

Rebounding From Failure

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon teaches that failure is a part of life, but through God's grace, we can always find a path to redemption and new beginnings.

Duration: 28:14

Scripture: Psalm 32:1

Topics: "Failure"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the topic of failure and how to handle it when we fail God and ourselves. He starts by mentioning Abraham, the first man called by God to be the father of a people. Abraham was asked to leave everything behind and go to a land that God would show him. The preacher emphasizes that failure can haunt people and make them feel like a disappointment, but he reassures the audience that God's love is greater than their failures. He encourages them to put their faith in Jesus and let go of past mistakes, reminding them that they are children of God and that he will walk with them and lift them up.

Transcript

It just so happens that the Bible is a book that has two opposing truths staring at you. They juxtapose one another. One is that God is great and God is perfect.

The other is that man is full of failure. And what the Bible tells us is the collision of a perfect holy God with a rebellious, faulty human race. And that works out not only collectively, but that works out individually.

There's failure everywhere. There's behavioral failure, moral failure. And I just don't mean sexual failure, but there's failure of making promises to yourself and then breaking them.

There's just failure everywhere. Not only is there failure before you know God, and many times our failure brings us to God, but even after you've put your faith in Christ and you've put your trust in the promises of God's word, what do you do when you're then hit with failure? Many people think that once you become a Christian, you never experience failure, but that's not true at all. Some of the people who are closest to God have experienced failure, and what you do with that failure determines the kind of life that you're gonna live.

Many people who experience failure, Satan, the devil that Jesus talks about, uses the failure to bring condemnation and guilt, bothers them at night when they try to sleep, and the next thing you know, they have a heavy spirit. Many times their heavy spirit leads to bitterness, cynicism, and they quit, they give up life. They're walking, but they're not alive any longer.

They're making a living, going to their job, but that failure haunts them, letting down God or their family, their friends. And other people have the same failure or worse failure, and instead of it burying them, they turn out to become stronger through their failure. Just like a bone that's broken, they say when it's healed, that bone is stronger than before you break it.

In just these few moments, I wanna talk to you about how to handle failure when you fail God, when you fail yourself. Peter is an example that we're gonna get to, but I wanna start with another man who learned something valuable about failure, and I wanna give this little lesson to you, then let you go home. Abraham was the first man that God called to be the father of a people.

The Lord spoke to him and called him and said, Abraham, leave everything, where you are, your family and everything, and then I want you to go to a land that I'm gonna show you. He became the father of the Jewish people. He had to believe great promises from God because he was an older man, his wife was old, and she was barren, and yet God talked about, you're gonna have children, and you're gonna be the father of a multitude.

The Bible tells us that it took great faith for him to leave where he was to go to where? Nobody knows where, he's just following God. That takes faith. And the Bible tells us he came to the land of Canaan, and he stayed there because God told him, this is gonna be your land, look around, even though you see other opposing forces occupying the land, one day your descendants will possess this land, and that's where the Jewish people are living right now.

Well, he was there for a while, he was worshiping God, waiting on God to fulfill his promise, and then a famine came in the land, and without asking God what to do, without asking God for direction, and ladies and gentlemen, when you come into dire straits and you come into hard circumstances, that becomes the greatest temptation to make a move without asking God for direction, without looking in his word, and then you end up, you go from the frying pan into the fire, and that's what happened with Abraham. He went down to Egypt, which God never told him to do, God told him to stay in the land. He went down to Egypt because Egypt had food, and when there's a famine in the land, you go where the food is, don't you? I mean, that's logical, but he's down there, and then he sees a lot of people eyeing his wife.

They see that she's very desirable, so he goes to her and he says, look, when anybody asks me about who you are, tell them you're my sister, tell a lie, that I'm your brother, that way I can save my neck. What's gonna happen to her? Abraham's not thinking, because when you lose your faith in God, you do some very crazy things. Isn't that true? Well, the next thing you know, Pharaoh sees her, he takes her into his court, but then God sends judgment upon Pharaoh just because he has Abraham's wife Sarah in there, and then they discover, wait a minute, that's not his sister, that's his wife, and that's why God's judging us.

We have somebody else's wife living in our palace. So he goes and he scolds Abraham. Why didn't you tell me the truth? This is the man of God, and yet the Pharaoh, who doesn't know God, is rebuking him.

Why didn't you tell me what was going on? You could've got somebody killed. And Abraham said his mea culpa and said I'm sorry, and now, like a dog with his tail between his legs, goes back to the land of

Canaan where he shouldn't have left. Just think of that.

The one that the Bible calls the father of everybody who believes, the one who's the father of the Jewish people, whose faith broke down, he told a lie, risked his wife's honor, and now he's going back to the land of Canaan. And the Bible says he built an altar. He kept moving until he had found the place where he built his first altar, and there he called on God again, and he learned something that day that I want to leave you with tonight.

The Christian life is made up of 10,000 fresh new beginnings. He began again. Yeah, he messed up, but that was yesterday.

Today, you can have a new beginning with God. He doesn't throw you away because you messed up. Can we all say amen to that? God is a God of a second chance.

Forget it. I've heard people, God is the God of a second chance. That's ridiculous to me.

How about God is the God of the two millionth chance? And someone said a lot of years ago, the perseverance of the saints, the way we make it into heaven and continue our walk with the Lord, the perseverance of the saints is made up of 10,000 new beginnings. I want to just say something. The girl sang it better than I can say it.

You're gonna make it. Just start anew, fresh with God today. Forgetting those things that are behind.

So you messed up. Abraham not just did it once, he did the same boneheaded thing later on in his life. It's like he's a slow learner, but you find out that God is so full of mercy that he gives you another chance.

Can everybody in the building say amen? So remember, no matter how you fail, no matter how you mess up, you can always have a new beginning with God. If you just come to him, he will help you. The next great name in the Old Testament is the man who next to Abraham is the most famous in Jewish literature, and that's Moses.

Moses was the man who on Mount Sinai received the law from God, the 10 commandments and all other kinds of myriad commandments about worship and food and the organization of society for the Jewish people. And Moses is a tricky story because when he was born, the Egyptians were trying to kill every male baby born to a Hebrew. And he was miraculously delivered because his mom and dad hid him for a while, and then his mother, realizing she couldn't hide him forever, she brought him to the Nile River.

You remember that story? And she put him in a basket and let that basket out into the water. Just then, because God works everything out according to his purpose, Pharaoh's daughter came out there for her bath. Aren't you glad we have a shower and a tub rather than the Nile River? And as she's walking there, she sees the baby crying.

She brings the basket to herself, and she raises Moses in the court of Pharaoh. So he grows up with the best education. He's a Jew.

When he found his identity, we're not sure who he really was. We're not sure. But he was a Hebrew.

He was raised around money, education, sports, Pharaoh's court, like Pharaoh's grandson. That's how he was raised. He had culture.

He had everything. The Bible tells us that at one point, he learned who he was, the book of Exodus tells us, and he went out to where the Hebrews were working because maybe he thought he would deliver them from the slavery that had overwhelmed them in Egypt. And he went out there to present himself.

Yo, I'm Moses, and I can help you. I'm a person of influence. But the Bible tells us that he was watching as two Hebrews were getting beat.

Some Hebrews were being beat by an Egyptian master, slave driver. And this overwhelmed Moses. So he went and started his ministry by killing the guy.

He killed a human being. He killed an innocent man. Yeah, the man was beating someone, but that didn't deserve death.

Well, the next day, he buried the guy in the sand and said, that'll just cover everything up. He goes the next day, sees two Hebrew guys fighting, and he says to them, men, don't fight. I'm Moses, you shouldn't be fighting.

There's strength in unity. We gotta hang together. And one of them drops a dime on him and says, hey, what are you talking to us? What, are you gonna kill one of us like you did the Egyptian yesterday? And you buried the dude in the sand? And then he realized he had been found out.

And now he totally panicked. The Hebrews didn't want him. He can't go back to Pharaoh.

Then Pharaoh found out. The report went back to Pharaoh, and now Pharaoh's trying to kill him. Now your life is over.

The Hebrews don't want you. Where you grew up, you've burned all your bridges behind you. You've committed first-degree murder, and now you're in Never Never Land.

And sure enough, out of fear, he flees into the desert of Midian. That's the same Moses who God said, go to Pharaoh and tell him, let my people go. Here's a great thing that we learn about failure.

We learn not only there's always a new beginning with God, but we learn this about failure, that nothing else seems to do it like. The Bible later says that Moses became the meekest, most humble man on the face of the earth. That might mean much to you, but to God it meant a lot.

In other words, one of the things that failure should teach us is that we need to humble ourselves and realize that without God, we are all a time bomb ready to go off. If Moses in a moment of anger, the chosen one who had been saved in the River Nile, the one that God had his hand on, yet so human, so full of failure, and now he kills a man. But it did something in him along with a lot of other things.

And when I was younger, I didn't see this as important, and now I see it as all important. God resists the proud. Who does he give grace to? And failure and mistakes, if we take it right and learn from it, we not only learn there's always a new beginning with God, but we humble ourselves because we're all too proud.

You don't have to not say amen, I'll say amen for you. We all are proud by nature. When we do something wrong, what do we do? We defend ourselves.

We blame it on someone else. We're never wrong. It's somebody else's fault always.

That's what all of us tend to do. And as long as we're that way, passing the buck and blaming someone else, Almighty God can't show us the blessings he wants to. But the Bible says this, when you go down low, God is able to lift you up.

And God uses the failures of our lives to remind us you ain't all that. That's not a verse in the Bible, but it's true. How many have found out you ain't all that? How many have learned that? And it brings a softness and it brings a humility in us.

God uses it so that we'll be meeker and nicer to other people. When you're full of self-righteousness and you think that you never make a mistake, you can be harsh with other people. But when God has shown you through your own mistakes how weak you are without him, oh, it should just make us tiptoe around everybody.

And when someone says, you know about that lady? I don't really wanna know about that lady because I don't wanna get involved. I got so many troubles myself that God has brought me through, why do I wanna judge somebody else? Can we all put our hands together and say amen to that? What I wanna say is this, there's always a new beginning. God is a God of a new beginning.

You can have one today, I don't care how you messed up. I don't care what you did. In my office, even in this building, I don't think there's anything I haven't heard that you could imagine.

And I've heard some things you could never imagine. But I'm so happy I can tell people, you know what? You confess your sin, you'll have a new beginning with God. Confess your weakness, confess your failure, confess your breakdown in faith.

Go back to that altar, find the place where you once were serving God like Abraham because he's the God of 10,000 new beginnings. But pastor, I've failed so many times. I don't care, his mercy is greater than all your failures.

He's always the God of a new beginning. And number two, let's ask God to use our failures and our mistakes and our misspeaking and our wrong decisions, boneheaded decisions. When I sit alone and I come to my senses and I think of all the mercies of God in my life, when I think of all the mistakes I've made just in the ministry, decisions I made when I first went in the ministry, oh my goodness, that I'm still able to stand and talk to all of you.

It's purely the mercy of God. Let's use those to humble us so that we walk softly around people and we'll be able to encourage people because we can tell people, listen, he lifted me up. He can lift you up.

I don't wanna judge you. I wanna lift you. Judges, the world doesn't need.

There's enough judges to go around, am I correct? You know what the world is looking for with a small S? They're looking for saviors. Today, you can be a judge or you can be a savior. You can go out in the street this week and you could be a judge and see what's wrong with everyone.

So what else is new? Or you could be a savior. You can be humbled by your own mistakes and say, you know what? What he did for me, he can do for you. He really can.

And that finally brings us to our friend, Peter. You know about him. He was a disciple that the Lord made the leader of the 12.

Peter had a revelation. It seems like before anyone else did. You're not a prophet.

You're not Elijah. You're not John the Baptist. Come back from the dead.

You are the son of the living God. And Jesus said, Peter, man hasn't shown you that. God showed you that.

Peter was the one who got out of the boat and walked on the water. Yeah, someone says he sank because he looked at the storm. But he was out on the water.

How many of us would have got out on a boat and tried to walk on the water? So Peter was a very special man and chosen. But alas, he was like a lot of us. He thought he was stronger than he really was.

So when the Lord began to speak about his demise on the cross and that he would die on Calvary, Jesus said, that's not only gonna be what my final destiny is, but all of you are gonna deny me and flee. And the Bible says they all remonstrated with him and said, no, that's not the way it's gonna be. We would never do that.

But Peter was the boldest. Peter said, never. These other guys, I've never been sure about them.

They are very menza menz, masomeno. But me, master, I am with you even if I have to die. That's just like us.

Haven't you ever made promises to God that you're broke? Am I the only one here? I said, am I the only one here that just, God, I'll never do that. I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna do that. I'll be loyal.

And then when Jesus was arrested, Peter followed at a distance. That's a bad way to follow Jesus. Either follow him close, but don't follow him at a distance because you get in trouble when you follow from far away.

And they caught him in the courtyard and three times said, we know you belong to him. You're one of those disciples. He said no twice, but the third time we read about, he cursed, he brought down curses upon himself, and then he swore and said, I don't know the man.

And then the cock crowed. And Jesus had said, you're so full of how confident you are, Peter, but before the cock crows, before the morning comes, you're gonna deny me three times. One of the other gospels tell us, not only did the cock crow, the rooster crow, but at that moment, Jesus was being taken out, handcuffed, and he was led to another place, and he looked at Peter.

And when Peter saw his look and realized what he had just done, he went out into the night, screaming, crying bitterly, crying. Talk about failure. Talk about a moral breakdown.

And yet, when Jesus arose from the dead, he said to one of the people he appeared to, he said, tell the disciples and Peter that I'm gonna go ahead of them and that they should wait for me. Later on, we find out that he appeared to the 11 disciples, he appeared to the two women, he appeared to two men on the road to Emmaus, but he made a private appearance that none of us know about. Isn't that just like Jesus? When he has to restore you, he doesn't do it in front of everyone to humiliate you.

He does it in private. And he appeared privately to Peter. And you know what Peter found out? It's the last word I give you today.

That even though your love and my love breaks down, Jesus' love never breaks down. Even when you don't act out your love, when you fail, I'm not justifying failure, when your love breaks down, when my love breaks down, and which of us, come on, be real, whether you're from Norway or Italy or from wherever, who of us who's a Christian here has not failed the Lord? You're from Pakistan, wherever you're from. Come on, let's be real.

Every one of us has failed the Lord. But isn't it wonderful to know that when we fail, it doesn't mean he throws us in the garbage heap of humanity and say, you know what, Peter, you are so old and I'm so tired. You are so passe with your bold boasts and you're full of yourselfness.

No, Jesus' love, even when our love breaks down, he picks us up. And my last sentence, isn't that why some of us are even here tonight? Haven't some of us broken down totally and even started running from him? And yet, why are you in church tonight? Because he went after you. Did he not go after us? Did he not find us? Can we not say amen to that? Let's close our eyes.

Great is thy faithfulness. You're gonna make it. You can have a new beginning today.

You can have a new beginning. You can have a new start. I don't care what you've done.

Doesn't matter if the police are looking for you. You can have a new beginning. You can have a new start.

Even though you should've known better and I should've known better, like Abraham should've known better. If God promised one thing, how could the Egyptians kill him? Ah, but our faith breaks down. But you can start again today.

Take that first baby step. I'll pray with you. You're gonna take it.

Remember number two, he can take your mess and turn it into a blessing. Just humble yourself and say, God, I feel like Moses. Just where am I gonna go? It's over.

All the promise I thought I had in my life, it's gone. I've blown everything. I've blown being raised by Pharaoh.

The Hebrews don't want me. I'm a person with nobody behind them. I'm alone.

You're not alone. God is watching you. He's tracking you.

He can take the mess you're in right now and make it into a blessing, even though you and I might be guilty of the mess. Oh, his mercy endures forever. And finally, remember, if your love broke down and you failed the Lord, remember, his love hasn't changed.

Last sentence, he loves you. I'm gonna say it five times. He loves you.

Don't believe what the devil says. He loves you. Don't believe what some voice in your mind says.

He loves you. He loves you. God loves you.

I know he's perfect and you and I are a mess, but he loves you. That's who the kind of God he is. So before we dismiss, I'll stay with you here forever and pray because I know how important this is.

Rather than going out discouraged and all that, you can have a new beginning, a fresh start. A fresh start with God. How about that? A fresh beginning with God.

Letting his love overwhelm your broken down love, my broken down love. Is there anybody here who I could just pray for? Just stand up where you're seated right now. Just stand up and say, Pastor, that was from me.

Don't know why you talked about it, but it is the biggest encouragement to me. I don't care if just two of you stand or 200. What does it matter? God knows what we need.

Anybody else? I need a fresh beginning with God. I do know him. I have trusted him just like Abraham did, but I broke down.

I've been blessed like Moses was, but I've done something really crazy. But now I know that he can take my mess. I want to give him my mess so he can make it into a blessing.

Still bless my life. Or maybe your heart is sore and tender like mine has been so many times when I fail the Lord. He wants to heal your heart.

He wants to make you strong again. Right now, you that are standing, come up out of your seat. Come down from your seat and stand in front of me.

Come on. Come on, we're gonna see God do something new. You're gonna walk out of here full of energy, full of faith, full of power, full of something good.

Come on, walk right to the edge here. Every eye closed. I love all of you here in the front.

I want you to know that. But my love is nothing compared to how God loves you. And you're gonna make it.

Ma'am, you're gonna make it. Sir, you're gonna make it. Don't care how or where you failed.

God is greater than your failure. Don't let the devil get over on you now. If you put your faith in Jesus, you're a child, son of a daughter of God, and he's gonna walk with you.

He's gonna lift you up. No more condemnation. I want you to go home tonight and sleep like babies.

I want you singing, praising God. Some of you have lost your song. You don't sing anymore because this heaviness is on you.

Satan is bringing up stuff from what, 10 years ago, five years ago, a year ago? Forgetting those things that are behind. Let it go. Give it to Jesus.

I want you to repeat after me. Dear God, thank you for your love. And your faithfulness.

I'm sorry I messed up. I knew better. I'm not blaming anyone.

Use that to humble me. So that you can lift me up. And bless me like never before.

Thank you that you can take our mess and touch it with your power and turn it into something good. Thank you that your love never breaks down like my love breaks down. My faith breaks down, but you remain

faithful.

Lift up your hands with me. I love you, God. I praise you, God.

I lift my voice. I'm not looking down. I'm looking up.

I praise you, God, for your mercy and love. Come on, say it louder, for your mercy and love. You love me today.

You're gonna help me today. I have a new beginning because of your grace. Walk with me.

Help me. Strengthen me. Keep my life pure.

Keep me away from dark things. Keep me in the light. For I pray it in Jesus' name.

I pray it in Jesus' name. And the whole church said, amen, and amen, and amen. Come on, let's clap loud.

Look at me, everyone, before you go to bed tonight. I want you to read Psalm 32. Look at me, all of you.

Will you do it? Psalm 32. You read it. Now, tonight, or tomorrow, or anytime, you hear those accusing voices.

You messed up, you did that. Here's what I want you to say. That's Satan.

God doesn't accuse like that. Am I right, congregation? Here's what you say. The blood of Jesus is against you, Satan.

The blood of Jesus is against you. I've been forgiven, it's been forgotten, and I'm moving on. Let's give God one last hand clap of praise.

So now turn around and hug somebody. Turn around and hug somebody, everybody.

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