

God's Perfect Plan for Those Who Have Failed

by Zac Poonen

God can take a man who has failed and make something glorious out of him, and still make him fulfill God's perfect plan for his life.

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-3, Genesis 3:15, Proverbs 3:5, Isaiah 1:18, Isaiah 55:8-9, Jeremiah 18:1-6, Matthew 9:29, Romans 4:20, Revelation 13:8

Topics: "Redemption", "Hope in Failure"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes that despite past failures and sins, individuals can still fulfill God's perfect plan for their lives. He illustrates that God's ability to create beauty from chaos, as seen in the creation narrative, reflects His power to redeem and restore even the most broken lives. Poonen reassures that God's promises, such as the redemption through Christ, are not diminished by human failure but rather can be fulfilled through faith and humility. He encourages believers to trust in God's grace, which allows for new beginnings regardless of past mistakes, and to recognize that their failures can serve as a foundation for God's glory. Ultimately, the message is one of hope, emphasizing that nothing is impossible for God when we believe in His ability to transform our lives.

Transcript

There are many brothers and sisters who feel that because they have sinned and failed God at some time in their past lives, therefore they cannot fulfil God's perfect plan for their lives now.

Let us look at what the Scriptures have to say on this matter, and not lean on our own understanding or our sense of logic.

Notice first of all how the Bible begins.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1). And the heavens and the earth must have been perfect when God created them, for nothing imperfect or incomplete can ever come forth from His hand.

But some of the angels whom He had created fell away, and this is described for us in Isaiah 14:11-15 and Ezekiel 28:13-18. It was then that the earth came into the condition described in Gen. 1:2, "formless, empty and dark"

The rest of Gen. 1 describes how God worked on that shapeless, empty, dark mass and made something so beautiful out of it that He Himself declared it to be "very good" (Gen. 1:31). We read in Genesis 1:2,3 that the Spirit of God moved over the earth, and God spoke His Word - and this was what made the difference.

What is the message in that for us today?

Just this that no matter how much we may have failed or how much we may have made a mess of things, God can still make something glorious out of our lives.

God had a perfect plan for the heavens and the earth when he created them. But this plan had to be set aside because of Lucifer's failure. But God remade the heavens and the earth and still produced something very good out of it.

Now consider what happened next.

God made Adam and Eve and started all over again. God must have had a perfect plan for them too, which obviously did not include their eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But they did eat of the forbidden tree and frustrated God's original plan for them - whatever the plan may have been.

Logic would now tell us that they could not fulfil God's perfect plan any longer. Yet we see that when God came to meet them in the garden, He does not tell them that they would now have to live only on His second best for the rest of their lives. No. He promises them in Genesis 3:15 that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. That was a promise of Christ's dying for the sins of the world and overcoming Satan on Calvary.

Now consider this fact and see if you can reason it out.

We know that Christ's death was part of God's perfect plan from all eternity. "The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). Yet we also know that Christ died only because Adam and Eve sinned and failed God. So logically, we could say that God's perfect plan to send Christ to die for the sins of the world was fulfilled, not despite Adam's failure, but because of Adam's failure! We would not have known God's love shown on Calvary's cross, were it not for Adam's sin.

That baffles logic and that is why the Scriptures say that we should "not lean on our own understanding" (Prov. 3:5).

If God worked according to mathematical logic, then we would have to say that Christ coming to the earth was God's second best plan. But it would be blasphemous to say so. It was part of God's perfect plan for man. God makes no mistakes. But since God is almighty as well as sovereign, and since He also knows the end from the beginning, and since He is always silently planning for us in love, human reasoning fails when we try to explain His dealings with us.

God's ways are not our ways and His thoughts not our thoughts. The difference between them is as great as the distance between heaven and earth (Isa. 55:8,9). So it is good for us to set our clever reasoning and logic aside when trying to understand God's ways. What then is the message that God is trying to get through to us right from the opening pages of the Bible? Just this that He can take a man who has failed and make something glorious out of him and still make him fulfil God's perfect plan for his life.

That is God's message to man, in the Bible and we must never forget it.

God can take a man who has failed repeatedly, and still make him fulfil His perfect plan - not God's second best, but God's best plan.

This is because even the failure may have been part of God's perfect plan to teach him a few unforgettable lessons. This is impossible for human logic to grasp, because we know God so very little.

It is only broken men and women whom God can use.

And one way He breaks us is through repeated failures.

Part of the apostle Peter's training for leadership was failure. The Lord used Peter's failure to break him.

One of the biggest problems that God has with us is to bless us in such a way that the blessing does not puff us up with pride. To get victory over anger and then to be proud of it, is to fall into a far deeper pit than the one we were in! God has to keep us humble in victory.

Genuine victory over sin is always accompanied by the deepest humility. This is where repeated failures have a part to play in destroying our self-confidence so that we are convinced that victory over sin is not possible apart from God's enabling grace. Then, when we do get victory, we can never boast about it.

Further, when we have failed repeatedly ourselves, we can never despise another who fails. We can sympathise with those who fall, because we have come to know the weakness of our own flesh, through our own innumerable falls. We can "deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since we ourselves are beset with weakness" (Heb. 5:3).

Hearing such a message, the logically minded man, can then say, "Then let us sin all the more so that good may come!"

Romans 3:7,8 (LB) answers such a man with these words: "You say, 'My dishonesty brought God glory by pointing up His honesty'. If you follow through with that idea you come to this: The worse we are, the better God likes it! But the damnation of those who say such things is just".

No, we do not preach that we should sin so that good may come. Neither do we say that we can take advantage of God's grace and disobey God deliberately, and still avoid reaping what we have sown. No.

But we do say that human logic cannot grasp the grace of God to fallen men. Nothing is impossible for God - not even to bring us into His perfect will, after we have failed miserably and repeatedly. Only our unbelief can hinder Him.

If you say, "But I have messed up things so many times. It is impossible for God now to bring me into His perfect plan", then it will be impossible for God, because YOU cannot believe in what He can do for you. But Jesus said that nothing is impossible for God to do for us - if only we believe.

"Be it done to you according to your faith", is God's law in all matters (Matt. 9:29). We will get what we have faith for. If we believe that something is impossible for God to do for us, then it will never be fulfilled in our lives.

On the other hand you will discover at the judgment seat of Christ that another believer who had made a greater mess of his life than you, nevertheless fulfilled God's perfect plan for his life - just because he believed that God could pick up the broken pieces of his life and make something very good out of it.

What regret there will be in your life in that day, when you discover that it was not your failures (however many they may have been) that frustrated God's plan in your life, but your unbelief!

The story of the prodigal son, who wasted so many years, shows that God gives His best even to failures. The father said, "Quickly bring out the best robe", for one who had let him down so badly. This is the message of the gospel - redemption and a new beginning, not just once, but again and again - for God never gives up on anyone.

The parable of the estate-owner who went out hiring labourers (Matt.20:1-16) also teaches the same thing. People who were hired at the eleventh hour were the ones to be rewarded first. In other words, those who had wasted 90% (11/12th) of their lives, doing nothing of eternal value, could still do something glorious for God with the remaining 10% of their lives. This is a tremendous encouragement to all who have failed.

"The reason the Son of God was manifested was to undo (dissolve) the works the devil has done (1 Jn. 3:8 Amplified Bible).

That means that Jesus came to untie all the knots that there are in our lives. Picture it like this: All of us started at babyhood with a nice ball of string. But by now that string has been knotted up with ten thousand knots, and we do not have any hope that we can ever untie those knots. We are discouraged and depressed as we look at our lives. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus has come to untie every one of those knots.

You say, "That is impossible!". Well then, it will be done to you according to your faith. It will be impossible in your case. But I hear someone else whose life is worse than yours, saying, "Yes, I believe that God will do that in me". To him too it will be according to his faith. In his life, God's perfect plan will be fulfilled.

In Jeremiah 18:1-6, God spoke His word to Jeremiah through a practical illustration. Jeremiah was asked to go to a potter's house, and there he saw the potter trying to make a vessel. But the vessel "was spoiled in the hand of the potter". So what did the potter do? "He remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make".

Then came the application: "Can I not, O deal with you as this potter does?", was the Lord's question (v. 6). (Fill in your name in those dotted lines, and that would be God's question to you).

If there is a godly sorrow in your life for all your failures, then even if your sins are like scarlet or red like crimson, not only will your heart be made as white as snow - as promised under the old covenant (Isa. 1:18) - but God promises even more under the new covenant: "not even to remember your sins any more" (Heb. 8:12).

Whatever your blunders or failures, you can make a new beginning with God. And even if you have made a thousand new beginnings in the past and have come to failure, you can still make the 1001st new beginning today. God can still make something glorious out of your life. While there is life, there is hope.

So, never fail to trust God. He cannot do many mighty works for many of His children, not because they have failed Him in the past, but because they will not trust Him now.

Let us then "give glory to God by being strong in faith" (Rom. 4:20), trusting Him in the days to come for the things which we considered impossible up until now.

All people - young and old - can have hope, no matter how much they may have failed in the past, if only they will acknowledge their failures, be humble and trust God.

Thus we can all learn from our failures and go on to fulfil God's perfect plan for our lives.

And in the ages to come, He can show us forth to others as examples of what He could do with those whose lives were total failures.

In that day He will show what He could do in us, through the "surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7).

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