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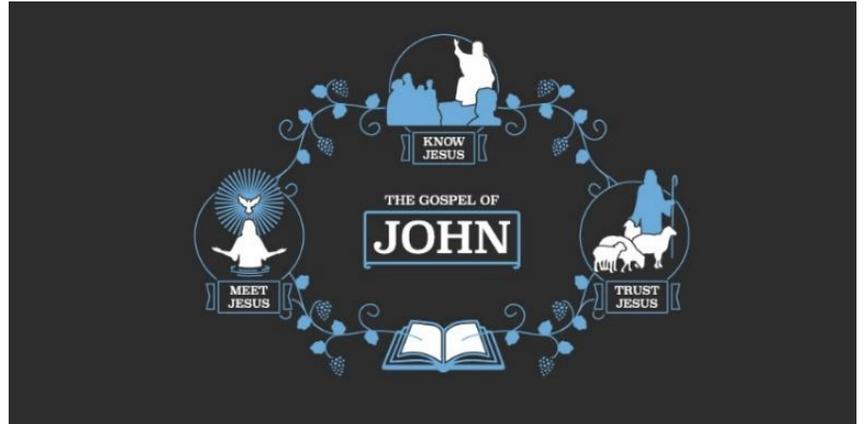
Shutting Down Your Shame – Once and For All!

The Gospel of John

John 21

Tim Badal | July 24, 2022

Turn in your Bibles to John 21 this morning. We're in the last chapter of this year-long journey, meeting Jesus and learning about Him so we can trust Him with all of who we are and everything that concerns us. John finishes his Gospel about his best friend on earth, after chronicling the miracles and messages Jesus preached, in a way that none of the other Gospel writers did.



Matthew, Mark and Luke finished their Gospels with the Great Commission to go and make disciples in all nations. But John focuses on a fishing expedition and the restoration of Peter. We know that John wrote his Gospel about 30 years after the other Gospels were written. I think he knew there were some leftover dots that needed to be connected.

The last we heard of John's friend Peter was in John 18. At that point, Peter had denied Jesus three times and as a result he was in deep despair. If John had only talked about the Great Commission and Christ's ascension, we would wonder about some things when we get to Acts 1 and find Peter taking a position of leadership in the early church where he preached the message of a lifetime, after which 3,000 people were added to the church and launching it. We would also wonder at how God used Peter in many awesome ways throughout the book of Acts. Then, how could a man who had failed so miserably write two letters to the church—1 and 2 Peter—revealing his great dedication to Christ. We need John 21 to connect those dots and tie up those loose ends for us.

More than that, I think John 21 is a gift and grace to all of us. Who among us hasn't failed? Who among us hasn't made big boasts about our relationship with Jesus, only to fall into sin? Who among us hasn't felt unworthy to serve Christ because of the struggles we have? John 21 is such a fitting place for John to end his gospel. In a nutshell, it reminds us that apart from Jesus we can do nothing, and that although we are failures and sinners, Jesus came to give us life and life abundantly.

In this chapter, John is declaring to us, "When you trust Jesus, He can shut down for sin and shame once and for all." That's what I'm going to be focusing on this morning. For some of us, because of our sin and the shame that comes with it, we are debilitated in our ability to serve and honor Christ. That's not what Jesus wants for us. He didn't want it for Peter, or His other disciples, and He doesn't want it for us today. This morning I want to tell you how Jesus deals with our sin and the shame that comes with it, looking at three things.

Shame comes as a result of our failures.

When we last saw Peter in John 18, I entitled that message, "Epic Fail." After the message, an individual came up to me and said, "Boy, I needed that. I had an epic fail in my life." I responded, "You're not the only one. We're all epic failures." The Bible makes this clear when it says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Listen to me carefully this morning. You have failed God. You have failed Him and so have I. Every man, woman and child, other than Jesus Christ, has failed to live up to the glory of the perfect God in heaven. Because of that, no matter how clean we look, no matter how good of a game we talk, all of us have had epic failures in our lives. As a result of those places where we've fallen short of God's glory, we find ourselves living in the emotion called shame. Shame has been defined as "the painful feeling of failure." It's the feeling you have when you have failed.

You feel shame when you strike out in a baseball game. You feel shame when the girl you ask out says, "No." You feel shame for a variety of things, both at work and play. When there's a moment of failure, shame comes right on its heels. It rises in our consciousness as a feeling of being dishonorable, improper or ridiculous. It can be caused by something that we've done to ourselves or maybe by someone close to us.

We can have family shame. Parents can have shame because of what their kids have done. Kids can have shame for what their parents have done. Shame is part and parcel of the human condition, because we have all failed. What the devil and the world will tell us is that if we have failed, there's no hope and no future for us. In fact, many people—even those who have gone on to live great lives—have still been told they were abject failures.

Upon watching the first game of Vince Lombardi's football career, a mentor coach said, "Vince possesses minimal football knowledge, he lacks motivation and he probably will never see a game as a coach." Sadly, Vince heard that in the press.

Second, Beethoven's teacher said, "He handles the violin awkwardly; he prefers to play his own odd compositions, instead of improving his technique." The teacher called him "a hopeless musician who will never, ever become a composer."

How about Walt Disney? He was fired from three jobs as a newspaper editor for lack of creativity and ideas. He went bankrupt several times and it wouldn't be until later in life, after a set of failures, that he would build the great Disney empire.

How about Thomas Edison? His high school teacher wrote this on his report card, very succinctly: "He's too stupid to do anything."

Albert Einstein was a failure over and over again. His parents thought he would amount to nothing in adulthood. Why? Because he didn't speak until he was eight, he didn't read until he was ten, and his teachers described him as "mentally slow, unsociable, adrift forever in his foolish and childish dreams." He was expelled from high school and refused admission into the university.

All of us, no matter who we are, have felt the sting of failing and the shame that comes from it. A lot of us think that because of that, we're defined by that. I grew up in this church, and if you were to ask the congregation as I was going through junior high and high school to name the one person they didn't think would grow up to be a pastor, it would have been a 100% vote for me. There were some hard things that were said. I'm sure they were said in love. I'm sure I drove people to say some difficult things. I pushed their limits. I was thrown out of my eighth grade Sunday School class by the nape of my neck. He was a type-A personality, so this Kool-Aid drinking, ADD kid drove him berserk. He dragged me to the class my dad was teaching, an adult Sunday School class right outside these doors. Talk about history! As he was walking me down the stairs from the old building, he said, "What are you going to do with yourself?" I told him, "Sir, you watch. One day I'm going to be a pastor." I had no intention of being a pastor; I just knew that would get his goat. To which he aptly replied, "Listen to me, Tim. The only place you'll ever be a preacher is the Joliet State Penitentiary."

We've all been there, right? Sadly, there are a lot of people who will tell us we're good for nothing. They'll tell us that our history defines us. If there was anyone who had a moment in time that should have defined his future, it was Peter. Peter had failed miserably. He had talked a great game. He had said everybody else would leave Jesus, but not him. Peter loved Jesus more than anyone else and he made sure everyone knew that. But then, on the day of Jesus' arrest, Peter denied Jesus, not once, not twice, but three times. He did the very thing he said he wasn't going to do. When Jesus, humanly speaking, needed him the most, Peter failed Him. The text tells us that after that failure, when the rooster crowed, Peter wept bitterly. He knew he had failed. He knew he had blown it.

Some of us remember that moment when we blew it. We said something or did something, even though we knew it was wrong. The moment it happened, we knew life would never be the same again. We knew that moment would haunt us the rest of our lives. That's where Peter was at in John 18. He knew his life was over. He knew that whatever was planned for him was done.

I want to be careful how I say this, but if there was anyone who might have found some consolation in the death of Jesus, it may have been Peter. He knew he would never have to see Jesus again, so that shame and remorse would never have to be brought back up with Jesus. But here's the problem: Jesus was raised from the grave. I wonder if, even though Peter felt great joy that Jesus had done what He promised He would do, there was part of him that realized, "Now I have to look Him in the eye. Now I've got to talk to Him."

For some of us, our relationship with Jesus is skewed and broken. That is not anything He's done; He does exactly what He promises to do. But now we have to look at Him, talk with Him and have a relationship with Him. We believe our sin has separated us once and for all from any kind of relationship or ongoing ministry. You see, shame brings friends with it. Shame loves to throw parties. Inviting friends named Alienation, Inadequacy, Helplessness, Powerlessness, Defensiveness, Insecurity, Uncertainty, Unworthiness, Hurts, Intimidations, Defeat and Rejection. That's what we're dealing with because "*...all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). All have shame.

What Jesus wants us to know is that we can trust in and believe in Him, then He will take the shame away. He'll give us purpose and identity, then our failure will never define us again. But there's a problem in this story. Before that our new purpose and identity can happen, we see that shame can impact our lives more than we realize. Here are three ways Peter's failure and shame impacted him.

Shame impacted the choices Peter made.

We see in John 18 that Peter had blown it. The rooster had crowed. It was over. But then Jesus was resurrected from the grave. Peter had seen Him, not once, not twice, but three times. Let's read about the third time he saw Jesus:

¹ After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Notice what Peter was doing. He was going fishing. After seeing the risen Savior, why would Peter go back to fishing? Commentaries agree that Peter was probably making his exit from his role as a disciple. In his mind he was thinking, "I have failed so miserably, any chance of me being a pastor, missionary or follower of Jesus Christ is gone. That went out the door when I denied Him those three times." So he decided to go back to what he did before he met Jesus. Because he was sure he was of no use to Christ anymore, he would just go back to his previous occupation that didn't require anything spiritual from him.

As many of you know, I work bi-vocationally. This would be like me losing my ministry here because of some epic failure in my life, then my words to you as I leave would be, "I'm going back to catering." That's the only other thing I know how to do. Besides, even though I mess up this ministry, I can't mess up pork chops and chicken. I've got that down.

So Peter was exiting the ministry because of his sin and shame. Some of you have walked away from the Lord, not because He has walked away from you, but because your shame has you thinking there's no place for you in the church, no place for you in the family of God, so you're filling your life with everything else—and the devil has you right where he wants you.

Shame impacted how Peter would lead his companions.

Notice that Peter's shame also impacted his companions. He said, "I'm going fishing" and the others said, "We'll go with you." Here's the problem. When Peter was faithful, he was the leader. When he was faithless, he was still the leader. I want you to know that when you're faithful, you're a leader and when you're faithless, you're still a leader. There are eyes watching and ears listening. There are people following in your steps.

So instead of preaching Christ, proclaiming restoration, reconciliation and the forgiveness of sins, Peter was just wallowing in his sadness and guilt. And to a lesser extent, the other disciples felt that as well. All but John had deserted Jesus, so now they followed their leader.

Some in this place today have people following you, but not to good places. Instead of being the model of reconciliation and restoration, you're a model of what it means to spiritually retreat. Be careful, people are watching. You shouldn't be surprised when they follow in your footsteps.

Shame led Peter to a new set of consequences.

So the disciples took off, then notice what they did. They got in a boat and went fishing. Of the ones who are listed, four of them had professional fishing in their background. However, they caught nothing. That's an important Greek word there. "Nothing" means zilch, nada, nothing. This is an example of what consequences of doing life without Jesus will bring you.

Here are Peter and the other disciples, running away from Jesus, knowing they had failed Him and that now they are good for nothing spiritually. Then they find out, "We can't even catch fish anymore. This is how pathetic we are. There's nothing we can do."

Isn't that what shame does for many of us? Shame makes us think there's nothing of value in us. Whatever we might have done in the past that defined us, now fills our lives with futility. Here they are, fishing all night but catching nothing. Now here's the crazy thing about them fishing: it's not like it only took place over the course of a few minutes. They were there all night long, sitting in that boat, casting out that net, pulling it in, but there was nothing in it. Cast it out, pull it in, nothing. They were at a place of epic fail and shame. In that moment, they needed something.

In this moment, in this church, I have to believe there are some who are living in places of shame and failure, and you need something. You're going through life, but there's nothing, nada, zilch. The reason why you're so fruitless in your work is because of that situation, that moment, that thing you said, that thing you did, that thing you wish you could get in a time machine and go back and relive, doing it differently. So you keep going back to it and back to it. The devil is accusing you, "Of course you're good for nothing. How could a child of God do such a thing? How can you say you're a Christian and let those words come out of your mouth? How can you say you're a follower of Christ and involve yourself in that activity?" So you feel absolutely worthless. That's John 21:3. They're feeling it. They're sitting in that boat. They're dying inside. It's in that moment, in that place, that Jesus had an answer for them. He also has an answer for us.

Shame is removed through the words of a friend.

Shame is removed through the words, and I would add the actions, of a faithful friend. Jesus shows up in your place of greatest sorrow and pain. Our passages continues with this:

⁴ Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." ⁶ He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. ⁸ The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards^l off.

⁹ When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast."

Listen, church. In our place of greatest sorrow and shame, Jesus comes looking for us. Notice that Jesus restores Peter by finding him, then by feeding him, then by freeing him.

Jesus restores Peter by finding him.

Peter didn't want to be found, so he went fishing. He didn't want to be near Jesus. Peter hadn't even done what the prodigal son did. When the son was in a far-off land, after squandering all his riches, it came into his mind to go back to his father. "It would be better to be a slave in my father's house than to live life on my own" (John 15:11-32).

Peter wasn't even there yet. He was trying to put more distance between himself and Jesus. He was running from God, yet Jesus came running after him. Of course, Jesus always knew where Peter was. They weren't playing a hide-and-seek game. When Jesus found Peter, notice what He said.

If I was Jesus, let me tell you how I would have responded. "Hey, Peter, you deserter. You denier. You talked such a good game, saying you'd never leave. Remember that, Peter? 'Oh, all these may fall away, but not me. Not Peter.' Remember that, Peter? What

a joke. Not once, not twice...remember that third one. That little girl with the pigtails. She was like 55 pounds. She was a little thing, yet you couldn't even say you were a follower of Mine to that little thing. What is wrong with you?"

How many of us respond like this to those around us when they're in a place of guilt? That's not what Jesus does. Jesus calls out to them and hears that they've caught no fish. So He miraculously gives them words that would be a blessing to them: "Stop doing it that way; do it this way instead."

Some of us are living in our shame because we are unwilling to listen to Jesus, unwilling to stop doing it our way and start doing it His way. Jesus says, out of love and compassion, "This isn't working for you. Let's try this way. Trust Me. Believe Me and it will work." The disciples do what he suggests, then they pulled a great load of fish out of the water.

Jesus restores Peter by feeding him.

Then we read that when they came to the land, Jesus told them to bring some of the fish. There was already a fire going and He said, "Come and have breakfast." He not only found them, He began to feed them. Don't miss this. In the Middle Eastern culture, that was an invitation to intimacy. Americans will eat with anybody. In the Middle Eastern culture, if there was a rift, even within a household, the table would not be set.

I want you to know that you are already reconciled to Jesus because of His finished work on the cross. He is inviting you and all you have to do is come. Over and over again we find the image of God setting out an incredible meal, then He invites anyone and everyone who will come to His party.

So Jesus had prepared the food, then He invited Peter, saying, "I want you to eat." Notice what He does next. This is so important but we can read right past it. All of this takes place just as day is breaking (verse four). The sun was rising.

Let's rewind back to John 18. After the third denial of Jesus by Peter, what happens? Rooster crows. Farmers, when do roosters crow? Afternoon? No! It's early in the morning, as day is breaking.

Do you see what Jesus is doing here in John 21? He's moving Peter to the same time stamp. Then notice that Jesus had a bag of Kingsford charcoal, lit it on the seashore, the smoke and smell is wonderful. I make a living off that smell, but that smell took Peter to his denials. Back in John 18, in his second denial, Peter denied Jesus to a group of men who were huddled around a fire. Now Jesus is bringing Peter back to that time and that place, and it wasn't hard for Peter to go there.

For some of us, in our epic fails, if you're like me, you remember that moment. You remember what you were thinking. You remember what you were doing. You remember what you were wearing. You remember the smells. And forever since that point, you have wanted to go back and change that moment.

Peter realizes, "It's daybreak, there's the smell of fire, there's Jesus again, at a distance." Jesus has set him up. He wants to feed him. Then there's a dialog. Even though there are other people around them, the dialog is just between Jesus and Peter. Here's what Jesus wants Peter to know. Jesus was telling Peter, "There's restoration in Me. There's reconciliation because of Me."

Jesus restores Peter by freeing him.

In a room this big, you're hearing the voice of Jesus, not speaking to everyone, but speaking to each of us individually. He's saying, "Whatever your sin is, whatever your struggle, wherever you've blown it, there is forgiveness and freedom."

Jesus begins by asking Peter some questions and He asks them three times. How many times did Peter deny Jesus? Three times. Three times Jesus says, "Do you love me?" Notice, He says, "Do you love me more than these?" What are the 'these'? What is He saying here? "Do you love me more than these?" in verse 15. Is it the boat? Is it the net? Is it the fish? "Do you love Me more than being a fisherman?" Does He mean, "Do you love Me more than these," talking about the other disciples? Most commentaries believe it's the disciples. Why? Because Peter had said he loved Jesus more than they did. "They would all fall away," Peter said, "but not me."

Shame can be reversed through an obedient future.

So how is Peter going to be restored? Jesus is now saying, "If you do, you don't have to live in that place anymore. Your shame and sin can be reversed. Your shame can be reversed through an obedient future." Jesus says it begins with a life of service.

Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."¹⁶ He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep."¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.

How do we get beyond a place of shame and sin? We stop living in the past and start serving the Lord in the present. "Feed my sheep. Tend my sheep. Feed my lambs." What is He saying? In a nutshell, Jesus is saying, "You're going to minister to all types of people, all types of ages and backgrounds, all types of smells, issues and struggles. You're going to minister to them all."

The way we reverse our sin and shame is by dedicating our lives to a life of service, serving the other epic failures around us, helping them, guiding them, leading them, gracing them. This involves more than simply a service we ordinarily do; it's the primary service we should do.

You're not going to see this in your English translation, but in the original language, when Jesus says, "Do you love me?" and Peter responds, "Yes, I love You," there is more than one word for love. The Greek language has multiple words for love. So Jesus says, "Peter, do you *agape* Me?" *Agape* is a supernatural, sacrificial love. Peter responds, "You know I *phileo* You." That's brotherly love, a social love. "I love You like a brother." Jesus says again, "Do you *agape* Me, Peter?" Peter says, "You know I *phileo* You, Jesus."

When we talk about a life of service, Jesus is saying our sin and shame is reversed when we make Jesus the primary thing in our world. That relationship is first and foremost in our lives. This means we need to surrender things. There's a life of service that Peter is going to live and it will be a life of surrender. For the rest of the chapter, Jesus says some pretty cryptic things.

¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go."¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."

Peter is being told that he would be a prisoner for the sake of Christ. "People will drag you around and do what they want with you. At one point they're going to stretch your arms out, then you're going to die on a cross." Peter did die on a cross some decades later, but because he thought it was unfitting to die as Jesus did, church history tells us he requested to be crucified upside down.

What do we know about Peter? Peter was one of the greatest men who ever lived. He was one of the greatest men to ever serve our Lord. He was a model of faithfulness and humility Why? Because his past no longer defined him. Because of his surrender and service to his King, Jesus took Peter's shame and reversed it so he was never be defined by it again.

If you are being defined by a sin, defined by a moment in time, dedicate your life to your Lord and Savior, then watch Him change the narrative. People will forget your failure and only remember your faithfulness. Listen, that has been my calling. As an 18 or 19-year-old kid, I had far too many people saying, "You've blown it too many times. Your rap sheet is too long. You've got too many issues and struggles. Your mouth gets the best of you." I finally got so sick and tired of the devil and other people beating me up over it that I dedicated my life to Jesus. I said, "Jesus, wherever You want me to go, whatever You want me to do, I'll do it. If I'm going to be a fool for anybody, I'll be a fool for You." I will tell you this. He has taken away my failures, and by His grace and mercy He has used me to bring Him glory. For that I will be eternally thankful.

So join me in that journey with Peter, then watch your shame shut down forever. Give your sin and shame to Jesus as Peter did, then watch Jesus change it all. You'll never be the same and you'll never be happier.