse to do the thing that maybe we should do.

And then before long we stop and we realize, what have I done? Look how far this has gone. This is not just about self-preservation. Look what it has taken me to.

I've made a mockery of my God. Sinclair Ferguson says, poor Peter, he loved his master too much to desert him. And so he followed him at a distance at considerable risk.

[18:38] Yet he loved himself too much to remain indifferent to the consequences of all out faithfulness. Now it's really easy to write that.

But it's true, isn't it? Peter in this moment, the one who said, I won't do it, is actually the one who does it worst. Failure.

Number two, fulfillment. Fulfillment. I said earlier that Mark's primary purpose is this contrast, encouraging believers regarding failures and faithfulness.

We can't ignore the fact that Peter's failure was actually an explicit fulfillment of what Jesus said would happen. And this prophecy is actually key to understanding why Peter is so devastated.

Just look back with me at verse 29 for a moment. You're there in Mark 14. Verse 29, Peter said to him, even though they all fall away, speaking of the other disciples, even though they all fall away, I will not.

[19:42] And Jesus says to him, truly I tell you, this very night before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times. But he said emphatically, if I must die with you, I will not deny you.

And they all said the same. Now there's the bombastic statement, there's the spiritual pride, there's also the prophecy. No, Peter, that's not gonna work that way. You're actually gonna deny me three times tonight.

Look at verse 72, and immediately the rooster crowed a second time. Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.

I don't wanna bore you with unnecessary lectures about roosters crowing habits, but I'm going to.

Just to give a little context, I think it helps us here understand Peter's predicament.

But William Lane notes the historical relevance of this, and the way that it would unfold. He actually cites a 12-year study. I don't know who chooses to study for 12 years the crowing habits of roosters

in Jerusalem, but apparently somebody did the study, and he cites it in his commentary.

[21 : 01] It's actually quite interesting. The way that this would have worked, and it still does today, there are three distinct crowings in that particular area. I don't know if it would be the same here. I'm a city slicker, so I wouldn't know.

Some of you could correct me probably, but at least in that area, there's three distinct crowings. The first one happens between about 12.30 and 1 o'clock in the morning. The second one happens about an hour or so after that, and then the final one happens about an hour or so after that.

So in Roman timekeeping, when they said the final watch of the night, they actually referred to that final watch as the rooster crow, because that's what signified about three o'clock in the morning, the final crowing of the rooster in that particular area.

Now Lane also acknowledges that the roosters crowed for about three to five minutes at a time before they went quiet again. Now here's why I bring all of that up.

That means between the first crow and the second crow that Peter experiences here, there's about an hour of time that probably has elapsed. That means that Peter's denial here is not, we can't just reduce it to a momentary misjudgment.

[22 : 15] We can't reduce it to that because over the course of an hour, he decidedly, willfully denies the Lord three different times.

See, this is in his mind at this point. He's not going to admit in this moment to following Christ and being a follower of Christ to save his own hide. That's the thing. And it's not just because he slipped up in a moment.

No, he's doing this over and over, over the course of an extended amount of time. In other words, there's no way for us to justify Peter's sin.

Now again, Lane notes that the rooster would crow three to five minutes before everything goes quiet. So there's no way for Peter to have missed the significance of this crowing.

So immediately after denying Jesus for the third and final time, the rooster crows and Peter remembers. And what is it that he remembers?

[23 : 19] Just a few hours before when he so foolishly confronted Jesus and said, you're wrong. I'm not going to forsake you.

And Jesus says, no, actually, before you hear the second crow, you're going to deny me three times. Peter never imagined a circumstance that would lead him to deny the Lord that he loves so much.

The sound of that rooster settled on his heart and mind like nothing he had ever experienced before. And Luke's account adds a fascinating element to the story that dramatizes it even further. You read it to you. Luke chapter 22 and verse 60. Immediately while he was speaking, the rooster crowed 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.

Now remember, between the first crow and the second crow, probably about an hour if not a little bit more. Peter's at least there for an hour. Long enough for Jesus to go through this kangaroo trial.

[24 : 34] Long enough for Jesus to have endured the things that he endured and is now being led away from Caiaphas' house in order now to go see Herod and then eventually to see Pilate.

And at the moment that Jesus is being escorted out of Caiaphas' house, being brought down from upstairs to the courtyard in order that he can leave, Peter denies him for the third time.

The rooster crows and Peter looks up and who's there? Jesus. And Jesus and Peter lock eyes. And what do you think was the impact of that on Peter?

Do you remember how the trial ended? We read it just a moment ago. When they're finished, they cover Jesus' head and one by one, they take turns punching him in the face and trying to get him to say who it was that did it.

And when they were tired of doing that, whoever it was that was involved, they pass him off to the temple police who were outside in the courtyard to take him over to the next place of judgment. And remember what it said they did.

[25 : 37] They received him with blows. So these men inside the courtroom pass him off to the soldiers in the courtyard and as he's being passed off, the soldiers themselves begin to beat him.

So when Peter looks up at that moment and he locks eyes with Jesus, what he saw was a beaten, bloodied, abused man. It's not just about seeing the eyes and remembering the statement, it's about what he saw in Jesus' condition in that moment.

The very thing that Peter was afraid of, the very thing Peter wanted to avoid which led to his denial is the very thing that Jesus was so faithfully enduring for Peter's sake.

King Hughes says, Peter looked at the torn, bleeding visage of Jesus and their eyes locked. Oh, the pain. The rooster began to crow for the next three to five minutes over and over and over and over and Peter remembered Christ's prophecy.

He remembered and he remembered and he remembered and he remembered. You know, what do you think he saw in Jesus' eyes that night?

[26 : 53] I don't think that Jesus would have rolled his eyes and looked at Peter with disgust. I don't think that that would have been true of Jesus. I don't think that he would have gotten one of those I told you so, I can't believe you would do this to me kind of looks.

What did Peter see? I think Jesus looked at Peter with the same compassionate eyes with which Peter had seen Jesus look at so many others over the course of three years.

What has Mark noted so often about Jesus? His compassion. His compassion on the people. His compassion on the hurting. His compassion on the sinful.

His compassion on the outcast. And now Peter's eyes lock with Jesus and what he sees is those same eyes that he's seen for so many other people. Perhaps for the first time Peter's recognizing himself as the unclean leper.

Perhaps for the first time Peter's recognizing himself as the Gentile quote dog. Perhaps for the first time Peter's recognizing himself as the demoniac in the cave.

[28 : 12] And however a person can communicate with a look a thought and we know people can do it because our wives do it all the time. If it's possible to communicate with your eyes I'm doing this for you that would have been what Peter saw that night.

He sees the compassion of the Lord. And I think ultimately that's what broke him. It's a combination of recognizing his own failure he's reminded of that failure with the crowing of the rooster.

But it's not just the reminder of his failure it's being confronted with the image of Jesus beaten and bloodied on his behalf in that very moment. Saying because of what I just did he has to do that.

And that's what breaks him. Failure fulfillment number three forgiveness. And this is the part we want to hurry up and get to right? Forgiveness.

Verse 72 the last phrase he broke down and wept. Matthew and Luke record it just a little bit differently but basically the same he went out and wept bitterly they both say.

[29 : 27] He ugly cries this moment. The weight of that moment for Peter is unlike anything else. You've experienced those moments right?

So upset with your own sin so upset with the fact that you have fallen again and the weight of that settles on your heart it settles on your mind but what makes Peter different from Judas?

That's a question I want us to ask before we get to the forgiveness. Why did Peter get to the restoration but Judas didn't? What made him so different?

Didn't Judas demonstrate extreme levels of regret as well? Yeah he did. Why don't I read it to you? Matthew 27 when Judas his betrayer saw that Jesus was condemned he changed his mind.

He brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priest and the elder saying I have sinned by betraying innocent blood and they said what's that to us? That's a you problem Judas is what they said.

[30 : 46] Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple he departed and he went and he hanged himself. Judas had regret. Judas probably wept.

What makes him so different from Peter? There's a lot of ways to answer that. The way the scriptures tend to answer this question is by pointing to what happened beyond those moments of regret.

Judas's regret didn't lead him to repentance and faith. his remorse didn't indicate that he was now willing to believe and follow Jesus. It only indicated that he couldn't live with himself.

He couldn't live with the burden of condemning and taking part in the condemnation of an innocent man. It just shows that he had a moral compass like every other person. God but he doesn't seek for mercy.

He doesn't seek for forgiveness. Instead he just tries to remove himself from the experience of guilt. Now that's a very different thing than what Peter does.

[31 : 59] Peter probably by faith in the words of Christ actually continues in his discipleship despite the guilt. Do you remember the promise Jesus had given?

Look back in Mark 14. Look at verse 28. This is in the midst of telling Peter and the other disciples that they're going to forsake him. And look at the promise in verse 28.

After I'm raised up, in other words I'm going to die, I'm coming back to life. Then what does he say? I will go before you to Galilee. In other words, I'm going to meet you again.

We're going to fellowship again. And it's going to be in Galilee after I raise up from the dead. Now I want you to flip over to chapter 16. Chapter 16.

This is the morning of Jesus' resurrection. Mary Magdalene and the other Marys have come to the tomb. And look at verse 7.

[32 : 56] This is the words of the angel that awaited them at the tomb. He's telling them what to do. Jesus has risen. And then he says, but go tell his disciples, and then he emphasizes Mark does, and Peter that he's going before you to Galilee.

There you will see him just as he told you. So remember the ladies have come to the tomb. They don't see Jesus. One of them does, most of them don't.

They don't see Jesus. They want to, they just see the empty tomb. The angel says, go to Galilee, tell the disciples to go with you. And by the way, make sure you tell Peter to go there too, because there you will see him.

And that's significant, isn't it? Promise after promise to Peter. I'm going to meet you. I'm going to meet you in Galilee. Now, I don't know if Peter imagined that restoration and forgiveness was possible at that moment, but he at least had enough faith and love for Jesus to actually go back to Galilee.

So flip over with me to John chapter 21, and that's where we see, as Paul Harvey would say, the rest of the story. John chapter 21.

[34 : 13] Now, just because Jesus gave the promise doesn't mean that Peter has enough faith to believe the promise, okay? That's where Judas is. Judas just doesn't believe, so he goes and kills himself, all right?

Peter's heard the promise, Peter is overwhelmed by his sin, but he has enough faith to follow Jesus, to Galilee, and wait for him there, and that's what he's doing.

In John 21, look at verse 1, let's read the first six verses. After this, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, that's the Sea of Galilee, and he revealed himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas called the twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and the others, and two others of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, I'm going fishing. They said to him, we'll go with you. They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore, yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

[35 : 10] And Jesus said to them, children, do you have any fish? And they said, no. And he said, did you try the other side? Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you'll find some.

And what's amazing about it is they don't recognize that it's Jesus at this moment, but they still cast it on the other side. I would imagine, as most of the fishermen you know, these fishermen were pretty superstitious, right?

So they cast it. Now, they were not able to haul it in because of the quantity of the fish. So they've gone back to Galilee, and what are they doing? I don't think this is an indication that they were quitting.

I don't think that's it. Because Jesus said, go to Galilee and wait for me there. So what do they do? They go to Galilee and they wait. And what do fishermen do while they wait? They go fish.

They're waiting for Jesus. Now, I want you to see how Peter responds to this. Look at verse 7. That disciple whom Jesus loved, probably John, therefore said to Peter, it's the Lord.

[36 : 13] And when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he puts on his outer garment for he was stripped for the work, and he threw himself into the sea. That's amazing.

Kind of ridiculous, but amazing. They're out there, not too deep, they're out in a bit of the shallows, and they're fishing all night, and this wonderful miracle takes place, and they finally realize, okay, that's not just anybody on the shore, that's Jesus, and Peter in his excitement because he's been waiting for Jesus, throws himself into the lake so he can swim to the shore.

Now the rest of them just paddle behind him in the boat, but Peter swims there. What does that tell you about Peter in this moment? He loves Jesus. He wants to see Jesus. He wants to be with Jesus.

That is a very different thing than what we see in Judas. It doesn't mean he wasn't carrying the discouragement of his failure, and we'll see that in a moment, it.

But he had a consuming love for Jesus that couldn't be denied. Now, if you're in the midst of a moment of failure, that's the question to ask. Is the regret that I feel and the guilt that I sense merely because I have a moral compass that God has built into the fabric of my DNA, or do I really love Jesus, am I committed to following him, and I'm discouraged because I failed him?

[37 : 46] There's a big difference between those two responses. And they all finally get to the shore. Jesus has breakfast prepared. They have a meal together, and then a conversation breaks out between Jesus and Peter.

This is in front of everybody. Look at verse 15. They had finished breakfast. Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

And he said to him, yes, Lord, you know that I love you. And he said to him, feed my lambs. And he said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

And he said to him, yes, Lord, you know that I love you. And he said to him, tend my sheep. And he said to him a third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

Peter was grieved because he had said this to him the third time. Do you love me? And he said to him, Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.

[38 : 52] And Jesus said, 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're 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 was going to glorify God. And after saying this, he said to him, follow me. And I'm going to have to leave it to you to really dig into this particular paragraph, and I hope you will if you have some quiet time this afternoon.

I want to note just a couple of things as we wrap it up, though, okay? First, restoration is available for every disciple of Christ, but the process is painful.

Jesus wastes no time cutting to the chase with Peter here in Galilee. Notice verse 15. Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

Remember what Peter had said on that night? Jesus says, you're all going to forsake me. Peter says, they might, but I won't. In other words, I love you more than them.

[40 : 08] I'm more committed than they are. Jesus deals with the spiritual pride immediately. Peter, do you really love me more than them? Were you right, Peter?

Jesus' three questions then reflect Peter's three denials. Now, I've heard people try to point to the Greek that's used here in different Greek words for love.

That's not the point of this passage. The same words that are used for love, the different Greek words for love in this passage are all used elsewhere for God's love. So this is not a matter of Jesus using different words for love.

That's not what this is. Jesus isn't even speaking Greek. So we know that that wouldn't be the case. So what's the purpose of these three questions? Well, it mirrors Peter's three denials.

That's why when you get to the third one, Peter's grieved by the third one, not because the word Jesus uses, but love reflects a denial of Jesus that night in the courtyard.

[41 : 14] Restoration's painful. Our sin has to be confronted, and Jesus wastes no time confronting it. Then after his questions, notice that Jesus affirms that he still intends to use Peter.

Verse 21, or verse 15, feed my lambs. Verse 16, tend my sheep. Verse 17, feed my sheep. Action statements, ways that Jesus intends to use Peter.

What do we get from that? Well, there's always usefulness in God's plan, not for perfect people, but for repentant people. Peter in this moment is going through the painful process of restoration, and Jesus says, feed my sheep.

Do what I've called you to do. then he affirms that one day, Peter will face a similar circumstance, but this time he'll succeed.

He talks about the way he's going to die, which church tradition teaches us that he was crucified and unwilling to be crucified in the way that his Lord was. He demanded to be crucified upside down, and tradition says that's exactly what happened with Peter.

[42 : 33] What's Jesus' point here? I think this is a moment of encouragement for Peter's anxieties. I don't know, maybe it produced more anxiety to know that you're going to be murdered.

I don't know. I think there is a bit of comfort from Jesus here, saying, I know you're bothered by how you failed, but the next time you're presented with this, you're not going to fail. You're going to succeed.

Now, that's not to say that we never fall in the same way. It only means to say that Jesus is a comfort to our anxieties, and he is a faithful minister to our failures.

And the final thing that we'll note is in verse 19. And after saying this, he said to him, what? Follow me. So the fundamental key to discipleship is heeding Jesus' call to follow me.

Not just at the moment of our conversion, but every day following that. It's amazing, isn't it? The same phrase that Jesus uses to call Peter to conversion three years before at the Sea of Galilee.

[43 : 38] He says, follow me, and Peter leaves his nets and follows him. That's the same phrase he used here to restore him to usefulness and acknowledge his forgiveness in God's plan. Follow me. What does that tell us?

That's his desire for us. You've fallen? Okay. Restoration might be a bit painful. Repent, believe the Lord, and get up and follow Jesus. You fall again tomorrow?

Okay. There's forgiveness for you. Follow me. You fall again in the same way? Okay. There's forgiveness for you.

Follow me. We'd all do well to wake up every morning and maybe have it written on the wall next to our bed. Follow me. Follow me today. So the first thing we see when we wake up in the morning is Jesus' call for us to be faithful to him.

And the last thing that we see before we go to bed, no matter how much we failed him that day, is he's still calling us to follow him. There is forgiveness. There is restoration. There is usefulness.

[44 : 40] It doesn't matter how you've fallen. Follow him. So Peter's failure begins with spiritual pride. We see that in 26 to 31. It's guaranteed by spiritual complacency.

We see that in his sleepiness in the garden, verses 37 to 42. And the lessons for faithful discipleship are many, not the least of which is Jesus' pattern of prayer in the garden.

But what do you think should be the primary takeaway of this text? I think it's the faithfulness of Jesus to endure the cross so that forgiveness can be ours, not just today, but tomorrow as well, and the next day, and moving forward.

And if there's anything that I hope you're encouraged by as we pray, it's this, that if you follow Jesus, your failures will always, always end in forgiveness.

In fact, the forgiveness has already been provided. That failure you may commit this week has already been paid for if you're in Christ. It's already paid for.

[46 : 00] That's why you can get back up and follow him the next day. He's not going to remove a sin off of Christ and put it back over your head. That's not how God works.

No. Your sin's paid for. So rest in that. Rest in his forgiveness. Acknowledge that sometimes it's painful to go through a restorative process.

But seek his forgiveness and just start following again.