

Ransomed, Healed, Restored, Forgiven

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[0 : 00] Allow me to direct your attention this evening to these verses that we've read together in Luke's Gospel, chapter 22 and at verse 54 through to verse 62.

Look 22 at verse 54 through to verse 62. And before we come to consider this portion, let us pause for a moment's prayer. Let us pray.

We thank you, O God, our Father, for your word. We thank you for the characters who you have revealed to us in Scripture. And we pray now that as we come to consider your truth and to consider one of the great characters of Scripture, that you would come and teach us by your spirit in the word.

That if we are cast down, we may be lifted up. If we are wondering that we may be drawn back, whatever our need, minister to us now we pray for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Some years ago, I can't quite recall the occasion. It was either a birthday or Christmas or something like that.

[1 : 22] My family gave me a present. They knew that this present would excite me. They knew that I would enjoy it. They knew it was something that I was into.

It was a book, a book that was published by The Times Newspapers. And it was entitled The Times Big Book of Obituaries.

Now I love obituaries. They're just fascinating to read. And when you read them there in the newspapers, they're really just many biographies of the person concerned.

And they give you the details of that person's life. One of the notable things about biographies, especially those that have been well researched and well written, is that they will tell you the ups and the downs of that person's life.

This stands in contrast to a great deal of modern Christian biography. So often when you read Christian biography today, the lives of Christian people that's been written in recent times, so often it's kind of glorious from start to finish.

[2 : 41] The person has come to a living faith in Jesus Christ. They have trusted in the Lord for salvation, and it's kind of brilliant from there on. Everything's grand. It smiles all the way.

Now of course we know that if we trust in Jesus Christ by faith, the great problem of sin has been dealt with. We are reconciled to God. We are at one with God. We know God's forgiveness, and heaven is our future. That we know.

But that does not mean that our Christian life is going to necessarily be always easy, always smooth, no problems, no difficulties. Everything just working out fine.

One of the helpful things about the Bible is that when the Bible sets before us Christian men and Christian women, they are set before us by the Holy Spirit just as they were, warts and all.

It means when we come to the Bible and when we look together at some of these characters, we find encouragement. We are able to identify with these people. We can see them in their struggles and in their problems and in their trials, and we can say, yes, I've been there.

[4 : 04] That is especially true of the character who is before us this evening. Peter, the Lord's disciple, Peter.

We want to think about him tonight in one of the dark moments of his life. Now, inwardly, you may have just grown. You will be too plighted to outwardly grown, but you may have grown inwardly.

Tonight, we are going to consider Peter in one of the dark moments of his life. You might be saying to me this evening, great. My life's a struggle and I'm knowing lots of problems. I've got a lot of difficulties at the present time, and I've come to church this evening, hoping that I will be encouraged, hoping that I will be lifted up in some way.

Hoping that even through God's Word, I might be able to go out tonight, better equipped to face my problems, to face my trials. Instead of that, we're going to have a dark sermon on a dark moment in Peter's life. Great.

Well, if you're thinking that, I understand. But I trust that as we go on this evening, that you will also be encouraged.

[5 : 23] Because as we look at the dark moment in Peter's life, we shall consider how Jesus dealt with him in that dark moment. And we shall see, I trust that we shall see, something of the love and grace and tenderness and compassion of Jesus.

Peter fell into sin. It happened in this passage which we read. Jesus has been arrested. He's been taken to the High Priest Courtyard, and Peter and John also have gone to the Courtyard of the High Priest House.

There there is a fire. It's called, it's like Edinburgh. And they're standing around this fire in the High Priest Courtyard. Peter is there, and I don't know where John is, but Peter's standing just with some others around the fire.

And we're told in verse 36 that a servant girl comes up to him and she looks at him and she says, ah, I know you. You're one of his followers. You belong to Jesus. I don't know him, says Peter.

A little later, verse 58, someone else comes up. You are one of them. I'm not. About an hour later, someone identifies his accent. You're a Galilean. Yeah, you are one of his followers.

[6 : 56] And if you compare the different gospel accounts, you will find that Peter on three separate occasions, deny that he knew Jesus. You will find that Peter on three separate occasions with passion, deny that he knew Jesus.

Even with cursing and swearing, I don't know him. And when this happens for the third time, we're told that the cock crowed.

And Jesus looked straight at Peter, verse 61. And Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken before the cock crows today. And he will disown me three times. The Lord had predicted this. Jesus had told Peter that you're going to deny me on three occasions.

And when you've done it the third time, the cock is going to crow. And here it is taking place just exactly as Jesus said it would. And Jesus looked straight at Peter.

He's fallen, fallen into sin. He's let the Lord die and he's denied that he knew Jesus. He's made an absolute mess of it. He's completely botched it in the high priest's courtyard.

[8 : 15] The fall of Peter. Now we need to be clear just for a moment before we go any further, that although he has made a mess of it, and although he has fallen into sin, and although he has denied that he ever knew Jesus, or he was one of Jesus' disciples, he has fallen into sin as a Christian. He's fallen into sin as one who has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in falling into sin, it doesn't mean that he has lost his salvation. It doesn't mean that he has ceased to be a Christian. It doesn't mean that one moment before he made that denial, he was truly a child of God, and then when he sinned, he lost his salvation. He ceased to be a child of God.

That's not it. If by God's grace you have trusted in Jesus Christ, and he is your Savior, if this evening you're here as a Christian, you have a living faith in Jesus Christ, then nothing, nothing can change that. Nothing.

Listen to these magnificent words, please. The words of Jesus Himself. My sheep, listen to my voice. I know them, and they follow that me.

I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can snatch them out of my hand.

[9 : 46] No one can snatch them out of my hand. That's your excitedness this evening, if we're Christians, if we're really trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation, and he is our Savior, nothing can change that. I'm safe in Christ.

And here is Peter making a real mess of it, denying Jesus a dark moment, his fall into sin. It's not that he's ceasing to be a Christian. It's not that in some way he has lost his salvation, but as a child of God, he's getting it wrong.

This might be you tonight. Might be. Maybe you're sitting here this evening, and you've been singing these songs of praise, and entering into the service, but inwardly you are in turmoil tonight, because in some way, known maybe only to you and to no one else, you have let the Lord down in a big way.

You've really failed him. You're struggling tonight, troubled by your fall into sin.

Well, let's see what happens here. Let's ask two questions. Why did Peter fall, and how did Jesus deal with him? Why did he fall, and how did Jesus deal with him?

[11 : 19] May I suggest to you in the first place that one of the reasons he fell is that he stopped praying. You remember that just shortly before his arrest, Jesus went with Peter, James and John to a garden.

We call it the Garden of Gethsemane. He went into that garden because he, Jesus, wanted to pray. He took his three friends with him, and he asked them that they would also pray.

Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. Well, Jesus leaves them, and he goes off a short distance, and he prays for a while, and then he comes back to see his friends praying.

But they're not praying. They're sleeping. So Jesus goes away, and he prays again, and he comes back, and he finds his three friends again, sleeping three times.

And he finds them sleeping. He had encouraged them to pray. He had told them to pray. He had impressed upon them that if they were going to stand, they had to pray.

[12 : 26] Now you might be saying to me this evening, whoa, Gareth, this is profound, isn't it? As a Christian, I need to pray all the way from Ireland at great expense.

But to let you know that as a Christian you need to pray. But you do. You do. You'll not stand unless you're praying.

Glenn Owen in writing on the life of the Apostle Peter says, We who have professed loyalty to our Lord need to realize that our drowsiness, our absence in the hour of prayer, betrays a terrible state of soul.

He got it wrong at the very basics. He didn't pray. Can I suggest to you that another reason why Peter fell into sin, and another reason why he let his Lord down so dramatically, is that he was trusting in his own strength and ability.

Now I don't know what the Apostle Peter looked like. I know that he was a fisherman, and I know that that would have required certain strength. I have a mental image of him in my mind, and you may have as well. But I see him as a pretty strong fellow.

[13 : 52] He's pretty muscly, and he's sort of quite rugged, and he's quite tanned. This is of course all just a sanctified speculation, but I hope it's on the right track.

He's a strong fellow, is the Apostle Peter. And there's a temptation for him to kind of look upon the other disciples as being a little bit wimpish, compared to him.

Now there's a hint of this in Scripture. Matthew 26, verse 33 and verse 35. What do we read?

Jesus warns them. He are the disciples together in this section. He warns them that this is going to be a terrible night. Terrible things are going to happen this night, the night of my trial, the night of my arrest.

Peter says, if all fall away on account of you, I never will. Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.

[15 : 01] Ah, you know, these other fellows, they're not like me, Master. They're not like me. I'm strong. I'm a macho follower.

I'll be able to manage it. So when the party come to arrest Jesus, the group comes into the garden and Judas kiss the Savior and betrays him.

We are told that there's someone who reaches for their sword and cuts off the ear of Malchus, the high priest's servant. And who is that person? Peter.

Oh, let's take it in hand. We can't be just standing here watching Jesus being arrested. We've got to do something.

So the strong man, who kind of looks down on the others and thinks they're a little bit weak in comparison, the strong man who feels that he will be able to stand when others are following is relying too much on his own strength and his own physical ability.

[16 : 10] I knew a lady once who worked for a Christian organization. And she worked for that organization for a quite lengthy period of time. And during the course of that time, there were two different men who were in charge of that group.

You can see that I'm very nervous that you would be able to identify this group. So we're speaking in very general terms, a certain Christian organization with two men. Well, I heard her one day describe to my mother what it was like to work for these two men.

Both, she said, were well organized. Both knew how to keep a diary. It's before you would keep anything apart from a diary. Now they would keep, well, whatever, you know, got into this, Derrick, an iPad or one of these things.

They would keep that. Well, they would have kept it neatly and well. But naming one of them, she said, there was a difference with him.

Because not only was he well organized, but whenever he got his diary out, he would always pray over it every day that God would help him with what he was doing. And that's where Peter failed.

[17 : 30] He's just a diary man, depending on himself, on his own strength, on the courage that he had physically by nature.

May I suggest to you that Peter fell into sin. And one of the reasons he fell is that he failed to pray. And other perhaps is this, that he was trusting in his own strength and ability.

And the third is possibly this, that he didn't listen to the Lord. He didn't listen to the Lord. You see, Jesus had warned him about this night.

Same chapter, Luke 22, verse 31. Simon, Simon, Satan is asked to sift you as wheat. And again, verse 34, I tell you, Peter, before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.

But was he listening? Was he listening to Jesus? Jesus was telling it to him plain and clear. It's going to be a terrible night. There's going to be lots of trouble. I'm going to be arrested. There's going to be put on trial. And you, who are my disciples, and who are around me and with me, it's going to be a terrible night for you as well.

[18 : 45] But he wasn't listening. He wasn't listening to the warnings that he was being given by Jesus. Jesus speaks to us today, doesn't he? In his word, in the Bible, by his spirit.

As we read the word and as we listen to it preached and as we meditate upon it, the Lord comes to us and opens out that word to us and speaks to us. In his word, he guides us and directs us. In his word, we've got to listen to him. We've got to listen to him.

Let me kill the street, except I may. Over the years I've noticed that young men and young women, in the context of a church, can at times be attracted one to another. It's a profound observation.

And it can happen that in that situation, sometimes a young man who is a believer in Jesus Christ can meet up with a young lady who is not a believer in Jesus Christ.

They can become very friendly. They can get very involved one with another. And they can come and speak to you and suggest to you that, well, they're thinking of getting engaged. One is a Christian and one is not.

[20 : 14] So you go to the Bible and you say, well, the Bible's not really for this, you know. You take them to that verse which speaks about not being unequally yoked together with unbelievers and you speak of the importance of having a common faith and allegiance to Jesus Christ before entering into the bond of marriage.

And they say, well, yes, it's in the Word of God and I hear it, but my situation is different. With respect, and I don't want to be too scaredy, but with respect, their situation is always different.

They speak about the other party who's not converted them. They say, well, he's not a Christian, you know, but he likes the church and he likes the church people and he likes the ministry and he enjoys the tea meetings and, you know, great.

But that's not the same as a living personal faith in Jesus Christ. He's refusing to listen to the Lord. Peter falls. He falls into sin. He makes a mess of it three times.

He denies that he was even ever with Jesus. He lets the Lord down at a crucial moment in the life of Jesus when he's all alone and unsupported and under trial in a major way.

[21 : 35] Peter lets him down because he didn't pray, because he's trusting in his own self, his own natural ability, because he won't listen to Jesus and he won't listen to the Lord as the Lord has spoken to him.

He thinks he's stronger than that and better than that. He falls also because he fell into the wrong company. Now we have to live out there in the world. We have to be faithful in our witness in the world.

We're not to closet ourselves away into a little corner where we only engage with Christians and have really next to nothing to do with men and women who are out there in the world. We've been called to be salt and light and we are to engage with the world around us.

But we have to be careful that we are able to stand, that we are able to maintain our testimony, that we are able to continue to witness for Christ and that the company around us isn't crushing us, isn't destroying us spiritually.

It was cold, says John, and the servants and officials stood around a fire that they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

[23 : 00] Now we'll credit to him he was there. He was there in the High Priest courtyard. Only himself and John were to be found there. But when he was there in that place, he wasn't careful about where he went. He got himself into a situation where he found it hard to witness.

He deserted the Lord and let him down. And one of the reasons is that those who were standing around him at the fire were against Jesus. He could feel the anti-vibe coming from these men around him. And so he fell.

He fell also because he forgot about the enemy. Don't you remember what Jesus said in verse 31, verse 32?

Satan has asked to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. Satan has asked to sift you as wheat.

He has asked to pray for you. He had asked to pray for you. He forgot to pray. He trusted in himself too much. His own natural ability.

[24 : 23] He fell in with the wrong company and didn't listen to the Lord as he should have. But undergirding all of it was this. He was engaged as you are in a warfare with Satan and the powers of darkness.

underestimated the enemy against whom he was wrestling and fighting. Satan's going to take you tonight, said Jesus, and he is going to shake you. He's going to sift you as wheat. Now my baking skills are very limited, but I do recall my mother baking, and in the kitchen she used this thing which was called a sieve, I believe, and you put flour into it and you shook it really vigorously, and then when she shook it vigorously the flour came through ever so smooth through the sieve and it was perfect for making whatever apple pie or cake or something of that nature, and then the day came when she got what was then a sort of modern sieve and you put the flour into this thing that looked like a pot and it had a handle and you pulled the handle, yeah, you pulled the handle from side to side with great vigor and the flour flowed through very finely and made even finer apple pie. But vigor was involved in this, she didn't sort of stand going like that, it was vigorous, it was all action, there was involvement in this, it was shaking, and that's the imagery which Jesus is using. Satan's going to take you Peter and he's going to give you some shaking, he's going to shake you to the very depths of your being. But he forgot about the enemy and underestimated his power and the warfare that he was involved in. Maybe tonight this is you, I don't know but it could be, this could be you tonight, you could be sitting here in church and inwardly you are in turmoil, you've let the Lord down in some significant way, you have failed the Savior, you've denied Him, you've fallen into some kind of sin in your own life, nor maybe only unto you. You just would want to acknowledge that you haven't been maintaining that personal devotional time as you ought to have done, you haven't been listening to the Lord as He's been speaking to you in

His Word and you've fallen in with some company that aren't helping you in your Christian life. This evening inwardly you're not in great shape spiritually because you've fallen into sin. Why Peter fell? But how did Jesus deal with him? How did Jesus deal with him? He did three things I believe. He confronted him first of all. Here is Jesus in the courtyard of the high priest, Peter has denied him, Peter goes away to weep over the wrong that he's done, but Jesus is taken away and in a little time he is crucified. After three days reports come through that Jesus has risen from the dead. Now think about Peter over that three-day period.

What must he have been like? Imagine the thoughts going through his mind. I've let Jesus down, I've failed him, I've turned away from him, I made a real mess of it. I've totally botched it spiritually and I'm not going to get the opportunity to get it sorted out with Jesus. I failed him there and he looked at me. Is that the last time I'm going to see him when he looked at me in the courtyard as the cock was crawling? Is that the last time I'm going to see him?

But some women went to the tomb early on that first Easter Sunday morning and there they meet with an angel and the angel has a message for them, a message from the Lord himself. Go tell his disciples, and Peter, tell his disciples, and Peter. The Gospels tell us that there was on that first Easter Sunday a meeting between the risen Christ and the Apostle Peter, a private meeting. Look 24, 34, tells us the same, that the men from Emmaus when they returned to Jerusalem and enter into the room where the disciples are to be found sharing the good news that they met with Jesus on the road to Emmaus, the disciples say yes, some women folk went to the tomb and they know that Jesus is risen. And

[29 : 28] Peter also, Peter also, Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 talks to us also about a private meeting between the Apostle Peter and the Lord Jesus Christ on the day when Jesus rose from the dead a personal encounter. And what happened there? Well we don't know for sure do we, but there's no doubt that Peter would have been broken by the sin in which he would have engaged. He would have been broken by the sin in which he had failed the Savior and he would have confessed that sin to Jesus and there together one to one man to man they would have spoken together of his failure in the courtyard and he would have acknowledged Christ's brokenness over sin. And Jesus I am sure would have confronted him with this sin. Maybe this is you tonight is it? In turmoil within, troubled, you've let the Lord down. How are you going to get back on track spiritually? How are you going to recover from this fall? The first thing that is necessary is that you like Peter must confront your sin. Don't try to play it down, don't try to sort of sweep over it or hide it. You've got to confront it. What is your sin tonight that's troubling you so much? Face it, face it, confess it, recognize it before God. He confronted him. But then something else. Jesus restored him some time after his resurrection in John chapter 21. We read of how Peter and a group of disciples went out fishing on the sea of Galilee and there they meet with Jesus who prepares a breakfast for them on the shore of the sea of Galilee.

Jesus prepares a breakfast for them and they're around that breakfast fire in the presence of some of the other disciples. Jesus speaks with Peter. Simon, son of John, do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? I really believe that in that personal encounter between Jesus and Peter on that morning when when Christ rose from the dead that individually, personally together there Peter acknowledged his sin unto Jesus and Christ saw the brokenness in the apostle and there was restoration to fellowship between them at that time privately and personally.

But now publicly in the presence of others Jesus is recognizing that Peter has sin but he's forgiving him for his sin and he's giving him work to do. Feed my sheep, feed my sheep, feed my lambs. But that's not the end of it because when you go to Acts chapter 2 to the day of Pentecost there's a preacher on that day and his name is Peter. He's preaching on that day and we're told in Acts 2 and 14 that Peter stood up with the 11, raised his voice and addressed the crowd. That's what Jesus does with us. He gets us to confront our sin. He sees our brokenness. He forgives us but he doesn't leave it there. He restores us.

And gives us work to do again in his kingdom. It's not that just he recognizes that we are broken by the wrong that we've done and by the sin we've committed.

It's not just that he hears or cry for forgiveness and receives us and cleanses us and then sets us aside and says now you're forgiven but you know I couldn't really trust you again. You're forgiven but you've let me down so badly that I just couldn't be giving you any significant work to do hereafter. You're forgiven says Jesus and I restore you to work in my kingdom. So Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost as the preacher on that day. That's what Jesus does with us.

[34 : 38] Those of you who have been here for the three services over this weekend will know that I am not too good with the illustrations. My congregation know that.

I only have a few and they hear them regularly. So have you ever meet anyone from Stramblese, EPC? Don't tell them that I used the Thomas Edison illustration please. You know Edison? Well there's a bit of a debate about him. I think he was the inventor of the electric light bulb. The last time I used the illustration a young boy, my own congregation came to tell me he brought it up on his phone on a Google article that it wasn't Edison at all. It was somebody else who turned your phone off. He invents the electric light bulb Thomas Edison and it's all ready to go. Can't you see it? That little bulb. It's being developed in some workshop but it needs to be tested up the stairs. So he gives it. He gives it to a man who's working with him. He gives it to one of his helpers and he entrusts him with the task of going up the stairs and testing the light bulb on some machinery. Well the man's excited. He's holding the light bulb in his hand. This is a great invention. He rushes up the stairs with great vigor to test the thing out and as he's rushing up the stairs he trips and falls. Smash. It's broken. So Edison gets to work again and he develops the light bulb and he gets it all together with all those wires and bits and twisted knobs that go into a light bulb. And what's he going to do? He gives it to the same man to take up the same stairs to test it out. I think he went slower that time. But that's Jesus.

I want you to face your sin because he's serious about sin. He wants you to acknowledge it before him and to be broken over it. He wants to see genuine penitence in you. But when he sees that he reaches out in love. A loving, gracious, restoring Savior who doesn't just forgive but he uses us again in his service. If this is you tonight, if this is you, take heart. All is not lost. Yes you did get it wrong. Yes you did let the Savior down. Yes there was failure but there is a way back. A simple way back. Just run to Jesus your Savior and He will forgive until He'll use you again. Never, never forget those two little words spoken by the angel. A message from the Lord Himself given to the women on the morning of Christ's resurrection. Go tell his disciples and Peter. Let us pray.

We thank you Lord Jesus Christ for your great love towards us. We thank you that you bear with us in grace and love and kindness. We thank you for the wonderful way in which you dealt with your servant Peter. And we thank you that if this is us tonight, you will receive us. You will cleanse us. You will pardon us. And you will reuse us just like him. Thank you for your grace and your love Lord Jesus Christ. And we pray that if there are any here who has yet have never looked to you or trusted in you, that they might come to see you in your kindness and love and might run to you even for the first time in brokenness, crying over sin, praying for salvation. Encourage us now as we meditate on your word and as we sing to your praise. In your name we pray. Amen.