

Peter's Restoration

by W.F. Anderson

The sermon explores Peter's journey from denial to restoration through Jesus' grace and personal encounters.

Scripture: John 21:1

Topics: "Jesus' Resurrection", "Divine Provision"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Jesus appearing to his disciples after his resurrection. He emphasizes how Jesus provided for his disciples by helping them catch a large number of fish and preparing breakfast for them. The preacher highlights the significance of Jesus' actions in showing his care and provision for his followers. He also mentions the recognition of Jesus by his disciples, emphasizing that they recognized him not by his physical appearance but by his characteristics and nature.

Transcript

Very quickly, the first steps in Peter's respiration as our Lord said that he had prayed for him that his faith would not fail. I want to read from John, chapter 21, beginning with verse 1. It's a rather lengthy section, but it won't hurt us to review what happened. It's a beautiful picture.

So, John, chapter 21, beginning with verse 1. After this, Jesus rebuked himself again to the disciples by the sea of Tiberias, and he rebuked himself in this way. Sam and Peter, Thomas called the twins, the Samuel of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. Sam and Peter said to them, I'm going fishing.

They said to him, we'll go with you. They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Just as day was breaking, Jesus was still on the beach.

Yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, children, have you any fish? They answered him, no. He said to them, cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.

So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in for the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, it's a lord. When Sam and Peter heard that it was a lord, he put on his clothes where he was fit for work.

He sprang into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish. For they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

When they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire there with fish lying on it and bread. Jesus said to them, bring some of the fish that you have just caught. So Sam and Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore full of large fish, 153 of them.

And although there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, come and have breakfast. Now none of the disciples dared ask him, who are you? They knew it was the lord.

Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them. And so was the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Sam and Peter, Sam, son of John, did he love you more than me? He said to him, yes, lord. You know that I love you. He said to him, feed my lambs.

A second time he said to him, son of John, do you love me? He said to him, yes, lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, send my sheep. He said to him the first time, son of John, do you love me? Peter was grieved because he said to him the first time, do you love me? He said to him, lord, you know everything, you know that I love you.

Jesus said to him, feed my sheep. So let's trace this Peter to his service, which occurred in several steps. The first of those he touched on this morning, before he ever fell, before he ever denied the lord three times in the courtyard of the high priest, our lord Jesus had prayed for him that his faith would not fail.

Let me repeat that point tonight. Jesus did not pray that he would not fall, he prayed that his faith would not fail. And the idea of his faith not failing is the very point for which Satan wanted to sift these disciples.

Remember our lord had said in Luke's gospel to those men, Satan has desired of thee as the man that there hath been, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail. And they were put into the sifting sieve of Satan.

And what Satan wanted to do is what he always wants to do with God's people, and that's destroy their confidence in God. And as I trace the work of Satan against Christians, I'm convinced that his work is not primarily in the moral realm. Murder, adultery, theft, all the rest of it, we are perfectly capable of taking care of ourselves and we do a good job of it.

Those things the scriptures say come from the flesh, they come from my own heart. Satan has more important things to do than to incite us to commit murder or anything else. Where he works is in the spiritual realm of our relationship to God, to destroy our confidence in the living God.

That's where he works, and he has all sorts of ways of doing it. Some of you may have felt his pressure as in the case of Job, where God permitted Satan to afflict Job. And the whole idea that Satan was working on was to get Job to curse God, to give up his confidence in God or God.

And Satan destroyed all of Job's wealth, took it all away from him, destroyed his family, and finally destroyed his health. And in those circumstances, Satan was trying to get Job to give up on God. Does it pay to serve God when this happens to you? Satan was hoping Job would say, No, it isn't worth it, and I'm through with God.

And some of you may have felt that attack of Satan, to give up on God because of your circumstances. I think Paul felt the same thing. After the Corinthians, he mentions that thorn in the flesh, as the Robert

Anderson says, is a terrible translation.

You can't imagine Paul talking about a thorn. But of course, when you think of those long, near-eastern thorns, maybe it's something to talk about. But the idea of the word is a stake.

And one of the cruel methods of execution in the Near East, practiced quite a bit by the ancient Assyrians and by other people after them, was to put a sharpened stake in the ground that was pointed end up, and then you just took a live victim, one of the captors of the city, that you were trying to defeat, and you just took that live individual and killed him alive on that stake and watched him rise until he died. And Paul talks about the stake, not a thorn, but a stake. It could be thorn, but I rather think it's the Robert Anderson's idea that Paul felt himself entailed on a stake, and that's what it is.

And in those circumstances, which he called a messenger of Satan. And a messenger delivers a message. And Satan was trying to get a message through to Paul in those circumstances.

And the message would be the same that he was trying to get through to Job. Quit! It's not worth it. After all you've given up for Jesus Christ, after all you've endured for Jesus Christ, this is what you get out of it, like a man entailed on a stake.

Give up. In those same circumstances, God was trying to get a message through to Paul. My grace is sufficient for you.

My strength is made perfect in weakness. And there was Paul in those circumstances listening to two messages. What Satan was trying to do was to get him to give up.

In Peter's case, Satan was using his sin, his denial of the Lord, the terrible shame that went with it, to give up his confidence in Jesus Christ. Then, as I see it in Scripture, what Satan is always trying to do is make us give up our confidence in our Lord Jesus. And in those circumstances, our Lord says to Peter, I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.

That you won't give up. The fact that you have sinned is no reason for thinking Jesus Christ is through with you, or that you ought to be through with him. I'll let you in on a little secret.

If you may not have picked up this week, our Lord Jesus saved sinners. And the only kind of servants our Lord Jesus has are sinners. And if committing sin is a reason to give up on him, or for his giving up on us, then not one of us is going to make it.

But that's the message Satan tries to get through to us. You've blown it. Everything's finished.

It's through. But the first step in Peter's restoration is our Lord's prayer for him. I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.

The second step in Peter's restoration occurred on Resurrection Morning. In fact, early in the morning, when those angels said to the women who came to the tomb, Go tell his disciples, and Peter. Now, why do you think they said, Go tell his disciples, and Peter? Well, put yourself in Peter's shoes.

In the hour of our Lord's deepest need, you have denied three times with oaths and curses. Oh, by the way, let me deliver Peter from the false side. There are some who feel that Peter acted like an immature, angry sailor.

No, oaths and curses do not mean that. They mean something worse than that. Peter was not foul-mouthed that night that he denied the Lord.

He took a solemn oath before God that what he said was true. And that's a whole lot worse than the language that comes out of a drunken sailor's mouth. He took a solemn oath and evoked God's curse on him if he were not going to be true.

I do not know. Now, if you had done that, would you count yourself a disciple of the man you had denied? And when a message came from those angels through the women to the disciples of our Lord Jesus, if you were Peter, would you count yourself as a recipient of that message? You were Peter. And so the Lord made sure that the angels said to those women, Tell my disciples, I am Peter.

Don't leave him out. Now, put yourself in the place of the disciples. Do you know how self-righteous we are and how hard we are on our brothers? Suppose you were one of those that night who hadn't denied the Lord.

You hear the story got round to what Peter had done in the courtyard of the high priest. How would you feel about Peter? Boy, at least he didn't do that. That leaves ten of us, doesn't it? To prevent that, our Lord gets the words to these men.

I need to include Peter. What that must have meant to Peter when the words came back to those women that morning. Tell my disciples, and don't you dare leave out Peter.

How thoughtful our Lord is. How thoughtful. Go tell my disciples and Peter.

I've just spent about eight weeks meeting twice a week with a man from India who was a Hindu. And we've been preparing Hinduism and Christianity. And as we had discussed Hinduism, just in gist as an attempt to remove yourself from the mundane of everyday existence, enjoying yourself without any emotions, whatever, to the great all in all, I can't tell you how refreshing it is to deal with the real God who comes down into the ordinary kitchen that every day lives in.

Go tell my disciples and Peter. In the third step in Peter's restoration, you'll learn in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, when Paul is listing the witnesses to the fact that Jesus Christ was alive, not dead, but that he had been raised from the dead, he appeared also unto Peter. I wish I knew what took place between the two of them when our Lord had that private audience with Peter after his resurrection.

But that was the third step in Peter's restoration. The fourth step is here in John chapter 21, and I want to look at that in some detail. The circumstances we've already read.

Seven of them had gone out fishing. And remember, Peter was a professional fisherman. They had gone out that night, and as they had before, fished all night, hadn't caught a thing.

Now, here they come back to the shore at dawn. In the first place, these men are tired. They went out there fly-casting all night.

And I've watched those fishing trawlers go up and down the coast of Carolina, just offshore. And I've watched those nets go over. But those nets were hauled in by a diesel engine.

When these fishermen threw those nets over, they did it by hand. And when they pulled them in, they pulled them in by hand. And they may have been light enough when they were thrown over the first time

dry, but they came in dripping wet.

And that went on all night, over the side of the boat, hauling in, over the side of the boat, hauling in, over the side of the boat, hauling in, all night long. They were dead tired. Besides which, they were thoroughly disturbed.

They hadn't caught a thing. For me, this was South Carolina years ago. I used to go fishing once in a while with a man who had that for his hobby.

I was almost going to say his vocation rather than his avocation, but it was supposed to be his avocation. I sometimes thought it was his vocation. And, of course, he always came back with loads and reports of what he had caught, except when I went with him.

And no experienced fisherman likes to come back with an empty trail. You should have heard the excuses, the last of which is that I was with him. But anyhow, here are these experienced fishermen.

They've worked all night, and all they've got are wet nets to show for it. And they're coming in to shore empty-handed and thoroughly discouraged. And if you've been out working all night, you sure are hungry, aren't you? Now they're coming in to shore, tired, discouraged, hungry.

And our Lord has business to do with Peter. How are we going to handle it? Well, if one of us weren't handling it, you'd see that boat telling you, Hey Peter, I want to talk to you. Our Lord didn't do anything like that.

Not at all. He knew the conditions Peter was in. And so while they were still out fishing with art, and I don't know how he got the fish or where he got the bread, but he took time to build a fire and let it burn down to a hot coal.

The bread was not going to be smoked bread, and there wasn't going to be smoked fish for breakfast. He took time. Imagine this, this is the resurrected Lord now.

He's talking about being a servant. Here he is in resurrection, carefully building that fire, letting it burn down so there's nothing but hot coals, no smoke, hot coals. And he's got the fish all clean, laid out over the fire, hot bread, and it's all ready for them when they come in.

He's got something else for them. As they're coming into shore, he says, Have you caught anything? What is his mission? If there's anything you don't want to ask the fisherman who's coming back in to hear this, Did you catch anything? He says, Did you catch anything? And they say, No. And they're not sure who this man is on the shore, and they don't know anything about the breakfast waiting for them, but he says to them, Put the net down on the right side of the boat.

And they put it down, and they get a great catch of fish. And John's mind begins to work. Three and a half years before, they had been on this same sea of Galilee, and they had been told to let down the net when they had caught nothing the night before.

And they got such a big catch that it began to swamp the boat. Wait a minute, wait a minute. Do you know who that is on the shore? That's the Lord.

If you read the resurrection accounts, the accounts of the encounters of the disciples of our Lord after his resurrection, there is very often a hesitancy about their identification with him. It's not quite the same as it

was before his death and resurrection. And if you look at the resurrection accounts, there's such tremendous changes in our Lord's whole physical constitution that it must have affected his appearance to some degree.

And they're not so ready with the identification that this is their beloved Jesus, their Lord and Christ. But there were certain characteristics about him of attitudes and actions that never changed. Do you remember the two on the way to Emmaus? They didn't know who he was until he sat down at a table with them and acted as the host.

And I really don't think it was because they saw the nails printed in his hands. He acted as host and he gave thanks and broke the bread. And each of us has a characteristic way of doing things, doesn't he? And I think it's the way he did it and the way that he prayed.

No two of us pray exactly alike unless we're trying to imitate each other. No two of us pray exactly alike. And there was something about the way he did it that suddenly they realized who he was.

And there was something about what our Lord told them to do that clicked in their minds with what had happened three and a half years before when he had called Peter and James and John to be disciples. That's when that miraculous draft first occurred. Here it is again.

There's only one person we've ever known that could do something like that. That's got to be the Lord. Now that tells me something about recognition.

I remember when I began this season several years ago when I went to a certain city in North Carolina to preach and I hadn't been there for 15 years. Maybe more than that. And one thing astonished me was how much those people had aged in 15 years.

Of course, I'm sure they were thinking the same thing. But some people would come up to me after the service and say, You don't know me, do you? And I would look at their face and say, No, I don't. And then they would start to talk or they would give a certain gesture.

Oh yeah, I know who you are. I know who you are. The features had changed in 15 to 20 years.

But not the characteristics of speech and gesture. Not the mannerisms. And I recognized them not by the way they looked, but by the expressions of their personalities.

You ask me will we recognize each other in heaven? Well, as one brother said, I don't expect to be more stupid than I am now. I recognize you now. I expect to recognize you there.

But the recognition of our Lord, I take it, is the same way. It's the characteristics of the nature of the man. And that's how they knew who he was.

It's got to be the Lord. No one else is just like that. It's got to be the Lord.

I shall know him by the prints of the nail on his hand. Oh, indeed. Oh, indeed.

I don't need those to recognize me. Oh, indeed. Have you ever had anybody else that loves you the way he does? Have you ever had anybody else that has done for you what he has done for you? Have you ever had anybody else who is as characteristically forgiving and kind and helpful as he is, and you're going to need nail prints to recognize him? No, you won't.

No, you won't. You're not going to need those. That isn't how they recognize him, and that's not going to be how we recognize him.

Oh, of course you're not going to need that. There's only going to be one man in the center. Of course, I realize that.

But you're not going to need nail prints to know who he is. Now, let me remind you. But Joseph Knapp, what had he done for us? They had been out all night and caught nothing.

Now, what had he done? Given them far more than they would have caught if they had been catching fish all night. They had to bring the nets through the water. If they dropped the boat into the shore, they couldn't get it into the boat.

That's how heavy it was. 153 fish. The only significance I know of the number is that Seth tells me somebody found it.

And they couldn't get that many into the boat, and they just carried it through the water. He rewarded them. He took away that discouragement, that despair, before ever he talked to people.

Hungry? Let's have some breakfast. And while you fellows are eating the first course that I've already prepared, bring some of those fish over and I'll get the second course on. We're going to have seconds.

And that's what he did. While they were eating the first round, he'd already cooked, he was cooking a second round for them. Isn't that characteristic of him? When he said the multitude, what do you mean? They were all filled.

Right? Sure. So he gave them seconds for breakfast. Now, can you think of anything more delightful than being alongside a lakeshore early in the morning and as you come ashore, here is the smell of breakfast cooking.

And all you have to do is sit down there beside that lovely sea with the water laughing at your feet and be served breakfast. And be served by the risen Lord. How would you feel at that point? Huh? You've just caught one of the biggest chances you've ever had in your life.

Your stomach is full with good food. You could eat another bite. You're relaxed.

You're feeling good. Right? Then the Lord says, Now ladies, will you take your family car out and you come back nine at the tender? Or you go down to Gainesville and there's a \$50 hat in the window you just couldn't resist. I know you couldn't resist it, but let's say you did and you couldn't resist it and you come home.

And the old ogre is sitting in the living room waiting for you. You leave that hat box in the trunk of the car locked. And don't you say a word about that vendor.

You come in the house and you fix him a good meal. Now don't fix all his favorite dishes or he's going to get suspicious. But fix him a good meal.

And when he is content and he's sitting back in the easy chair and he's telling you what a wonderful cook you are. Then you tell him you have something you want to talk to him about. That's how to do it.

Sure. Now I know there's going to be some questions tomorrow when you start cooking supper for your husband. But when you're dealing with more serious questions than that, brethren, when a brother has fallen into sin, you're going to restore him.

That's the way the Lord did it. You don't go barging in with the accusation that it's sin. I discovered one thing in my own family, especially with my teenage kids.

When we're blocking horns, the way I solve that is I say to one of them, Hey, let's go have lunch together. And we'll go out and there's not a word about the conflict between us. And we'll sit down and have a good lunch.

It may bust the budget for the week, but we'll sit down and have a good lunch just the two of us. And then when we're satisfied and feeling good, then we get into the car and take a drive and start talking. And that's how our Lord ended it.

How carefully, how graciously, how understandingly he worked with this man. What a savior. What a savior.

He doesn't push him around like an angry bull in a Santa Claus. How carefully he laid the groundwork for this talk with Peter. And then he took Peter off by himself.

Now, I know it doesn't say that, but it's obvious that he did, because after he was through, Peter turned around and saw John following and said, What shall this man do? Now, there's no way John could be following them unless they were walking. And our Lord took Peter away from the rest of the disciples and started to walk along the lakeshore with him. Isn't that a lovely setting to talk to me about restoration of the earth? I can almost see them arm in arm going along the lakeshore.

Just the two of them. Now, that does not mean he is not going to bring up the issues. But in that kind of a setting, you can be forthright and face to face.

Peter, do you love me more than they do? Isn't that what Peter had really said that night in Gethsemane? They all may forsake you. I'll never. I love you more than they do.

Peter, do you love me more than they do? No comparison now. Lord, you know that I love you. Now, I'm not going to play on those two words for a while.

I think sometimes there are too many differences made between them because there are too many passages in the New Testament where they are obviously synonymous. So I'm not going to play on those two words. Three times our Lord questions Peter, do you love me? And lets Peter search his own heart for that threefold denial in the high priest's courtyard.

And at last, Peter can't stand it any longer. Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you.

Do you see the effect of our Lord's prayer that his faith would not fail? Do you hear what Peter is saying? You know everything. And you know that I love you. Oh, I like that.

I like that. Suppose our Lord had seen only the denial. Would he know that Peter loved him? No.

But Peter says, you know everything. You know more than what I did in the courtyard of the high priest. What confidence in the Lord.

He doesn't zero in on our sins to the exclusion of everything else. And I think that's what John means when he writes in that first epistle. If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows all things.

And when we are condemning ourselves, what are we zeroing in on? The sin that we committed. And everything else is blotted out. The only thing we can see is what we've done.

God's vision is never that restricted. He sees all things. And he knows that Peter's denial was the exception, not the rule of Peter's life.

God is not that narrow-minded, nor is his vision that narrow. He sees the whole direction of our life. He knows what our criteria is.

And he understands what Paul is talking about in Romans 7. The evil that I would not, that I do. But God sees that I would not. Deep down in my heart, no Lord, I would never sit against you.

But sometimes I am weak in the conflict and give in. But it's the evil that I would not. And he sees that.

And he sees far more than Peter's denial. And Peter is confident of it. And our Lord's prayer has been answered that his faith fail not.

I know the kind of Savior you are. And I know that you can see past my denial. I know that you can see that I really love you.

Now Peter's restoration is complete. One more step. Each time when our Lord questions Peter, he says, Tend my land or feed my sheep.

Do you see what our Lord is doing? He trusts Peter. The most valuable thing that Jesus Christ has on earth. He's putting him to the care of Peter.

He takes care of my sheep. Would you do that with a man like Peter? Well, you wouldn't if you were the Lord, because he knows all things. What a restoration.

Take care of my sheep. Our Lord trusted him. Now, lastly, I want to see just a little bit of how all this works out.

We don't have time to read much in Peter's first epistle. But I want you to look at some passages. And by the way, perhaps tonight or some other time you would like to read through 1 Peter, which I take to be an old man's reminiscence.

Read through 1 Peter in light of what has happened to him. And let's look at some expressions in 1 Peter chapter 1. And maybe we'll have time just to jump over to chapter 5 and take one or two expressions through. Here's Peter writing in verse 3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the dead. That could be translated to a life of hope. How? By the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Just suppose Jesus Christ had never been raised from the dead. And the last time Peter had ever seen Jesus, the one whom he really loved, was in parlance he was in the palace of the high priest when having denied Jesus three times, now the Lord lifts on him, and that's the last time Peter would ever see him. I

think if I were Peter I'd be in tears.

That gave him a life of hope. The resurrection of Jesus Christ. That risen Christ who led him and restored him, that's the one who filled his life, not with despair but with hope.

Read on, please. He talks about an inheritance in verse 4, which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are kept through age for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Peter, I have prayed for you, that your faith may fail not.

Kept by the power of God through faith. Do you think Peter didn't know what he was writing about? Now, we're going to have to go a little further down. And he talks about the trial of faith in verse 6. Lord, did he know what the trial of faith was? In those long hours when Jesus Christ was still in the tomb, do you think he didn't know what the trial of faith was? Much more precious than that of gold.

Look at verse 8. Without having seen him, we love him. What do you think Peter's response was in those hours when the body of Christ was still in the tomb? Did he love that Savior? After those three and a half years, how could he do anything else? Without having seen him, we love him. And though we do not see him now, we believe in him, and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy.

Where do you get that? The resurrected Christ. Now, there are a number of passages that touch me deeply in this epistle as I think about people. He talks about suffering for Christ's sake.

Having it happy if you are persecuted for Christ's sake. That must have stung him bitterly as he wrote it, as he thought back in his own failure to suffer for Christ that night in the high priest's courtyard. But he writes that.

But I want to come over to chapter 5. Verse 1. For I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as of the power and the glory that is to be revealed, tend the flock of God that is in your charge. Not by constraint, but willingly. Not for shameful gain, but eagerly.

Not just domineering over those, and do you think Peter could ever domineer again? They all, but not I. Do you think he could ever do that again? No. Not just domineering over those in your charge, but being examples for the flock. And when the chief shepherd is manifested, you will obtain the unfading crown of glory.

Verse 6. Humble yourselves, therefore, unto the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you. Do you think after that incident, those incidents of the resurrection, care that Jesus Christ took in reaching this man, that Peter could ever doubt that he cared about him? Or as the paraphrase has it, you are his personal concern.

And Peter could never doubt that. He was the Lord's personal concern. And so are you.

That's right. Lord Jesus, for being such a gentle, yet truthful shepherd, being righteously, yet so graciously, we bless you and praise you tonight. And like Peter, we rejoice because your resurrection has filled our life with hope.

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