

## Final Words Part 7 - Follow Me 04.24.11

Video: "Grace" by The Skit Guys [3:38]

**Introduction:** This post-resurrection scene between Peter and Jesus gives us much food for thought. I invite you to open your Bibles...

**Read: John 21:15-19 ESV**

**What Resurrection G.R.A.C.E. Means To Me. Jesus...**

**GRANTS** me second chances.

He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"  
John 21:16 ESV

Jesus shows Peter... and us... that he and his Father are not about finding reasons to get rid of people. They are about including people. They love people. Jesus loves giving second... and third... and many more chances. This should not be surprising...

Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times? Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."  
Matthew 18:21-22 ESV

We want to put limits on how often we give second chances. Not God. He exaggerates the number of times both He and we should forgive others. Because we don't really believe this, we... like Peter... can have the idea that God doesn't really want us. Have you ever noticed that John tells us exactly how many fish were caught (John 21:11)? 153! By implication we can believe that Peter was over counting the fish instead of hanging out with Jesus and the other disciples. In the same way we can distract ourselves with many good things that keep us away from the very best thing: relationship with Jesus... all because we don't really believe he grants us second chances. Elsewhere John teaches...

"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1 ESV

Even now Jesus is our advocate. This was his attitude all the time he walked the earth. **CONSIDER!** Jesus called Matthew after Matthew had been a tax collector. Jesus affirmed Zacchaeus - a chief tax collector. Jesus forgave and affirmed Peter. Won't he give YOU a second chance?

**RESTORES** my broken relationships.

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?"  
John 21:17a ESV

Not only does Jesus give second chances, but he restores the broken relationships between ourselves and God... and between ourselves and other people. It's not just a second chance but I want nothing to do with you. It's a second chance for a full restoration! God the Father had always been about this.

So this is what the Lord says, "If you change your heart and return to me, I will take you back. Then you may serve me." Jeremiah 15:19 NCV

Jesus - God in the flesh - demonstrates this in human terms. Peter was doing what people do: shutting himself off from Jesus because he didn't really believe Jesus would restore him back to a full relationship. Jesus says THREE TIMES "Do you love me... Feed my sheep." It was his way of saying, "Peter - you're still my guy. I still love you. I still trust you."

This is not just the GRACE that God gives to us, but also the grace he expects that we will give to one another. One of Jesus' most powerful parables was about the servant who was forgiven, but didn't in turn forgive his own servant. Paul tells us this is a part of our life as Christians:

"Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you."  
2 Corinthians 13:11 ESV

**ACCEPTS** \_\_\_\_\_ me the way I am.

"Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."  
Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." John 21:17b ESV

Peter was fallen. He had failed miserably. He really wanted to defend Jesus. He wanted to stand by him. But three times he had denied even knowing Jesus. He not only let Jesus down... he let himself down. He didn't live up to his own expectations of himself.

We often cannot live up to our own expectations. We want to live a noble life. We find ourselves often living well below our own expectations, our own standards. We don't accept ourselves if we're honest, so we can't imagine that God could accept us.

He does accept us. Just like we are. Not like we could be. Not just at our best. But at our worst! In fact, it was our worst that Jesus gave his all for us:

"But God has shown us how much he loves us - it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us!" Romans 5:8 GNT

INSIGHT: You may never live at your best. You may always be hobbled by your regrets, your sins, and the consequences of your actions. Substitute God's acceptance of you for your own acceptance of you! Begin understanding that God's opinion of you is much more important than your own. **That will lead you to understand that Jesus...**

**CREATES** \_\_\_\_\_ in me the desire to change.

And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me." John 21:19b ESV

Have you ever considered just how significant those two little words are? "Follow me." It was the first words that the disciples had ever heard from Jesus. They never would have qualified to follow any other rabbi, but Jesus wanted them. At the time it was one thing to throw away a life of fishing to join up with Jesus. Now, though, they knew him so much better... his power... his Godness... his power... his teachings. AND he knew them. He still wanted them. He still said "Follow me!"

"Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons! Look at it!" 2 Corinthians 5:17 MSG

Jesus accepts me the way I am, but he is not satisfied to leave me the way I am. He wants to change me... and you. To help us to live up to his expectations of who he created us to become.

**ENLARGES** \_\_\_\_\_ my vision for service.

“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.”

John 21:18 ESV

Our first brush at this passage is one of despair. Jesus is telling Peter he is going to die for his faith. Sounds horrible to our ears. However, to Peter, it is an affirmation. Peter will not remain the man who denied Jesus three times. He will become a man with a strong backbone, who will resist his own weakness even unto death. We may not all die a martyr, but Jesus predicts great acts of service for all Christ-followers:

“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”

John 14:12 NIV

When you consider the great works that Jesus did, that is remarkable. Of course it's not within our own powers and abilities that this is possible. It is only in connection with God's powerful Spirit that we can accomplish great things for Christ's kingdom.

**Conclusion:** If we are not careful we can approach Resurrection Sunday with an attitude of how wonderful it is that we have eternal life. How terrific it is that we can have a personal relationship with Christ. All that is great. However, I think there's more to Easter than our own salvation. God wants to use us to bring heaven to earth. We have the opportunity to restore His kingdom to every place, every relationship, every job we do.

“Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically.”

Romans 12:11 NLT

Today we celebrate the Power of the Cross. That power is not a power that leads to death, but a power that leads to resurrection. We all will be resurrected one day. That changes how we live... how we think... how we go about our lives. As Christy sings “Power of the Cross,” I invite you to go to the communion table so we might celebrate together the great and wondrous things Christ will accomplish in our lives because of Easter.

**Christy sings, “Power of the Cross”**

**Communion and Prayer**

**Closing Congregational Song: “Christ Is Risen”**