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How Do You Manage Failure? (Part II)

Luke 22:32: (NASB) *But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.*



Failure, as everyone knows, is an unlooked for and unwelcome commodity in life. It disrupts our plans, impedes our progress, upsets our feelings and is generally intrusive to our lives. As a result of failure's glowing resume, we often do whatever we can to avoid it, and when we experience it we often try to soft peddle its impact or even hide its presence. All in all, these descriptions of and reactions to failure are really quite unfortunate. Failure gets too bad a rap. It is judged too harshly. A few weeks ago, we began a journey towards a better understanding of failure. In that journey, we began to see the place failure holds in our lives and the value it can bring us. Let's get back to it, for success begins when we understand our failures!

(Recap of Part 1) **FAILURE DUE TO LACK OF KNOWLEDGE: YOU SIMPLY DO NOT KNOW WHAT YOU NEED TO SUCCEED. FAILURE DUE TO IMMATURITY: YOU JUST DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH EXPERIENCE OR UNDERSTANDING TO BE ABLE TO SUCCEED.** Failures due to lack of knowledge and immaturity are dealt with by acquiring knowledge and by growing up - failure due to weakness requires a lot more personal responsibility.

FAILURE DUE TO WEAKNESS: YOU DO KNOW BETTER, YOU HAVE DONE BETTER, BUT YOU SIMPLY FALL ANYWAY.

This type of failure can come upon us even when we are mature and experienced and can be a serious eye-opener to help us with exponential growth. (This can really humble you! You may not be as strong as you thought!) Let's review an example of a massive failure - the Apostle Peter denying Jesus: Matthew 26:33-35: Peter plainly said he would stay by Jesus' side, no matter what. "I am strong enough to handle it. Not me - I won't fall away." We believe his heart was right, his focus was clear and he was serious. Our failures due to weakness are often set up in a way that we really do know the right answer before we end up giving and living the wrong answer. Peter's response was emphatic that he would not deny Jesus even if he had to die with him. You would think after being with Jesus for years, Peter would know whatever Jesus said came to pass. He should have taken a second look at Jesus' words, but his emotions got the best of him.

Later that same night: Matthew 26:69-74: *I do not know what you are talking about - He starts with a general denial. This is a convenient way to try to avoid an issue and move on. The denial escalates. He wanted to move away from the people so he would not have to deal with this, but they caught him anyway. He denied it with an oath, I do not know the man - He adds solemnity to the denial and is specific. When we get into these situations, we are like Peter and tend to pile onto our failure instead of admitting it and backing away. Now he is angry, emphatic and lashing out at those around him. He adds cursing to an over-the-top emotional reaction since just denying was not enough. He entered into a massive failure. And immediately a rooster crowed. Luke 22:61: (NASB) *The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Matthew 26:75: (NASB) ⁷⁵And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, before a rooster crows, you will deny me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly.* Peter had no place to go. He tried to deny. He tried to be specific in his denial with an oath. Then he got over-the-top and out of character, but when Jesus looked at him, he knew. You can see his character. He had a huge failure, but when confronted he went out and wept bitterly. What went wrong? Peter's circumstances overwhelmed his strength and he fell prey to what was around him - the pressure of the moment. He just was not strong enough.*

What was the remedy for this failure? **The powerful intervening words and challenge of Jesus:** John 21:17: The response of Jesus to Peter's failure was to look at him to show that Jesus trusted in him, even though he blundered so completely on that night when Jesus was abandoned by everyone. Jesus knew Peter's heart. That is the beauty of the remedy. "I know your heart. I know that is not what you meant to do. I know you are weak. Do you love me?" He asked three times, the same number of times Peter denied Jesus. (Incidentally, Jesus originally called Peter to follow him three times.)

A failure due to weakness remedy: 2 Corinthians 4:7-12



Failure due to weakness is a true window into our fallen humanity and can be used as a VITAL tool of growth IF we are willing to accept the intervening challenges and teaching of discipleship.

We might think that once we recognize our failures due to weakness, we can change them. Sometimes our weaknesses will never go away, so we have to learn to compensate for them. If you know you are weak in a particular area, here is a simple solution - do not go there anymore! Avoid it! Failure due to weakness is a hallmark of the human race, and it makes sense to many Christians that God would focus on and attack such a hallmark. However, when we look at the Scriptures on this type of failure related to God's judgment, we see an entirely different story. Some "failure due to weakness" symptoms: thinking more highly of yourself than you ought, giving in to peer or situational pressure and having/feeding our natural and imperfect tendencies. The way to begin to cope with failure due to weakness is to make the choice to cope with it and rise above - do something different. If it is an area of continual weakness, just do not go there anymore. Set up roadblocks. On April 24, 2017, we made a podcast called "Virtual Sex and Pornography - Does God Care," and for many people, this is a problem that cannot be controlled. It gets hold of you and ruins you. The answer is: SHUT THE DOOR. You are too weak to be able to cope with it. Close the door and walk the other way. This is a choice.

With the level of the world's human weaknesses so overwhelming, it may seem like God messed up. Did His plan go wrong? **Back to the explanation for the Parable of the Sower - the third group:** Mark 4:18-19: First we had seeds stolen away by Satan, and then seeds that were choked out. Now we have seeds that grow among thorns. This gives people a place where they can find biblical answers to the dilemmas of their lives taking root but are just too weak to flourish - there is too much in the way! Failure due to weakness. This is what happens to so many people who hear the gospel. It sounds good, but they just do not have the strength to hold on and find the depth of the message.

The worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches - Those who are part of the "Prosperity Gospel" should read this carefully! If we earnestly pray to God, He will give us everything *He* wants for us, not everything *we* want.

What is God's future remedy for this failure? **First, God's remedy was prepared ahead of time:** 1 Peter 2:9-12: This gives an active description of what true Christians are called to do and to be. You are catapulted out of your normal realm of being and sometimes that is uncomfortable. You have received a very powerful mercy. God's remedy for the world is going to come through true Christianity.

Second, Christians are called *out* of the world and *up* from the world to be presently trained for a future work of ministering, encouraging and leading a weak and sinful world of men to God: ¹¹*Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Fight against your weaknesses! This is a present-day challenge for every Christian. Our managing of our own failures now will help us guide the world later. We are learning how to be powerful guides for the sake of God through Christ. We have a world of miserable failures that need to be led to God after their resurrection. You, as a true Christian, will be helping in that mission!* ¹²*Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. The people who are talking bad about you are the same people who will be glorifying God because of your example in the day of visitation, the Day of Judgment. This is in the kingdom Jesus taught us to pray for (Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth...).* We are told in 2 Peter 3:8 (quoting from Psalms 90:4) that *a day with the Lord is like a thousand years*. In this day (time period) of visitation, God through Christ and the church (the faithful followers of Jesus) will help all humanity to understand what they need to do to have everlasting life.

The present experiences of a Christian are in contradiction to the world around them, which causes grief and persecution. If you are *not* contrary to the world around you, we would suggest you look in the mirror and ask, "How did I represent Christ today?" Not, "How did I represent the things I like about Christ so my friends wouldn't be offended today?" Our lives should be out of character with the world around us.



This text tells us that those in the world will at that future time be able to recognize and respond to the experiences of the future priesthood. This means the failures of weakness and blindness of this age will be wiped away from their lives. They will be able to overcome the weakness.

The world's miserable failures due to their incredible weaknesses will be a thing of the past - they will be eradicated to such an extent that mankind will be all-capable of recognizing righteousness and glorifying God as a result.

When it comes to God's judgment upon the world, failure due to weakness will not preclude having an opportunity for life. How do they *glorify God in the day of visitation*? Because they are able to grow up into Christ and become more righteous and upstanding in their focus. God will not judge humanity based on weakness.

For us as Christians, we need to fight those weaknesses so we can be of help in the future. Go to the word of God and lean on His power so we can be lifted up. We want to learn to grow from failure due to weakness.

Failure due to our personal choices is the most insidious kind of failure as it implies that there was ample knowledge of the situation, sufficient maturity to recognize the gravity of the situation and no inherent weakness that overwhelmed us in facing the situation. This level of failure (failure due to personal choices) acts against righteousness and godliness simply because it wants to. Deception can bring us failure on any of the first three paths, but NOT ON THIS ONE! Here failure is a choice!

FAILURE DUE TO CHOICE: BEYOND MERE WEAKNESS, THIS FAILURE IS FOUNDED IN THE IDOLATRY OF SELF-WILL

Sins of choice always have the most clear-cut final consequences if there is no intervention or reversal and here we have *many* scriptural examples we can examine. We will take a look at just one.

The Apostle Paul back when he was known as Saul of Tarsus: *Acts 26:9-15: I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile* - Such a degree of degradation! He was not just following orders; he took persecution to a whole new level. What went wrong? Saul was angry and passionate enough to rationalize his own breaking of the sacred Jewish Law that he so loved and upheld. He chose to escalate the unjust persecution. What was the remedy for this failure? **The personal, powerful and dramatic intervening words and challenge of Jesus:** *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads. ¹⁵And I said, who are you, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.* Jesus knew the heart of Saul of Tarsus and knew that if he could show Saul what was right and challenge him towards what was right, he could get him on the right path. Saul was now confronted with the enemy and it was not Jesus, it was *himself*. He saw the enemy, saw his choices and chose yet again - but this time to follow godliness and righteousness. He chose to defeat the true enemy and changed his life entirely.

Acts 26:19-21: *I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision* - All the other "visions" in his head were earthly, diabolical, evil visions that were distorted pictures of truth. He did not understand until now what was truth. Saul became Paul and LIVED THE CHANGE THAT HE CHOSE TO MAKE! Even though his failures were as a result of choice, his overcoming was the result of a monumental, spiritual choice to change his life. Persecuting the church drove him to serve the Lord all the more because of how bad he was. He now had to overcome the skepticism of all the brotherhood, because they knew who he was.

Failure due to choice requires dramatic intervention and a dramatic personal response, as this level of failure is symptomatic of a character and conscience that are seriously damaged by sin. Half measures will not work - only total commitment to change will work.

When we are engaged in failures due to choices, dramatic intervention is required along with humility to change. **Lamentations 3:22**

Failure as a result of a choice is the most dangerous and debilitating kind of failure. Coming back from it is difficult, because that requires a complete overhaul in approach. God *does* deal with this kind of failure in a different way than the other three kinds, and the difference in His dealings is important. God will not hold the world accountable for lack of knowledge - He will



fix that. God will not hold the world accountable for being immature - He will help them grow up. God will not hold the world accountable for weakness - He will show them how to find strength. What about choice? Some "failure due to choice" symptoms: ignoring what we broke, justifying our actions with passion and blaming another. How does failure from choice fit into God's judgment? The kind of choices our human race makes now can make belief in God look pretty foolish. Our world does not resemble godliness on any level.

Back to the explanation for the Parable of the Sower - the fourth group of seeds:

Mark 4:20: There was no failure in this seed. This shows the results of good choice. This good choice is because the "ground" (character of that person) is ready to receive God's word so it can flourish. This is a dramatic contrast to the three previous conditions. 1. Satan's influence keeping it away = lack of knowledge, 2. The rocky ground of immaturity and 3. The thorny ground of weakness. **TAKE THESE THREE THINGS AWAY AND CHOICES BECOME CLEAR!** What is God's future remedy for failure due to choice? First, God will wipe away all of the other excuses so all that is left is choice.

God will grant full disclosure in the Day of Judgment. **Full Disclosure - this will solve the lack of knowledge failure:** **1 Timothy 2:4:** Notice, **FIRST** all men are saved and **THEN** they will come to the knowledge of the truth. Isn't that backwards? People always say you learn about the Gospel and then you are "saved." This is backwards because it is not talking about Christians. It is talking about the "everybody else." They will be saved - they are given a resurrection and judgment according to **John 5:28,29 (NASB)**. **THEN** they will come to a knowledge of the truth. The Greek word for knowledge here means "full disclosure." They will understand everything, clearly. There will be no way to say, "I didn't get it." In dealing with humanity after the resurrection, God will say a lack of knowledge is no longer an excuse. His mercy will not allow a lack of knowledge to get in their way.

Complete Accountability - this will solve the immaturity failure: **Matthew 12:34-36:** (NASB) Carelessness is often a result of immaturity. Jesus was specifically focusing on the Pharisees at this point, who were not on a pathway to heaven. They were on the road to resurrection in the next age, being bought by the sacrifice of Jesus. He died for even his enemies - the ones who put him on the cross. *You brood of vipers* - that would have gotten their attention! *They shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment* - They will be accountable for their actions. God will put all of the world in a situation where they will be able to grow up.

Lots of room to learn - this will solve the weakness failure: **Isaiah 35:8:** Again, those on this highway are the "everybody else," not the true Christians. Conversely, the Christian walk is referred to as *straight, difficult and narrow*. This is a large highway. Even if they are not sure of themselves, there will be plenty of room to learn. God will take away the weakness failures because they will have time and opportunity to learn. Once all these other things have gone away, we are left with failure due to choice. **Full personal responsibility for each person's decisions and actions - this leaves only free, educated, experienced and mature choice for man's ultimate individual judgment:** **Jeremiah 31:29-30:** The Adversary will be removed. In the kingdom, Satan's influence will not be allowed to hinder humanity to become reconciled back to God. **Revelation 20:2,3** tells us Satan will be bound for 1,000 years. He and the fallen angels will have no part in this rehabilitation process for mankind. What a weight off humanity's shoulders to have pure truth and education!

The world's miserable failures due to their personal choices will be weighed carefully and justly, and each man will be given ample opportunity for correction and growth. God's plan assures all men complete understanding so they can make complete choices!

Psalms 22:27-28: This gives us a sense of the great power of God's justice and mercy. Mercy does not work without justice - both are needed in the kingdom. Failure will be only as a result of absolute educated personal choice and nothing else. Failure is part of our lives, but hopefully you now have a sense of how to deal with failure in a more practical way in your life. Make failure a stepping stone!

**So, how do you manage failure?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**