

I mentioned last week that chapter 21 largely contains three things: (1) our Savior's third appearance to His disciples (vv1-14), (2) our Savior's restoration of Peter, and (3) our Savior's concluding comments about Peter's death.

Thus, there is a sense in which, this final chapter intends to tie up some loose ends, that otherwise would have been left untied, and at the very heart of these loose ends, is the restoration of Peter.

There are three things within vv15-17—Christ's Question to Peter, Peter's Response to Christ, and Christ's Command to Peter. And thus, I want to examine these three headings, and then summarize this passage with five important lessons.

- I. Christ's Question
- II. Peter's Response
- III. Christ's Command

#### I. Christ's Question

1. Three times Christ asks Peter the same question, v15—"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" v16—"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" v17—"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?"
2. (1) Why did our Savior refer to Peter as Simon? Some have suggested that our Savior used Peter's original name to rebuke him—as if to say, Peter you were acting like the old, pre-converted Simon.
3. But the problem with this is that our Savior often refers to Peter as Simon and Simon-Peter obviously without any intent to rebuke or correct.
4. No—I suggest the simple reason is, our Savior refers to Simon because it was his name—in fact, our Savior never referred to Peter merely as Peter.
5. In fact, if anything, I suggest our Savior uses this term in an affectionate way—"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?"
6. (2) Why did our Savior ask Peter, "Do you love Me more than these?"—v15—"Do you love Me more than these?"
7. By "these" are meant the other disciples—I suggest our Savior is reminding Peter of something he previously said.
8. Matt.26:31—"Then Jesus said to them, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night'...v33 Peter answered and said to Him, 'Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.'"
  9. Peter had early expressed pride and self-confidence—he boasted that he would love Christ more than the others.
  10. Thus, our Savior is here reminding Peter of his earlier boast—He is reminding Peter of what he previously said.
  11. A.W. Pink—"Peter had boasted, 'Though all shall be offended, yet not I.' He not only trusted in his own loyalty but congratulated himself that *his* love to Christ surpassed that of the other Apostles. Therefore, did the Lord now ask, 'Lovest thou me more than these?' that is, more than these apostles love Me?"
12. (3) Why did He ask the question three times? I suggest our Savior asks Peter three times, to remind him of his three denials.
13. Because Simon Peter denied Christ three times, our Savior repeats His question three times—once for every denial.
14. And thus, we learn, our Savior's question was intended to probe Peter's conscience and produce true repentance.
15. The obvious reason why He repeated the same question three things, was to produce within Peter a sorrow for sin.
16. Now, because of the importance of this point, I want to pause here for a few minutes and suggest three things about repentance.

17. (a) It entails knowledge of sin—this is why our Savior repeated His question three times—to remind Peter of his sin.
18. Our Savior desired that Peter have a fresh sight and sense of his sin—He wanted him to remember he denied Christ three times.
19. Ps.51:3-4—"For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight."
20. There obviously brethren, can be true repentance without a true, heart-felt knowledge of our sin as against God.
21. Peter needed to know his sin, and not merely his denials of Christ, but the pride and self-trust that lied behind them (Do you really love Me more than them—Will you really never leave Me).
22. (b) It includes sorrow over sin, v17—"Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?'"
23. The word "grieved" literally means "to make sorrowful to afflict or make sad"—this was our Savior's purpose.
24. Now if you remember, Peter had already sorrowed over his sin, Lk.22:62—"So Peter went out and wept bitterly."
25. But apparently our Savior knew that Peter had need of further repentance, and thus, additional grief for his sin.
26. (c) It results in forsaking sin—this is the end result of repentance—to turn us away from our previous sinfulness.
27. The Holy Spirit breaks our heart for sin, so that we will not quickly return to it—it's the same principle in applying the rod to our children.
28. Scripture tells us that discipline is painful—when we apply the rod to the backside of our child it's intended to hurt.
29. This way the child associates pain with sin—this is one way in which the child is motivated not to commit that sin.
30. Now, let me remind you what repentance is—simply put, repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of direction.
31. Our Savior uses the question—"Do you love Me" as a probe, to point out the sin that remained within Simon Peter.
32. True repentance doesn't merely cause grief or sorrow, but it causes grief and sorrow for positive reasons and purposes.
33. Remember, there is a sorrow of the world that leads to death, and a godly sorrow that leads to life (that is, Christ).
34. Perhaps I can say—true repentance always leads a person away from themselves to Christ, in whom there's forgiveness.
35. Or perhaps I can put it this way—true repentance is always connected to true faith, which entails looking to Christ.
36. In other words, the Holy Spirit shows us our sin, breaks our heart over it, that we would forsake it and flee to Christ.

## II. Peter's Response

1. Peter responded in the same way to each of Jesus' questions, v15—"He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.'" v16—"He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.'" v17—"And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.'"
  2. In each of his responses, Peter appeals to Christ's perfect knowledge—"You know that I love You...You know all things."
  3. You know that I was overly confident in myself—You know that I denied You three times—but You also know that I truly love You.
  4. I find it very instructive that Peter does not say—Of course I love You, or Just look at my life as a proof of my love.

5. But instead, he appeals to the perfect knowledge that Christ had of Peter's heart—Christ knew Peter better than he knew himself.
6. Thus, within Peter's response, we behold his humility—he opens his heart before the all-knowing eyes of Christ.
7. Perhaps we can say—Peter came clean—he doesn't try to justify himself or to hide his behavior—Christ knew it all.
8. And so, Peter appeals to Christ's perfect knowledge as a way to show Christ that he did in fact sincerely love Him.
9. Ps.139:1-6—"O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For *there is* not a word on my tongue, *but* behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. *Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot *attain* it."
10. Thus, Peter knew he loved Christ, and more importantly, he knew that Christ knew, that while his love grew cold, it was genuine.

### III. Christ's Command

1. Christ's command is also repeated three times, v15—"He said to him, 'Feed My lambs.'" v16—"He said to him, 'Tend My sheep.'" v17—"Jesus said to him, 'Feed My sheep.'"
  2. (1) What Peter must do—he must feed and tend the sheep—to "feed" is to nourish and to "tend" is to take care of.
  3. Peter was to take care of Jesus' sheep by feeding them, and he was to feed them with the pure milk and bread of the word.
  4. Jer.3:15—"And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding."
  5. To be a shepherd according to God's heart means, you have a heart in accord or harmony to God's heart—you desire the same thing as God.
  6. And what is the heart of Christ with regards to His sheep—that His sheep would be fed them with knowledge and understanding.
  7. (2) Who Peter must feed—he must feed and tend Christ's sheep and lambs—Scripture often likens Christians to sheep.
  8. Like sheep, Christians hear the voice of their Shepherd and follow Him, and like sheep, Christians are weak and needy.
  9. But the important thing here is the pronoun "MY"—"feed My sheep" "tend My sheep" "feed My sheep"—these are His sheep.
  10. They were given to Him by His Father in eternity, He purchased them with His own blood, and He called them to Himself in time.
  11. And so, Christ commissions Peter, and by inference the other disciples, to shepherd or pastor His beloved sheep.
  12. 1Pet.5:1-4—"The elders who are among you I exhort...Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."
  13. Lesson 1—Erring Christians can and will be restored—I suggest this is both an obvious and important lesson from this passage.
  14. Christ loves His erring and sinning people too much, to leave them in a fallen state without restoring them to Himself.
  15. For example, think of a parent who disciplines their sinning child—they rightly spank them for their behavior.
  16. But surely brethren, we understand, that merely spanking our children is not enough, it must be followed by restoration—correction must be followed by restoration.

17. Satan, that great archenemy of mankind, has two fundamental schemes he uses upon sinners and saints—first, he suggests to sinners they are too sinful to be forgiven,
18. But secondly, he suggests to sinning saints that they are too great of sinners to be forgiven and restored by Christ.
19. Christians sin, and they unfortunately sin often, and our enemies will suggest that Christ wants nothing to do with us.
20. O dear Christian, this is nothing but a lie from the very father of lies—Christ restores every wayward disciple.
21. Perhaps I can put this as plainly as I can—Christ restores His erring sheep because He loves them too much not to.
22. Thus, fundamentally, by restoration is meant a returning to Christ, renewed fellowship with Christ, and renewed obedience to Christ.
23. Ps.23:1-3—"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."
24. Lk.22:31-32—"Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."
25. Notice, Christ did not pray that he would not be tempted by Satan, but did pray, that he would be restored—"and when you have returned to Me."
26. This is what all sin is—it's turning away from Christ—it's not merely forsaking Christ's law but Christ Himself.
27. O what a wonderful truth we learn here—erring Christian, who have strayed away from Christ enough—return to Him.
28. But you ask—I am not sure whether Christ would have me—perhaps I have sinned too much for Him to receive me.
29. O dear poor and partially foolish sheep—I assure you He will receive you, for in fact, He is now praying for your return.
30. He is the Good Shepherd who leaves the 99 and goes after that one straying sheep, for the simple reason—it is His.
31. These are Christ's sheep—YOU are Christ's sheep—and if you belong to Him, He has promised never to leave you.
32. Ps.119:176—"I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments."
33. Lesson 2—Restored Christians can and will be used—Peter was not only restored but entrusted with Christ's sheep.
34. Now, let me clarify—there are reasons why a person might not be restored to a specific office or responsibility.
35. For example, if a pastor proved to be unfaithful to his wife, regardless of repentance, he should never pastor again.
36. He has disqualified himself—he is no longer a blameless man, and thus, should never be hold office in the church again.
37. But even in this case, if he truly repents of his sins, Christ will restore him to fellowship and use him in other ways.
38. Lk.22:31-32—"Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."
39. (a) The fact of restoration—"I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail"—Christ would restore him.
40. (b) The reason for restoration—"and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren"—that is encourage them.
41. The point being—Peter would learn from his sin, repentance, and restoration—he would be better equipped to help others.

42. We learn from the example of Peter, that Christ not only restores His erring sheep, but He uses them mightily.
43. Far from no longer being used, our Savior not only restores Peter, but He then uses him as a leader in His church.
44. O brethren, we are so slow in learning this point—the Lord does use perfect people, but He does use penitent people.
45. 2Cor.4:7—"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."
46. Christ uses needy and weak people to share His gospel, so that it's evident, the power comes from Him not us.
47. Lesson 3—God's omniscience is a comfort for saints—omniscience refers to fact that God sees and knows all things.
48. God knows everything for the simple reason, He decreed everything that happens—He knows the end from the beginning.
49. The fact that Christ sees and knows all things is a two-edged sword—for the wicked its terrible news but for the righteous its wonderful news.
50. Christ knows everything we've done—He knows every wayward thought, word, and deed—He knows us perfectly.
51. But He also knows that we sincerely trust and love Him—He knows we hate our sin and long to serve Him faithfully.
52. You see, it's only the fake money that's fearful of scrutiny—what does real money have to fear if it's scrutinized?
53. So too, it's only the hypocrite who fears examination—the true Christian welcomes the fact that Christ knows all.
54. And you know what, to be honest, sometimes a Christian has to rely upon Christ's perfect knowledge of him.
55. At times it feels like the only thing within us in sin and confusion—O LORD You know all that's within my heart!
56. You know all the sin and remaining wickedness—but You also know the good—You know the faith and love that exists!
57. And while all sin and evil are to be attributed to my remaining corruption, all good is the result of Your grace.
58. You know, O Christ, the grace that exists in my heart, because every once of it is the fruit of Your Holy Spirit.
59. Lesson 4—Love for Christ is a mark of true religion—this is why our Savior put the focus on Peter's love for Him.
60. This is what God expects from man—He expects that man, His creation, would love Him for who He is and what He does.
61. Love is the fulfillment of the law—we can reduce the entire law down to this single word—LOVE—love to God and to man.
62. Strict outward behavior, precise doctrinal views, and zeal in evangelism, all mean nothing without love for Christ.
63. Notice our Savior did not ask Peter about his theological creed (though that's very important), but He asked him about his love.
64. Now, let me ask you this important question—What does our Savior mean by love? What does it mean to love Christ?
65. True love for Christ is an affection within our hearts, wrought by the Spirit, whereby we behold Christ as glorious, delight in Him, long to fellowship with Him, and seek to obey Him.
66. It's obviously in every way right to love our spouses, children, parents, pastors, and brethren—but we are not to love these as we love Christ.
67. We are to consider Him as most glorious, the object of our chief delight, and long for Him, and labor to obey Him.

68. Thus, let me finish this 4<sup>th</sup> lesson with a few practical helps on how to increase our love for Christ—(a) behold His beauty.
69. That is, study the person of Christ—follow Him through the pages of Holy Scripture, learning about Him and His work.
70. This is indispensable to any true growth in love—we must behold with the eyes of our souls His glory as the GodMan.
71. (b) Get to know Him—the more you get to know someone either two things happen—you love them more or less.
72. The more we get to Christ the more we find Him worthy of our hearts affection—we find Him worthy of our highest esteem and regard.
73. (c) Drink from His love for you—the more we know in our hearts, His love for us, the more we in turn love Him.
74. Lesson 5—Love for Christ motivates work for Christ—"Do you love Me. If so, then show that love by feeding My sheep."
75. What a wonderful principle we find in this passage—love for Christ drives or compels us to obey the law of Christ.
76. One obvious way Christian ministers can better tend to the sheep, is if they have their hearts filled with love for Him.
77. Perhaps I can put this another way—a pastor who fails to feed the sheep, manifests little if any love for Christ.
78. And yet, this principle applies to all Christians (and not merely pastors)—the way you treat the sheep reflects your love for Christ.
79. Pastors who don't feed the sheep don't love Christ, and Christians who despise the sheep, don't love Christ either.
80. O dear brethren, I fear many professing Christians overlook the obvious—what you think of the church you think of Christ.
81. This is really the whole point—Christ desires Peter to feed the sheep because the sheep personally belong to Christ.
82. If you truly love Christ you will also love what's His—you can't love Christ and fail to love all that belongs to Him (His law and people).
83. And so, this is the great principle that Christ teaches Peter (and the rest of us)—love for Christ motivates work for Christ.
84. The more love we have for Christ, the more motivation we have to work for Christ—or we work because of love.
85. Christian parent, why should you continue to care for and raise up your children, but because you love Christ.
86. Christian husband, why should you continue to provide for and love your wife, but because you love Jesus Christ.
87. Christian mother, why should you continue to respect and honor your husband, but because you love Jesus Christ.
88. Christian student, why should you continue to study hard, seeking to get good grades, but because you love Christ.
89. Or perhaps I can put it this way—Christian, why should you continue to obey Christ, but because you love Christ.
90. Thus, our Savior comes to every one of us this morning and asks the question—"Do you love Me? and if you do—then obey Me."
91. But let me close with this clarification—sinners are not made Christian by loving Christ—this is a terrible mistake.
92. Sinners are made Christian by realizing they haven't loved God and so they need Christ who perfectly loved God and His neighbor.
93. O remember dear friends, saint and sinner, we are not saved by our love to Christ, but by HIS LOVE FOR US!

