

**John 21:3-22 (NIV)**

<sup>3</sup>"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

<sup>4</sup>Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

<sup>5</sup>He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered.

<sup>6</sup>He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."

When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

<sup>7</sup>Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.

<sup>8</sup>The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.

<sup>9</sup>When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

<sup>10</sup>Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."

<sup>11</sup>Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.

<sup>12</sup>Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.

<sup>13</sup>Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.

<sup>14</sup>This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

<sup>15</sup>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."

<sup>16</sup>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."

<sup>17</sup>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."

<sup>18</sup>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."

<sup>19</sup>Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

<sup>20</sup>Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?")

<sup>21</sup>When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?"

<sup>22</sup>Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me."

43-21-03-Jesus Is Our Best Psychotherapist  
failure, guilt, memory, forgiveness, healing, ministry

John 21:3-22

Jesus turns remembered failures into restored fruitfulness.

**INTRODUCTION:** (Scripture Reading: **John 21:3-14**)

–*Our best psychotherapist is Jesus, Healer of memories.* **John 21:3-14** set the stage for a therapeutic session with Peter in the rest of **John 21**.

–Peter already had the Holy Spirit– **John 20:21-22**, Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." *Wouldn't that meet any emotional needs Peter still had? **No more than new birth solves all our problems!** Spiritual growth is a process, but growth spurts do happen. One form of them is the divine therapy of *inner healing* or *healing of memories*. –Peter's triple denial of Christ may explain his *return to fishing*. Even after *receiving the Spirit*, maybe he still felt *guilty... unfit* to serve in the Gospel work he'd been called to. But **HOM.idea** by *healing memories*.*

- I. To Heal Memories, He First Helps Us to Recall Them– v.5-6.** *He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.*
- A. An identical miracle with fish was the context of their becoming Christ's disciples– **Mat 4:19-20**, "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. (This probably reminded Peter of his original decision to follow Jesus.)
- B. In **v.9**, *When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. (Did this remind Peter of the multiplied "loaves and fishes" that he'd helped distribute to the crowd of 5000? Maybe...)*
- C. But "a fire of burning coals" [lit., a charcoal fire] held painful memories for Peter. That word's used only one other time in the NT– **John 18:18 (ESV)**, Now the servants and officers had made a **charcoal fire**, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself. (Did Jesus purposely mean for Peter to recall that terrible night of denying Him? If so, why?)

**TRANS:** [**David A. Seamands** tells *why*: "Surely the memory of those courtyard coals had been burning like fire in the conscience and memory of Peter. Here the Master Psychiatrist led Peter to face his most traumatic memory, and used a charcoal

fire to cauterize and heal Peter's pain and shame. With the sting removed, Peter would be able to use that burning memory not as a curse which crippled, but as a spark to ignite him to an even deeper devotion..." ] Our *subconscious* can fool us into *repressing* or forgetting painful memories that need healing— Jer 17:9 (ESV), "The heart is deceitful above all things, and **desperately sick**; who can understand it?" God can! He "searches the heart," not only *understanding it* but *wanting to heal it*. **Jesus wanted to turn Peter's remembered failure into restored fruitfulness.** And...

## II. To Restore Our Fruitfulness, He Recalls Us to our Calling— v.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."*

- A. Jesus asked Peter the same question 3 times, and surely "*Peter was hurt because*" it was the same number of times he denied the Lord.
1. If Jesus helps us recall our *painful memories* in order to heal them, then their *recollection* will indeed "*hurt*." [Psychiatrist M. Scott Peck, in *The Road Less Traveled*, wrote: "...the process of confronting and solving problems is a painful one. Problems, depending upon their nature, evoke in us frustration or grief or sadness or loneliness or guilt or regret or anger or fear or anxiety or anguish or despair. These are uncomfortable feelings... sometimes equaling the very worst kind of physical pain." ]
  2. Peter's painful memory needed to be up-front in his awareness, so that Jesus could heal it. (That's why it's so needful for us to pray the prayer in Psa 139:23-24 (NASB), Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know **my anxious thoughts**; And see if there be any **hurtful way** in me, And lead me in **the everlasting way**.)
- B. To call Peter back to fruitful service in "the everlasting way" was the ultimate goal behind Christ's painful but therapeutic interrogation.
1. Jesus told him: "Follow Me," be "a fisher of men." (*But after I catch them, what? Jesus said*: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.")
  2. Peter knew what Jesus meant! (As the *Good Shepherd*, Jesus had led and fed the sheep, laying down His life for them.)
  3. Jesus confronted Peter's 3 denials with 3 renewals of the call He originally gave him. (And indeed, that call, "feed My sheep," would lead Peter to be crucified for being an *obedient shepherd*.)
- C. When Jesus spelled this out, indicating "the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God," Peter saw John and asked, "What about him?"
1. This showed he still needed the healing of his original devotion

to Christ, as expressed in John 13:37, "I will lay down my life for you."

2. In v.22, *Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me."* (When we compare our unique gifts and callings with those of others, who are *just as unique*, Jesus tells us the same thing: "*what is that to you? You must follow me.*")

## CONCLUSION:

—[Chuck Swindoll: "*Failures are only temporary tests to prepare us for permanent triumphs.*"] That proved true for Peter, but not without pain. Failures can make us *feel worthless, depressed, paralyzed*. Whether they're *fresh* in our minds or *subconsciously buried*, Christ's spotlight on them hurts. Yet, Jesus helps us recall them only to heal them in our memory. —*Have you failed the Lord?* I have, many times. Each memory of it is *painful*. To keep on serving Jesus I need His therapy of **turning my remembered failures into restored fruitfulness**. And if others have failed me, *Jesus wants those memories healed too*, through *forgiveness*. If you need healing for memories of past personal failures or of when others failed you, I highly recommend a healing session with Jesus. He's the best Psychotherapist in the entire universe, and the only fee He charges is *our obedience* to His call: "Follow Me!"