

John’s Account ends with a securing of the mission and means for which Jesus came. The mission is a Kingdom of people and the means are a Kingdom of people. We must be set and reset aright so that we can incorporate others into the fold. This episode conveys this great new revived mission’s fundamental means and motive in the restoration/recommission of Simon.

1. Restoration (15-17)

- a. A leader (Simon) is taken aside for restoration, not forgiveness. Jesus addressed him as Simon for he had not performed as a rock i.e. Petra, which proved rigid and true.
- b. “The link is important: as Peter had boasted of his reliability in the presence of his fellow disciples (13:8, 37–38; cf. 18:10–11), so this restoration to public ministry is effected in a similarly public environment—regardless of whatever private forgiveness and reconciliation there may have been between Jesus and Peter when Jesus revealed himself after his resurrection to this one apostle, alone (1 Cor. 15:5; Lk. 24:34).”¹
- c. This event was necessary for other obvious reasons.
 - i. Peter’s conscience relieved. We all fail woefully and fall short exceedingly.
 - ii. Peter’s credibility. As a leader it is important for others to see that he is quite restored and approved by the Word. Leaders must be beyond reproach. How great and gracious was it that John still referred to Simon as Peter in this account? D. A. Carson wrote, “*each* shepherd of the flock of God, of Jesus’ sheep, of the church of God, is to mirror *both* authority *and* a certain brokenness that is utterly exemplary.”²
 - iii. Peter’s sanctification. Guilt, repentance, time to reflect, and correction are a part of our spiritual growth. If our failings are not addressed, we cannot learn from them.
 - iv. Peter’s humility. Humility is a major and indispensable prerequisite of God’s leaders and people. Peter learned yet again that he could not depend on the flesh which is weak but rely upon the Spirit. Contra to the self-confidence in which he thrice denied Jesus, his symmetrical restorative inquiries/replies served to humble him.
 - v. Peter’s discipline. Not just negative but a positive lesson is here for all of us to learn viz. cruel to be kind. Prov. 27:6 states that the wounds of a friend are faithful. Peter, and we, must be willing to make others uncomfortable. Not all rebukes need be public (public and private sins ought to be respectively handled). If we do not correct the nature of the sin, we are in danger of enabling others to continue in such w/o true learning, repentance, and discipline. “Thou shall not offend, be rude, or correct” is not the new commandment. Often we are called to rebuke, correct, and discipline – if not remove – particular offenders in the church. Jer. 6:14 and other passages reveal the LORD’s disdain for non-confrontational prophets who refuse to rebuke and only affirm.
 - vi. Peter’s repentance. There is no restoration w/o repentance. And repentance is often spurred by a sense of woe. John uses terms equivocally throughout this Account (see 2. e. below) and most technical commentators say there is nothing of note in interpreting the nuances of *agape* and *phileo* as written. I think there is a significance. John doesn’t ever seem to be arbitrary but quite nuanced in his writings. There are many Peters, so to speak, who are quick to proclaim their allegiance with all earnestness but with woeful ignorance. Don’t boast about how much you “love” the

¹ Carson, D. A. (1991). [*The Gospel according to John*](#) (p. 675). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

² Carson, D. A. (1991). [*The Gospel according to John*](#) (p. 678). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

LORD. Please never say, “I love the LORD will all my heart, soul, mind, and strength.”

- vii. Our encouragement and reminder that both God’s grace (the impetus) and Jesus’ work is efficacious for all sins. Richard Phillips remarked, “Satan whispers to us that our sin has disqualified us forever. This is especially the devil’s message to those who have sinned greatly after becoming Christians. Christians who have sinned, he urges, might as well continue sinning, or at least accept the fact that their failure has bound them to a low plane of Christian existence and service.”³

2. Recommission (15-17)

- a. Along w/ the restoration is encouragingly found recommission. Related to the reasons above given for restoration is the commission to the Church and, in particular, Peter.
- b. Jesus didn’t just say three times, “You are forgiven,” but rather gave an instruction. Jesus knew Peter’s heart (17) and He wanted Peter to know that he would have a chance to express his love by fulfilling the commission.
- c. Oh, how encouraging it must have been the first time Jesus asked and answered Peter? I would love to hear Jesus’ instruction as an affirmation that I still had a mission and thus belonging to Him.
- d. However, after a second and third repetition; Peter found, perhaps, a bit of distress and/or confusion. Albeit after a short time, if not immediately afterward, Peter likely correlated the triple inquiry w/ the triple denial.
- e. Peter’s call was to feed and tend the sheep and lambs of Christ as an under-shepherd for Jesus’ sheep. Re: John’s use of synonyms, Phillips wrote, “For instance, in referring to himself as “the disciple whom the Lord loved,” John uses *agape* in one instance and *phileo* in another (John 20:2; 21:7). Moreover, John tends to vary his vocabulary for stylistic reasons. In this passage, recounting a conversation that probably occurred in Aramaic, not Greek, John uses two different words for *love*, two different words for *knowing*, and two different words for the idea of tending Jesus’ sheep.”⁴ Later he noted: “Jesus answered, “Feed my lambs” (John 21:15). When Peter affirmed his love a second time, Jesus said, “Tend my sheep” (21:16). Finally, when Peter answered Jesus’ question by asserting Christ’s knowledge of his love, Jesus concluded, “Feed my sheep” (21:17).⁵ Bruce Milne concurred, “John has a habit through his gospel of using pairs of terms interchangeably, and, for example, in this very passage he has two different Greek words for *take care of and feed* (16–17), for *lambs and sheep* (15–16), and for *know* (17), both of which niv, in common with other versions, renders *know*. The *lambs/sheep* distinction may have some significance, but it is difficult to see what points can be made from the others.”⁶
- f. Peter and all pastors of Jesus’ flock are not hirelings but leaders who are called to disciple and sacrifice for the God’s sheep. We answer to the great Shepherd for they are His sheep not ours.
- g. We serve Christ hence we serve His Church. Bruce Milne rightly proclaimed, “Jesus Christ is not a ‘single’ person in the sense that he comes to us without other attachment. He is a

³ Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John* (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.; 1st ed., Vol. 2, p. 703). P&R Publishing.

⁴ Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John* (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.; 1st ed., Vol. 2, p. 705). P&R Publishing.

⁵ Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John* (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.; 1st ed., Vol. 2, p. 709). P&R Publishing. NIV The New International Version of the Bible (1973, 1978, 1984).

⁶ Milne, B. (1993). *The message of John: here is your king!: with study guide* (p. 317). InterVarsity Press.

‘married’ person; he comes to us with a bride, whom he loves and for whom he sacrificed himself (Eph. 5:25).”⁷

- h. Feeding the sheep is a pastoral duty which is not of its own authority. Phillips noted: “There is no warrant for the Roman Catholic dogma that here the church is placed under Peter’s sole authority as the single potentate who rules in the absence of Christ. The book of Acts shows that Peter never claimed or exercised such a lordly rule over the church. Matthew Henry comments: “This charge given to Peter to preach the gospel is by a strange artifice made to support the usurpation of his pretended successors, that fleece the sheep, and, instead of feeding them, feed upon them.”⁸ ¶Paul’s description agrees with that of Jesus in speaking not of princes over the church, but of Christ’s providing “shepherds and teachers” to serve the church (Eph. 4:11). Paul’s description perfectly matches Jesus’ calling to Peter to feed the sheep and tend the flock. Ministers of the gospel are not called to be fund-raisers, program organizers, building custodians, or committee chairmen, but teachers of God’s Word and pastors of Christ’s flock.”⁸
 - i. Peter himself confirmed such (1 Pet. 5:1-4).
 - j. Last but not least, the impetus for such is love hence Jesus’ questions linked to the service. All we do must be with the right motives of love, obedience, magnifying God, saving others, etc. and the primary being a love for the LORD.
 - k. N. T. Wright offered: “Here is the secret of all Christian ministry, yours and mine, lay and ordained, full-time or part-time. It’s the secret of everything from being a quiet, back-row member of a prayer group to being a platform speaker at huge rallies and conferences. If you are going to do any single solitary thing as a follower and servant of Jesus, this is what it’s built on. Somewhere, deep down inside, there is a love for Jesus, and though (goodness knows) you’ve let him down enough times, he wants to find that love, to give you a chance to express it, to heal the hurts and failures of the past, and give you new work to do. ¶These are not things for you to do to ‘earn’ the forgiveness. Nothing can ever do that. It is grace from start to finish. They are things to do out of the joy and relief that you already *are* forgiven. Things we are given to do precisely as the sign that we are forgiven.”⁹
 - l. And we shall have an opportunity to prove such love and it will be a burden at times →
3. Resolution (18-23)
- a. Just as Jesus predicted Peter’s three-fold denial and then restoration, He foretold here the nature of Peter’s death. V. 18 holds a euphemism for crucifixion. What a burden to carry for decades!
 - b. Historical Tradition: Phillips: “It was the uniform testimony of the early church that Jesus’ prophecy was fulfilled in the early days of the Roman emperor Nero’s persecution, around a.d. 64. Eusebius’s *Church History* from the fourth century a.d. states that Peter was crucified head downward by his own request, perhaps to make restitution for his earlier denials.⁴ This seems unlikely, since a mature Peter would have known better than to seek atonement by any other means than Christ’s suffering for our sins. Moreover, earlier sources, such as Clement of Rome in a.d. 96 and Tertullian in a.d. 212, affirm Peter’s martyrdom in a way that fulfilled

⁷ Milne, B. (1993). *The message of John: here is your king!: with study guide* (p. 318). InterVarsity Press.

⁸ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 6 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 5:995.

⁸ Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John* (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.; 1st ed., Vol. 2, p. 710). P&R Publishing.

⁹ Wright, T. (2004). *John for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 11-21* (p. 165). Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

⁴ Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, 3.1.

Jesus’ prophecy, but make no mention of Peter’s being crucified upside down.⁵ On his own cross, Peter would be given grace to “glorify God” in his death (John 21:19), having previously failed Christ because of his fear of death.”¹⁰ →

- c. I have thought the same i.e. that it would almost seem arrogant for Peter to request such an act that would put him in an even more humbled position as Christ. True humility doesn’t seek to be displayed as such! Why not just take what was given and as Jesus had foretold?
- d. Nevertheless, the one who knows the future holds it and thus will give us all necessary means of fulfilling His commands/our calls.
- e. We must be resolute in following Jesus at all costs. Lu. 14:25-33 the cost of discipleship. Bearing your cross daily and dying to self (Mat. 16:24-25).
- f. If we are honest, we’d likely shudder at the thought of hearing Jesus’ words directed to us. Peter literally heard Jesus predict his future crucifixion, albeit later in life. It seems natural for him to inquire – or at least think – of what may happen to John and or others who follow the call.
- g. We must rather mind our own business and humbly seek to fulfill our calling. I think that because many don’t want to consider bearing their own crosses, they busy themselves about what the Church as a whole must be doing etc. or looking at what others are failing at. Phillips: “It is perhaps because so few Christians really take up the cross that the church in the West today is not persecuted so much as ignored. The Christians who are made to suffer for Christ are those who refuse to compromise with the world and therefore are most useful to it. Stott comments:

If we were to hold fast the old-fashioned Gospel of Christ crucified for sinners, and of salvation as an absolutely free and undeserved gift, then the Cross would again become a stumbling block to the proud. If we were to maintain the high moral standards of Jesus—of uncorruptible honesty and integrity, of chastity before marriage and fidelity in it, and of costly, self-sacrificial love, then there would be a public outcry that the church had returned to Puritanism. If we were to dare once more to talk plainly about the alternatives of life and death, salvation and judgment, heaven and hell, then the world would rise up in anger against such “old-fashioned rubbish.”^{10 11}

4. Retention (24-25)

- a. In John fashion, he marks the reliability of testimony as an eyewitness.
- b. How should we interpret v. 25?
 - i. Re: Jesus’ actions on earth during His incarnate stay? Certainly a library would suffice to hold a day by day, action by action deeds of Jesus’ diaries if John included everything in Jesus’ some 33 yrs. How much more the world contain?
 - ii. Re: hyperbole. Could John be writing of the nature of Jesus’ actions i.e. the significance of them could not be contained by the world? Such a library would include the providence and unseen miracles during His life on earth.
 - iii. Re: comprehension. Somewhat overlapped with one or more of these points, Wright offered: “Even if it might be technically true that every single deed Jesus ever did could be written down, and that the books, though numerous, would ultimately be

⁵ Tertullian, *Antidote for the Scorpion’s Sting*, 15.

¹⁰ Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John* (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.; 1st ed., Vol. 2, pp. 716–717). P&R Publishing.

¹⁰ John Stott, quoted in R. Kent Hughes, *John: That You May Believe* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999), 481.

¹¹ Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John* (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.; 1st ed., Vol. 2, p. 720). P&R Publishing.

“Motive, Mission, & Means” (Jn. 21:15-25)

finite in number, nevertheless the point remains: *the world* wouldn't be able to contain them. They would be too explosive. It would be like trying to play a wonderful symphony on a broken piano. It would be like trying to serve a gourmet meal in a snack bar. It would be like God's breath inside an ordinary human being. It would be like light shining in darkness, and the darkness being unable to master it. The world couldn't take it.”¹² See Eph. 3:8 & Col. 2:3.

- iv. Re: Jesus as the eternal second person of the triune God. Certainly we could take this literally – though it boggles the mind to say the least.
- c. I think a combo of the last three options is best. It also offers a nice inclusion to bracket what the first verse in John's Account states. So from the very beginning to the infinite end (oxymoron) we see the eternal Word of God – who created all things and thus cannot be contained therein, much less a record of his deeds in the world.¹³

¹² Wright, T. (2004). *John for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 11-21* (p. 169). Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

¹³ A double meaning i.e. His works in the world and the lack of the world's capacity to retain such.