

ENCOURAGED BY A FAILURE

Luke 22:31-38

"The bird with the broken pinion never soars as high again...."

I can't vouch for the bird kingdom,
but among God's people that has never been true.

No one soars greatly for God until he has failed miserably, and experienced the grace and restoration of God.

The list is long: Jonah John Mark and, of course, Peter

Have you experienced the frustration of knowing what God wants you to do, and failing miserably by not doing it?

Peter knew the feeling.

He was called to fail so he could encourage us.

That's how he became useful to God!

Peter's success as a pastor to God's flock arose from his failure.

PREDICTION OF DENIAL 22:31-34

Jesus warns Peter about the spiritual battle—to prepare him for events about to occur. **22:31-32** *"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."*

God plans to use Peter's denial
to enable him to strengthen others

PETER'S THREE BIG MISTAKES:

1. Peter didn't believe he could fail. 22:33 *"But he replied, 'Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.'"*

His refusal to recognize that He might fail keeps Him from understanding.

He would never do such a thing!

–Even when the Lord told him he would

–Even when the Lord indicated it would make him useful in others' lives.

Since he *"couldn't fail,"*

he didn't hear the message.

The Adversary wants them.

"Satan is after you, Simon. He's out to get you!"

That's the plan—to deceive us and cause us to fall {ALL of us!}

He's expert at three main tactics:

(1) **Temptation**

(2) **Accusation**

(3) **Deception**

Satan's plan: sift the whole bunch of them
and get rid of them.

Sifting refers to repeated, swift, violent shaking of wheat in a sieve, so chaff rises to surface and they can blow it away.

Satan is after these men, as he was after Job.

He wants to "blow them away"—sort them and drive them off—make them unusable.

Jesus' plan: use Peter's restoration to encourage the rest.

Peter couldn't understand the plan because he couldn't believe the part about him failing!

Do you know anyone like that? "NOT ME!"

Jesus asks for Peter.
 Peter is to be the instrument of restoration.
 Jesus wants to warn him, to prepare him
 So his faith won't collapse.
 So his experience can serve
 as basis to strengthen others
 Peter can't hear warning;
 he's under illusion he can't fail.
 Jesus informs him that he isn't just going to fail once.
 He'll deny Him 3 times—within next few hours!

Lesson #1: We'll never become all God wants us to be until we recognize our weakness.

Our faith has to be based on Him—NOT on ourselves.

[Peter's first error leads into second error:]

2. Peter didn't take appropriate precautions to avoid failure. 22:39-46 *Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him.⁴⁰ On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation."⁴¹ He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed,⁴² "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.⁴⁴ And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.⁴⁵ When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow.⁴⁶ "Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."*

Since he didn't believe he was capable of failing,
 he didn't take preventative measures to protect himself.

Abbreviated version

—other gospels indicate it happened three times.

They worked hard. They're tired—exhausted

They can't stay awake to pray

Peter doesn't pray to overcome the temptation.

Even Jesus has to depend on the Father

in things He's about to suffer.

**Lesson #2: Since we think we're self-sufficient,
 We work too hard.**

We don't take time necessary

—to prepare for battle and temptation.

—to recognize our dependence on Him.

[The embarrassment and guilt produce Peter's 3rd error:

This error shows us how Satan wants to defeat him!]

3. Peter doesn't believe God will forgive him

61-62 *The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." 62 And he went outside and wept bitterly.*

22:61 The Lord turns back to him—NOT to condemn him

But in sympathy, to encourage and strengthen him He reaches out

22:62 Peter can't take it.

He turns his back and goes out to weep.

We usually miss something important in this story

Peter stays around!

Where were the others? They all took off.

Peter follows at a distance.

Their fear and scattering shouldn't have surprised them.

Zechariah 13:7: "*Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.*"

Now the time has come for restoration.

God wants to use Peter to strengthen the others.

BUT Peter's busy fighting off guilt, embarrassment, his inability to perform as he should have. *He's a failure!*

Remember, that's what Christ wants to tell him back in vss. 31-34.

Now Peter, instead of recognizing what the Lord tried to tell him, goes out and weeps bitterly.

He's a worthless failure!

The Lord told him the adversary wants to get him

He's got him—right where he wants him!

—totally defeated, wiped out.

**First he uses self-confidence to deceive him;
then false accusation, guilt.**

Had Peter accepted warning, he could've survived failure without defeat.

This is part of God's plan to make him the person God wants him to be.

There's no other way to get there,

but through the valley of defeat.

He's defeated; Satan has him where he wants him; he's rubbing it in!

Ken Gire writes: "When the tears finally do stop, the night has paled to gray. Soon it will be dawn.

"The winnowing is over. All that's left is the naked kernel of faith. It's a small grain, but a grain

Satan can't touch. He can winnow all the chaff he wants, but the wheat belongs to Jesus.

"Peter's a smaller man now without the thick husk that once surrounded his life. He's broken and bare.

"Be hard on him if you like.

Talk about how self-confident he was.

Talk about how impulsive he was.

Talk about how he is always shooting off his mouth.

And how he needed a good sifting. Go ahead.

"But before you do, remember the other disciples had already deserted Jesus.

Peter and John alone followed him that terrifying night.

"True, Peter followed him at a distance. But still he followed. Yes, he was rash in drawing his sword in the garden. He did it mistakenly. But he did it against insurmountable odds, at almost certain loss of his own life.

"And it's true, he failed Jesus. But he failed in a courtyard where the others dared not set foot.

And he failed not under normal pressure, but under the heavy winnow of Satan.

"So go ahead. Be hard on him. But remember, it was Satan, not Jesus who did the sifting.

"Jesus was the friend who prayed."

The Lord keeps reaching out to Peter —vs. 61

Mark 16:7: "*Go tell his disciples **and Peter**,*

'He is going ahead of you into Galilee.'"

John 21:15-17—the special commissioning of Peter

–3 Xs–*"Do you love me . . . Feed my lambs"*

Now Peter has seen the Lord.

But he hasn't resolved the embarrassment problem yet.

He decides to throw in the towel and go fishing.

He failed as a leader. Now what? *"Back to the fish!"*

He couldn't even do that right anymore!

He needs the Lord!

The Lord wants to assure him that if he loves Him,
the work isn't over.

Now he can be useful

–NOW he's ready to hear Jesus' original plan!

Now he can encourage others.

Now he can identify with other people who fail Jesus

He can feed and lead Jesus' other sheep.

Lesson #3 When we realize our incapacity, AFTER our failures, God can use us to help others.

He wants us to return to Him

and recognize our total dependence on Him

Jn. 15 (1-11); *"without me you can do nothing!"*

2 Cor. 12:9: *"My strength is made perfect in weakness."*

Bruce Larson: A man lost his wife in an auto accident and had to raise his children alone. "I saw a sign in the park that describes me. Posted in an area where new grass was planted, it said: "Not ready for use–healing."

Larson responded, "That's not you. That's grass. When you *feel* totally healed, you'll be less useful. While you're still healing, you can reach out to people experiencing grief like no one else can."

Brokenness and humanity are a great resource in ministering to others.

That was God's plan for Peter. It may be His plan for you.

God hasn't chosen very many perfect people to serve Him.

He carefully selects failures He can use to encourage others.

God needs specialists in the *struggles* of life–specialists in *FAILURE*.

We spend a lot of time counseling men and women in pain.

Rejected and feeling worthless.

When we try to assure them of their worth,
they can't always hear that.

It's helpful to find another who has been there, to empathize with their pain and assure them that they can make it, with God's help.

Each of us fails in some area.

It's precisely in that area that God can pick up the pieces and use us to encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ.

That's the story of Peter's life and ministry!

[The passage concludes with the . . .]

PREDICTION OF PERSECUTION 22:35-38 *Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" "Nothing," they answered.³⁶ He said to them, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.³⁷ It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell*

you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment."

³⁸ *The disciples said, "See, Lord, here are two swords." "That is enough," he replied.*

Jesus warns His followers that, as a result of rejection,
they will have a different relationship with people of Israel.

Things are about to change.

Previously, they depended on Him;

because people identify with Him, and provide and watch out for them, they lack nothing.

All that's about to change.

People will reject Him, and reject those identify with Him.

Jesus and His followers will no longer be welcomed by "God's people";
they'll be persecuted.

"You are moving into a new period.

If they arrest me, they will one day arrest you.

If they treat me like a criminal,

they will do the same to you.

Be ready for the coming affliction!"

Lesson #4 It's an illusion to think we can identify with Jesus and still be friends of the world.

To the extent that we're known as His followers,
we can expect opposition.

Which of these lessons do WE need to learn?

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and experienced the grace and restoration of God.*

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until we recognize our weakness.***

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Which of these lessons do WE need to learn?

ALL OF THEM!!

How will that realization change our lives?