

Joshua (Part 7): Don't Let Failure Be Final

by Richard Siple

The sermon encourages believers to view failure as a stepping stone to success and to seek God's guidance in recovery.

Duration: 47:43

Scripture: Joshua 9:3

Topics: "Faith And Obedience", "Overcoming Failure"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the theme of failure and recovery using the story of Joshua in the book of Joshua chapter 9. The people of Gibeon deceive Joshua and the Israelites by pretending to be from a distant country and making a treaty with them. The Israelites, relying on their own wisdom, fail to seek the Lord's guidance and make a poor decision. Despite their failure, the speaker emphasizes the importance of not letting failure be final and highlights the need for seeking God's guidance in decision-making.

Transcript

Good morning. Please open your Bibles to Joshua chapter 9. Joshua chapter 9, in a few minutes I'm going to read verses 3 to 6, 3 to 6, Joshua 9, 3 to 6, then 14 to 21, and then 26 and 27. I'm not going to read the whole chapter, it would be lengthy, it's unnecessary, but I will read those verses.

Joshua 9, 3 to 6, 14 to 21, and 26 and 27. Dr. Erwin Lutzer, senior pastor of Moody Church, wrote a book entitled, Failure, the Back Door to Success. Failure, the Back Door to Success.

A good book, worth your reading. My message this morning is entitled, Don't Let Failure Be Final. Don't let failure be final.

Now normally I don't need to drink while I'm preaching. I don't want anybody to say it's the first windmill they ever saw run by water. But I'm having trouble with the tears in my throat.

From our music this morning, the whole time was such a blessing. Failure. Well, the only people who do not fail are the people who never try.

If you want to avoid failure, just don't ever try to do anything. But if you try to do anything in life, you're going to have failure. Because we live in a fallen world, we are imperfect people, we struggle with sin and all the results of the terrible fall of man, and an imperfect world is a place where there is failure.

So the thing that God wants to speak to our hearts about is not letting our failures be final, not letting it be a point of giving up. Abraham failed in spite of the fact that he was a father of all who believe. One of the greatest men that ever lived on earth called the friend of God.

Yet he had some moments of failure. He didn't let them be final, and God brought him through those moments, those times, and God gave him a great ministry for his glory. Jacob also did.

And of course, Jacob almost got himself killed by his brother because of his sin, because of his selfishness and the fleshly things of his life that tended to twist him and make him deceitful and untrustworthy. But those failures were not final, and Jacob finally had his name changed to Israel. He became a prince with God and men.

Wonderful, huh? In spite of all the failure. King David failed, but God put away his sin. Peter failed and denied the Lord three times and cursed and swore, blasphemed, but he didn't let his failure be final.

And when he went out and wept bitterly, God saw his tears. And by the sea of Tiberias, Jesus said, Peter, go and feed my sheep. I know you love me.

Go and feed my sheep. And Peter became a great success for God, the great apostle, writer of the great epistles of Peter, inspired and in our Bible. All human beings except Jesus have experienced failure.

And from a purely human viewpoint, it appeared that Jesus had utterly failed. Because in spite of the fact that he had traveled all over the land, preaching to huge crowds, 15, 20,000 people, people healed by the thousands, people turned away from their sin. In spite of the fact that they cried out, Hosanna to the son of David when he came to Jerusalem and intended to make him king.

He ended up in a Roman court rejected by his own religious leaders and horribly scourged and crucified and put to death and buried and his followers hiding for their lives. And that was the end. Or was it? Nothing has ever seemed more like a total failure than the death and burial of Jesus.

But after three days and three nights, he came out of that tomb and the angel rolled away the stone, not to let him out, but to show that he was out. And this morning he's alive and he's here in this building and he is king of kings and Lord of lords. And he is coming back and every eye shall see him and everyone shall bow before him.

And every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the father. Amen. That's not failure.

And he will reign forever and ever. So I want to talk to you this morning. If you have failed, maybe this morning you feel like you're right in the middle of a failure.

It may be in fact, that you feel like just quitting, giving up. Why should I try anymore? I've tried and I've failed and it hasn't worked. And why do I keep trying? And why don't I just throw in the towel and quit? Well, as far as we are concerned, we have all sin come short of the glory of God.

And all we like silly sheep have gone astray and we've turned everyone to his own way. But the Lord has laid over on him the iniquity of us all. And this message this morning is a story of failure and recovery.

Failure and recovery. And that's my message. So look with me please at Joshua chapter nine, I'm going to read verses three to six, 14 to 21 and verses 26 and 27.

When the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, that is as now they've crossed the Jordan, or moving into the land of Canaan, they resorted to a ruse, a trick. They went as a delegation whose donkeys were loaded with worn out sacks and old wine skins, cracked and mended. The men put worn and patched sandals on their feet and wore old clothes.

All the bread of their food supply was dry and moldy. Then they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and the men of Israel, we have come from a distant country, make a treaty with us. Now it's a plain out lie of course, but they had planned it very carefully to try to deceive Joshua and the leaders of Israel.

Verse 14, the men of Israel sampled their provisions like they, I guess they tasted the old moldy bread and the sour stuff and spoiled food and checked it out, but did not inquire of the Lord. Mark that one. Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by oath.

So they made a decision. You ever make any bad decisions? Yeah. Three days later, that's all it took for him to find out what a blunder they had made.

Three days after they made the treaty with the Gibeonites, the Israelites heard that they were neighbors living near them. Number of times I've had women say to me, the first night of our honeymoon, I knew I had made a mistake. Have you ever heard that? That's a bad one.

That's a bad one. That could be a lifetime mistake. Should make those kinds of important decisions easily or carelessly because they can be serious.

It only took three days. They found out. So the Israelites set out and on the third day came to their cities, Gibeon, Kephara, Beeroth, and Kiriath-Jerim.

But the Israelites did not attack them because the leaders of the assembly had sworn an oath to them by the Lord, the God of Israel. Now God had said, completely destroy the inhabitants. So now they're faced with what God has said they had to do, but now what they can't do because of what they've done.

That's an interesting situation, you know, to be faced with what God said to do. Now you can't do it because of what you did that you shouldn't have done. Yeah.

And it got worse. The whole assembly grumbled against the leaders. That is 3 million people were upset, but all the leaders answered, we have given them our oath by the Lord, the God of Israel, and we cannot touch them now.

This is what we will do to them. We wrath will not fall on us for breaking the oath we swore to them. They continued, let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for the entire community.

So the leader's promise to them was kept. Verse 26. So Joshua saved them from the Israelites and they did not kill them.

That day he made the Gibeonites woodcutters and water carriers for the community and for the altar of the Lord at the place the Lord would choose. And that is what they are to this day. Question.

Why did Israel fail? Three main reasons why Israel failed in this situation. They failed God. They failed the assembly.

They failed the inhabitants of the land. They miserably failed in this situation. Why? They were deceived.

That's why they were deceived. These people came and they had carefully planned and they deceived them, lied to them, tricked them, and they were deceived. Well, how do we get deceived? Well, they were deceived by their own hearts.

Verse 14 makes it clear that they were full of confidence in their own ability to assess this situation properly and they did not seek the Lord. They looked at the provisions. They looked at the situation.

They talked to the men. They thought it through. They depended on their own wisdom and their own pride got in the way and their own hearts deceived them and they made a poor decision that brought defeat and sorrow.

It's amazing how quick they forgot their recent failure at Ai. Huh? That is a big mess and it costs them in their lives and it looks like they would have remembered that and said, wait a minute, wait a minute, let's not jump into this. I know it looks all right.

I know it sounds reasonable. I know these people are good talkers. I know that as far as we can see, everything is fine, but wait a minute, we need to go and pray and seek the face of God and find out what he wants.

But pride got in the way and so their own hearts were deceived. One of my favorite passages that God brings me back to again and again is Proverbs 3, 5 to 8. Many of you could quote it. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

Lean not on your own understanding. You say, yeah, but I've got that. That's a piece of cake.

Well, there might be a razor blade in that cake. Be careful. No, lean not on your own understanding in all.

How many of your ways in all your ways, acknowledge him, acknowledge him, that he is God, that he is in charge, that he is a Lord, that he knows the answers, that he has the wisdom, that he wants to direct your path. Acknowledge him in all your ways and he will direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes.

Fear the Lord. Turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones.

So they were deceived by their own hearts. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. Who could know it? I, the Lord, try the heart.

So when we're faced with some important decisions in life or with any decision really, but the more important, the more we should do this, we should say, oh God, search my heart. Before I make this decision, I know my heart is deceitful and I know it can fool me. I know it's selfish and it wants its own way.

So Lord, you search my heart and if I'm deceiving myself, you let me know it. And you know, God has a wonderful way of doing that. So they were deceived by their own hearts.

Well, a heart of pride can get us in lots of trouble. You remember Jonah? And I don't have time to deal with him this morning, but he really got in a mess, right? Someone said he was down in the mouth. He was swallowed by a whale.

But you see, he didn't want to go to Nineveh. And you say, why didn't he want to go to Nineveh? Lots of reasons. But the number one reason was because he knew if he went, and I said this last Sunday, but you'll be good and listen as I say it again.

The number one reason he didn't want to go was because he knew if he went, that they would repent and that God wouldn't destroy them and it would hurt his reputation as a prophet and his pride got in the way. I know this too, because that's what he said later. He said, I told you this to God.

I told you you would do that. So we can be deceived by our own hearts. So we need to let God search our hearts when we're faced with important decisions and let him guide us.

They were deceived by the counselor reasoning of the ungodly. And I am astounded and have been now for many years at how Christians run to the ungodly for advice. My friends, the scriptures tell us that the ungodly will call black, white, and white, black.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Psalm 1, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat with a scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord and in his law does he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season. Its leaves also shall not wither and whatever he does shall prosper.

The ungodly are not so, they're like the chaff, which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand the judgment nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish. My friend, they got in trouble by listening to the reasoning and the advice and the arguments of the ungodly.

Don't listen to it. Don't listen to it. I was listening to a preacher this morning who said, when you have a problem, don't go to the phone, go to the throne.

Yeah, I like that one. That's a good one. So you go to the phone and tell them all your problems and they probably have just as big or worse ones.

And they'll sound wise. And as soon as you hang up, they'll call somebody else to talk about their problems. And I enjoyed that.

That was good. So they listened to the counsel of the ungodly. Then of course they were deceived by not seeking divine guidance from God, from his word and from prayer.

Now I'll make a simple statement. Please listen to it carefully. Most of the time when Christians fail, it is because of some form of inconsistency in the simple disciplines of the Christian life.

Really most of the time our problems are not as complicated. Our failures are not as complicated as we make them sound. And I get it again when I have had people come to me with problems in their Christian life and I have asked them, are you reading your Bible regular? No.

Are you praying regular? No. Are you attending church regular? That means Sunday night too. You miss half of it.

When I think of all these years and all of the hard work I've done and the sermons I'm giving on Sunday night and how you're missing it, it really bugs me. Anyway, that's not what I'm talking about. And I ask them, are you tithing? No.

Are you witnessing? No. I mean, we're just, we're not talking about any great thing. We're just talking about the normal disciplines of the Christian life.

And if you live and walk a life with the normal disciplines of the Christian life, it will save you from many, many failures. We are deceived because we think we can have God's guidance and keeping without these simple but essential means of grace. Do not be deceived.

God is not mocked. He who sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap what? Corruption. But he who sows to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.

What a man sows actually also reap. The word of God says, sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground for it is time to seek the Lord till he come and reign righteousness upon you. So it is easy for us to be deceived.

Well, let me give you very quickly just some scriptural statements about being deceived. Man is deceived if he's a hearer of the word and not a doer, right? That's what it says. James 1.22. Man is deceived if he says he has no sin.

First John 1.8. We claim to be without sin. We deceive ourselves. Person is deceived when he thinks himself to be something when he is nothing.

Galatians 6.3. He is deceived when he thinks himself to be wise with the wisdom of this world. First Corinthians 3.18. He is deceived by seeming to be religious when he has an unbridled tongue. James 1.26. He is deceived if he thinks he will sow and not reap.

Galatians 6.7. He is deceived if he thinks the unrighteous will inherit the kingdom of God. He is deceived if he thinks that contact with sin will not have its effect. And so the list goes on.

But now I want to get to something that is in my mind much better. How did Israel recover from their failure? Don't let failure be final. Don't sit there and stew in it.

Don't wallow around in mud. And so they made some simple steps to get out of their mess. And you have those on your insert.

Seven steps to recovery. Number one, refuse to let failure be final. Face the fact that it doesn't have to be final.

The devil will say, well, it won't hurt to do it once. And then after you do it once, he'll say, well, you've done it now. You might as well do it again.

And then he'll say, well, why don't you just give up? But they said, no, we've messed up, but we're going to get this thing straightened out. We're not going to let failure be final. We're not going to just sit here and worry about it.

We're not going to disobey God. We're not going to dishonor him by breaking our oath. We are going to come to grips with the hard decisions that are involved in this thing, and we're going to recover from our failure.

Number two, they confronted their failure squarely and honestly. They did not make excuses or blame others. They could have said it's not our fault.

I mean, after all, anybody would have been deceived by these people. You know, it's really the Gibeonites fault. They're to blame.

They lied to us. They tricked us. They deceived us.

You know, they planned it carefully. They're to blame for the whole thing. Let's kill them.

But they said, no, we're to blame. Let me ask you a question this morning. If you're in the midst of a failure right now, who's to blame? You say, oh no, oh no, it's not my fault.

It's whose? You see, if I fail, then I'm the one who has failed, and I'm the one who's to blame. I don't care what anybody else has done. You know, one of the first steps to recovering from failure is to look at it squarely, to get totally honest, to humble yourself and say, I did it.

I'm to blame. I failed. I didn't seek God.

I didn't trust him. I knew what was right, but I didn't do it. I disobeyed the Lord.

I did it. It's my fault. Oh God, it's not my brother nor my sister, but it's me, oh Lord.

God just loves that. He says, wow, look at that. Look at that Christian down there admitting his sin and faults.

Hey, he's decided to quit being dishonest. Look at that. Let's send a thousand angels down there to straighten out his mess.

So we have to be honest about it and we have to do something about it. Then we have to recognize there are some things that cannot be reversed. I think that that's one of the hardest things to deal with when we have failed.

Sometimes when we fail, things happen because of our failure that cannot be changed. I remember one very strongly, a young lady came to me. It was the church I was pastor of in Hamilton, Alabama.

And she asked if I would marry her and her boyfriend. And I said, well, you're a Christian, aren't you? She was in our church. She said, yes.

And we talked about that. And I said, is he a Christian? And she said, no. And I said, well, then I'm sorry, I can't marry you.

You agree with me? Word of God says, be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness or light with darkness or he that believes with an unbeliever. So I said, no, I'm sorry, I can't do that. You need to bring him to church.

You need to witness to him. You need to be very careful. And if he becomes a genuine Christian, not just to marry you, but a real Christian, then we'll take a look at it.

So she went down the street and got married in another church that was willing to do it. And two Sunday mornings later, when we were singing closing hymn, she came running down the aisle and fell at the altar and burst into tears and cried her heart out. And she said, I wish I had listened.

I wish I had listened. I wish I had listened. That's all the time it took.

So, you know, I guess spend the rest of the day with stories like that one. There's some of the heartbreaks of being a pastor, watching people mess up their life. But let me tell you something.

There are some things we do when we fail that can't be changed, that can't be reversed. There are things that are the result of our failure that are final. The failure doesn't have to be final.

We can be forgiven, and God can restore us, and God can bless us, and God can meet our needs and use us. But there's some things that are irreversible, and we have to be able to accept that. They said, no, we can't go back on this.

It's not a good situation, but we gave them our oath, and that's that, and we can't do it. That's, it's a failure. It never should have happened, but it did happen.

We did it, and now there's some things that can't be changed about it. Are you with me? Are you understanding what I'm saying? There's two sides to what I'm saying. One is be careful.

Be careful. Young people, be careful. Men who are in business, be careful.

Don't go get in a partnership with somebody that's ungodly. I have seen so much heartache about that. I've had Christian businessmen come to me, and they were in such a mess.

I had one in the last church where I was pastor, wonderful guy, wonderful guy, and he went and got in a partnership with a man that was not a Christian. The man said that he was a Christian. I said, did you really believe he was a Christian? He said, well, to be totally honest, I wondered about it in my heart.

I said, brother, to be totally honest, you knew he was a phony, didn't you? And he said, yeah, I guess so. And he was in such a mess that it was about to destroy his life. I said, get out.

He said, if I do, I'll lose all the money I've put in it. He said, I've tried to sell it to him, and he won't pay me a decent price. I said, I don't care what he pays you.

Get out. Anybody listening? And you know, he did. He did.

And the last time I talked to him, he was happy as a lark. And he was doing, he was still, he's a highly skilled person, and he was making a good living. He was free from that.

He got that burden off his back, and he had had it for a long time. So, number four, I've got to get going here. Woo, I think so.

Determine the two wrongs do not make a right. They grumbled all, but the end does not justify the means, and you don't do another thing that's wrong in order to straighten out the first thing that's wrong that you did. Somebody says, well, I shouldn't have married this person.

I still remember the dear lady came to me and said, well, I just got saved in home Bible studies, and my husband's not a Christian. I guess what I do now is divorce him and marry a Christian. That's not the way we do it here.

It's not what the Word of God says. And you know, we saw a dear man come to the Lord and become a powerful force for God and his son in the ministry. So, no, two wrongs do not make a right.

Remember that every failure contains the seed to a success, to a recovery. Look for God in the situation. See, try to find out where God is at work in the failure.

Try to find where God is at work in the failure. Ask him to show you so he can put his finger on it. Then in your recovery, seek to make that failure serve God and yourself.

And it's amazing the way God will work that out. Then learn your lesson well so it will never happen again. Well, let me quickly, in closing here, give you some examples of those who failed and recovered.

Acts 12 verses 11 and 12 and verse 25, I want to talk about a young man in the New Testament church. Then Peter came to himself. Peter had been in prison and God opened the doors and let him out, sent an angel, let him out.

Then Peter came to himself and said, Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating. When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. So the all-night prayer meeting that got Peter out of prison was at the home of Mark's mother.

You say, Mark who? The Mark that wrote the book of the Bible. He's a young man at this time and they prayed all night at his mother's home. Verse 25, When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned to Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark.

So now the great missionary and apostle Paul and Barnabas, they take young Mark with them on their missionary trip. This is a fine, godly young man. On Tuesday, he's going out to the mission field.

Whoa. So away he goes with the greatest missionary probably that ever lived. See it? Wonderful picture.

Acts 15, 36 to 40, Sometime later, Paul said to Barnabas, let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preach the word of the Lord and see how they're doing. Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. He couldn't take it.

I'm not surprised. It was a terrible journey. Awful and wonderful things were happening, but he got discouraged in the middle of it.

He gave up. He said it's too much to be a missionary. He quit and went home.

Now, after he got home, apparently he repented and Barnabas, his uncle, by the way, said, let's take him with us. And Paul said, no way. The last time we took him, he deserted us and went home.

And the disagreement was so great that Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, and Paul took Silas and left and went on their journey. Did you know that was in the book of Acts? We're talking about the man that wrote the gospel of Mark, the life of Jesus. Then 2nd Timothy 4, 9 to 11, Paul's writing to Timothy.

He says, do your best to come to me quickly for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me. Here's another one that deserted and went home. Because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.

Crescens has gone to Galatia and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. The beloved physician who also wrote a gospel of the Bible.

Get Mark and bring him with you because he is helpful to me in my ministry. Hallelujah. This young man failed, but he didn't stay there.

Failure was not final. He met God. He got straightened out.

He got his life on the line. He accepted the cross in his life. And by this time, the great apostle is saying, oh, by the way, make sure you bring Mark.

He is a great help in the ministry. That's recovery. Amen? Huh.

If you're in the midst of a failure, you don't have to stay there. By God's grace and by God's help, you can recover and be used for the glory of God. Even as Mark was used.

Samson, when he was a little boy, do you know what Samson means? It means sunshine, a little sunshine, gift of God, supernaturally given by God. But Samson, you remember, he was God's chosen to deliver Israel from the Philistines. And God said a sign of your commitment is you're never to cut your hair and you're never to drink alcohol or drink.

That's those will be signs of your commitment, a Nazirite from birth. And so Samson started out and God started moving him and he started doing great exploits for God. But Samson had some problems.

Samson failed dismally. Remember, he finally failed. He revealed the secret of his commitment, that it was his hair.

And Delilah, while he was asleep, had his hair shaved. And she cried out, wake up, the Philistines are upon you. And he said, I will go forth and shake myself as at other times.

And the power and anointing of God was gone out of his life. And he became like any other man. All of God's blessing was gone.

He failed completely. And they put him in the prison house and he found that sin is binding. They took out his eyes.

They found that sin is blinding. And they put him on the grindstone to grind the grain. They found that sin is grinding.

He was going around, around, around, getting nowhere. How did he get in that mess? Well, if you read his story, he had a rebellious spirit toward his parents. He was impure in the practices of his life sexually.

And he was irreverent about God's hand upon his life. And he ended up terrible failure. But his hair grew back.

I heard Oral Roberts preach on this man's life one time. And he said that final day when they brought him out and stood him there, and they were mocking him in the temple of Dagon. And there were 3,000 lords of the Philistines.

All their top brass was there. And he said, had a little boy lead him out and lead him around so they could mock and laugh. But his hair had grown back.

And of course, this is, this is just fanciful. But he said, he said to the little boy, son, how's this place held up? He's great big pillars in the middle of the temple. And he said, take me over there and get my hands on those pillars and then run like crazy because I'm going to pull this place down.

And I don't know how it all worked, but I know that's what he did. And at the end, he was willing to give his life. So he was able to recover Onesimus, remember the runaway slave.

And he went to a meeting where Paul was preaching, got saved. And, uh, Paul wrote a letter. That's why you have Philemon.

He wrote a letter to his friend Philemon, uh, who had come to Christ through him, rich man. And he said, I'm going to send your runaway slave back, but not as a slave, but as a brother, he was not profitable, but now he'll be profitable to you, a total failure in life and a total recovery. And then recently, and this will bring us to our day in a dramatic way.

Then recently there's Ashley Smith. Have you seen it? Her first years were filled with failure, sin, disaster, and heartache. As a young woman, she became involved in a wild life filled with drugs and immorality, total failure.

Finally, she was married to a man. She loved was working hard, both of them, and trying to raise their first child, but still living their wild weekends in sin. They did not know the Lord.

Then tragedy struck four years ago. Her husband was stabbed out in the parking lot of their apartment and died in her arms. She gave up completely.

Her life went into a deeper downward spiral of sin and despair and utterly reckless living. Then God stepped in. Ashley was introduced to the book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, written by Rick Warren, which many of you have read, studied.

She began to read it, started the struggle to turn from sin, gave her life to Christ. She was heavily addicted and was still doing some drugs and smoking, but was beginning to make some progress. Ashley was part of the First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Georgia, had made a profession of Christ as her savior.

Then coming home one night, she walked into her apartment and found herself in the hands of an escaped prisoner who had just killed a judge, a court reporter, a sheriff's deputy, and a customs agent one after the other. It wasn't long before, as he turned on the television, there it was. She realized the desperate situation of her life.

Bound with duct tape, she had nothing else to do but, in her heart, cry to the Lord. She requested permission to read to him from Warren's book on *The Purpose Driven Life*. Didn't sound like the right time, did it? What purpose in that? Nichols asked her to read again a passage that begins, we serve God by serving others.

She talked about his escape from the courthouse as being a miracle, which maybe it was, and charged him with this mission. You need to go to prison and you need to share the Word of God with them, with all the prisoners there. Ashley said, he said he thought I was an angel sent from God, and that I was his sister, and he was my brother in Christ, and that he was lost, and God led him right to me to tell him that he had hurt a lot of people and their families, and to let him know how they felt, because I had gone through it myself, in losing her husband.

Miraculously, Nichols did not harm her, though with her for many hours. In the love of Christ, she cooked a meal for him, ministered to him, talked to him constantly about the love of God. Nichols agreed to surrender to the police, and was picked up by them from Ashley's apartment without further harm to anybody.

One of the most amazing miracles that you have seen on the news in our time. I sat and watched as he walked out, this entire experience has helped Ashley to grow in leaps and bounds, and God has enabled her to give her testimony to millions of people on television, and through her new book, Unlikely Angel, and to give God all the glory. Don't let failure be final.

God is waiting for you to let him turn your failure into his kind of success, and to glorify his name. God has said, call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and you will glorify me. So don't let failure be final.

God's gracious recovery is at hand.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/9/SID9488.mp3>

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