

**Auburn Baptist Church**  
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## **Messing Up Is Easy to Do**

*Luke 22:54-62*

In John Bunyan's classic allegory, *Pilgrim's Progress*, the Christian life is portrayed from the moment we the call of God toward salvation until we finally reach our heavenly home. Although it is just a story, it gives us the perfect picture of the journey each one of us walks when we decided to follow Christ.

The Christian life is a journey. We do not belong to this world any longer. We are not to be at home here. We are passing through on the way to something better. We are merely pilgrims. But along the journey our path is fraught with perils.

In *Pilgrim's Progress*, the main character, Christian, faced many perils on his pilgrimage, difficulties that we all face at one time or another. He was tempted into taking his eyes off the light that led him to salvation and became mired in the Slough (Swamp) of Despond. He tired of climbing the hill of difficulty and gave into his flesh by sleeping when he should have been walking. As a result he lost his copy of the Word of God and had to retrace his steps and journey the difficult path twice instead of just once. He chose a more comfortable and delightful looking path instead of staying on the narrow way and ended up in the Castle of Doubt, prisoner of the Giant of Despair.

Our own Christian journeys can be just as difficult. One day we seem to be running confidently for Christ and the next we've tripped and fallen. We are tempted by our own fleshly desires and end up making poor decisions. We take our eyes off of Christ, neglect His Word and teachings, and suddenly find ourselves full of doubt and despair.

We come across difficulties and instead of persevering we stop and fall asleep spiritually and when we wake up we find that the journey is more difficult than if we had just kept going in the first place. Or we find ourselves traveling the same path again and again instead of just walking it once.

I think it's probably safe to say that we all have done things, or not done things, along our spiritual journeys that we regret. Things that we were warned about and yet did anyway. And the frustrating thing is we've probably all done them more than once. In fact, if you're anything like me, you have days, or weeks, or months, or years when it seems that all you're doing is falling down and getting up and falling down and getting up.

Thankfully, for us, our times of failure and weakness cannot keep us from the love of our God. And as long as we chose to get back up and return to the narrow path, neither can they keep us from our ultimate destination - heaven and eternal life with God.

### **I. BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF FAILURES**

There are several examples in the Bible of great men and women of faith who took these detours in their journeys of faith, who messed-up royally from time to time.

### **A. MOSES**

The Bible says Moses was the meekest or humblest among men [meekness: strength under control.] But what did he do? He lost control of his emotions and killed an Egyptian and later he smashed the tablets that the Ten Commandments were written on in a fit of anger at the Israelites idolatry.

### **B. ABRAHAM**

Then there was Abraham, the man who is referred to as the father of our faith. But instead of listening to God's leading, he left the Promised Land and went into Egypt, and while there, he lied about Sarah being his wife because he didn't have enough faith that God would protect them from Pharaoh.

### **C. DAVID**

Or how about King David? He was the apple of God's eye. He was a man after God's own heart, but he committed adultery and then schemed to cover it up by murdering one of his own faithful soldiers.

### **D. PETER**

And what would you think of a preacher who would swear falsely and deny even knowing the Lord? Not much, I'd say. And yet, Peter, one of Christ's most intimate disciples, did just that.

**"Then seizing him [Jesus], they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. But when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, 'This man was with him.' But he denied it. 'Woman, I don't know him,' he said. A little later someone else saw him and said, 'You also are one of them.' 'Man, I am not!' Peter replies. About an hour later another asserted, 'Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.' Peter replied, 'Man, I don't know what you're talking about!' Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. 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.' And he went outside and wept bitterly." (Luke 22:54-62)**

## **II. HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH YOUR MESS-UPS?**

The Christian life is a journey of ups and downs. Because none of us is perfect we can expect that there will be times when we fail to live up to the life we are called to. Even those who were closest to the Lord Jesus when He walked on this earth, experienced moments of failure, of backsliding, of doubts, and confusion. The question we need to ask ourselves is what do we do with these times? How do we react when we fail?

### **A. STOP SIGNS**

Some people treat their mess-ups as stop signs. When they fail, some people decide to stop right there in that moment or that point of failure. They never go on. They tie themselves to that one moment or event and live in their failures.

They decided that they've done too much, or said too much, or failed in too big of a way to go on. They think that because they've failed that there must be something wrong with them. That maybe they weren't really saved or called by God. Maybe they weren't cut out to live the Christian life. (All of which are lies from the enemy.)

God never said that we wouldn't mess up. That we wouldn't have moments of defeat. That we wouldn't face battles and suffer wounds. That we wouldn't make wrong decisions. In fact, in our Scripture passage we can see that in fact Jesus knew before Peter even denied Him that he was going to do so. Jesus even warned Peter it would happen.

But neither did God say that when we messed up, we had to stay tied to our failures and defeats. **1 John 1:9**, promises us that, "**If we confess our sins [our failures, our mistakes, our disobedience], he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**"

We aren't stuck in our failures, unless we want to be. We aren't defeated, unless we want to be. We aren't tied to the past, unless we choose to be. **Proverbs 24:16**, "**For though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, but the wicked are brought down by calamity.**"

## **B. DIRECTIONAL SIGN**

We need to treat our failures or mistakes as directional signs, instead of stop signs. A directional sign sits along the side of the road or path and warns us of upcoming danger or instructs us on the correct way to go. That is how we need to look at our mess-ups, as signs that warn us not to go this way again. We need to learn from our failures and sins, but not wallow in them! God has a marvelous way of bringing good out of bad.

**Romans 8:28**, "**And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.**"

## **III. EVEN WHEN WE MESS UP...**

But even when we fail and mess up, God has given us four wonderful promises to hold on to. And the first one is that God is still sovereign.

### **A. GOD IS STILL SOVEREIGN**

Sovereign means: "in control; powerful." Look again at **verses 60 and 61 of Luke 22**, "**Peter replies, 'Man, I don't know what you're talking about!' Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. 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.'**"

The rooster crowing at the exact time that it did is a testimony that even though Peter failed by denying Christ, God was still in control. The Lord had shut the beaks of hundreds of roosters until the precise moment of the third denial.

Peter is at his worst. He's reached his lowest point. He's failed the Lord he promised to follow to the death. He probably feels like he's falling, like he's out of control, but he got a message from the Lord, "I'm still in control."

**Psalm 37:24, "Though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand."**

We often fail God, but He never fails us. Many times, I'm not faithful to Him, but great is His faithfulness. We must remember that even when we despair and feel out of control, God is still in control. He's still sovereign. And when **Romans 8:28** says all things work together for good - that includes our failures.

You may feel like you've blown it, and maybe you have. But no matter what we've done, God still has a wonderful plan for our lives. How do we know that? We're still here! He hasn't taken us home yet, so He must still have something left for us.

## **B. GOD STILL LOVES US**

The second truth we need to hold on to is that even when we mess up, our God still loves us. In **verse 61** of our passage we see that at the moment Peter denies Christ, he turned and saw the Lord, and their eyes met. Now the Bible doesn't tell us what Peter saw in His Savior's eyes, but I can probably guess, knowing the character of Christ from other passages of Scripture. I don't think Peter saw disappointment or anger. I think he saw love and forgiveness in the eyes of Christ.

God is not changing us so that He can love us. He loves us already, warts and all. And God does not love us because we are valuable. Instead we are valuable because He loves us.

God loves us and wants us even when we fail or wander away. **Matthew 18:12-14, "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little one should be lost."**

## **C. WE ARE SECURE**

When we mess up, God is still in control, He still loves us, and third, we are still eternally secure. There are many churches that have taught and believe that it is possible for a believer to lose their salvation if they sin after they have been saved. Though these Christians are well meaning, and truly believe what they are teaching, they are wrong.

**1 John 5:18, "We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God [Christ] keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him."**

This is a passage that at first glance seems to support the false teaching by claiming that believers will not continue to sin, but this is a slightly skewed interpretation. What John is saying here is that true Christians will not knowingly and willfully continue to sin. It does not say that we won't ever sin. That would contradict **1 John 1:8-10**. **"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives."**

We do sin after we've been saved. We are not perfect nor will we be made perfect until Christ comes again. We will sin, and Christ has made provision for those times. But nowhere in Scripture does it say that we will lose our salvation. We are eternally secure even when we fail. Christ keeps anyone born of God safe.

#### **D. GOD ISN'T FINISHED WITH US YET**

**Philippians 1:6** holds one more promise that we need to take hold of in our times of failure, **"being confident in this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."** God isn't finished with you yet.

You are not an accident. Your salvation was not a mistake or a chance thing. You belong to God and He will keep you safe. If you have fallen or failed or made a bad decision or have not lived the way that you know you should have, then listen to the voice of God calling you home.

Get up. Don't remain in your place of failure and sin. Repent. Turn away from the sin, ask for forgiveness, and walk on. The journey isn't over, God still loves you, and he's not finished with us yet.

#### Sermon Sources:

Adapted from an article by Jerry Shirley entitled, "You've Fallen...But You CAN Get Up!"