

# John 18:15-18 - The Fall and Restoration of Peter

Saturday, March 24, 2012

9:09 PM

## Introduction

### Passages to Read

1. Psalm 51
2. I John 1

### a. Sermon Introduction

- i. If any of you are like me, the words of I John 1:9 have often been a comfort to me
  - 1) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
  - 2) It is not a 'few times' that I have found myself in sin and needing repentance and restoration
- ii. Repentance and an attitude of repentance is emphatically commanded in the New Testament
  - 1) But, practically, what does this mean? How do we repent?
  - 2) Our passage this morning uses a very real story to demonstrate the true nature of sin, repentance and restoration

### b. Passage Introduction

- i. The records of Peter's proclamation and his subsequent denials appear in all four gospels
- ii. We are focusing on John, but we will look briefly at Matthew, Mark and Luke as well
  - 1) Matthew 26:30-35, 69-75
  - 2) Mark 14:26-31, 66-72
  - 3) Luke 22:31-24, 54-62
- iii. John records Peter's proclamation and his subsequent denials as well, but he includes one more part of the story, Peter's restoration

### c. Passage

- i. John 13:36-38 (Peter's Statement)
- ii. John 18:15-18, 25-27 (Peter's Denials)
- iii. John 21:15-19 (Peter's Restoration)

### d. Proposition and Outline

- i. **Proposition** - Peter's fall and restoration is recorded to give us a practical example of sin, repentance and restoration and it sandwiches the cross to show the necessity of the cross to restoration.
- ii. **Outline**
  - 1) Matthew, Mark and Luke
    - a) Pride goes before a fall
    - b) The devil is a real adversary
  - 2) John
    - a) Repentance and restoration
    - b) Following Christ

## I. Pride goes before a fall (Matthew's and Mark's accounts)

**[4 verses below]**

**a. Matthew 26:30-35**

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." Peter answered him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away. Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same.

**b. Matthew and Mark seem to focus on Peter's excessively strong affirmations**

- i. Mark 14:31 - But he said *emphatically*
- ii. Matthew 26:33 - Though they all fall away from you, I will never fall away

**c. Matthew and Mark seem to focus on what the problem was, and the problem was pride**

- i. Peter thought more of himself than he should have, he did not understand his own weaknesses
- ii. Peter even thought that he was better than all of the other disciples
- iii. **Proverbs 16:18** - Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

**d. Application**

- i. **I Corinthians 10:12** - Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.
- ii. **Romans 12:3** - For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.
- iii. Pride is a dangerous enemy, we must consider ourselves with right judgment, understanding our weaknesses
  - 1) If anyone had reason for pride, it was probably Peter
    - a) He was the 'head' disciple
    - b) He was the one who proclaimed Jesus as the Christ
    - c) He was the one Christ said he would build His church on
  - 2) Despite all of this, Peter should not have grown overconfident with pride
    - a) If Peter should not be overconfident, how much more should we not be overconfident
    - b) I think we are tempted, when reading about Peter's denials, to focus on Peter's failing
      - i) We see how the story is going to end up and we can't believe Peter did something so dumb
    - c) This is a really dangerous attitude to have, though
      - i) When we have this attitude about this passage, we are falling exactly into the same error Peter did - prideful confidence
      - ii) Instead, when we read this passage, we should say, "Peter, I can empathize with you, because I am weak in that same way."
      - iii) We should not see Peter as the one who fell, we should see ourselves as the one who could easily fall in the same way
    - d) So, we should have an attitude of humility and be in prayer, because we have judged our weaknesses rightly
      - i) **Matthew 6:13** - And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

**II. The devil is a real adversary (Luke's account)**

**[5 verses below]**

**a. Luke 22:31-34**

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."

**b. Luke introduces something new that Matthew and Mark leave out, Christ's initial statement**

- i. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."
- ii. While Matthew and Mark focused on Peter's sin, Luke focuses on the spiritual realities happening behind the situation
  - 1) The spiritual reality of the devil's enmity with Christ's people
  - 2) The spiritual reality of Christ's intercession for His people

**c. The devil is a real adversary that wants to destroy Christ's people**

- i. **Ephesians 4:26-27** - Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.
- ii. **Ephesians 6:11-12** - Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
- iii. **James 4:7** - Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
- iv. **I Peter 5:8** - Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.
- v. **Revelation 12:9, 12** - And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world---he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him...Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"

**d. So, we must neither underestimate or overestimate the Devil's power**

- i. Since the devil is a real adversary of the people of God, we must not discount him or underestimate him, instead we must resist him
  - 1) But we don't resist him by some mystical technique
  - 2) Instead, we:
    - a) Are sober-minded and watchful
    - b) Submit ourselves to God, and stand firm in faith
    - c) Put on the armor of God (salvation, faith, truth, gospel, Word of God)
    - d) Keep our emotions in control
- ii. But we must not overestimate the devil's power
  - 1) He has already been defeated - he knows his time is short (Revelation 12:9, 12)
  - 2) His action is not mystical power, but worldly power
    - a) Ephesians 6 - we might mistake the devil's work for striving against flesh and blood
    - b) I Peter 5 - the devil's work is the persecutions Christians suffer throughout the world
    - c) Ephesians 4 - the devil's power is only powerful because of our sinful nature

**e. Application - Christ's prayer is effective to overcome Satan**

- i. This is Luke's second spiritual reality - Christ intercedes for Peter

- ii. This is an incredible truth
  - 1) It should give us hope
    - a) We see in John 21, that Christ's prayer is effective, Peter's faith is not finally overthrown
    - b) But we also see in the story, that this is not Peter's doing, but Christ's
    - c) Christ will protect His own
      - i) John 10:28-29 - I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.<sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one."
  - 2) It should give us endurance
    - a) This is related to giving us hope - since we have hope that Christ will rescue us, we should endure under temptation and persecution
    - b) I Corinthians 10:13 - 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 the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.
  - 3) It should keep us humble
    - a) It is Christ power and efficacy, not ours, that ultimately overcomes our adversary

**f. Application - We overcome by the blood of Christ, the word of our testimony, and not loving our lives even to death**

- i. Revelation 12:9-12 - And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world---he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"
- ii. By the blood of Christ\*
  - 1) Our resistance to the devil must be rooted in Christ's sacrifice
  - 2) The devil is primarily an accuser (I Peter 5, Revelation 12), so to overcome him, we plead the blood and the merit of Christ
  - 3) Only by understanding and living in our justification in Christ will we overcome the devil
- iii. By the word of our testimony\*
  - 1) The blood of Christ is the ultimate defeat of Satan, but in this world, the offensive defeat of Satan is by the preaching of the gospel
  - 2) Christ chooses that the 'foolishness of what is preached' to defeat Satan
  - 3) The preaching of the gospel (and the corresponding living out of the gospel) is used by Christ to spread His kingdom which is the temporal defeat of Satan on this earth
- iv. By not loving our lives even to death\*
  - 1) We see in I Peter 5 and probably Ephesians 4 that a major play of the devil is persecution
  - 2) By not loving our lives, even to death, we remove the power of the devil
  - 3) But, again, this is rooted in Christ, we do not love our lives because we love Christ

\*Thanks to D.A. Carson and his book Scandalous, which has an excellent chapter on Revelation 12, which I borrowed significantly from

### III. Introduction to John's account

- a. Coming to John's account, I want to ask what is different about John's account, why did he include it?**
- i. John was the last writer and probably had access to the other three gospels
    - 1) John did not include much overlapping information with the synoptics, he wanted to add to the story of Christ's life and teaching
    - 2) But, the story of Peter's denial is one of the few stories found in all four gospels
  - ii. I think we can see the reasons he included it in the differences he includes in his story
    - 1) There are two differences in the account of Peter's statements at the last supper
      - a) Peter asks, "Lord, why can I not follow you?"
      - b) Christ responds, "Will you lay down your life for me?"
    - 2) The denials are virtually the same
    - 3) The account of the restoration only appears in John
      - a) We can relate two parts of the account back to the two differences in the account of Peter's statements
        - i) Christ predicts Peter's death in service to Himself, answering His earlier question, "Will you lay down your life for me?"
        - ii) Christ commands Peter to follow Him, closing Peter's earlier question, "Lord, why can I not follow you?"
      - b) The third part of the account - the actual restoration, does not correspond to anything in the first part of John's account
        - i) But it does correspond to Luke's account
        - ii) In Luke's account, Christ predicts Peter's turn
        - iii) In Luke's account, Christ also says, that after Peter turns, he should strengthen his brothers
- b. So, we are going to look at two aspects of what John is trying to communicate here**
- i. First we'll look at what Luke and John focus on - the restoration of Peter
  - ii. Second, we'll look at

#### IV. Repentance and Restoration (Luke's and John's accounts)

[1 verse below]

- a. John 21:15-19**
- b. In John, we see an intimate conversation between Christ and Peter**
- i. I call this little section, repentance and restoration
  - ii. We see three rounds between Christ and Peter
  - iii. We will look at these rounds and see an example of what repentance and restoration must look like
- c. Application - Repentance and restoration should be founded in love for Christ**
- i. Three times Christ asks, "Do you love me?" and three times Peter answers, "Lord you know that I love you."
  - ii. Christ, when restoring Peter really only focuses on one thing - does Peter love Him?
    - 1) Theoretically, there are many reasons we might want to turn from sin
      - a) Fear of punishment
      - b) Desire for reward
      - c) Etc.
    - 2) Each of these is good, in its own right, but foundationally, we must turn from sin because we love Christ
      - a) We repent and turn to Christ because our love of Christ overcomes our love for sin
      - b) It is what Thomas Chalmers calls 'The expulsive power of a new affection'
      - c) So, repentance and restoration must be founded in love for Christ
- d. Application - Repentance and restoration should cause the display of Christ's glory**
- i. After each time Christ asks Peter about his love, Christ then commands Peter to care for His sheep
    - 1) Feed my lambs, Tend my sheep, Feed my sheep

- ii. Luke also hits on this idea in his account when Christ's says, "And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."
- iii. Christ sees the restoration of Peter as having a purpose
  - 1) This purpose was to have Peter shepherd His church
- iv. So, repentance and restoration should cause the restored one to work for the glory of Christ
  - 1) Consider David's words in **Psalm 51:12-13**
  - 2) We ought to remember this, when we repent and are restored, it is not merely for our own benefit, but to display the glory of Christ
  - 3) And we ought to look at how we can display the glory of Christ

**e. Application - Repentance and restoration requires reflection and humility**

- i. Although we can't see it in the English texts, there is an interesting word play going on here between *Agape* and *Phileo*
  - 1) [Read the passage inserting *agape* and *phileo* were appropriate]
- ii. Many commentators say that this word selection is just John's stylistic tendencies and has no real meaning, especially because in Aramaic there is only one word for love
- iii. But, I disagree for two reasons
  - 1) First, the Holy Spirit prompted John to use two different words in this section, so I would hesitate to say it doesn't mean anything
  - 2) But also, Peter, the one who had this conversation, comes to see there is a difference between *Phileo* and *Agape*
    - a) II Peter 1:5-7 - For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection [*phileo*], and brotherly affection [*phileo*] with love [*agape*].
- iv. So, what do we learn from this word play - reflection and humility
  - 1) [Use illustration of walking and running]
  - 2) Peter no longer has the prideful confidence that he exhibited before his denial
  - 3) Instead he has a much more humble view of himself, he is judging himself rightly now and recognizes his weaknesses
- v. So, repentance and restoration requires reflection and humility
  - 1) We must come understanding that it was our weakness that caused us to fall, we must judge ourselves rightly even in repenting

**f. Full restoration is promised to Christ's people**

- i. Christ finishes His discussion with Peter by mentioning Peter's death
  - 1) "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."
- ii. I think Christ mentions Peter's death for one reason - to promise Peter full restoration
  - 1) Consider John 15:13 - Greater love [*agape*] has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.
  - 2) We just finished the interplay of *phileo* and *agape* in Peter's restoration
    - a) It ended with Peter only being able to say that he *phileo(d)* Christ
    - b) Christ turns to Him and says, in effect, yes, you *phileo* me, but I tell you, you will *agape* me, you will even lay down your life for me
- iii. This passage ends with great hope - the repentant one is fully restored by the power and promise of Christ
  - 1) Christ's prayer in Luke 22 does not fail in any sense, Christ upholds Peter to the end, until Peter truly *agape(s)* Christ
  - 2) Christ prays this prayer for every believer, in John 17:15 - I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.
  - 3) This prayer will be effective for every true believer as well, and full restoration is promised to the repentant one

**V. Our following Christ must be founded in Christ's sacrifice**

- a. In John 13, Peter asks, "Lord, why can I not follow you now?"

- i. Dan dealt with this question to some degree when he went through the Coming and Going of Christ
  - ii. But it bears repeating again, because in John 21, we see the question repeated, Christ tells Peter, "Follow me."
  - iii. We see a similar reflection between Christ's question in John 13, "Will you lay down your life for me?" and Christ's statement in John 21 predicting Peter's death
- b. Why could Peter not follow Christ or lay down his life in John 13?**
- i. I think the answer has to be John 19 and 20 - the crucifixion and resurrection
  - ii. Peter could not follow Christ because Peter had no basis for following Christ
- c. Why can Peter now follow Christ in John 21?**
- i. Again, John 19 and 20 - the crucifixion and resurrection
  - ii. The work that accomplishes justification is finished and now Peter has a basis for following Christ
- d. So, our following Christ cannot be on our own power or merit**
- i. The Cross must be the center of both our orthodoxy and our orthopraxy
  - ii. It's what we said earlier, we overcome the adversary by the blood of Christ
  - iii. Again, it's what we said earlier, our walk cannot be marked by prideful confidence - our only confidence should be in Christ
- e. We must follow Christ based on Christ sacrifice**
- i. We must find our acceptance in Christ's sacrifice
  - ii. We must find our power in Christ's sacrifice
  - iii. We must find our confidence, our assurance in Christ's sacrifice

## Conclusion

- a. Peter's fall and restoration is recorded to give us a practical example of sin, repentance and restoration and it sandwiches the cross to show the necessity of the cross to restoration.
- b. Practical examples
  - i. Prideful confidence is destructive to a Christian, instead we should think of ourselves rightly
  - ii. Our adversary the devil is a real and powerful adversary, but we overcome him by the blood of Christ, the word of our testimony and not loving our lives, even to death
  - iii. Repentance and restoration are promised to Christ people, but repentance requires love for Christ, repentance and humility, and a desire to display the glory of Christ
  - iv. Following Christ must be based on the cross of Christ, never our own power