

# Turning Regret to Blessing

by Fred Tomlinson

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*This sermon delves into the theme of regret, exploring how allowing God to work in the depths of our hearts is crucial for spiritual growth. It emphasizes that regret is a universal feeling stemming from past actions or decisions. Through the stories of David, Joseph, Moses, and Peter, it illustrates how God's providence can turn regretful situations into opportunities for redemption and restoration. The sermon concludes with a message of God's unconditional love, forgiveness, and the power to cleanse our hearts from guilt and shame, inviting listeners to embrace His healing and move forward in freedom.*

**Duration:** 56:26

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 26:21, Psalm 139:23, Matthew 26:75, John 21:15, Hebrews 9:14, Jonah 3:1

**Topics:** "Regret", "Redemption and Restoration"

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## Description

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## Transcript

For an opening text, maybe you'd like to turn with me. I'm turning into the first book of Samuel, for just a word, 1st Samuel and chapter 26. As is very, very obvious, there's a whole lot that leads up to this one verse that I'm reading.

David has once again preserved the soul of Saul, and Saul responds to David in verse 21. Then Saul said, I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will not harm you again, because my life was precious in your sight this day.

Behold, I have played the fool, and have committed a serious error. I have played the fool, and have committed a serious error. Pretty strong statement.

I'd like to talk to you this morning a little on the subject of regret. Maybe an unlikely topic at first sight. It's certainly not my intention to try and play the part of a psychiatrist, but I want to, if God will help me, share some things with you which may still the storm that rages in some of your hearts.

I believe that unless we allow the Lord to deal with us in our hearts, in the very core of our being, not just in our heads, he does deal with us in our heads and in our thoughts, of course he does, but unless we allow him to plumb the depths of our hearts, and deal with us there, and deal with the issues of the heart, every other attempt to mend human behavior can only ever be a kind of band-aid, maybe done with best intentions, but we recognize that everything springs from the heart. We have Jesus who taught us that, and it's taught elsewhere in scripture, of course, as you know, but out of the heart are the issues of life. We thank God that the gospel is God's vehicle, God's means, God's ability to speak to men and women at that deepest of all levels, within our inward being, and meet the needs that exist there, and change us so radically that God himself would use the language through the prophet of actually changing our heart and replacing it with another heart, a new heart, and so on.

But unless we allow God to deal with us along this line of regret, our spiritual progress will be hindered, and will be stunted in any potential growth or development, spiritually speaking. Regret is a subject and a condition from which none of us are exempt. Regret is a feeling of distress about something we wish could be or could have been different.

And the only synonym, I've not looked for anywhere to find a synonym for this, but my own personal synonym for regret would be two words, if only. If only. If only I'd known then what I know today.

If only I'd known then what I know today. But the fact of the matter is, none of us did know then what we know today. And none of us feel today, or felt then, perhaps I should say, what we may feel today.

None of us understood then what we may understand today. And there's not one iota of what was then that any one of us can change. It just can't be done.

What has been, has been. That's not, you know, Sheila doesn't like the way the word is used today, whatever, because that's a careless remark, isn't it? But we're not looking at these things from a careless point of view, we're looking at these things in a very factual, honest way. And there's not one of us that has lived for any period of time without facing some situation or other, and probably myriads of them over the years, where later on we look back with some kind or some degree of regret.

And how many times have we thought, how many times have I thought, I wish I could relive that moment, I wish I could redo that particular thing. But we only ever get one shot at life, don't we? There's no replays. And we can't change history at all.

These are just simply facts. But these feelings of regret can basically spring out of virtually each and every circumstance and event of life. It could be any one thing, and it will be one thing today in one person's life, it might be another in someone else, and that's very likely.

Sometimes, of course, regret can be trivialised, it's just a trivial thing. I mean, for those of us who have need to keep an eye on our weight, and I'm certainly one of them, you know, it was a little bit awkward last night, to be honest with you, because we were out at a meal, and of course there was some birthday cake that was provided, and I thought about the diet that I'm trying to keep to, and I looked at the cake. In fact, I was looking at it about 15 or 20 minutes earlier, when it was brought into the room, and it was on the table at the back.

And so I had a little while to deal with this, but what I didn't expect was that the dear pastor, former pastor of Stephen, of Sean, sorry, and his wife were sitting right opposite to us. And frankly, I wouldn't have

thought they needed to worry about their weight at all. But the cake was brought to them and they refused it.

And then what was I going to do? Anyway, it was very nice. Maybe that's all I need to say. But, you know, there's, you know, things like that, that we may do, you know, you're with some friends, and some of the friends decide that, you know, wouldn't it be nice to go to Dairy Queen? You know, you remember what blizzards used to taste like.

And, you know, maybe you regret it afterwards. But of course, life is far more serious than that. That's at a very trivial end of things that we could think about.

There are far more serious things that take place, issues of life and death, for example. And I mean, over these many years that I've had opportunity to talk with people, and used to do it probably more years ago than I do these days, where people would open their hearts about their lives. And I've heard people share all kinds of things, sometimes with great sadness, great sorrow, because of something that is plaguing their lives, that they regret deeply.

Someone who terminated the life of a child, an infant in their womb, something that can never be changed, but it was done at a particular point in time, or things that were said to someone who has now passed on into eternity, and we wish that they'd not been said, or on the other hand, we wish that we had said what we perhaps felt we should have said at that time, and so on. Serious things, serious choices that we've made, serious decisions that we've made in life, thinking about some of our priorities that we had lived by, that we look back upon with regret, and wish that was not true anymore. I shouldn't do this, but just as I'm saying that, I'm thinking I should just share something with you, to illustrate what I'm saying, but I don't want to trivialize anything.

But this wasn't a trivial moment. I can remember sitting around the table in the Fellowship House in Stouffville many, many years ago, and our children were young, and we were having our meal together, and at a certain point I said to the children, I said, I've got something, you know, pretty serious I need to say to you. And so they're all very attentive, of course, and I said that mom and I feel that, oh, sorry, so I did a bit of an extra build-up to this.

Obviously I overdid it, you know, that this was something heavy, something, I can't remember the words I used then, but what I'll never forget as long as I live, was the youngest of my boys, who happens to be in the room this morning, who said in a very plaintive tone, are you not going to be our daddy anymore? And so when I shared, didn't faze them at all, I was telling them that we were going to get rid of the television that we'd been having for a little while. But priorities that we set, we look back on, whatever they may be, that we wish we had not set for our lives or, and so on. But we can't change what's past.

And because the list is endless, we could talk about all kinds of things that fall into this category. What I do know is that when people have regrets going on in their hearts and in their lives, perhaps I'll rephrase that, when we have, we're using our minds and we're reflecting on memories, let's put it this way, then of course we find many memories which are so rich and we remember God's graciousness to us and the way he's blessed us, blessed us in our own lives, blessed us in our families, blessed us in our ministries and whatever, and so on. And these are wonderful things to reflect upon.

But we know when we go down that road, it's very easy to cross a line somewhere and we're reminded at that time of other things that somewhere were part of those historical moments in our lives. And as we

focus on those memories, these indelible memories in our minds, we expose ourselves to a bitter regret because those things are there also. Excuse me, I don't know what's wrong with my voice this morning.

It's all this singing. Maybe that's it. But since history can't be rewritten, when we focus our attention on the things which are deeply disturbing in our past that we wish could have been different, the if-only issues, we expose ourselves at that point to the very enemies of our soul, demonic spirits, and we open ourselves up.

We believe that the enemy is very much alert to us and attentive to us. And frankly, I feel that... Thank you ever so much, Dean. Thank you.

Good man. As we turn our hearts to proceed with the Lord, the enemy is, as it were, on full alert and seeking for any opportunity in which he can take advantage of us and spoil our testimony and bring discouragement, even in more extreme situations, to bring despair. And surely his aim is to destroy us and destroy our faith completely and so on.

And render us in that position of hopelessness, because we can't change these things that we may be focused on or thinking about at that particular time. I have an illustration which will impress certainly a far more serious side to all of this. It's a little poem, actually.

I actually stumbled on it and just looking over some of my own papers just a few days ago. If I had only known. If I had only known it was the last walk in the rain.

I don't like walking in the rain. Sheila does. If I only knew it was the last walk in the rain, I'd keep you out for hours in the storm.

I'm not very good at these things, as you can tell. I would hold your hand like a lifeline to my heart. Underneath the thunder we would be warm.

If I had only known it was our last walk in the rain. If I had only known I'd never hear your voice again. I'd memorize everything you ever said.

On those lonely nights I could think of them once more. Keep your words alive inside my head. If I'd only known I would never hear your voice again.

These kinds of challenges are not unique to any one of us. We can all respond. Whether you've been in exactly that situation or not is not really the point.

We're talking about issues that are part of being human beings and living our lives out in this world in which we are planted. Things happen and we do make choices. We do make decisions.

All kinds of things are said and not said. It's just life. That's the way it is.

Our mind has this ability to highlight them at appropriate times. The enemy at that point comes in in his own way. These issues are not unique to unbelievers.

What I'm talking about now, I'm talking to people who are believers. I'm sure that these things are not unique. They're just part of the human condition, I think, and so on.

But for the Christian man or the Christian woman, harboring thoughts of regret raises the stakes a lot higher. Let me explain what I mean. Since the root of our regrets is really a preoccupation with ourselves and it focuses on our human understanding, our human wisdom, it highlights issues that may be our busyness of life and so on.

There are many things that can be said because the topic is broad and so on. But for the Christian, as we go down that road, there's like a parallel road that's running alongside those thoughts that would not be there for the unbeliever. Because these very thoughts, should we focus upon them and entertain them, they're really highlighting the fact that somewhere on our journey of life as a Christian believer, we've been careless.

Careless about the things of God. Careless about our union, our closeness with him. Careless about we've been insensitive to his speaking to us.

Maybe even going a step further, they would speak to us about our disobedience at times. In other words, we've treated lightly these great and huge spiritual and biblical principles of the preciousness of the gift of the Holy Spirit of God, who has been imparted to the believing heart to become resident within us. Concerning him, the person of the Holy Spirit, Jesus has said, when he comes, he will teach you everything.

He will guide you into all righteousness. In other words, the Holy Spirit is given to us, and we can think of a variety of answers and other items to include in this, but he's been given to us as our inward teacher, to inwardly teach us the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and his precious life, and to guide us and steer our lives. As someone said in my hearing decades and decades ago now, that God is a speaking God.

He is a speaking God. He's not dormant. He's not intending to be silent within us, but he comes to us to commune with us and to make the will of God known to us and to lead us and instruct us and sharpen our very consciences so that our inward being is so engaged with him, we're in tune with him.

So to harbour and feed our minds on things that bring this sense of regret and the bondage that can so quickly follow those thoughts is clearly to indicate that we've not been walking before God and in fellowship with him as we ought to have been. And for that reason, we can look back and say, I wish I had not done so or I had not made that change or whatever the issue had been, but deep in our hearts we're thinking, I should have paid more attention. Surely the Lord would have helped me and if I'd been more sensitive to his heart, perhaps I was so self-willed, I was so sure that what I was doing was the right thing, I didn't really pause to seek the face of God for his leading and his direction.

And as a result, make some terrible blunders that we will look back on with great regret. And here's an added tragedy to all of these things that I'm talking about. Almost always, these bad decisions, these things that we now regret have actually impacted far more lives than just our own.

Perhaps we will never fully know how many lives have been impacted by our own bad decisions, our own carelessness and the lack of sensitivity to God's voice speaking in our hearts, which inevitably would be translated into insensitivity to other people around us and so on. And it could be that while I'm speaking this morning, there are those who are able to hear me, even with my strange voice this morning, who are living with the pain of some if-only's right now. If only I had been there at that moment, if only I could have said such and such, if only I could, and so on and so on.

But apart from indicating the fact that maybe we've not been as close to the Lord as we really ought to be, have been rather, we inevitably give room to the enemy to take advantage. And I think the next kind of thought that would come to the minds of most sincere believers is that temptation to believe that you are disqualified from being a person who can discover fully the blessing and anointing of God in your life. Perhaps some would feel disqualified from ministry because of things that the enemy now is working on that we have allowed to continue and so on.

So this is incredibly important. In the light of all these things, our minds go back to scripture. And one thing about the Bible is it's replete with so many stories of so many people who are real people, who are facing in one shape or another the very same things that each and every one of us face.

My mind very naturally gravitates back to someone that we thought about a few weeks ago when we were together from scripture, and that was Joseph, do you remember? I remember talking about him in the hearing of some of you anyway. This 17-year-old, we know he was 17 because the Bible tells us that at this particular moment in his journey, he was 17, he was a dreamer. He had this remarkable gift, it seemed, to have these dreams with great significance in them.

But the thing, that's not a strike against him at all. It may have very well been a clear gift from God, his own father, who was sort of very shocked to hear what Joseph was saying to him about a particular dream. You will remember, I hope.

But nevertheless, when Joseph had left his presence, the scripture says, Joseph thought on these things. In other words, he sensed there was something in this that was quite remarkable, even though at first sight it seemed so reckless and foolish. But I think the thing that was really wrong for Joseph at that time was his attitude.

Attitude is so important, isn't it? We went to a shoe store, which I probably shouldn't name, earlier this week, and generally speaking, we don't wear masks outside. Maybe we should do, but there you are. And so we were stopped at the door by a lady.

I'm giving the credit when I say that. And of course, she told us that we need masks, but she said it in a particular way. And so I had one, which I could put on, but Sheila didn't have one.

And so she said, well, you know, Sergeant Major, I said, you're going to make my wife stand out in the rain when I come in. And I'm glad that the Lord didn't let me say other things that could have come to my mind at that point. But what we were talking about afterwards was there was nothing wrong with what she said.

She was doing what her superiors would have told her to do. It was her attitude. It's attitude that's everything.

And for Joseph, there may have been nothing wrong at all with what he was sharing with his family, but his attitude was wrong. Clearly it was wrong because it stirred up this profound hostility from his brethren, from his brothers, and so on. And the result of that set in motion a series of events that were completely beyond his control.

And we remember the story. I'm sure I don't need to tell you again, but he was forcibly dispatched into a foreign land, a couple of hundred miles away. And for 13 years, he seemed to pass through all of these random circumstances, some of which are listed clearly in the Scriptures.

And one of these included spending two years in a prison cell and so on. And the Bible doesn't actually give us any information that would say, and Joseph was filled with regret. In fact, the word regret doesn't appear in the Bible, certainly not in the King James at least.

But the fact is, surely he did think along those lines. Surely there would have been times when he would have looked back and said, if only, if only I had not acted the way I did, or been so cocky and arrogant as I was back then with my brothers. In other words, whatever it was, and I think it was along these lines that I'm mentioning, that he himself set a course for his own life.

And then all these things happened to him as he was separated from his family. But here's the important thing. We believe that nothing is random with God.

Nothing is random with God. And so that would immediately inform us that, well then, for God's people who are paying attention to him, who are sensitive to him, who are listening to him, and who are obedient to his words, to them nothing will be random, no matter how they may seem to us at the time. Because the God with whom nothing is random is steering the course of our lives.

And we know that for Joseph there came a moment, all the circumstances we're not dealing with right now that led to this, but there came a moment in his life, everything could change now, and it's as though a light came on. I can't tell you at what precise moment, I can only tell you when he expresses the light that had come on. But somewhere, whether it happened little by little, I don't know, but somewhere along the journey, a light came on in his heart and the result of which was a profound statement that he made as he spoke to his brethren, to his brothers, you remember, and he said, you meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.

Amen. In other words, without any question, God used what he regretted for his benefit and blessing and for the blessing of countless other people, as we reflect on that great story. So nothing just happened, everything was serving God's purpose.

Which leads me to think of another man in the Bible and another story, his name was Moses. These are stories that are very familiar to us all, I'm sure you remember that Moses had godly parents and loving parents, certainly, and we recall the unique way in which his life was preserved and we reflect back on the open-heartedness of the princess, Pharaoh's daughter, and as a result of that, he basically is adopted into the family and becomes a virtual grandson to the Pharaoh himself. But I think on the basis of his mother's earlier teaching, and of course, even though he left her in one sense, she was employed to be his nanny.

Those who were employing her were completely unaware of the fact that she was the baby's mother. But in any event, she was there and was able to speak to him and teach him during those early days of his life, and there's no question that she would have taught him that his real kinsfolk, his real people, were not in the opulence of the palace, but they were outside and they were a pathetic, persecuted group of slaves out there being treated so terribly, harshly. And there came a day, so tells the Scripture, that Moses went out of the palace in Byron's and he went out amongst his own people.

And it was there, as you remember, that he actually saw one of the soldiers harming one of his own kinsmen. And Moses acted at that point and he slew the soldier. But he was witnessed doing this, as you know, and the word obviously got back to the palace, and the result of all of that was that Moses fled for his life.

I love the way the writers of the Hebrews tells this story, because he gives an emphasis in Hebrews that we don't find in the account back in Exodus. But in Hebrews we read that Moses made a choice and he chose not to remain in that situation. So that's very interesting, but maybe that's to be looked at in another setting than this morning.

But the fact of the matter is that Moses, as the result of his hasty action, he had to flee. I mean, that's certainly how the account goes in the Old Testament. He had to flee from the palace for his life, and this man who had been raised now into his adult life, had lived with what I've called the opulence of Pharaoh's palace, is now living on the backside of a desert looking after someone else's sheep, and so on.

And no one can ever convince me that Moses didn't reflect on his action back then with some kind of regret. I mean, if you disagree with me that's fine, but frankly that's just how I think it would have happened. And, you know, he had actually 40 years to reflect on his hasty, perhaps even reckless action on that occasion, and so on.

But then one night on the backside of the desert he saw a bush that was burning and was not being consumed. He draws aside to see this strange sight, and a voice spoke out to him and said, Moses, Moses, take off your shoes for the ground upon which you stand is holy. And we remember how that God spoke to Moses, and how God commissioned him for a ministry, a service to God and to his own people, which would occupy this third 40-year period of his life, and so on.

The fact of the matter is that through the processes of all that had taken place, whether it was reckless on his part or not, but nevertheless by that act, and as the result of his fleeing, and as the result of all of this aggravation and discouragement that surely he suffered through those long, long years, God had been preparing him and positioning him, just as we said for Joseph, for the purpose which God had designed him for before the foundations of the world. Nothing was random. God was using what may have been recklessness and what may have appeared to be random, but God was fulfilling his own purposes with him, and he would at that point begin to discover the purpose for which he had been born.

So here we are. We may have decisions that we regret making, and actions we regret taking, and things that we regret saying, and no doubt there have been powers that have been trying to suffocate all hope and any sense of purpose or fruitfulness from our lives, and so on, but I want to tell you what I believe concerning you. I believe that God has not forgotten you.

God has not turned away from you, and he's been divinely monitoring all of these particular circumstances which may have appeared to be very random to you. He's been not only monitoring them, he's been tailoring them to fulfill his purpose and further produce in your heart and in your life the man or the woman of God that he intends you to be in order for you to fulfill the purpose for your life that is not yet finding full expression. Amen.

And there are others, no doubt many others, whom he, God, will be able to reach and bless as the result of you surrendering to him and recognizing that God has been working. This has not been random. It's not been bad luck.

It's not been, it's God has used it for his great purpose, and isn't that a wonderful thing? Let me put just a little sharper point on this by reminding you of yet another person. God isn't saying to you about these things, whatever they are, that well you just need to get over it and get on with your life and so on. There's more to it than that.

Consider the man in the New Testament who was filled with regret, and I have no doubt about this, although the word regret doesn't appear, I am in no doubt about this at all. His name, Peter. Peter.

Nothing had worked out the way he had hoped it would work out. Nothing would come together the way he believed that it would. In fact, quite the opposite.

Everything he had hoped for had fallen apart and was ripping at its seams as he saw Jesus arrested and taken away so brutally and so on. And of course, it seems only minutes earlier, although it was longer than minutes, but only short hours, where Peter had made that great and bold statement, he said, I will lay down my life for your sake. And I believe he meant it, and I don't think any of us would question that at all.

I think I need to just turn to this passage. Would you go with me if you, if the Bible's open? Let's go to Luke's Gospel, I think. And we'll go to the 22nd chapter.

I'll just read a couple of verses. I'm in verse 54. And having arrested him, they led him away and brought him to the house of the high priest, but Peter was following at a distance.

That's too bad. And I think in some of the phrases that we find in this section, they really are worthy of a lot more attention than I'm giving them just now. But when you follow at a distance, you leave yourself exposed for more trouble.

Okay, verse 55. After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them. So he's traveling and following at a distance.

Now he's seated with this group of people who are hostile toward Jesus. And he sits down and warms himself by the fire. And of course, as time goes on, he approached a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, this man was with him too.

But he denied it saying, woman, I do not know him. A little later, another saw him and said, you are one of them too. But Peter said, man, I am not.

After about an hour had passed, another man came to insist saying, certainly this man also was with him, for he is a Galilean too. But Peter said, man, I do not know what you're talking about immediately. While he was still speaking, a rooster crowed.

Just picture this. Here's a man of God, for such he was. God had chosen him.

Jesus had chosen him to be one of his disciples. And God had determined a future for this man, which would be a most remarkable, singularly amazing ministry. But here he is, this man of God, he's allowing himself to follow Jesus as a distance.

He's sitting with worldly people by their fire. He's denying the very presence of God. Of course, we remember what Jesus had said to him only a couple of hours earlier and so on.

But then the rooster crowed. Just think about that for a moment. But we believe that within the context of the providence of God, he causes things to move and happen around us.

And I think this is fascinating, and I was thinking of it last evening, how remarkable that God's attention was on a rooster. Isn't that amazing? And he caused that rooster to crow at a precise moment. I know my voice is croaky this morning, but I wonder if maybe I might be a rooster for someone this morning.

Someone that God is using in a particular way to say something that is really the word of God to your heart, and you're sensing within that God is speaking to you. God used the rooster, but that wasn't the end. That was a providential thing, an act of his providence, but there had to be more than that.

And of course there was, because when Peter heard the rooster, he remembered at that point in time. And at that moment, all orchestrated by God, as Peter was fastening his eyes through what think of opening he had to where Jesus was standing, Jesus turned around. He also had heard the rooster crowing.

And he turns to Peter and looked at him. Just think of the words. Jesus turned and looked at him.

This is the man who's gone horribly wrong to have denied Jesus three times, having been told by Jesus he would do it. And his response was, Lord, no, I will die for you. And he was found out in this moment.

Everything was exposed. His heart was exposed at this moment. And verse 62 reads and he, Peter, went out and wept bitterly.

That tells me he was filled with regret. And in fact, his regret had moved to another level. It was remorse for him at this point in time.

And I think at that moment, demons were laughing at this moment. They were cheering they'd won this victory, it seemed, there in this moment, because the man of Jesus's choice had failed so desperately. The man that Jesus had put so much store in had fallen so horribly and so completely, it seemed.

And I think at that moment, the very demon spirits, I don't know whether you know anything about this in your heart and in your life, but I think it would have seemed to Peter like these demon spirits were like a thousand wild bees swarming around him at that moment. Failure. Catastrophic failure.

And he went out and wept bitterly. That's repentance. He was helpless to repair what had happened.

But his heart, that look of the Lord Jesus at that time was not a look of condemnation. It was a look so loving that it broke his heart. And what could he do? Couldn't change anything.

He just goes to one side and sobs and sobs and sobs. His heart out. Turn over with me into John's Gospel.

Chapter 21. The disciples are on the side of Galilee. Jesus has met them there.

I'm breaking into the story, but let me go to verse 9 of chapter 21. So when they got out onto the land, they saw a charcoal fire. Remember the fire we've just been reading about? They saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it and bread.

Jesus said to them, bring some of the fish which you have now caught. Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land full of large fish, 153 and so on. It goes on.

Jesus said to them in verse 12, come and have breakfast. I like this translation. Just come and have breakfast.

And none of the disciples ventured to question him, who are you? Knowing that it was the Lord. And Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them and the fish likewise. Now this was the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

No sobs of contrition this time. It's amazing. Jesus had looked at him.

His sin was exposed. He breaks down in his heartbroken state. Psalms to God.

No question there was forgiveness flowing at that point to his heart. But he needed something yet more than to know he was forgiven. And Jesus arranged this time.

And as you read the whole chapter, we see how that Peter's very near the center of the story that unfolds here. And that's by design I'm sure of it. But Peter needed to know restoration.

He needed the bond to be restored again. And that's really what we've been looking at in those few verses that I've read to you. And it's all so tender.

In one sense you can read it and it's all matter of fact. You know, this happened, that happened, the other happened and so forth. But it's all so tender when we think that Jesus in love that we know so little about, loves this man with such passion as he loves you with the same passion.

And he saw him. Peter no doubt went out of Jesus' physical sight when he went out to weep bitterly, but Jesus saw him. He knew what was going on.

At the right time he arranges another situation. And there's another fire. It's not the world's fire, but it's a fire that Jesus has established.

And the tenderness of the gathering and the interaction that I'd like to spend more time on, but just the tenderness of what Jesus did as he breaks the bread and gives it. He loves you. Amen.

Jesus never, never said, now about what you did, no mention of his denial. Jesus just wanted to hear Peter say, I love you. And he gave him three opportunities to do that.

And it can't be by chance that he denied the Lord three times and his question plays three times. But I think for Peter, who was sort of challenged by the question, you remember that and how the words put it here. But I think there was something else going on in Peter at this point in time.

I think he was looking at Jesus. He'd been to the cross now. He was raised from the dead now.

He's there with them by his own appointment. And he's dealing with them so kindly and so graciously, feeding them like children. He's asking me, do I love him? But I only feel love like a mighty river flowing from him.

We're so unworthy. Amen. Redemption and restoration still doesn't change history, does it? But what we do know is that as we respond to his great love, that love of God, it drains away from us.

All the bitterness of regret and remorse, because now we're beginning to see that the important thing is where he has brought me to today. And all that right, wrong, whatever is gone. And I'm in his presence and he loves me.

And he's asking me, do I love him at this point? And all of the if-onlys, well, they're meaningless now. They're irrelevant because I'm here today in the context of his wonderful love. And I can see his providential hand in so many of these things along the journey of my life.

But today I sense his healing power, his cleansing power, his blood that is able, we read in Hebrews, able to cleanse even our consciences from all of the guilt and shame. He cleanses our hearts. Amen.

His love restores our souls. He enables us to walk on now into whatever the next step is, free in our hearts of that horrible bondage and torment and the bitterness of regret and remorse and the remembrance of failure. And clean in our hearts, free and clean, washed in the precious blood of Jesus.

I'm reminded of a verse from the Old Testament, and the Lord spoke to Jonah a second time. I wonder if the Lord is speaking to you this morning, as it were a second time, whether he's bringing into focus some things that need to be brought into focus in your life and revealing to you some areas where you need to just allow his love to bathe your heart. One expression came to my mind when I was upstairs this morning.

I thought really what the issue is here in the light of everything, and now arriving at this point in time where I'm in the presence of Jesus and he's handing me with his nail pierced hands, this blood that speaks such volumes to me and he's handing it to me by this fire and the warmth of friendship and fellowship and the love of God. I just want to fall into his breast and say I love you. Will you do that today? Let's pray.

Amen.

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