

Video: Broken Things

In this brilliant song called 'Broken Things' Matthew West says that:

*The pages of history, they tell me it's true
That it's never the perfect;
it's always the ones with the scars that You use
It's the rebels and the prodigals; it's the humble and the weak
All the misfit heroes you chose
Tell me there's hope for sinners like me*

But is that really true? Does God really use broken things in his kingdom of grace? Are people who've messed up, who've hurt others and failed Jesus – are they really able to serve in God's kingdom?

Not everybody thinks so. In his book on the life of Moses, Chuck Swindoll refers to a proverb which says, *"The bird with the broken pinion (wing) never soars as high again."* In other words, once you've failed, you will never attain the heights you did before. If you've made a mess of things in your life – you'll never accomplish anything of worth for God again!

And some people believe that. That's why they remember our failures and keep on using them to put us down. They believe that because we messed up, then we can never serve God effectively again.

But like Matthew West, Swindoll disagrees. He says that "God seems to prefer using people with broken pinions." God chooses to use and bless broken people! The Bible is full of broken people who did amazing things for God. People like:

- Abraham who was an habitual liar.
- Jacob who was a cheat.
- Moses who was a murderer
- Rahab who was a prostitute.
- David who was an adulterer.
- Jonah who was disobedient.
- Paul who was a persecutor.

And of course, people like Peter. Peter had denied his Lord 3 times at the most crucial of moments. It was an incredibly painful experience for Peter.

But it wasn't the end of his life with Jesus. Jesus didn't discard him as a failure. Instead, after giving him the miraculous catch of fish and hot breakfast that we saw last time, Jesus restored Peter in an amazing demonstration of his grace. John 21:15-19: *"When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"*

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

¹⁶ *Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?"*

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

¹⁷ *The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"*

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

1. Don't Try To Hide

A few weeks previously, Peter had stood around a fire with the enemies of Jesus, in the courtyard of the high priests. Three times he'd been asked if he was a disciple of Jesus. Three times he'd denied it saying, *"I am not!"* John 18:17

And now, Peter was again beside a fire. This time he was surrounded by his brothers in Christ. And again, he was asked three times about his loyalty to Jesus: *"Do you truly love me?"* John 21:15.

Clearly, Jesus was bringing Peter back to the night of his betrayal. But why? Why did Jesus feel the need to bring this up again? Why did he have to remind Peter of this painful memory? He knew that Peter was sorry for what he'd done. He

knew he regretted it. Why not just forgive and forget and move on?

Years ago, I had a friend in Scotland who'd a problem with gambling. He borrowed money from me to pay off some of his gambling debts. Later I also found out he borrowed money off some of my family as well. He arranged to pay it back but never did.

I was concerned about him and his problem, but I never confronted him about the situation. We never fell out, never fought about it. He was embarrassed, I was a bit annoyed. And so this unspoken issue between us eventually caused us to drift apart as friends.

Sin that is hidden destroys relationships. But sin that is confronted in love and with grace and forgiveness can heal them. That morning, Jesus had to bring this issue to light so that it would not destroy their friendship.

a) Confess

It is the same in our relationship with the Lord. Romans 8:1 states ["There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."](#) If we've put our faith in Jesus, then our past, present and future sins have been completely forgiven and God will never condemn us.

But still, our ongoing sin needs to be confessed. ["If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."](#) 1 John 1:8-9

Of course that's not easy. It is uncomfortable and humbling to confront our failures, wrong attitudes or actions. And yet the alternative is worse. In Psalm 32, David wrote about the oppressive weight of unconfessed sin in his life. He said ["When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer."](#) Psalm 32:3-4

But then he repented and confessed that sin before the Lord:

["Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'— and you forgave the guilt of my sin."](#) Psalm 32:5

If we try to hide our sin from God, then there is no relief, no intimacy, only guilt. But when we confess our sin, then we can experience the joy of forgiveness and restoration. Is there something in our lives today that we need to confess before God?

b) Confront

But we don't only need to do this with God. We need to do this with each other. Jesus said, ["If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over."](#) Matthew 18:15.

When issues arise between us. When someone offends us or says something hurtful to us, it is tempting to run from confrontation. It feels easier to just cover it up, and hope that it goes away.

But hurts that are not dealt with, or guilt that has never really been forgiven gets in the way of close fellowship. It leads to distance and separation!

So we need to confront sin in love. We need to go to the person who has hurt us and deal with it with grace. Is there someone that we need to speak to about this issue today?

2. Focus on the Heart

So in love, Jesus confronted Peter's failure. But did you notice what Jesus focussed on here?

He didn't talk about that night. He didn't go over all that Peter did or didn't do or say. Instead he asked Peter about his heart. 3 times, he asked, "[Simon, son of John, Do you truly love me...](#)" John 21:15 Jesus went right to the heart of the issue. This is the core of our relationship with God!

In fact, Jesus actually asked Peter initially "[Do you truly love me more than these?](#)" John 21:15. That word 'these' probably referred to the other disciples. Jesus was asking Peter if he loved him more than the other disciples did.

That was because the night before Jesus was crucified, Peter had boasted, "[Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.](#)" Matthew 26:33

But his experience had humbled him. He didn't reply to that part of Jesus question. He only stated "[Yes Lord... you know that I love you.](#)" John 21:15

a) Jesus' Priority

Sometimes we can put so much focus on the externals - what we do or don't do, how many times we go to church, how much we give, what ministry we are involved in. But Jesus' priority is our heart.

The greatest commandment he said is to "[Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.](#)" Matthew 22:37. Our focus should be on our heart relationship with the Lord!

Just as an aside, you might have heard that in these verses Jesus and Peter used different Greek words for love – agape love (the sacrificial or divine love) and phileo love (brotherly love, the love of a friend). And some have suggested that this shows a deeper meaning about what Jesus and Peter were saying about the strength of love asked and given. But I don't think that's what was going on here as John often used these two Greek words for love interchangeably in his gospel.

b) Jesus Knows

But what we can see here, is that Peter did not just declare his love. He appealed to what Jesus knew about his heart: "[You know all things; you know that I love you.](#)" John 21:17

Peter knew that Jesus knew his heart. Yes his actions had let Jesus down. His mouth had denied him. But his heart belonged to the Lord!

There's a challenge in this. "[Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.](#)" 1 Samuel 16:7 This morning, we might fool others by our appearance or behaviour. We might look the part of a wholehearted follower of Jesus. But we can never pull the wool over the eyes of the Lord! He knows our inmost thoughts.

But this can also be a great encouragement. Other people might wonder about our commitment to the Lord. Other people might see our failures and the times we don't live up to what we profess. They might even accuse us, "Call yourself a Christian?"

But Jesus knows our hearts. Even in times of our failure. Jesus knows we love him!
And Jesus accepts our love, weak as it is!

c) Jesus Loves

Peter declared his love 3 times – as if he was cancelling out each one of his denials. And Jesus graciously accepted these expressions of love!

Peter's commitment had wavered. But Jesus' love had not. And although our love for Jesus may fail, his love for us will never.

["Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."](#) Lamentation 3:22-23

3. Be Fully Restored

But that morning, Peter wasn't only restored to his relationship with Jesus.

a) To The Privilege of Service

When Peter declare his love Jesus responded, "[Feed my lambs.](#)" John 21:15

“Take care of my sheep.” John 21:16 “Feed my sheep” John 21:17 Jesus invited Peter to express his love for him by feeding and caring for his young and mature followers.

This was not Peter being installed as some sort of pope. Jesus is “The Good Shepherd” John 10:11, “The Great Shepherd” Hebrews 13:20, and “The Chief Shepherd” 1 Peter 5:4. As Jesus said here – they are his lambs, his sheep.

But Peter was being called to be an under-shepherd. To care for God’s people, to teach them Jesus’ words, to protect them from those who would seek to destroy their faith! Peter used to be tempted to compete for prominence against the other disciples. Now his job would be to care for them – to serve them!

Peter had just failed Jesus. He had denied his Lord. But that didn’t make Peter a second-class disciple. But by the grace of God, Peter was restored into the privilege of service.

And Peter called all church leaders, all pastors, to do the same: “To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow-elder... Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.” 1 Peter 5:1-2

But this is also true for each of us who’ve trusted in Jesus. Often we don’t feel good enough or knowledgeable enough to serve in this way. We’re so aware of our failures and struggles. But Jesus’ grace is so amazing that he doesn’t only restore us to know him, but also to serve him.

We’re all called in some sense to shepherd or care for others: our families, friends, younger believers. And each of us have spiritual gifts that enable us to serve others, as an overflow of our love for Jesus. Peter wrote: “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” 1 Peter 4:10

b) To The Privilege of Suffering

But Peter wasn’t only restored to serve Christ. He was also restored to suffer for him. Jesus said, “When you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” John 21:18

Peter would be martyred for his faith in Jesus. Tradition says that Peter was crucified upside down because he didn’t feel worthy to die like his Lord.

This is what it meant for Peter to follow Jesus. And to some extent it’s the same for us. Following Jesus includes suffering. “If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.” 1 Peter 2:20–21

Following Jesus is costly. We might suffer criticism, ridicule, rejection, isolation or even violence and death. And Jesus can ask this of us – because, he is simply asking us to follow in his footsteps. He already gave his life for us.

But although, Jesus doesn’t promise to save us from suffering, he does promise to transform that suffering. “Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.” John 21:19

Peter’s death would not be a tragedy, rather it would glorify God. John didn’t explain how this would happen. But maybe it would be that his death would be a powerful demonstration of the grace of Jesus that changed his life.

- Initially, Peter had opposed Jesus when he first spoke about the cross.
- Then he drew his sword in a futile attempt to protect Jesus from it.
- And then, when the pressure was on, he denied his Lord, in order to save himself.
- But Peter would be so transformed by the grace of Jesus, that he was willing to follow Jesus faithfully, even although he knew that it led to death on a cross.

Sometimes we might not understand what God is doing in our lives. We might not see good coming from it. But the Bible tells us that: “In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28

He promises to transform our suffering and work in it for our good and for his glory!

And so Peter wrote: “Those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.” 1 Peter 4:19 If we’re suffering, let’s not give up or retreat. Instead, let’s commit ourselves into God’s hands and ask him for the grace to keep on following Jesus!

Conclusion

So this morning, we may be all too aware of our brokenness. But that doesn't mean that we can't have the privilege of serving Christ.

So let's not try to hide our failings. Instead, let us humbly confess our sins and wholeheartedly declare our love for Jesus. And let's commit ourselves to follow him with everything that we are and have.

Now I'm just a beggar in the presence of a King

I wish I could bring so much more

But if it's true You use broken things

Then here I am Lord, I'm all Yours

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