

The Way Back

“Return, you backsliding children, And I will heal your backsliding.” (Jeremiah 3:22)

I find it interesting that when Peter encountered the risen Christ, Jesus asked him the same question three times. How many times did Peter deny the Lord? Three. And three times Jesus asked him, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me...?” (John 21:15-17).

The former Peter would have said, “Do I love You? No one loves You like I do, Jesus.”

But the new-and-improved, repentant Peter said, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You” (verses 15-17).

Jesus used the Greek word *agape* for love the first two times, while Peter used a different word, *phileo*. *Agape* carries the meaning of intense, complete, devoted, sacrificial love, while *phileo* refers to love as in friendship. So Peter was essentially saying, “Well, Lord, all I can commit to right now is that I like You like a friend.”

I wouldn't criticize Peter for that. It was an honest assessment of where he was. Don't ever boast of how much you love Jesus; boast of how much Jesus loves you. Our love is fickle. It runs hot and cold. But God's love for us never changes. It is always there. That is why John the apostle referred to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” That was not arrogant. John was saying that he knew Jesus loved him. And you need to know that Jesus loves you, even if you have fallen away from Him.

Maybe you have messed up. Maybe you are in a backslidden state. The way to get right with God is to return to Him. He says in Jeremiah 3:22, “Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.” So remember where you were. Return and repent of your sin. And then start living as God wants you to live.

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