

Aaron's Failure

by Duncan Campbell

Duncan Campbell's sermon highlights the dangers of compromise in faith through the story of Aaron's failure with the golden calf, urging Christians to uphold holiness and strong character.

Duration: 1:00:51

Scripture: Exodus 32:7-14, Joshua 14:6, Proverbs 9:10, Matthew 3:2, Matthew 11:28, Acts 4:12, James 1:5

Topics: "Failure"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of his daughter giving a testimony before leaving for Nepal. She attributes her faith and presence at the meeting to her parents, which humbles the speaker. The speaker then questions if others can say the same about their parents and challenges the audience to be men and women of God. He shares a story of a Christian worker who bought a television set despite the negative influence it can have on young people. The speaker emphasizes the importance of living a life that reflects God's presence and warns against dishonoring God's name in the presence of enemies.

Transcript

The Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down, for thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made them a molting calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed their unto and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation. And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with a great power and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say for mischief, did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy stiff wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel thy servants, to whom thou swearest by thine own self, and said unto them, I will multiply your seed as a star of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. Amen.

And God will add his blessing. Now shall we bow our heads for a minute in the fellowship of prayer. Our gracious God and loving Father, how glad we are this morning that our oft-coming doth not weary thee, nor the giving of thyself impoverish thee.

Thou art near to all who call upon thee, who call upon thee in truth. We would desire now to come before thee in the confidence of faith, believing that thou art, and that thou art the rewarder of all them that diligently seek thee. We thank thee, Lord, for a sense of thy presence on this campground.

Thou art closer than breathing, thou art nearer than hands or feet. Lord, thou art in our midst. And we ask that thou wilt give to us again this morning the hearing ear and the understanding heart.

I ask thee, gracious Father, to help me. Thou knowest, Lord, how, oh, how dependent I am upon thee, how very, very poor I am in myself with so many limitations. Oh, God, would you be pleased to make that up for me today by giving that consciousness of thy nearness.

Oh, blessed Savior, we can say, with thy servant of old, when free grace awoke me with light from on high, and legal fear shook me, I trembled to die. We thank thee, Lord, for saving and for sustaining grace. We cast ourselves afresh upon thee this morning.

Seek, Lord, in the stillness while we wait on thee, and hasten to listen in expectancy. For Jesus' sake, amen. The story of the golden calf is one with which we are all familiar.

We associate the story with a very dark day in the history of Israel. In it we have recorded the extent to which a soul may fall when left unaided to battle with the spirit that is not of God. I think that is written clearly and largely across the story of the golden calf.

It is also, to my mind, an illustration of the inevitable issue of a non-spiritual dependence upon God, a non-spiritual dependence. You will have noticed that here the moral restraint of a holy life for the time being ceases to operate, and in the recoil, passions that had been in the heart, oh, they crave for gratification. And in a moment of crisis, I would say in a moment of soul crisis that called for moral courage, one man failed.

I think that is clear and obvious to us all. Is it not true that among the dire tragedies recorded in Scripture, none are more arresting than the records of men who have turned aside, though there are so many often today? Men once bright in evangelism, men standing for holiness and separation. Oh, my dear people, where are they, where do they stand today? They have stepped aside.

They knew the will of God and its personal implication for their life, but listen to the voice of the tempter and swayed by the modern approach. Oh, I'm tired of this. Men speak of the new technique in evangelism, the new technique.

Oh, may God keep us to the old. May God deliver us. Oh, how often I've prayed that.

God deliver me from the new approach and the new technique. Keep me true to the old and keep me ever on the old path. Oh, yes, of course, you will be misunderstood.

You will be misrepresented. And perhaps some may say what the minister said to me not so very long ago, man, you ought to have been alive a hundred years ago. A hundred years ago.

Oh, how often life's glorious possibilities are sacrificed in one tragic surrender. Now, here it is. Here it is.

You will notice that the tragedy of this incident is in the fact that God's name was dishonored and that in the presence of his enemies. Oh, read verse 25. Tragic, desperate.

My dear people, if it's not being repeated today, the picture that you have before us is just what is happening, at least in my country today, particularly in England. Oh, may God have mercy on us. Let me say again what I think I mentioned last night, that we must never forget that God's character before the world is committed to his people.

I say in a very real sense, committed to his people. And when they fail, when they fall, when they succumb to the lure of the less of loyalty, that's what men are doing today, yielding to the lure of the less when they come down. We must accommodate.

We must compromise if we're going to win the youth of the country. Oh, how foolish. How foolish.

I sometimes use the illustration, I was born and brought up on a farm. On a farm, and people were farmers, and are farming today in Scotland. And I am often asked the question, if I found a cow in a bog, oh, she sank in a bog.

And I am anxious to help her and get her out of the bog. Would I go into the bog with her to try and get her out? Oh, you dear farmers, you say, never. Never.

If I'm anxious to get her out, I've got to stand on something solid. I'm not going to go into the bog with her to try and get her out. And I'm not going to compromise with the world to try and get the youth out of it.

Never. I've got to stand on something solid. I've got to stand on the solid rock of ages.

Oh, my dear people, be careful against compromise. Never yield to the compromise of the devil. Misunderstood, yes.

Misrepresented, yes. Left alone, ostracized. And you'll come through all that.

But I'd rather have the smile of Jesus than the applause of men. There are several thoughts in this story, this record, that I wish to touch upon this morning, if the Lord may help me. And the thought is the uplifting and the restraining character of a holy life.

Oh, how it uplifts. And how it restrains. We speak of constraining grace.

Yes, we thank God for constraining grace. But we want to thank him also for restraining grace. I'm afraid.

The fear of God. Oh, how we need that today. The fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom.

Well, you have it here personified in Moses. You remember that Moses is spoken of as a man of God. Caleb, who knew Moses, intimately speaks of him in this fashion, Joshua chapter 14, verse 6. A man of God.

Oh, my dear friend, may I ask this question. Do the neighbors speak of you as such? That's a simple question. But, brother, it has profound implications.

May I ask, do the members of your own family speak of you as such? Father's a man of God. There's something about him that restrains me. I cannot be worldly, devilish, selfish.

Oh, thinking of Father, I just can't. Restraining grace is a man of God. Are you? Tell me, what is the voice of God saying at the ear of your guilty soul at this moment? Have you been alone with God last night? Oh, let me repeat again what a man is on his knees before God.

But he is for nothing more than what Jane has said. One wonderful moment in my life is associated with a meeting in London. It was a valedictory service, a valedictory service for my daughter before leaving for Nepal.

And at that meeting, she was asked to give a word of testimony. And in her testimony, she said this, I feel, now I'm just quoting her words, I feel that I must say this, that I am here this evening because of the parents that I have. Oh, my dear people, I felt small, I felt small.

I'm here because of the parents that I have. And I would like to ask again, is that what your children say of you? A man of God. Oh, pastor, what have we to say about you? He's a man of God.

He's a man of God. Here we have a man who by the purity and the nobility of his character keeps two and a half million people on the highway of spirituality. I think we can read that into it.

With so much of God in us and so much of God about us, is to make men and women think of God. I come back again to the life of that young man that I so frequently refer to, just because I can't do anything else. I'm referring to little Donald MacPhail.

He is leading the couple out from the village to the pasture. And while passing through the gate, the bus from the town stopped, and a young man alighted, came up the bus, off the bus, carrying two cases. He had just returned from Australia.

He had been sailing there for several years. He was a sailor. He is now home for a holiday.

And at the gate he met little Donald. And Donald looked at him and said, I'm so glad to see you home at such a time as this. He shook his hand and went with the couple to the pasture.

That young man hadn't left Donald more than half a minute when he was struck down by conviction. He hadn't been home during the revival. He was now in the midst of it, and he met this young man.

And before he arrived at his home, he was in great distress of soul. He had met God in the person of this young man. When he was greeted and welcomed back home by his mother and father, he laid down his cases and said, Mother, is there someone here that would pray for me? And the mother said, Norman, we have much need to pray for ourselves.

Oh, she was saying. She was led to Christ just the following night. Oh, I remember the night well.

We were in the church, and Donald is sitting on the front seat, and as usual, weeping, tears. Then his mother came in, and he recognized her. And he went over to her, and he took her right to the front, and said to her, Mother, this is where Jesus saved me last night, and he can save you tonight.

God saved us. And shortly after that, the same thing happened to his father. It was here that Mother found Jesus last night, and he's here to meet with you.

That was how it went on. This young man is now standing beside his mother, and the mother said, Your old companion was saved, and I'll just go for him, and he'll pray for you. And because of Donald meeting

that young man, and this companion of his praying, every member of the family that weren't saved until then was gloriously saved within an hour.

Oh, they had come, they had gathered, just to welcome him home, and met with a Savior. Because constraining grace was in evidence in the life of one young man. Oh, here you have it.

With so much of God in us that will make men think of God. My dear people, to me, that's normal Christianity. Normal Christianity.

But with so much of God in us and about us, that just a seer makes men think of God. It is reported that through looking at the late Dr. McIntyre, who succeeded Andrew Bonner in this church in Glasgow, married on Andrew Bonner's daughter, I spoke to a man some years ago who was saved through looking at Dr. McIntyre walk into the pulpit before he spoke a word. The life also of Jesus made manifest through my mortal flesh.

My dear people, if the life of Jesus is made manifest in us, we are the greatest Christian evidence that can be furnished. I believe that. The greatest Christian evidence that can be furnished.

Oh, we have an argument, of course we have. We can speak of the hope that is within us. But I maintain, dear people, that the greatest argument must be myself.

Here you have it. With so much of God in us, so much of God about us, that he kept two and a half million people on the highway of spirituality. Oh, yes, brother, we must be the argument.

Oh, let me say again, what I am, what I am, is far more eloquent, far more convincing than what I just say. Let us understand, dear people, that the world looks beneath the dress of the priest, the dress of the pastor, to the character of the man. And it's not the dress that is going to convince them of the character.

Oh, here you have it. As my Father has sent me, even so send I you. Was it not Jesus who said, He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.

Oh, so simple, so profound, God manifested. And does John not say, as he is, so are we in the world. I feel, dear people, that this is a truth that we want to emphasize and reemphasize.

That the crying need of the Christian church today is not a new approach or a new technique, but men and women that demonstrate God. Holiness. Oh, holiness.

Christ like man, as he is. So are we. My dear people, think of that.

Think of that. So are we. Oh, the mystery of it.

I can't explain it. I wouldn't attempt to explain it. The word of God states it.

As he is, so are we. What does it mean? Oh, what does it mean? Just to my mind means this. We are called upon to duplicate the life of Jesus to men.

Duplicate the life of Jesus to men. By character and by conduct. We represent it.

Oh, I told you already. I love the Puritan. I am constantly reading them.

I think just now of something that Gernot the Puritan said. Say not that thou wast royal blood in thy veins. Say not that thou art born of God, if thou canst not prove thy pedigree by daring to be holy.

As Gernot said that, expressing the same thought that God would have us listen to this morning. Unless thou canst prove thy pedigree, I am saved. God in his mercy has dealt with me.

Can you prove your pedigree by daring to be holy? A Christian, of course, is a holy person. He ought to be. He ought to be.

If he is possessed of the life of God, be ye holy as I am holy. Oh, brother, sister, tell me, where do we stand in the light of that truth? There are times, my dear people, when I tremble before you. God knows my heart.

When I tremble before it, oh, my God, am I holy? Am I holy? Am I separate? Is your life made manifest through my mortal flesh? And I often tremble before it. God. Oh, God is massive.

I know that you and I go to our conventions and we go to our camp meetings. And I believe that we have our great moments of aspiration. Visions of spiritual beauty, oh, come before us, up before us.

And listen, brother, that has happened already in this camp. That has happened. I believe that.

I cannot believe anything else, but let me say this. What are such aspirations and visions if they are not translated into reality in character and in context? Oh, brother, sister, remember. Oh, remember that only insofar as it dominates my life is my profession of salvation real.

Only so far as it dominates my conduct under my mode of thinking is my profession of holiness real. Oh, let's, oh, let's think of that. The uplift and the reclaiming character of godliness.

Oh, that God may send us away from this camp meeting. Send me back to Scotland. Send you to your community more like Jesus.

More about Jesus in his words. Holding communion with my Lord. Hearing his voice in every life.

Making it faithful. Saying, my Lord, more about Jesus. Oh, that that may be the cry of every soul forgetting all about the camp meeting and the realization of that Jesus is real to me now.

That's it. My dear people, is that not the supreme aspiration in your soul this morning? I want to be more like Jesus. Notice further that this passage of scripture speaks of the injury done by a weak Christian character.

We want to face this. The injury done by a weak Christian character as seen in Aaron. To me it is remarkable that men sooner or later betray themselves.

Oh, they betray themselves. And others will estimate then by what I see, a moral diagnosis. Which is absolutely certain in its action.

Oh, others pass their judgment upon it. That is why I keep saying that it's already on this platform that as Christian men and women we ought to live to the world's conscience but avoid its faith. Oh, let me say it again.

Live to the world's conscience. I said already that we may berate our religion but others sit in judgment on it. You see, it was not the office of the priesthood that failed.

Oh, no. It was the character of the man. The character of the man.

That was what failed. And I want you to notice the two signs of weakness in Aaron's behavior. Of course he knew this to be wrong.

Of course it was wrong. A car? Another God? Oh, no. I can well imagine that that was his first reaction.

But instead of meeting their desire by a direct negative you'll notice that he tries to evade the fact by raising a side issue. Oh, how often we do this. How often we do this.

If you wish a God you must bring your own in it. You must bring your own in it. Perhaps he reasons back.

They know that women will never part with their own. And I will be saved from compromise. And I believe, dear people, pastors, listen, I believe that we are often tempted just along similar lines.

I know a thing to be wrong. I know a thing to be wrong. I was at a camp meeting last week.

I feel I can say this. At that camp meeting two young women came that weren't dressed as they ought to have been dressed. And the leader went to them and sent them straight home.

They had booked. They had paid their booking fee. And they were to have lodging for the whole period.

But here was a man who refused to compromise. You must understand what we take and what we expect of girls who attend this camp. You must change your dress or go home.

And they weren't prepared to have changed their dress. Oh no. We have our own convictions, one of them said.

Our own convictions. Well, young women, just go back home with your convictions. And he sent them home.

Now, some might say, well now, that was a bit ungracious. A bit ungracious. Why? They could have been blessed.

They could have been blessed. Oh yes. But here's a man who refused to compromise.

And I believe us ministers, us Christian workers, us pastors, we are often tempted to reason in a similar fashion. We know a thing to be wrong. But instead of saying so, we try to evade the fact by raising a side issue.

Oh, I know it's wrong, but I do not wish to offend. You've heard that, haven't you? We mustn't be too hard on them. We must compromise just a little.

My dear people, oh, let me say this. Is it not true that as Christian men and women we must be different? We must be different. Peculiar people.

Separated. I love that verse of Scripture, you'll come out from among them and be separate. Touch not the unclean things.

That's why I hate television. I just hate it. Oh, how many Christian people have spoken against the theatre and the dancing saloon.

Oh, it's wrong. It's wrong. I've said repeatedly in Scotland, if you saw Duncan Campbell standing in a picture house too, what did you say? What did you say? Oh, how dreadful.

That man that preaches holiness. Just look at him. Just look at him.

Compromised. But brother, you may have criticized the theatre and the picture house and the drinking house, but my God, you've brought it into your drawing room. Oh, my dear people, we've got to face facts in their naked reality.

Yet I fear, Oh, I fear that so many of us are compromised. I was at a convention in Ireland, it's now five years ago, and I made reference to television as hell's greatest agency for the damning of young people today. There was a businessman in the service.

Yes, a prominent Christian worker. Prominent Christian worker. A man that I believe gave his thousands to foreign mission workers.

But just a week before the convention, he bought a television set and paid a hundred and twenty pounds for it. A hundred and twenty three, a matter of fact. It was a good set.

When I made that statement, I can see that man leaving the church. And to begin with, he called at his place of business and called two of his workers. Two of his workers.

Out and said to them, I want you to come with me home. And he took them home without saying anything to them until they got to the house. Now, come into my drawing room.

And you see my new television set there. I want you to lift it out and bring it into the yard and you will find in a septum shed, a sledgehammer. And mash it to this.

Mash it to this. One of the young men, now I'm quoting what the dear man said to me, one of his workers said, surely, surely you're not going to do that. If you don't wish it, you could sell it and give the money to some foreign mission.

He said, I could sell it, of course. But if meat will cause my brother to offend, I shall eat no meat as long as I live. And if that television set is going to cause someone to offend, I shall not have it, no one else will have it.

And he smashed the 123 pound television set to smithereens in the yard. He would not compromise. He would not.

Oh, but we are so tempted. And we say it can be made a blessing. Of course, I believe it could.

I believe it could. Food could be made a blessing. But if such a meat is going to cause my brother to offend, I shall eat no meat as long as I live.

I feel there are people, us Christian men and women, that is the term that we've got to take. Irrespective of what people may think or say of it. That is my conviction.

And I'm giving expression to it. We are expected, oh brother, we are expected to come up from among them and be separate and touch not the unclean things. Television, is it clean? Is it clean? Well, you answer that question.

If you have a television set. Touch not the unclean. Don't, don't touch it.

Of course, I could dwell on other things just as well. I'm sure you must have read of that incident of the Kessler Convention that happened, oh, this happened years ago, when Keswick was what Keswick is not today. I'm sorry having to say that.

Your Keswick may be different. Oh, how we are low of the standard. I remember a day when no woman would be allowed to go into a tent but wasn't wearing a hat.

That was the standard. If you came without a hat, you were sent away. And there were other demands.

But oh, how different it was. Now I'm thinking of a service conducted by the late Dr. Inwood, an Irishman. One of God's great preachers on holiness and lived a holy life.

He's preaching. When he sat down, a rector of the Church of England rose to his feet and asked if he could say a word. So he addressed the chairman of the convention.

He said this, Chairman, I came to Keswick looking for a blessing and expecting a blessing and I believe that God has revealed to me the way into blessing. I'm quoting exactly what the man said. But listening to Dr. Inwood, I made this discovery that I must part with something in my life.

There's a certain habit that I must part from. And I think that I'm honest enough to say this, that if I part with it, I'll die. I'll die.

Dr. Inwood is now addressing the doctor. Can you tell me what can I do? Dr. Inwood rose to his feet and addressed the rector. He said this, Brother, you just told us that you came to Keswick seeking a blessing.

And you further said that God has revealed to you the way into blessing. But you evidently, according to your own statement, you evidently are bound by a habit. And you said that if you were forced to do it, that you would die.

Of course, many suspected that what he was referring to was that filthy habit smoking. Smoking. Oh, the filthy habit.

And then the doctor further said, What can I do? My dear brother, there's only one answer. Just die where you're standing. Just die where you're standing.

And that was the answer. I believe, oh let me see it again, We are expected to be different. Aaron replied, They give me their gold and I put it in the fire.

Oh, poor Aaron. They give me their gold and I put it in. And this calf came out.

But the calf would not have come out. Aaron hadn't put the gold into the fire. Oh, how we excuse ourselves.

I am the unfortunate creature of circumstances. I cannot be but what I am. It's the old man.

Oh, for God's sake. I know that you couldn't have read this article of this report that appeared in the British press. A dear Christian man found himself in court.

He had committed an offence. And he is now standing before his judge. The judge, before passing sentence, asked him if he had anything to say.

And this dear man said, Yes, I have. I want to make it clear to your judge that it wasn't myself. It was my old man.

It was my old man. Well, there's only one thing that I can do and that is to send yourself and your old man to prison and you can settle it there. Now you smile at that.

Oh, how we will excuse ourselves. Brothers. The servants would not do it.

But it was done. Because one man wielded some ought to have taken a definite stand against that which was wrought. And you'll be up against it.

Oh, brothers, you'll be up against it. It happened because of one man out of touch with God. And brothers, you know as I know that we can get out of touch with God.

Do you know what a man said to me recently in Birmingham in England? Oh, how it shook me and shocked me. Mr. Campbell, I want to say this too, that I haven't sinned for 40 years. And I just looked at the dear man and said, Brother, I'm afraid you've broken the record.

There's such a thing as the sin of resumption. It's amazing what people will say. I haven't sinned for 40 years.

Brother, you've broken the record. He wasn't at all happy. This happened because this man was out of touch with God.

And my dear people, I can bear testimony to the tragedy of that. Oh, when I face the question how many have been hindered by my compromise, by my compromise. Brother, you'll never be in the place where it will be impossible for you to sin.

But I would agree with F.B.Mye. Also, D.N. McIntyre, he has broken the cross. While it is true that you'll never be in the place where it will be impossible for you to sin, but you can be in the place where it's possible not. Didn't John Wesley say that? In the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son cleanses from all.

When I walk in the light. Well, here you have this dear man. And because of his faith, men and women are dragged down.

Now I believe, dear people, that streams are running today. Oh, the world will see to that. Streams of loneliness.

Streams of impurity. Streams of compromise. Streams of war.

Stand up. Oh, they're running. But brother, tell me, are we going to launch out on the stream with them? Never.

Oh, let me say, never! With all the conviction at my disposal. I believe that there are young people who might be grabbed and held if you and I were strong. But I'll yielding to that which is questionable.

Oh, let me say, we'll relax the one saving influence of their life. My strength in saying no. The thing is wrong.

The thing is dying. I'm not going to yield. I'm not going to compromise.

Dare to be a Daniel. Dare to stand alone. Dare to have a purpose firm and dare to make it known.

Oh, forspire, forspire. Well, coming to a close, surely this truth comes possibly before us. That nothing but the power of the Holy Ghost can overcome the powers of the flesh.

It was the flesh that led to this idolatry. Now you ask, after all, what is idolatry? Well, let me say, it's not a rudimentary knowledge of God. No.

To me, idolatry is just the recoil from the Holy Ghost reality in my life. Recoil from. You see, there were men who went in for a substitute.

But brother, you cannot substitute anything for God. Oh, when I think of the miserable substitutes that were brought into the church to be miserable substitutes. We must have this, we must have that, we must have the other thing.

But let me say again, you cannot substitute anything for the Holy Ghost. For the power of God in your life. Ah, they went in for it.

But let me say that for a perfect one, there's echo for a song. On, on, on. What will the end be? My dear brother or sister, let's face it with honesty.

You'll notice that there is a call to consecration. In effect, Moses is saying, repent. Repent.

Who is on the Lord's side, let him come unto me. I will see the sons of Levi standing by the side of Moses. Why can we all believe that even in this little meeting today, there are those to whom God has spoken.

And who must Hoshikaya us all find it in their hearts to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel. What happened then? That act of his ushered in the greatest revival that we ever witnessed in that country. He gave to his life the proportion of a sacred vow.

I am founded in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel. Who is on the Lord's side? And that is my final question this morning. Who is on the Lord's side? Who will stand by our mighty leader and face the challenge of death to the stills? Do I have to swear this too? Do I have to swear this too? Who is on the Lord's side to get back in verse 26? Can I believe that there are

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/0/SID0558.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/duncan-campbell/aarons-failure/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net