

“The Benefits of Failure”

TEXT: Lk. 22:32

INTRO: A. For the serious saint, nothing is more disturbing than a feeling of failure the feeling you have failed the Lord, your family, your friends, yourself. Adding to the frustration is the knowledge that the failure was caused by our pride, arrogance, or over-confidence. We thought “This could never happen to me.”

B. In Lk. 22:31-33 Peter expresses over-confidence in his flesh and perhaps physical strength. I see Peter as a physically strong man, a swarthy fisherman, a real man's man, as the world judges. (He apparently had a vocabulary to match!) But God's evaluation of strength is not the same as ours. He demands moral courage and spiritual strength, under testing. Christ knew Peter's propensity at failure and his extra large ego, so He prophesied of his upcoming spiritual defeat and gave him a promise. What a promise: "...I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

I. GOD'S GRACE VS. OUR GUILT:

A. Living With Past Failures:

1. Peter was feeling so strong that day when he verbally pledged his loyalty to the Lord...and he no doubt meant every word of that pledge.
2. But Peter underestimated the flesh; it was one thing to look into the Savior's eyes and derive strength and quite another to look into the maiden's eyes later as he warmed himself by the enemy's fire.
3. It is one thing to boast about loyalty when with other believers and quite another thing when you are among the lost.
 - a. The test of our faith and loyalty to Christ doesn't come in church, it comes at the work-place.
 - b. The day Peter denied the Lord was a turning point in Peter's life and service; it was the day his ego died!

ILLUS: The subtitle of this message is "THE BENEFITS OF FAILURE." Perhaps the Lord will use your failure to witness to strengthen your trust in Him. Maybe He will use your failure to love as you should to enable you to be more compassionate later. Possibly your failure will be the best thing that could happen to you to make you a better Christian, a better witness, a better and more consistent believer.

- c. Peter could have simply quit on the Lord because of his failure, instead he did not live in the past and dwell on failure, but rather used his failure as a lesson on the weakness of the flesh and the need for the fullness of the Spirit.

B. Clinging To God's Promises:

1. In Jesus' promise to Peter was the realization of his possible failure.
2. But there was also the assurance that good could come even from failure.

ILLUS: The Lord "knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." Ps.103:14 Peter should have listened instead of talked! What the Lord has to say is far more important than what Peter says or thinks (or what we say or think)! We need to find the promises, then cling to them. Every believer needs to be a promise seeker before he can become a "promise keeper." He also needs to acknowledge that he can only keep promises if supernaturally enabled; that the only real Promise Keeper is the Lord!

II. GOD'S DESIRE VS. OUR DISTRESS:

A. A Failure May Be A Beginning:

1. The day Peter sinned was probably the lowest point in his life.
2. Peter probably believed his ministry was over, when it was just beginning.
3. The Lord's prayer for Peter would be answered; (note that Peter's cooperation was necessary).
 - a. Sometimes the most difficult thing is to forgive ourselves.
 - b. We need to learn that God's forgiveness is available and work on our forgiveness as well.
 - c. God's desire is to relieve our distress by getting us to a point of rededication, as with Peter. John 21:15-17
 - d. The good news is that Peter became the strongest preacher among the original twelve and the most famous due to his ministry.
 - e. Peter's bitter tears of remorse, regret and repentance were necessary, but he needed to "get over" his failure!

ILLUS: If we dwell on our failure instead of on His forgiveness we will continue to be failures!

B. A Failure May Be An Opportunity:

1. God's desire is to restore each failing disciple to a place of renewed and perhaps even greater service.
2. The fact that you fail once and rebound is no guarantee that you will never fail again; even after the resurrection it was Peter who told the other disciples:
3. "I go a fishing" (returning to his former occupation)...it was also Peter who messed up when the Jews came and Paul had to rebuke him.

Gal. 2:11-12

But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

4. Again and again Peter's failures taught him lessons and opened up greater opportunities for service for him.

III. GOD'S FORGIVENESS VS. OUR FAILURES:

A. God Uses Failures:

ILLUS: If God never used failures, He would have no one to use! Some notable biblical failures were Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samson, Jonah, David, Jeremiah, Peter, Thomas, John Mark, etc. In fact the men God used about whom no failure is recorded are few indeed: Joseph, Daniel and ???

B. Failures May Be Steppingstones:

1. God is in the forgiveness business; if we never failed, He could not demonstrate His forgiveness.
2. Forgiveness is extended to failures; they only continue to be failures if they refuse to accept His forgiveness!
 - a. Peter failed, but accepted forgiveness and saw 3000 saved at Pentecost thru his preaching.
 - b. Jonah failed but accepted forgiveness and saw an entire city saved.

- c. John Mark failed but accepted forgiveness, recovered and continued to serve faithfully with Barnabas.
- d. Even Samson, the most flagrant failure of God's servants, accepted God's forgiveness and served Him with one final act of dedication.

CONCL: Should we be ashamed when we fail? Absolutely! Should we shed tears of repentance, remorse and regret? Yes! Should we accept God's forgiveness and cleansing and continue to serve. Positively! Why not "CLAIM THIS PROMISE...WHEN YOU FAIL?" God is no respecter of persons and if He can forgive Peter and use Him, He can do the same for you!