

## "Overcoming Failure" Part 4 - Simon Peter is Restored

John 21:15-17, 20-22 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? 21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? 22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

So far in our series of lessons we have looked at the life of the Apostle Peter. We learned how Simon Peter was brought to the Lord by his brother Andrew. We learned how he "stepped up" when he responded to the question asked by Jesus, "Will ye also go away?" You may recall his answer when he said, "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." We learned of his premature determination to never deny the Lord Jesus and his insistence that he would sooner die than to do such a shameful thing. We also learned that despite his self-confidence, Jesus told him that he would deny Him three times before the sun went down that very day. And sadly, for Simon Peter, we learned that what Jesus said, came to pass....Simon Peter denied Jesus in the company of His enemies and in the absence of his friends.

In **John 18:15-27** we read John's account of Simon Peter denying the Lord. His account is much like the account that we learned in **Luke 22:54-62**. Following both of those events we do not see any conversations between Jesus and Simon Peter up until the time we read of in **John 21:15-22**. Peter and the other disciples saw Jesus on two occasions prior to this one but his denying the Lord was not discussed. It would be safe for us to say that Peter carried the burden of his failure until this dialogue that he had with Jesus that day on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias. Perhaps he had periods of time when he may have thought that Jesus might have overlooked his denial. Perhaps he had other times when he felt like he was forgiven, then without warning he may have been overcome again with the guilt and shame of his denial.

Whatever the feelings were, we can be certain that they included feelings of uncertainty concerning his relationship with Jesus whom he felt so confident that he would never let down.

The series of events in **chapter 21** that we read prior to the dialogue that Jesus has with Simon Peter give us a little more perspective. In **John 21:1-14** we see seven of the disciples that followed the lead of Simon Peter to go fishing. They were fishermen by trade so it is no surprise that they would occupy their time doing it again. We cannot really say what their mood was, but we might consider that the events of the three plus years prior had rocked their world in a big way and their lives would never be the same again. We can also say that since the death of their Lord they may have lacked direction.

Now they would learn again, what they lacked, Jesus would supply. After they had fished all night without catching anything, they heard a voice from the shore say, "**Children, have you any meat?**"...or simply said, "Do you have anything to eat?" Their response was a definite "no." In spite of their skills and in spite of all the times that had caught fish in the past; they had come up empty after fishing all night long. Jesus gives them a suggestion to cast the net on the right side of the boat and in doing so they would catch more fish than they were able to pull to shore by themselves. The rest of the disciples who were in a smaller boat about one hundred yards away came and gave assistance. And they all dragged the nets that were filled with fish to the shore.

Verse seven tells us that after they saw the multitude of fish in the net, they knew that it was the Lord and we also learn that this was the third time (**John 20:19&26**) that He had revealed Himself to them after His resurrection. Upon reaching the shore the disciples saw that Jesus had already prepared a fire with fish upon the coals. He also had bread and everything He would need to make His disciples comfortable and welcome. We see that Jesus was the same after His resurrection as He was prior to His resurrection and the caring Savior then is the same caring Savior now. His passion, his death and his resurrection could not alter his character as a man any more than they could alter His attributes as God. He is and forever will be Jesus, forever the same (**Hebrews 13:8**). Each time that He revealed Himself to His disciples after His resurrection he did not cast off His manners or His sincere interest in their wellbeing and He addressed them just as tenderly and affectionately as He did before, as His children.

After He had enquired about the necessities of their bodies concerning their food, he goes straight to the necessities of their spiritual condition. He begins with Simon Peter who might have been the one who was the sickliest in terms of his spiritual condition, the one who denied

His Master three times and wept bitterly over it. Here is where we pick up our story in hopes that we might find some encouragement and comfort despite our failures and most importantly, perhaps some purpose in them as well.

How the story unfolds and how we might apply it. We will look at this story in four ways, "A Serious Question - A Careful Answer", "Three Questions - Three Answers", "A Required Demonstration to the Fact" and "An Immediate Distraction".

**1. Verse 15a - A Serious Question. So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?**

The question was not asked by Jesus to Simon Peter for His own information. We know that when we read Peter's answer when he says, "Thou knowest that I love thee." It was not for Jesus' information, but it was instead for Simon Peter's *examination*. There are several opinions concerning the meaning of the question and to miss the meaning for the question might cause us to miss some of the application that we might glean from the question. There seems to be two schools of thought concerning the question. One, Jesus is asking Simon Peter if he loves Him more than he loves the other disciples. Or two, Jesus is asking Simon Peter whether he loves Him more than the other disciples love Him.

Based on what we have already learned about certain things that Simon Peter had already said in the past, I believe that Jesus was asking him concerning the second school of thought....."Do you love me more than the other disciples love me?"

**Here might be some good reasons why this might be the case.**

- **It may have been a self-examination concerning his past sin.**

I would say that Jesus asked Simon Peter this question so that he might ask it of himself. We know that Peter wept bitterly over denying Jesus. We can be confident that he repented "with tears" and that he got right what he did wrong. Now Jesus is giving him an opportunity to allow him to examine what may have been at the root of his sin so that he might have the opportunity of not repeating it again. Now Jesus gives him the chance to really look into himself and see where his love for Jesus really was.

He did not say, Simon, son of Jonas, do you fear Me?" He did not say, "Do you admire Me?" "Do you adore Me?" "Do you trust Me or do you like Me?" .....he asked him, "Do you love Me?"

Love is the best evidence of godliness, holiness, faithfulness, and devotion. It is the evidence of our faith and all that we do should come from the fountain of our love for Jesus Christ. When we lack love for God we will lack in all other areas of our walk with God because we will never follow anyone that we do not first have a great love for.

**John 14:21 - He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.**

**The Application:**

- If I love a little, I believe a little. If I love a little, I trust a little. If I love a little, I serve a little and if I love a little I will not follow for long.

**For our encouragement:** Jesus did not ask Simon Peter any details about his past failure. Yes, we already said it might have been for a self-examination concerning his past sin, but it was not to resurface his guilt. He did not ask him how much he wept. How much good have you done to make up for the bad? How much time have you spent on your knees for denying me and cursing in the act of doing so? No, it was not in reference to what he could do to make up for his sin, but to the condition of his heart that Jesus posed the question.

God is not about making us feel horrible about our past that He has forgiven to keep us from repeating it again in the future. He is not a "guilt trip God," He is a merciful God and He is ready to forgive (**Psalm 86:5**). When our sin is brought up before it has been forgiven it is in order that we might have an opportunity to repent and receive God's forgiveness. After we receive His forgiveness based on our request, He ceases to convict us of what we have already been forgiven for.

So then, our tears without love are not tears that God accepts if there be no love to Him. We have all cried over our condition without the thought of any love for God. We may have done some works to try to make up for what we have done, but they are not acceptable if they are not done out of love for Him. The question then, "**Lovest thou me?**" is a vital question because it goes right to the heart.

- **It may have been a ground for self-suspicion and it may cause us to do the same.**

We all lack love for God which means that we could all love Him more than we have and more than we do. Just to look back at the past week or month might show us that we are either

lacking or straight up destitute of a sincere love for God. If I loved Him more, I would not have sinned so much. And how can I say that I love Him when I have broken so many of His expectations for my life as His child. Have I reflected His image to a lost world as I should have done? Have I wasted so many hours away from Him that I could have spent close to Him? Have I thrown away precious time in frivolous activity when I could have spent some of that time in prayer? How many words were uttered from my mouth that might have been damaging when they could have ministered more to the hearers? How much foolishness did I engage in, sins did I wink at, iniquity did I cover and how many corners did I push Jesus into to make room for all the meaningless junk in my life? I must ask myself the question, "Am I suspicious of my own love for Jesus Christ?" And I would answer, "Yes I am but I do not have to stay this way"!!

**2. Verse 15b - A careful answer. He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.**

Simon Peter gave a good answer, Jesus asked him whether he loved "better than others" or as we have already said, "do you love me more than others love me?" This time, Peter did not answer Him in the fashion that he had answered questions in the past. He was accustomed to having no problem with comparing himself with others and even making himself look better than others, but all that seems to have changed. When once he was prideful and esteemed himself better than the other disciples, now he evades the question and would not say that he loved Jesus more than others did.

**Philippians 2:3 - Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.**

**The Application:**

- The more spiritually mature that we get the lower we will be in our own opinion of ourselves.
- We should never imply that we have any supremacy over any other Christians in terms of how much we love God.

Notice how Peter did answer Jesus and how we might learn from it. "Lord, I can't really comment on the quantity of love that I might have for you, but you already know everything and all I can address is the quality of my love and you do know that I love you." Peter did not want to be the one to compare himself with others anymore. He did not want to measure his maturity in comparison with someone else's and neither should we.

Notice also that Peter did not defend himself on the bases of his works as to whether he loved Jesus. We might answer the question with some of the things that we think give evidence to the fact that we love Jesus. "Lord, I did read my Bible last week...I did pray a few times...I did restrain myself from giving into temptation at least twice in the last several days and I did even say some nice things about certain people when I didn't really mean what I was saying". That might be somewhat of a good answer if anybody else but Jesus asks us because they just might buy into what we are saying. But he might say, "just because you pray every once in a while doesn't mean you love Me and just because you resist a few inconvenient temptations every once in a while doesn't mean that you love Me and just because you say a few nice things even if you don't want to, doesn't mean that you love Me". "I'm not asking for the *evidence* of your love, I will know that, I'm asking for the *fact* of your love."

**James 2:14-26** teaches us in detail that our works are an expression of our faith. I believe that it can be said of our love as well. Our love for Jesus Christ is a love that is developed over time. The more we love the more we do and the more we do (not necessarily in quantity) the more purpose we experience for the love that we express. In other words, I express my love for God, in part, by obeying Him in the areas of my life that He has called me to obey and by serving Him in the areas of my life that He has purposed for me to serve.

**3. Verses 15b-17 - Three questions - three answers.** He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Jesus addresses the same question three times to Simon Peter and three times Peter returns the same answer. The first two times Peter respectfully confessed that Jesus already knew the answer to His question before He asked it. The third time he says that Jesus not only knows that Peter loves him; he says that he believes that Jesus knows everything. The third time that Jesus asked Peter if he loved him, the Bible tells us that something else happened to Peter when he heard it, "**he was grieved.**" Peter began to feel a sense of sorrow when he heard Jesus ask him again. This provided another unwanted reminder of the third time that he denied Jesus

or perhaps he was struck with the possibility of Jesus getting more personal with the intention of bringing up the details of the infraction again in front of the rest of the disciples.

Whatever he was thinking we know his thoughts were accompanied by his sorrow, but that is not where Jesus wanted him to stay. At this point, the best thing for Peter to do is what he should have done in the past. In the past Peter appeared to be impulsive, quick to speak and slow to think. His old behavior was revealed in hypocrisy when he would say one thing and turn around to do another thing. This time he left the answer to Jesus and would trust that what Jesus knew concerning Peter's love for Him was authentic and not just lip service.

### The Application:

- It is frightening for a hypocrite to think that Jesus knows everything, because His omniscience will be their witness against them.
- For the sincere Christian, it is a comfort to know that Jesus knows everything.

We have more time than Simon Peter to consider what our answer might be if Jesus were to ask us if we love Him. Perhaps we would want to play it safe and give an answer similar to that answer that Peter gave. In other words, we might say, "Lord You know everything, why would you ask me a question like that?" Or given the time to think about what we might say it might be more along the lines of..." Lord You know that I love you, but you and I both know that I could love You more than I do now".

Love for God is the essential foundation for all that we do, what we are and whatever we will be. Everything that we do for God and for others should be motivated by our love for God. Loving God is more than just a command, it is a choice, and we must all choose whether we will love God.

**Mark 12:30 - And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.**

Yes, we are commanded to love God. But would it be a genuine love for God if I love Him only because I felt a sense of duty for doing so? Would it not be the shallowest love that we can imagine if there was no authenticity and sincerity in my love for Him and I am doing it because I must rather than because I want to? I think if we were able to ask Simon Peter what might have been the most pivotal point in his walk with the Lord, he might tell us that if it were not this one, this one rated right up there near the top. This is where Jesus gave him an

opportunity, though it may have been a very uncomfortable one, to look deep inside of himself and honestly find out what really mattered most....did he love Jesus or not.

Many of us have been challenged with this thing that we call love. It is something that is talked about so often and yet if we are honest with ourselves, we know little about it. Song writers sing more often about it than any other subject. Poets write about it more than any other subject and people say it more often than they ever really mean it. When we think about love, and we think about Jesus we can say with the utmost confidence that Jesus is safe to love!! With that thought in mind we will mention just a few of the many reasons we can say this.

- **Jesus is safe to love because of what He has done.**

Many times when we consider what Jesus has done for us our minds might go back to the recent past. How we have begun to gain some ground over the struggles of the past and we are seeing more light at the end of the tunnel than we may have seen in a long time. We might remember some of the times when He rescued us from eminent danger and reached down and brought us from deep times of distress. All of these things will help us to love Jesus for what He has done for us, but all of these things are a direct result for what He had already done thousands of years before.

**Romans 5:8 - But God commendeth (to show or prove) his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**

**John 15:13 - Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.**

We would all agree that there is no greater expression of love that a person can show than the giving of themselves. Addiction is a taker and if it is left to itself it will take until there is nothing else to take. It thinks nothing of giving and it thinks of only self. For us to say that there needs to be a drastic change in terms of giving and taking for a person to begin and continue to stay clean would be an understatement.

To make the statement that Jesus is safe to love and live out this statement involves trusting Him in every area of our lives. The longer a person lives in rebellion the more they shorten the list of people they believe they can trust. Often times there are very few if any people on their list at all. People who genuinely love us and care for us begin to become people of whom we are suspicious. When we are doing well, we want them around and we have no problem being around



them. But when we are not, we do not want them around and we rarely want to be around them. The result can often evolve into a pathetic cat and mouse game and the people that love you most are the ones that you care about the least.

I have told many people who have struggled with addiction that they do not know how to deal with the people that are dealing with them and the people who are dealing with you do not know how to deal with you either. But that is not the case with Jesus Christ! Long before you ever struggled with addiction, He proved that He loves you unconditionally. He loves you in your addiction and He will love you out of your addiction. He loves you on your good days and He loves you on your bad days. He does not need to do anything more than what He has already done to prove that He loves you. All we need to do is look to the cross to know that He loves us, and therefore, we know that He can be trusted because of what He has already done!

**The Application:** Perhaps one of the reasons that we might find it difficult to love Jesus Christ is because we continue to look at what He is or isn't doing for us now as opposed to looking at what He has already done for us.

- **Jesus is safe to love because of what He is doing.**

The activity of God in any believer's life that invites Him to help is an undeniable truth. He shows up in ways that can only be described as a "God thing". **Philippians 1:6** is one of my favorite verses in the Bible.

**Philippians 1:6 - Being confident (persuaded) of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform (to bring to an end or complete) it until the day of Jesus Christ.**

Our crying out to Jesus is an expression of our believing that He has invited us to do so. We may not know a lot of things about the Bible, and we may not even know a lot of things about Jesus Christ Himself, but we have heard by His grace that we can call and He will answer. So then, we respond to what He has already done (proved His love to us by His death on the cross) and we ask Him to forgive us of our sin and receive Him as our Savior, that is the "beginning". From that time, by our effort and with His power, we begin to grow in our walk with Him.

Something amazing continues to happen. God continues to work in our lives in ways that we may have never thought that He would. He gives us strength for each new day and direction for each new decision. He provides needs that only He can provide, and He speaks peace when our days

are unsettled. Days turn to weeks and weeks turn to months and as we continue to see Him work we are gaining a sense of trust in Him that provides us a safe place and a safe object for our love.

### The Application:

- Never be too anxious about what God has yet to do in order that you do not miss what He is currently doing, this can lead to discouragement.
- Love waits without looking for shortcuts to meet our needs.

#### **4. A required demonstration to the fact. "Feed my lambs...Feed my sheep".**

"Feed My lambs, feed My sheep"....this would be Simon Peter's demonstration, but it does not make it the only way of showing our love. There are different ways for different Christians, but the one thing that we need to learn is that we can all find different ways to love our Lord. All of us would agree that love is far more than saying and in sincerity it is doing. We mentioned that reading our Bibles, praying, being kind to others and other things likened to these are for our own benefit but not necessarily expressions of our love for God.

Love for God is exemplified in the Person of Jesus Christ. We love Him like He loves us, and we love others like He loves us as well. Jesus was giving Simon Peter something for him to do that He had called him to do and by his obedience Peter would be able to demonstrate his love for Jesus by doing what he was called to do.....feed His lambs, feed His sheep.

There are some, we know, that are not qualified to feed the lambs because they are but lambs themselves. There are some that cannot feed the sheep because they are weak in the faith and are not qualified to teach. But what we must all understand is that we have all been lambs at one time and some have been sheep, a little more mature. But every one of us has ways, wherever we are in our walk with the Lord, to demonstrate our love for Him.

#### **5. Verses 20-22 - An immediate distraction. 20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? 21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? 22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.**

Distractions do not always have to be a terrible thing, but they can be. Sometimes the distractions in life are by the sovereignty of God in order that we might have an opportunity to

learn and grow. However, if we are not careful, we can and will take our eyes off of following God and place our eyes on other things. When Jesus gave the instruction to Peter to follow Him, he began to do exactly what Jesus told him to do. No sooner than he started than he noticed that John was following also. Certainly, this was not the distraction that Peter was experiencing because we know that Jesus taught them that where He was, there would His servant be also (**John 12:26**). Peter was not being distracted by John following Jesus; he was being distracted by minding what would become of John instead of what would become of him.

If Peter would have been fully engaged and devoted to following Jesus, he would have been waiting to hear more of what Jesus had to say to him. Instead, he seemed more focused on what further instruction He had for John. In previous verses Jesus described for him that he would suffer for His sake. It would be anything but pleasant and history records that Simon Peter was crucified upside-down, at his own request. He would die the death of a martyr and when he was given the news from Jesus it would have done him much better to ask, “**Then Lord what should I do**” rather than “**what shall this man do?**”

### The Application:

- The best of Christians find it a challenge to keep their attention and focus on the Lord without being distracted. But the best of Christians are in fact the best of Christians because they discipline themselves to do so.
- Worried about what might happen to someone else just might be the beginning of something happening to us.

There are many things that clamor for our attention and some of which are very deserving of it. Much discouragement can be avoided when we simply **stay focused**. For those who have and still may be struggling with addiction we know that distractions can be the beginning of leading us back down a road that is all too familiar. An opportunity considered and another poor choice is made and before we know it we have been scammed again by a distraction that should have been ignored instead of entertained.

To learn what we might do to avoid being attracted to distractions that should be resisted we will describe a few of them so we might be better equipped when we see them.

- **The distraction of comparison.**

**1 Corinthians 15:10a - But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain;**

If we are not careful, comparing ourselves with others can not only be distracting but also be very discouraging. We see others appear to be gaining more ground than we are, and we think perhaps that they have some advantage that we do not have. We see someone get answers to prayers they have been praying for such a brief time and we do not think we are getting answers to prayers we have been praying for a much longer time. Things are not coming together as fast as we may have thought they should, and it sometimes is moving faster for others. We must understand that God has us where we are and how we are for a reason. His timing may not always seem to play out the way we would like it, but God's timing is always perfect.

Consider when He finally got your attention. It is hard to compare that with anyone else. Your situation is unique because you are unique to God. Paul said, "**By the grace of God I am what I am**" (1 Cor. 15:10); he may have not been where he wanted to be in life but he knew that he was on his way and he certainly knew he was not where he used to be. Were it not for the grace of God there is no telling where any of us would be. God has you in His hand and He knows where He wants to take you and how to get you there.

### The Application:

- If we do not discipline ourselves to resist comparing ourselves with others, we will end up being distracted by comparison in one of two ways. (1) We will think that we can never be as good or spiritual as someone else. (2) We will think that we are not as bad as others and therefore make light of our badness.
- The distraction of circumstances.

**Matthew 14:28-32 - And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. 29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. 31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? 32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.**

It may make a person wonder how circumstances can be a distraction when we know that circumstances are a part of everyday life. Perhaps a better way to describe it would be that we can become overwhelmed by our circumstances which make us focus more attention on them than we focus on our walk with God.

In **Matthew 14** we notice the story of Simon Peter walking on the water. We read that he first asked Jesus, "**bid me to come unto you on the water.**" The word bid means to be "commanded or ordered"...so we know that Simon Peter was not doing anything that the Lord did not want him to do and had not allowed him to do; he was in the will of the Lord. However, while he was in the will of the Lord he was distressed by the circumstances of the moment.

Three things happened and they nearly happened at the same time. He saw the wind to be **boisterous** (mighty, strong, powerful), he became afraid and then he began to sink.

### The Application:

- If Jesus told him that he could do something that is all he should have needed to do it and that is all we should need as well.
  - We must always remember that although the circumstances can seem very overwhelming, Jesus is always with us in them to help us through them. When we divert our attention from Him because they overwhelm us, sooner or later we run the risk of disregarding Him AND our circumstances.
- The distraction of pride and success.

**Romans 12:3** - For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Pride is the sin that is bred in the bones of all of us and we need to take all caution and guard against it. Success can be a wonderful thing and when we know that God is always at the root of it, we will keep ourselves better in check; but if we are not careful it can become our worst enemy. In **Romans 12:3** we see just one of the many warnings against thinking that we are more than we really are and taking any personal credit for our accomplishments. Yes, anyone that does succeed in sobriety has much to be proud of for the accomplishments they have experienced. Remember as Christians, it is with God's help and God's power that we experience

success. It is by doing things His way and not our way, in His time and by His leading that we experience all these things.

Perhaps James said it best when he said, **"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning". (James 1:17).** We should have a modest opinion of ourselves and our abilities accompanied by the promise that **"we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us" (Philippians 4:13).**

One way of guarding against pride when we begin and continue to succeed is to always keep in the forefront of our mind that despite the success that we have experienced, we will always have a lot to learn and perhaps a long way to go. Paul also said later in Romans 12, **"Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits" (verse 16).**

All of us should strive to be wise. In fact, James tells us that **"if any of us lack wisdom, we should ask of God and he will give it to us liberally" (James 1:5).** Yes, it is good to be wise but according to Solomon it is bad to think that we are.

**Proverbs 26:12 - Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him.**

Simon Peter stepped up, then he was warned, then he failed and then he was restored. All of this teaches us that this can be our experience as well. Certainly, the details will be different, however, one thing remains the same; we have all failed. Perhaps our failures may be defined differently concerning the severity of them, but our failures do not need to define us. Experience the forgiveness of God and you can experience the restoration of God; it cannot work any other way. Go from "it is what it is" to "it was what it was." Nothing is impossible with God!!!