

Sunday Morning Message

October 27, 2019 (Text preached on February 21, 2016)

Jesus Faithful Friendship to a Fisherman Who Often Failed

Texts – John 1:35 – 42; Luke 5:1 – 11; Matthew 26:31 – 75; John 21:1 – 19; Acts 2:1 - 41

Congregational Reading – Luke 5:8 - 11

Introduction

Have you ever been a failure? Have you set to try to do something and then messed it up so badly that you could come to no other conclusion than that the entire project was a disaster, a complete failure. The saying goes like this: “To err is human.” I think we could broaden that statement to say, “To fail is human.” We have all failed at something in life, but whether or not we stay in failure or get back up and move forward will depend greatly upon our reliance and relationship with the Lord.

Woodrow Wilson once stated:

“I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed than to succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.”—Woodrow Wilson, quoted in Lloyd Cory, *Quote Unquote*¹

If we are intimately connected to the Lord Jesus Christ and His cause, than ultimate success is guaranteed, even though we will surely experience some failures along the way.

“C. S. Lewis, in *The Screwtape Letters*, vividly describes Satan’s strategy: He gets Christians to become preoccupied with their failures; from then on, the battle is won.”—Erwin Lutzer, *Failure: The Back Door to Success*²

In this message, we will look extensively into the Scripture and survey the life of one of the Lord’s greatest servants, the Apostle Peter. However, we will see very plainly that Peter’s life was not all success. In fact, Peter had experienced much failure in his life before God could use Him the way He wanted to. Most likely, God will have to allow the same thing in our lives. We will most likely have to fail often in order to get to the place where our eyes are wholly on the Lord in complete dependence on Him.

I The Lord Finds Peter (John 1:35 – 42)

In Bethabara where John was baptizing. Before Peter became a disciple of the Lord, he was first a follower of John the Baptist.

¹ Charles R. Swindoll, *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart and 1501 Other Stories* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2016), 192.

² Ibid, 194.

This is when Peter was first introduced to Jesus. I do believe Peter was saved at this point, because he had believed the message of John regarding the Lord Jesus, and was even baptized by John as a public profession of his repentance and faith, but he was certainly not strong in faith, and understood very little at this point about the Lord Jesus.

II Peter Becomes a Follower (Luke 5)

Though Peter believes that Jesus is the Messiah, he still doesn't understand yet that Jesus is God in the flesh. Here Jesus will deepen Peter's faith in Him by revealing His power.

God will work similarly with us. If we are saved and growing in the Lord, He will make known His power to us as well. As we place our faith in Him, He will work miraculously in our lives as well, and He will gradually open our eyes to the Truth about Himself. He will be magnified in our eyes. We will understand more and more about Who He is, and our faith will grow exponentially.

III Peter's Faith Fails (Matthew 26:73 – 74)

"And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew." (Matthew 26:73-74)

If you have been saved for any length of time, you have probably already experienced a failure in your faith. You have blown it in some way. Maybe it was a moral failure, maybe you have strayed into apathy or even doctrinal error; but, rest assured, if you are human, you are going to fail. Just as a loving parent must allow his child to make mistakes in order for him to learn, so our Heavenly Father allows us to fail, so that we will understand that we cannot do the Christian life in our own strength, or our own power. We must depend upon Him. We must do what He wants, His way. Until we get to that point, we will fail again and again.

A Peter Started Out in Faith (Matthew 16:13 – 19)

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:13-19)

B Peter Slipped into the Flesh (Matthew 26:31 – 46)

1 He was self-confident

"Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples."

(Matthew 26:31-35)

Peter said "not me!" – "I won't deny you" – "I will die for you"

He sounds a little like Satan: He had an "I" problem too.

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit." (Isaiah 14:12-15)

2 He neglected prayer

"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me." (Matthew 26:36-46)

3 He walked independently of the Lord – He distanced himself

"And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end." (Matthew 26:57-58)

C Peter Slides into Failure (Matthew 26:69 – 75)

"Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly." (Matthew 26:69-75)

IV Peter's Faith Was Fixed (John 21:1 - 19)

Peter was so discouraged about his failure that he quits the ministry, and goes back to fishing. Once again, because fishing was not God's plan for Peter, he fails miserably at it.

But, here in this passage the Lord assures Peter that He loves him just as much as he ever has, and he still wants to use him. (Illustration – Jonah)

"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (Romans 11:29)

V Peter's Faith Flourished (Acts 2)

"(14) But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: ... (37) Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? (38) Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. ... (40) And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. (41) Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:14, 37-38, 40-41)

Conclusion

Most of you have been found by the Lord.

Many of you are followers of the Lord.

Most of us have also failed the Lord.

That's OK – now you know that you can't do this by yourself, in your own strength. Now you are humbler, and you will depend on the Lord's strength and ability, instead of your own.

Don't let your failure keep you from fulfilling God's purpose for your life.

Illustration - When I entered Baptist College, Springfield, Missouri, I was a typical first-year student, searching for answers to questions. I was not settled on what I was going to do.

During that year something happened that was to change my life. I asked for a Sunday school class at the High Street Baptist Church and was given a little area with a curtain around it, a class book, and one eleven-year-old boy. I taught this boy for three or four weeks, until he finally brought a friend. I got so discouraged I went to the superintendent with the intention of giving up the class. He told me, "I didn't want to give you the class when you asked because my better judgment told me you were not serious and dedicated. I don't think you will make it in the ministry, but I went against my judgment and gave you the class." The middle-aged man finished, "I was right in my first judgment—you're worthless, so give me the book."

This made me so mad I told him I would not give him the book and I'd consider the class and pray about it. I went back to my room at the dormitory and began praying. I asked the Dean of Students for a key to an empty room on the third floor, and each afternoon for a week I went and prayed from half-past-one until five o'clock. God broke my heart over my failure with the small Sunday school class. I realized if I wasn't going to be faithful in little things, God would never bless me in big things. I prayed for the first boy and his family, and the boy he had brought and his family. Next I prayed for myself and my own needs, asking God to lead me to the right place.

God blessed the class, and new kids came. I prayed for them and their friends. On Saturday I cut a swath across every playground and empty lot I could find, seeking eleven-year-old boys. When I left school in May of that year the Lord had given me fifty-six eleven-year-old boys for my class. All had been saved and many of their mothers, dads, and friends had also been saved.³

He can still use you. In fact, as we have seen in the life of Peter, He can use you more now.

"If you are willing to try whatever the Lord tells you to do, He will be with you to enable you to do it. Are you afraid of failure? Are you simply playing it safe by not trying? Thomas A. Edison failed many, many times before he invented the light bulb. Babe Ruth struck out more times than he hit home runs. But they both tried—and succeeded."⁴

Though we fail often, the Lord never fails us.

The Lord has never failed you, and though you have failed Him, He still wants to see your faith flourish, and now that you know that you can't do it by yourself, He will do it through you.

³ Herschel H. Hobbs, *My Favorite Illustrations* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1990), 1396–1397.

⁴ Ibid, 235.