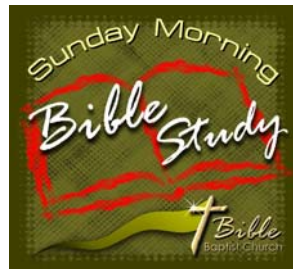




THE LIFE OF PETER

STUDY 4

RESTORATION & REINSTATEMENT



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INTRODUCTION

All Christians have some regret in their lives when they think about times they have let Jesus down. Regret is a powerful tool of the devil. Through the centuries our enemy has immobilized countless wounded soldiers for Christ. The devil knows how powerful the emotion of invalid guilt can be even after seeking forgiveness and reconciliation in our relationships with Christ. But for some Christians, they don't even think Christ wants them back. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Today's study is just one example of how badly our heavenly Father wants to be in a healthy relationship with each of His children. And in addition to that, still has a place of satisfying service for each "fallen soldier."

Today, we will look at Peter's denial of Christ and the impact it had on Peter and the other disciples. And then we will see our Savior doing what He does best, reaching out to the broken hearted and not only restoring the relationship but reinstating Peter to the purpose he was called to in life.

TRUTH

1 ~ CHOICES THAT CAUSE REGRET

Turn to Matthew 26:58-75

But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end. 59 Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; 60 But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, 61 And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. 62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? 63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us

whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. 64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. 65 Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. 66 What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. 67 Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, 68 Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee? 69 Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. 70 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. 71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. 72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. 73 And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. 74 Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. 75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

Peter was warned; we've all been warned. Despite Christ's direct warning to Peter, the bold disciple still denied the One he claimed he would die for. Before we think too harshly of Peter, aren't we all sort of in the same boat? At some point in each of our histories, hasn't somebody warned us about something? And for whatever reason, no matter how self destructive the thing may be, no matter how much pain it will cause loved ones around us, and no matter how completely it will stifle our relationship with Christ, we believe we know better and proceed into the mine field. What is that insanity made up of?

Group Questions

- What causes Christians to break with reality and just start pursuing a path of sin and its consequences? *When a saved person, a Christian, makes a break with practices of their faith it is not a sudden event in their life. It is an indication that their was not much of a functioning relationship between the believer and Christ and when the rules and regulations of church culture became too burdensome, like quitting a diet, the believer quits Christianity.*
- When we break unity with God and begin to make choices independent from Him, what are the consequences? *1. Our relationship with Him becomes non-functional. Communication ends. He still unconditionally loves us but we*

have little sense of it. He can not bless and protect us when we have dethroned Him and are attempting to run our own lives. 2. We hurt those closest to us. 3. We confirm the world philosophy that either there is no God or that if there is, He is completely dis-attached to His creation. We definitely are not attracting people to the Messiah anymore than Peter was by denying Him to others.

- What can Christians do to help protect other Christians from making the same mistakes they made? 1. Share the pain of their story. 2. Pray for struggling brothers and sisters in Christ. 3. Live differently – let their choices today show their commitment to a quality relationship with Christ – not a “back burner” relationship with Him. 4. Once a Christian has shared all they can, they must let God do His work in the other believer’s life. At some point, whether it is our own child or a close friend in Christ, we must let go and let God. (We are deceived if we think we really ever had control of another person in the first place.)
- Why did Christ allow this to take place in Peter’s life? Perhaps it was to bring humility. Perhaps it was an example for others. Maybe it was to show the Christians then and all future Christians that nothing can stop Christ’s love for us – even when Christians don’t reciprocate. Maybe it was to....

2 ~ RESTORATION BRINGS REINSTATEMENT

Turn to John 21:15-17

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Restored Relationship with Christ Brings Reinstatement. Peter publicly denied Christ 3 times. Peter is given 3 opportunities to publicly tell Christ that he does indeed love Jesus. This brought the needed healing to the relationship between Peter and Jesus. The Messiah knew He was not through with Peter by any means. Peter had to understand this, too. And to help Peter get the message, Jesus 3 times instructed Peter to be the “shepherd to the flock” that Christ had always intended him to be. Christ did not only want to mend His and Peter’s relationship, He wanted to reinstate Peter to a position of growing God’s Kingdom.

Group Questions

- What can Christians learn about Jesus from the way He conducted Himself here with Peter? 1. That regardless of how badly we have hurt Christ, He is always willing to restore relationship with us if we are willing. 2. Jesus meets us where we are at – Jesus showed up first and Peter responded by going to meet with Him. 3. Jesus is very fair – He gave Peter an opportunity to state his love for Christ as many times as he had earlier denied Him.
- Do you think Peter thought he was disqualified from serving Christ? It seems he had abandoned the mission that the followers of Christ had been on because he was not preaching and teaching the good news of the Kingdom of God but was fishing.
- How were the other disciples impacted by Peter's self disqualification to serve Christ? Some of them were following his lead.
- What must Christians today be careful of when choosing to "bench" themselves from serving God? Christians today must realize that their choice to be inactive because of past sin confuses other believers and impacts them to follow similar non-participation in growing the Kingdom.
- What truth can Christians learn from Peter's restoration and reinstatement to service? That no matter how great or ugly past sins are, Christ still wants to be in a growing relationship with us and still has a position for us in which to serve and receive fulfillment and satisfaction.
- So once a Christian has restored relationship with Christ, can they just continue on and start serving Christ as if nothing happened? No. Christians must realize that while we are completely forgiven for our sins, God does not erase the consequences here and now of our sinful choices. Time that was lost while serving self can not be replaced. The pain caused to others while serving self is not easily dismissed. The memories and regret of bad choices do not simply disappear once we've restored relationship with Christ. Additionally, sinful pleasures we may have indulged in left an imprint on our brains that we will have to protect ourselves against until we die or the rapture happens.



FISHING

ON THE HANDOUT

1. Christians can spare themselves the **pain** of regret if they will pay attention to the **warnings** God has for us in the Bible.
2. Christians must try to remember **before** rebelling that there are always **consequences** to our sinful choices that may be difficult to live through.
3. Christians must remember that God's **care** for us is too great for Him not to permit whatever is necessary to keep us **humble** and **close** to Him.
4. Christians must be prepared to **respond** to Christ when He **reaches** out to us to restore our damaged relationship with Him.
5. While Christians may be **disqualified** from serving Christ in some positions, God will always have some place of service to Him that will offer **fulfillment** and **satisfaction** in our lives.

THE CATCH

PETER LEARNED THAT ALONG WITH A RESTORED RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST COMES REINSTATEMENT TO A SATISFYING MISSION OF BUILDING GOD'S KINGDOM.

1. Do I need to restore my relationship with Christ? *Y N*
2. Have I been responding to His attempts to be close to me? Explain.
3. Do I feel like I can't serve Him because of something in my past? Give details.

4. What can I learn about dealing with paralyzing guilt from the way Paul learned to deal with his past? *For Paul's past actions see **Acts 9:1-2, 13-14.** For Paul's present mindset to serve Christ see **Philippians 3:13-14.***

5. What decision can I make this day to improve the quality of my relationship with Christ and my service to Him?

REMEMBER

CHRISTIANS MUST LEARN THAT ALONG WITH A RESTORED RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST COMES REINSTATEMENT TO A SATISFYING MISSION OF BUILDING GOD'S KINGDOM.