



I'm Still God's Workmanship

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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October 20, 2013

AM Assembly



Introduction:

Have you ever messed up big? I mean really big? And by messed up big, I mean sinned. And by really big, I mean since you were a Christian. Have you done something that makes you completely embarrassed and ashamed, something you just can't believe you let yourself fall into or even walk headlong into? When you look back at that, do you wonder if you can possibly still be considered God's workmanship? Do you show up here and wonder, "What is the point?" since you are certain you can't possibly make it? How can you claim God is still working on you when you've done something so tremendously wrong and messed up? Certainly, if you are abandoning God or rebelling against Him, I don't want to provide you any comfort in that. However, if you are longing for God but think that you have messed up too badly to keep trying, by the end of this lesson, I hope you will walk out of here claiming, "I'm Still God's Workmanship!" and then act like it.

Discussion:

I. A man who messed up badly.

- A. You think you've messed up badly? Let me tell you a story. It's probably a story most of you already know. But if so, you likely need to be reminded. If not, here it is.
- B. The man's name is Peter. Jesus was celebrating Passover with His disciples, but had some bad news for them. According to **John 13:33**, Jesus told His disciples He was about to go someplace they couldn't follow. Peter questioned Him in **John 13:36-38**, saying, "Lord, where are you going?"ⁱ Jesus repeated that Peter wouldn't be able to follow Him. Peter questioned further, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Jesus's response was shocking. "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times." Peter was stunned by this. According to **Matthew 26:35**, Peter replied, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!"
- C. And he meant it too. When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, Peter was ready to die. In **John 18:10-11**, Peter yanked out a sword and attacked. But instead of leading Peter into battle, Jesus rebuked him, telling him to put his sword away. This rebuke turned Peter's world upside down. Peter was ready to fight and die for the one he thought was going to be king. But just surrender his life? Just lay it down? No way. According to **Mark 14:50**, Peter, with the other disciples, fled.
- D. However, after getting away from the initial threat, Peter and another disciple (assumed to be John) followed behind to see where they would take Jesus (**John 18:15**). As Peter was being brought through the door into the court of the high priest the servant girl watching the door recognized him, "You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" This disciple who had declared he was willing to die with and for Jesus and had already put his life on the line once, looked at the girl and said, "I am not" (**John 18:17**). Later, Peter was standing, warming himself by a charcoal fire. Some of those who were around him said, "You also are not one of his disciples, are you?" Again he said, "I am not." Then again, he was asked by someone, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" Peter denied it again (**John 18:25-27**). According to **Matthew 26:74**, Peter took oaths and invoked a curse on himself to prove and swear, "I do not know the man." Immediately the rooster crowed and the Lord turned and looked at Peter (**Luke 22:61**). Peter remembered the warning of the Lord. He went out and broke down weeping.
- E. I'm not sure what you've done that has caused you to break down and weep. But can you imagine being Peter? Can you imagine having so resolutely declared your devotion and yet denied your Lord three times, with curses and oaths? Imagine living with that. Imagine doing that and then witnessing his death. Imagine doing that and then finding out He was resurrected. He's back. He knew you would deny Him and He's back. He had plans for all the disciples and He's back. How would you feel? What would you think? "What plans could He have for me? How could He use me? I promised to die with Him and instead I fled and denied Him. I might as well have been the betrayer." Imagine the guilt, embarrassment, and shame.

II. A man who was still God's workmanship.

- A. You can't imagine that you would still be God's workmanship after you've messed up as badly as you have? Well, let me tell you another story. It's not quite as familiar as the first story, but you might have heard it before. If not, you need to know it. It's also about Peter. It comes from **John 21**.

- B. Peter and 6 of the apostles had gone fishing. A man on the shore cried out, "Children, do you have any fish?" When they answered, "No," He told them to cast their nets on the other side. When they did, they brought in a huge catch of 153 fish. When Peter realized it was Jesus, he threw himself into the sea and swam to shore. When the disciples arrived there was a charcoal fire in place and Jesus asked them to have breakfast with Him. While eating, Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me more than these?" Perhaps He meant do you love Me more than you love fish? This may have been a question about Peter having to decide between his life as a fisherman and the life Jesus had offered as a fisher of men. Perhaps he meant do you love Me more than you love these other men? This may have been a question about the place Jesus held in Peter's life. Or Jesus may have meant do you love Me more than these men love Me. This may have been calling to mind Peter's earlier avowal that he loved Jesus so much that even when all the other disciples betrayed Jesus, Peter wouldn't. Peter answered, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." But Jesus wasn't finished. He asked a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" And Peter again said, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Tend my sheep." Then a third time, Jesus asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved that Jesus asked him a third time and responded, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." And Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." But Jesus went on this time. He said, "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." The text goes on to tell us that this was Jesus explaining what kind of death Peter would endure. After saying this, Jesus ended with, "Follow me."
- C. Here is an occurrence that encompasses three of Peter's most significant moments. It mirrors his first major interaction with Jesus as recorded in **Luke 5:1-11** in which Peter had been fishing all night and caught nothing, but Jesus had him cast his nets on the other side. Peter brought in a huge catch of fish. This account also calls to mind the night Peter walked on the water (cf. **Matthew 14:28-33**). Peter, learning that it is the Lord, wants to be the first to get to Him and he leaps out of the boat. Finally, it calls to mind the awful night of Jesus's betrayal and trial. The "charcoal fire" of **John 21:9** is the same kind of fire around which Peter warmed his hands and denied Jesus in **John 18:18**.
- D. While we have all kinds of questions about Jesus's three questions to Peter. The one thing I can't help but notice is that Jesus gave Peter the opportunity to counter his three denials around the charcoal fire with three affirmations of his love around the charcoal fire. Peter's grief may well have been caused by his own remembrance of the three denials. When Peter said he loved Jesus, Jesus didn't laugh at him. Jesus didn't mock him. Jesus didn't say, "If you love me, why did you deny me?" He just let Peter make his affirmations. More than that, he gave Peter a job. "Feed my sheep." Jesus not only let Peter counter his three denials with three affirmations, Jesus countered Peter's three denials with three affirmations of His own. Three times Jesus explained that He had a job for Peter. Three times Jesus explained that Peter was still one of His disciples; not only that, but one of His apostles. Three times Jesus commissioned Peter, essentially explaining that Peter is still God's workmanship even after he messed up so big.
- E. But now for the truly powerful point. Jesus's statement about Peter's death seems odd. How many recruiters try to get someone on board for their plans by explaining, "If you follow me, do what I say, you're going to die, and let me tell you what a horrific death it will be." That's not a normal part of a recruitment speech. It's kind of morbid to us and leaves us questioning what on earth was going on. However, keep it in context of Peter's sin. What had Peter promised in **John 13:37**? He had said he would follow Jesus anywhere, even death. He had said he loved Jesus so much he would die for Him. But when push came to shove, he abandoned Jesus. Instead of dying with Jesus, he denied Jesus. What is Jesus telling Peter in **John 21:19**? He is saying, "Peter, do you remember that commitment you made to Me? Do you remember when you said you would follow Me anywhere, even death? I know you think you are a failure, but I'm letting you know right now that you will keep that commitment. You will follow Me in death." And not just that Peter would die for Jesus, but would very literally follow Him in the kind of death. His hands would be stretched out, that is, Peter would also be crucified. Do you see what Jesus was saying to Peter? He was saying, "Peter, you messed up big. You sinned really big. You hit the trifecta of sin. But you are still my workmanship. I'm working on you. You will be My masterpiece. You will keep your commitment to Me." Notice even more the form of the statement. In **John 13:36-38**, Peter argued vehemently with Jesus that he would never abandon or deny Jesus. But Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times." And now, when Peter is perhaps just as vehemently arguing in his own mind that he will never live up to the love he claims, when Peter is just as vehemently arguing in his own mind that he is a failure who can never measure up to what God wants, Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you...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.” As assuredly as Jesus’s first statement to Peter came to pass despite Peter’s arguments to the contrary, this second statement would come to pass despite Peter’s arguments to the contrary.

III. You are still God’s workmanship.

- A. I don’t know what you’ve done. I don’t know what embarrassing, shameful sins you have committed. But I know this: as long as you are hanging on to Jesus, you are still God’s workmanship. Yes, I know that you can abandon Him. You can rebel against Him and instead of following in Peter’s footsteps, you can follow in Judas’s, who, having betrayed Jesus, killed himself instead of repenting. Understand that if you turn your back on Jesus, you are killing yourself; you are not being run off by Jesus.
- B. Jesus is not beating you up with technical definitions of “love.” He isn’t browbeating you with statements about how if you really loved Him you wouldn’t have denied Him. He is just asking you to reaffirm your love for Him. Do you love Him? I think you are probably here today because you do.
- C. And so how should you respond? Jesus is saying to you the very same thing He was saying to Peter. “Follow me.” What a great picture this is. Jesus is leading you somewhere. Jesus is taking you somewhere. He is still working on you. He is still making something out of you. And while your ultimate demonstration of commitment may not be physical crucifixion, it will be the spiritual crucifixion of self as Paul describes in **Galatians 2:20**.
- D. Yes, you have messed up. But Jesus wants you to know that you are still His workmanship. Say it out loud. “I am still God’s workmanship.” Remind yourself often. Don’t let go of Him, and He won’t let go of you. Follow Him wherever He leads you, and you will become the devoted disciple you promised you would be.

Conclusion:

Some of you are probably wondering what the point of being here today is. Some of you think you have messed up so badly that you can never make it, so why bother. The point is not to be here to prove you measure up. The point is this is where Jesus is. We are gathered around the charcoal fire with Him now and He is telling you that you are still His workmanship. Follow Him and He will lead you to be all that you have wanted to be in Him. Will you keep following Him?

¹ All quotes are from the English Standard Version, 2007.