

After We Fail What Then

by Charles Stanley

The sermon emphasizes the importance of genuine repentance and the steps to take after failing in the face of temptation, using David's example in Psalm 51 as a guide.

Duration: 20:09

Scripture: Psalm 51:1-2, Psalm 51:7, Psalm 51:10-12, Psalm 51:17

Topics: "Failure"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of learning from our failures and sins. He encourages listeners not to waste their sins but to use them as opportunities for growth and learning. The preacher highlights the need for genuine repentance, which involves confessing personal guilt, assuming responsibility, and being open and honest with God. He also emphasizes that God never abandons His children in times of temptation and failure, but instead offers forgiveness and instruction. The sermon concludes with the call to humbly seek purification and wisdom from God, so that we may avoid repeating our mistakes and hindering His work within us.

Transcript

Temptation is a fact of life and it's going to be with us as long as we live. And the question is, what do we do with it? And the real truth is that oftentimes we fail. In spite of all of our plans not to fail, all of our promises to God that we're not going to, we do fail.

And then the question comes, what do we do after we fail in that temptation? And I want you to turn to Psalm 51 and let's look at David's response to his own sin and his own failure and temptation in this 51st Psalm. And while you're turning there, if you'll hold that and then turn to 2 Samuel chapter 12, because we'll be referring to that in a few moments, as David is confronted by Nathan the prophet. But I want us to turn primarily to Psalm 51 and let's read some of this passage.

He starts by beginning, be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness. According to the greatness of Thy compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly, he says, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Thy sight, so that Thou art justified when Thou dost speak and blameless when Thou dost judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin my mother conceived me.

Behold, Thou dost desire truth in the innermost being and in the hidden part Thou wilt make me to know wisdom. Then listen to his request. Purify me with hyssop and I shall be clean.

Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness. Let the bones which Thou hast broken rejoice.

Hide Thy face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Thy presence and do not take Thy Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of my salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Thy ways and sinners will be converted to Thee. Then he says, as he concludes this passage, in verse 16, For Thou dost not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it.

Thou art not pleased with burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou will not despise. Now, what do we do with our sin? When we have yielded to temptation, how do we respond to that? We can respond by having ourselves a big pity party and just saying, shame on me.

God, I promise you're not going to do it again, and turn right around and respond the same way. I believe there's some very specific things that God would have us to do once we failed, once we've yielded, once we know we have sinned against God. So I want to ask you, my friend, be wise enough to get a pencil and piece of paper and jot down these seven suggestions that I want to give you, how to respond after we have yielded to our temptation.

And the first step is this, and that is to repent of your sin before God. Which leads me to ask the question, what is genuine, true, complete repentance? Complete repentance involves several things. First of all, a confession of our guilt before God.

Not just, Lord, I'm sorry for making a mistake, but God, I want to confess my guilt to you that I have sinned against you. It is a deliberate, willful confession of guilt before God. Secondly, involved in true repentance is a recognition that our sin is against God.

If you'll notice in this passage in Psalm 51, David puts it this way. He says in verse 4, against thee, thee only, I have sinned. That does not mean that he did not recognize that he'd sinned against Bathsheba and against Uriah, her husband, but that primarily, most of all, that he had sinned against the living God.

Recognition that his sin is against God. Not only a confession of my guilt before God, a recognition that my sin is against God, but thirdly, if my repentance is to be true and complete, I assume full responsibility for my sin. It's interesting that in this 51st Psalm, as David confesses before God, listen to what he says.

He says, be gracious to me, wash me, cleanse me, my transgression, my sin. He says, purify me, wash me, make me to hear joy. Hide not thy face from my sins, blot out all my iniquities, create in me a clean heart, renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Nowhere does David accuse Bathsheba. So, true repentance involves a confession before God of my guilt. I acknowledge that my sin is against God.

I assume full responsibility for it, and number four, which is very important, I am totally open and honest with God about the sin. Now, my friend, you and I cannot have complete repentance unless we are honest with God. No matter how grievous it may be, when we are honest with God about it, our fellowship with Him is still there.

It makes no difference how grievous the sin. If we are open and honest, truly repentant, confessing our guilt before Him, assuming full responsibility, acknowledging that our guilt and our sin is against God, God's fellowship with us will be sweet and tender when we are open and honest with God. But when we start trying to cover it up and say, Lord, now, you know, I know I've made a mistake, but after all, God, I know that everybody makes mistakes.

Nobody's perfect. That is dishonesty. The truth is, we have sinned against God.

We must be absolutely open and honest with Him. There is no genuine repentance unless those four things are involved. A confession of my personal guilt, assuming full responsibility, recognizing that sin is against God, and being totally open and honest with God about it.

Step number one, repent of that sin before God. Step number two, accept the forgiveness of God. Now, what is the attitude of God toward us when we sin against Him? The attitude of God is this.

He never abandons His children in time of temptation and failure and sin. He never abandons us. He doesn't reject us.

He doesn't abandon us. But what does He do? Because He loves us unconditionally, He is willing to forgive us because that forgiveness has already been provided two thousand years ago. Now, let me explain this very carefully.

When Jesus Christ died on the cross two thousand years ago, all of my sin, past, present, and future, was placed upon Him, and He and He alone bore the full impact and the full penalty of my sin. You say, well, if that'd be true, then why should I confess and repent of my sin? For this simple reason, though Jesus Christ took the full impact and the full penalty for my sin, I am only able to experience what He provided when I genuinely, personally repent of that sin. Jesus Christ died in order that all men may be saved.

Only those are saved who apply to their heart by personal acceptance through faith and repentance of their sin in the Lord Jesus Christ. That redemption is only applied to those who receive it. But now, what about my forgiveness now that I am a believer? Though God has forgiven me of my sin two thousand years ago, I will only be able to experience that forgiveness.

I will only be able to enjoy release and liberty from that guilt. I will only be able to experience freedom from that bondage when I genuinely repent of my sin. And you see, once you and I accept the forgiveness of God, then even in spite of the grievousness of our sin, we are able to walk through the discipline with a sense of comfort and assurance that we do not walk through it by ourselves.

Accepting the forgiveness of God is extremely important because with that comes the acceptance of ourselves. I must be willing to accept God's forgiveness and forgive myself for my failure. Otherwise, you just live in bondage, wondering if God is angry, if God is unjust, if God is going to somehow wipe you out somewhere along the way.

First of all, there must be genuine repentance before God. Secondly, there must be the acceptance of our forgiveness before Him. Thirdly, the making of restitution.

We must make restitution toward those we have sinned against. Now, sometimes this isn't always easy. If it is a matter of paying back or giving back to someone, that's easy.

But suppose, for example, it is more involved than that. Suppose you have sinned against someone. You cannot restore someone else's purity.

So what do you do? You ask that person to forgive you of your sin against them. And you ask them in the spirit of genuine regret for having sinned against that person. In the making of restitution, we have to be very careful that we do not involve someone else or bring hurt to someone else when it is not necessary.

You bring it to God and be sure that you are forgiven before God. You ask the other person to forgive you of your sin. Sometimes a person in a very selfish manner, motivated out of selfishness in order to get the burden off their heart, will sometimes share their guilt or their sin on other people in order to attempt to clear their conscience and oftentimes bringing unnecessary hurt and grief and sorrow and difficulty even in the life of a person toward whom they've sinned against.

We must bring our sin before God and the person toward whom we have sinned. We must be very careful not to hurt someone else, not to involve someone else unnecessarily when we are making restitution for our sin. Then there is a fourth step that I believe is necessary here, and that is to accept God's discipline willingly.

Now you say, well, but now wait a minute, if He has forgiven me, how can God discipline me having forgiven me? Because discipline is an act of love. Forgiving me says that God is not going to hold it against me. He's wiped it out.

But because He loves me and because He does not want to repeat it again and again and again, because God wants to teach us something, because God wants to build us up, because He wants to make us an encouragement to others, because He wants to deepen our relationship with Him so that we become more valuable in service to Him, what does He do? He corrects us by discipline as an act of love. And sometimes you say, oh God, you're loving me too much. I can't handle that.

Well, all of us feel that a way at times, but it is always an expression of love. Whether it is light discipline or heavy discipline, it is always an expression of love to correct us lest we ruin and destroy ourselves. So when the discipline comes, it doesn't mean we haven't been forgiven.

It just means that God is keeping His word. What does He say in Hebrews? He disciplines those whom He loves. So that the discipline is an expression of love and we should accept the discipline of God without complaining, realizing that it is coming from an expression of unconditional love.

But there is another step and that is, you and I are to seek to learn the lessons that God would have us to learn. Now what are those lessons? Well, if you'll notice here, I believe that David learned a lot of things. He learned many lessons from this experience.

What are the lessons we are to learn? You see, what you have to ask yourself is this, am I going to sin against God, violate His law and suffer the stern, sometimes stern severe discipline of God and let it all go to waste? Well, it will if I don't learn something. So don't waste your sins. Don't sin against God, but when

you do, don't waste them.

Don't waste the sorrows. Don't waste the severity of the discipline. Don't waste the disciplines.

Don't waste the tears. Don't waste the heartache. Don't waste the brokenness.

But learn from it. Now there are three words I want you to jot down. First of all, humility.

Secondly, purity. And thirdly, instruction. When we fail before God, we should ask God, Lord, humble my spirit before You.

Lord, purify my sinful heart. Thirdly, Lord, instruct me in Your ways so that this will not become a habit in my life, so that I will not repeat this grief against You and against myself and maybe against someone else. The spirit of humility, purity in our heart, instruction, wisdom.

That is, whenever you and I fall and falter before God, we should ask the Lord, Lord, teach me what You want me to know. Instruct me in the ways that I should be instructed, lest this become a part of my life and I continually hinder Your work and I continually hinder Your work within me. So we seek to learn the lessons that God wants to teach us.

And then, if we continue to struggle, this is the next point. I want you to jot this down. If you continue to struggle with that temptation, if you continue to struggle with that temptation, seek godly counsel.

Sometimes one of the wisest things you can do is to find some person whom you trust who will be a wise, godly counsel to you, to help you to understand why you're reacting the way you're acting, why you're responding the way you're responding, what is it in you, what need is there in you that's not being met, and you're trying to meet that need in a way that is unholy before God and disastrous to your own sense of self-esteem and to God's purpose and plan for your life. And if, my friends, you cannot find someone who is a friend, find some godly professional counselor, someone who will help you walk through that until you understand why, what's going on in your life, and someone who can encourage you. You see, sometimes that's what we need.

We need someone to encourage us along, someone to confront us and help us to see why we failed and the circumstance in which we failed and why is it we repeatedly fail and what mistake we're making and what little twitch in our thinking that's not right and how we've been deceived by the devil and how we're living in deceptions. There are reasons and sometimes we need someone else to help us understand that. And then there's one other thing I want to mention here, and I want you to notice, if you will, in this 51st Psalm, what David says, verse 13.

Then I will teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners will be converted to thee. Which leads me to the last thing that I want to say at this point, and that is, we are to share wisely--listen--we are to share wisely God's grace and God's power in our temptation experience. Now when we share our failures--notice what I said, share them wisely--you don't share failures and give such intimate details in such a fashion to stir up more motivation and temptation, but rather to share them so wisely that the other person will see primarily what? That your sin was against God, that you were grieved in your spirit, that you suffered the discipline of God, and that your heart ached, and that God has delivered you by His grace, and He's empowered you to overcome that in your life.

That's what people need to hear. But on the other hand, there's another word of caution, we never share our victories or our failures with a sense of, I have learned. My friend, don't ever tell anybody that, just tell them, you're learning.

God is working in my life, I'm still learning. Once you say, let me tell you what I have learned, watch out, because Satan's going to unleash the most vicious attack against the very area of your life in which you think you have succeeded or in which you think you have victory. We are all learners, that's what a disciple is.

A disciple isn't someone who has learned it, a disciple is one who has and is in the process of learning the ways of God. If I'm going to respond to my failures properly, I'm going to respond as a learner, one who is humbled in spirit, purified in the heart out of true repentance, and a person who is seeking wisdom and instruction. And you see, here's what will happen.

When you and I fail, and we get into the word of God, saying, Lord, show me, why did I fail? Why do I keep on failing? God, show me, what are you trying to say to me? It is amazing what you will learn about the Lord. It is amazing what you will learn about yourself. It is amazing what you'll learn about the grace and the goodness and the forgiveness of God and how God operates in a person's life.

And my friends, you and I can respond to temptation several ways. We can grow bitter, we can become barren and useless and wasteful in our life, or we can become a tremendous blessing to someone else. But it just depends on how you and I respond.

I can either be deceived and refuse to face the truth and be set on the shelf by God, useless, of no value to anyone else because I'm still covering, still refusing to repent, still refusing to deal with it, still refusing to acknowledge that it's against God. I can refuse to face it honestly, or you and I can become a valuable vessel of the living God. And my friend, whichever you choose, it's simply that.

It is a choice you make. And my plea to you today is, don't waste your failures. Profit from them and become a valuable blessing to someone else who is hurting desperately just like you've hurt.

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