

# A Restoration of Soul and Service

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 02 September 2015

Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn together tonight to John chapter 21. John 21, we'll read again at verse 15. And we'll look at this passage, verses 15 to 19. It's just following on from where we finished on the Lord's Day, as we saw Jesus and the disciples in the early part of the chapter.

So John 21 at verse 15.

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.

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.

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.

[ 1 : 31 ] Well, the background, obviously, to the passage is Peter's previous failure when he denied the Lord three times, as we read earlier here, despite the fact that Jesus had forewarned him and told him that Satan had his desires set upon him.

And really, this is, in a sense, the fulfillment of what Jesus also said to him. But I have prayed for you that your faith does not fail. And Jesus here is restoring Peter his repudiation of discipleship, his denial of Jesus as his Lord and Savior was very public.

And so his restoration needs to be very public, too. For one thing, his fellow disciples need to know that the Lord himself has accepted Peter, that he has rehabilitated him into the company of the disciples and reestablished him as an apostle in his service.

And that means that as you find this scene pictured for us here and described for us here, there is a deliberate recreation, if you like, of the previous time when Peter denied the Lord.

That's in the previous part of the passage, which we looked at on the Lord's day. We didn't particularly mention this point, but it does say when they got out in verse 9, unto land they saw a charcoal fire in place.

[ 3 : 11 ] And the circumstances there reminded Peter, surely, of the way he had denied his Lord, standing by a charcoal fire, warming himself. And so you find that the denial that took place then has to be undone, if you like, in a situation that recreates that previous occasion for him.

And all of that comes together for Peter to be reestablished and for Peter to be restored. But it's a restoration of soul and service, we can call it.

And these two things are important in Christ's restoration of Peter. It's not simply a restoration of soul for himself personally in his relationship with the Lord.

Important, yes, that is, of course. He needs to have his own personal relationship, his individual relationship with the Lord, restored, made good, reestablished.

But he's an apostle. Not only that, he's, even without being an apostle, he is a practicing Christian, a follower of Christ, a disciple.

[ 4 : 22 ] So he needs to have his service restored. It's not just for his own personal benefit that Jesus is restoring him. It's also being, he's being restored for the benefit of Christ's kingdom, for the benefit of his church, for the further input that Peter must have publicly into the advance of Christ's kingdom.

So it's restoration of soul and of service. And let's look at three things that arise from the passage for our study this evening. First of all, there is the restoration of soul.

We've called it that. Then there's the restoration to service. And then there's what we can call restoration sequel, because Jesus revealed to him that in the days ahead, especially when he was old, certain things would be true in his life that he would have to prepare himself for.

A restoration of soul, first of all. It's so important for us that we don't just rush into seeing how Jesus spoke to Peter and how Peter replied and all the things that are involved in the questioning. There's something you need to stop and admire, first and foremost, before you actually go into the detail of the passage. And that is the fact that here is Christ, by his grace, persevering in dealing with this fallen disciple.

[ 5 : 46 ] It's one of the beauties of the passage that you see how Jesus does not give up on this man. How Jesus does not dismiss him from his service despite what he's done.

How Jesus pursues this man right through to his grief and right through to the depth of his lapse so that he can actually impress upon Peter that when Jesus saves, he saves, despite all of Satan's attempts to undo that.

That's so precious, isn't it, to yourself, to myself too. As Ian Duncan mentioned in prayer, we have so many things, as we read about Peter, that are mirrored in our own lives, that we find in our own tendencies, that we need in our relationship with Jesus when the restoration of Christ puts us back whenever we have gone astray.

Even if it's not public, we have our private wanderings, we have our private decays, we have our private times of denying the Lord.

And it's then that his pursuing grace becomes so precious. It's then that you realize that even if our love waxes and wanes, his does not.

[ 7 : 23 ] And it carries through in its hold upon his people for their restoration. Psalm 23, of course, where David speaks about the Lord as his shepherd, fits in very well with what Jesus says to Peter here in terms of pastoring the sheep and the lambs.

But you remember there that David is saying one of the precious things he knows about the Lord as his shepherd in verse 2 is, He restores my soul. He restores my soul.

There's an acknowledgement in that, that his soul needs restoring. That he needs at times to be rehabilitated into the service of Christ and the company and the fellowship of God's people.

And there is pursuing grace. Give thanks for it. Give thanks daily for it as I must. Because where would we be without it? Where would we be if Jesus was just like us?

Frail, fallible human beings. If he got fed up of us after a certain number of failures on our part. And said, well I've given you every opportunity and that's as far as I'm going.

[ 8 : 43 ] He does not. His grace perseveres with us. Day after day. And then there's the fact that here is a question of love.

Because really what Peter showed in his denial of the Lord was a failure in his loyalty. A failure in his faithful, loyal following of Christ and being publicly concerned to witness to him as his disciple. Because loyalty is a matter of love. And when he had failed in his loyalty. It's natural, it's logical. As far as Jesus is concerned.

And as far as our relationship with Jesus is concerned. When our loyalty has been brought into question. Then we expect that Christ will focus on our love. When he comes to reestablish us. To restore our souls. It's as if the Lord is saying. I saw your disloyalty. And therefore I must now come to examine this love of yours.

[ 9 : 51 ] And is it real and how real is it? And that's why in a sense he's saying here. Simon. Simon. Simon son of John.

He didn't say to him simply Simon. He didn't call him Kephias. He called him Simon son of John. And that takes Peter back to that great confession that he made at Caesarea Philippi.

Recorded Matthew 16 especially. That famous statement where Peter said. You are the Christ. The son of the living God.

And we have seen and believed. Now he said to him Simon son of Jonah. Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you. But my father who is in heaven.

There was Peter making his great confession. His great confession of faith. His great confession of loyalty to Christ. His confession of acknowledging and publicly owning Christ as his Lord.

[ 10 : 54 ] And now Jesus after Peter's lapse and Peter's failure. He's taking him back in his mind to the moment he made that great confession. And he's saying Peter. What is the meaning of this Kephias?

Is it still in place in your life? Are you still my disciple? Do you still love me? He's examined as to where that fits into his life now.

And despite the fact that it's grace that's dealing with him. That it is indeed the love of the Savior that is taking him aside and examining him.

Despite the fact that this is so full of perseverance and patience. And compassion and kindness on the part of the Lord. We have to remember that grace and divine love probes.

And reaches into our hearts. And exposes to us. The things that are there. Because it's only really as you see. As we see ourselves and our sin and our lapses and our failures.

[ 11 : 58 ] It's only as we see them against the magnificence of that love. That our heart really will be broken over it. And we will come to acknowledge the rightness of God.

And our dependence upon him. And of course he says do you love me? In the first time he asked him Simon son of John. Do you love me more than these?

Now it's difficult to be precise about that. There are three possibilities. And each of them is actually relevant to ourselves. And for all we know maybe that's why John left it as open as this with three possibilities.

It could be that he meant do you love me more than these other disciples love me? Because that's what Jesus remember. That's what Peter had said to Jesus when he forewarned him.

That Satan had desired to have them. That he might sift them as wheat. And Peter said Lord I am ready to go with you to prison and to death. Another occasion he had indicated that whoever would fail.

[ 13 : 01 ] Whoever would not continue following. He would never do that. Now it could be that's what he means. Do you love me more than these love me?

Can you now say Peter with such confidence as you did previously. That you love me more than your fellow disciples. Did they deny me? Of course they all fled.

They all left him. They all went their different ways. But only Peter actually denied him in this way publicly. Maybe that's what he meant. It could be that he meant by this.

Do you love me more than these? Do you love me more than you love these? Do you love me more than you love your fellow disciples? That's possible from the words that Jesus used here.

It could be that that's the interpretation we could give them. And that of course is relevant to ourselves too. Just like the first one is. Do we love Jesus more than these others do?

[ 14 : 00 ] Of course we wouldn't dare to say that would we? But let's turn it this way. Do you love me more than you love these? Do we love as we love the Lord's people?

Do we love them more than we love himself? Do we love them above the love that we show and express to Jesus himself?

The other possibility is do you love me more than these? Remember where they had just been?

They had just been on a fishing expedition. One which first of all was very unfruitful.

Till Jesus changed the whole matter in that miraculous catch of fish. As we saw in the Lord's day.

And it could be that it was Peter of course who had said I am going fishing.

And then he led the others away with him into the fishing expedition. It could be that Jesus is now saying Peter do you love me more than you love these things? Do you love me more than you love your fishing activity?

[ 15 : 00 ] Do you love me more than what you were doing? What these things that have to do with your former employment? Before you became my disciple. There's a challenge to myself too and to yourselves.

Do we love things? Things of ordinary human life. Important though some of them of course are.

Do we love them more than we love him? It's really all pointing to Christ being the supreme object of our love. And that's what he's drawing Peter's mind to.

Whether it's the love of the other disciples. Whether it's his love for the other disciples. Whether it's his love of these things that he was just employed in a few minutes before this.

Peter is being challenged as where all of that fits. In relation to his love for the Lord himself. A restoration of soul.

[ 16 : 00 ] The Lord is going to take him to restore him inwardly. So that the love he has for Christ. Will come to be above his love. For anything else.

And as you read in the book of Acts especially. The remaining accounts of Peter's life. As you read through his letters. The first letter especially. You can see how this man took to heart.

The words that Jesus spoke to him here. The restoration with which Jesus restored him here. You cannot question Peter's loyalty after this. When you read everything there. You cannot question

whether or not he loves Jesus above his fellow disciples.

Or the things of this world. It's obvious that he does. The grace that has never let go of him. Has re-established in his soul. His love for the Lord.

He has been restored and so. And then his restoring. Involves a restoration to service. And it tells us. As you go through the way Jesus questioned him three times.

[17:06] And three times said to him. Feed my sheep or tend my sheep or lambs. It does. Of course again remind us. Of how important. To Christ.

Is the service of his people. How important to Jesus. Was the service that Jesus. That Peter was going to give him. From this point onwards.

And of course. He was an apostle. But we mustn't say. Yes but he was an apostle. I'm not an apostle. Therefore it's not as important. That I serve the Lord. Though I can acknowledge it.

In the way that Peter did. Well why not. This is Jesus. In principle. Saying to us. Your service is important to me. And what he's saying of course is.

That the way that Peter had acted. Had adversely affected that service. His public witness. But also his service of the Lord. Had taken a downturn.

[18:03] And now that has to be put right. And now that has to be re-established. And David has a very similar concern. In Psalm 51. That great psalm.

That prayer of repentance. Over his sin with Bathsheba. Here is David coming to seek restoration. Coming to be re-established again. With God.

And with his fellow believers. And how does he put it? Well in one place he puts it. Lord restore to me. Using that word restore. Restore to me.

The joy of your salvation. He's talking about his own soul. He's lost the joy of his salvation. His sin and his failure and his lapse. Has meant that that has gone virtually from his soul.

He doesn't have in his soul. That lively sense of God's approval. That joy of being in friendship with God.

[19:00] Which backsliding adversely affects. And now he's praying for it to be restored. Restore to me Lord. The joy of your salvation.

Then what's next? Then I will teach sinners your ways. He doesn't just want to be restored in his own soul. For his own personal private benefit.

Important though that is. He wants to be restored personally. So that he can also have a restoration of his witness. And his effectiveness. And his being used as an instrument to tell others of God and what God has done.

And it's the same with Peter. Jesus is not satisfied merely with restoring him in his soul. He has to restore him also to his service.

To being again his confessing active disciple. And that brings out of Peter this threefold confession. Lord you know that I love you.

[20:07] Lord you know that I love you. Lord you know all things. You know that I love you. The confession needed to be made.

Prior to Jesus restoring him. Or as part of Jesus restoring him. And it's so with ourselves as well. We cannot come back into the usefulness that God is requiring of us.

Even if this is just an inward lapse on our own part. That's never been known but between ourselves and God. We have to come in response to God's examination.

To confess anew our loyalty to him. And to confess anew that not only have we sinned. But we confess.

Lord yes I do love you. I've done wrong. I've gone astray. But I do love you.

[21:09] And Peter of course was grieved. That he said to him these three times. I think it means not that he was grieved. Because he said to him the third time.

Using a slightly different word to the word love. In the previous context. What is grieving to Peter. It seems that the Lord asked him three times.

Whether he loved him. The previous twice. He had answered yes you know that I love you. But he still asked him a third time. And to Peter it seems.

That that again just brought out from deep within his soul. The fact that his denial had been threefold. It wasn't just that he denied him once or even twice.

He denied him three times. And the Lord would not leave him alone. As his love actually was brought to the fore. Without bringing out of Peter. This threefold confession.

[ 22 : 06 ] That corresponded to his threefold denial. Because you see. The Lord's restoration. Always corresponds. To what we've done. It never leaves anything out.

It never leaves anything unnoticed. It always corresponds to what we need. And to what the Lord himself is going to do with us. And it's important too that.

We see how Peter relied. On the knowledge of Jesus himself. Isn't it significant that he says these three times. Yes Lord you know that I love you.

And the third time he actually went a bit further. When he said. Lord you know everything. You know that I love you. He relies on the knowledge of Christ himself.

He's happy to leave it to the all knowing mind of the Savior. As if he's saying. Lord it's not just that you know that I love you.

[ 23 : 10 ] It's that you know everything. You know everything I've done. You know everything that's gone before this. You know the reason why it happened. You know everything about how I failed to listen to your warning.

To your forewarning. How I didn't take in what you were saying to me. About Satan desiring to have me. There's nothing Lord that you don't know.

And that's where I find my refuge is saying. You know all things. You know that I love you. What a great step that is.

It doesn't matter what his fellow disciples think anymore. In that sense. That's not what Peter is looking to. It's not human opinion.

It's not the opinion of the world. It's not even his own opinion. What Peter is appealing to. It's not the opinion. It's not the opinion. It's not the opinion. It's the knowledge of his Savior. And he's resting in the fact.

[ 24 : 10 ] That Jesus knows it all. And so must you and I. When the world. Or Satan. Or whoever. Comes to insinuate that you don't love the Lord.

It's enough for you. That you can say. Though your love is not as perfect as you'd like. Yet it's real. And you can go to your Lord and say.

Lord. You know all things. You know. That I do love you. That I wouldn't have anyone else.

In your place. It's a restoration. To service. Involving that. But also involving. Christ's own. Dictation to him.

Of what he must now do. And you see how he says three times here. In response to each of. The confessions. That Peter made to Jesus. Feed my lambs. He says first.

[ 25 : 09 ] Then tend my sheep. And then thirdly. Feed my sheep. And it really has to do. Without being. Too concerned. To look at any distinction.

Between feeding or tending. Or lambs and sheep. It means that. Peter is being reminded. That his responsibilities. Are to the flock of God.

To the church of God. To those people. Over which. God himself. Has made him. An overseer. An elder.

A bishop. A pastor. A carer. All these words. Just reminding. As of. What. Peter's.

Responsibilities. And privileges. Are. As indeed. All. Who are. Pastors. In the church of God. Well he's saying. You have to tend my sheep. You have to feed my sheep. You have to feed my lambs.

[ 26 : 06 ] And Jesus is making a distinction. He's drawing a distinction. The differentiation. Between lambs and sheep. And that's why it's quite right of us.

To do the same ourselves. He's talking about. Those who are young in the faith. Or children. In the church. In distinction from those who are mature.

Those who are adults. Those who are further on in the faith. Even if they're still relatively young.

And what he's saying to him is. You have to pastor them Peter.

And really fits in with. What Jesus himself said earlier. In Luke's gospel. When he revealed to him.

That Satan had desired to have him. But I have prayed for you. That your faith does not fail.

And when you are converted. When you are returned. When you are turned back again.

Strengthen. Your brethren. Tend to my sheep.

[ 27 : 03 ] Look after my sheep. Look after my people. But it's not simply. A responsibility. For a certain few people.

Because the Bible. Makes it clear to us. More than a few times. How we are indeed. Responsible. To look out for.

And to look after each other. It's part of. Love's. Concerns and actions. Isn't it? Because when you accept. Jesus. When you receive him. Into your life. By his grace. When you are enabled. To embrace him. As the catechism puts it. As he is freely offered. In the gospel. He doesn't come on his own. He comes with a family. He comes with a family. Of fellow believers. Who are attached to him. Before you ever received him. And when you are receiving him. By implication. You are receiving them as well.

[ 28 : 01 ] And some of them are very different. To yourself. And to myself. And some of them don't see things. The same way as you see them. And some of them have different outlooks. And different ways of doing things. And different personalities.

But they are still his. They are still sheep. Or lambs. And that is the example he left them. I have given you an example. That you should love one another. As I have loved you. You don't usually find. A true shepherd. Looking after a flock. In such a way. That says well. I don't care for those. So I am just not paying too much attention. To them.

But there is a select few here. That I really want to look after properly. Of course there are selections made. And there are different ways. In which a shepherd relates to sheep.

[ 29 : 02 ] Which. Well. People here will know better than I do. Which have. You might say different personalities as well. But they all make up the one flock. And the shepherd looks to the flock.

In a way that seeks to tend. And to pastor them. As his flock. And that reminds us too. That when. As we are receiving Christ. We receive his people with him. And joined to him. And therefore we are responsible. For each other. To look after each other. To look out for each other. To love one another. That also reminds us of something else. Very important.

I am only just going to pick it up. And refer to it. But it is a huge area in itself. Especially in Paul's writings. And that is the matter of. Our unity in Christ. Unity is meaningless. Without diversity. Unity. It is because people are different. In different ways.

[ 30 : 02 ] That when they are put together. There is a unity. A combination. Harmoniously it should be. Of all these different qualities. And ages. And experiences.

And personalities. Unity. You must always remember. Unity is not. The same as uniformity. Unity. Unity. Uniformity means. Being exactly the same. And that is not what. God's flock is like. We are not all exactly the same. And it is part of. The richness. Of fellowship.

That we are not. And yet. That we are one. In Christ. And one. As a family. And one. It should be. In the way. We value. Other people's gifts. Even if they are very different. To our own. And other people's role. In the church. Even if it is not exactly.

[ 30 : 56 ] Or at all the same. As our role. In the church. What God. What Jesus is really. Reminding Peter of. In a sense. Is. That.

He must accept. The sheep. In the way they are. Different to the lambs. He must accept. The diversity. Within the flock. But. He has this responsibility. Of looking after them all. Of loving them. As Christ's people. And. In a sense. That is where. Luke. 22.

32. Begins. When you are converted. When you are turned round. Strengthen your brethren. Pastor. My people. And when you go through.

As we said. To. First Peter. You can see. How Peter. So. Admirably. Did that. Let me just pick up. A couple of examples. First Peter 1. Verse 22.

[ 31 : 52 ] Where he says. Having purified your souls. By your obedience. To the truth. For a sincere. Brotherly love. Love one another. Earnestly. From a pure heart.

And then of course. When you went. When you go into chapter 5. And where he deals there. With the elders. Specifically. Of the flock. Because. Although we are. Privileged to. Look out for one another.

And to love one another. A specific. Added responsibility. On the elders. Of the church. Including the ministers. Of the church. To pastor the flock.

To feed the flock. To tend to the flock. And that's why Peter here. Using that same language. Says. I exhort. The elders. Among you. As a fellow elder. And witness. Of the sufferings.

Of Christ. Shepherd. The flock. Of God. That is among you. Exercising oversight. Not under compulsion. But willingly.

[ 32 : 46 ] As God would have you. Being examples. To the flock. And so on. He's really using. The language of Jesus. As he restored him. To service. And in his soul.

As he's writing. To the church. And. Putting into practice. What Christ. Actually. Said to him. In his restoration. Now there's the sequel.

As well. We haven't really got much time. To do anything. Other than just refer to it. The sequel. To the restoration. Is when. Jesus said to him. That when he was old.

Others would. Carry him. Where he would not want to go. This he said. To show by what kind of death. He was to glorify. God. God. And.

It seems as if. Peter there is. Or if. Jesus there to Peter. Is really. Saying something like. Well Peter. You didn't listen. The first time. When I told you. What was going to happen.

[ 33 : 42 ] And look what it led to. So I'm going to tell you again. What's going to happen. In the final part. Of your life. So that you can recall.

What happened. The first time. And make sure. It doesn't happen. The second time. And Peter would carry that. With him. Right through. To the end of his days.

With no record. In the Bible. Of Peter's death. That is. What is generally regarded. As fairly accurate. Secular history.

That specifies. That. Peter was. Crucified. Under the reign of. Nero. The reign of Nero. The emperor. In Rome. But that he refused.

To be crucified. In the usual way. Because he didn't think. It worthy to. Be exactly. Like his lord. So he was crucified. In an inverted way.

[ 34 : 40 ] Upside down. And that that was how. Peter died. Now we have no certainty. About that. But we are certain. That Jesus said. This. Is the kind of death.

By which. He was going to glorify God. And it was certainly. Going to be a death. Where. Against what Peter himself. Would have wanted. People were going to carry him.

And bind him. And restrict him. And take him that way. And Jesus is saying. After he had said this. He said to him.

Follow me. Follow me. And then the rest of the chapter. You find. One other point. Just before I conclude. Where Peter turned.

And saw. The disciple whom Jesus loved. Who we take to be John. Following them. And he said. Lord. Who is he. He said. Lord. What about this man.

[ 35 : 34 ] Jesus said to him. If it is my will. That he remains. Until I am. What is that to you. You follow me. The relationship.

Between. An individual. And his or her Lord. Is a very sacred thing. You don't tread on that.

When you love one another. When you look out for each other. When you help each other. When you support each other. You don't interfere. In the wrong kind of way.

In the relationship. Between any individual. And their Lord. It's a sacred thing. Sacred ground. You don't go there. You don't tread there.

You don't interfere with that. But that's where. It's important. That we note what Jesus said. We all have a tendency.

[ 36 : 31 ] To compare ourselves with others. Or at least to compare others with ourselves. Or to inquire about. Well. Why is it that such and such. Has.

This. In their lives. Or this role in the church. And I'm different. Jesus is saying is. That's not your business. I'm in charge of that.

I determine. I dictate. Who goes where. And who does what. In my church. So he's saying to Peter. Don't compare yourself with him.

Don't compare your future. With his future. Don't compare your gifts. With his gifts. Your business. Is to follow me. That's.

Number one. And that's what Peter. Hears. At the conclusion. Of his restoration. And that too. For us. Is so significant.

[ 37 : 32 ] Isn't it? Of course we look out for each other. Of course we love one another. Of course we seek to support each other. But Jesus is saying.

Whatever you see. In other people's lives. Your priority. My priority. Is to follow him. And to follow him.

