

"I Have Failed"

A friend called and said, "Phil, I've just made the worst mistake of my life. What am I going to do? Do you think there's any hope for me?" Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." I told my friend there's always hope. Stay tuned and see why.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search God's Word for the Lord's Will. God has answers for all the ups and downs of life. God keeps us hopeful and yet humble. God's Word is a moral and practical guide that never leads us astray. It provides God's unfailing wisdom that delivers us from evil and gives us the truth. That's why we search the Bible and share God's Word with you. We're so delighted you've joined us. We want to hear from you and be a part of your life each week.

"What can I do about my failures?" We all fail, but it isn't the end of the world. Failure can produce serious consequences, yes, dark days, damaged relationships, sleepless nights; but there's hope. We all stumble, we say the wrong thing, we do the wrong thing, we miss an opportunity or an appointment, and we make a poor decision. We hurt our kids, or we anger our spouse, or maybe we disappoint our friends. We foolishly jeopardize our future, wreck the car, or lose our money over nonsense.

When we fail, we feel defeated, alone, and incompetent. We think nothing can change things, and we always feel like we're stuck in failure. Some who fail give up trying and also give up hope that they can be what God wants them to be. Please let Jesus help you rather than give up. The Lord will indeed help you. Overcoming failure means learning from your mistakes. The Lord Jesus has perfect patience with those who come to Him (1 Timothy 1 verses 12 to 16).

The apostle Peter is much like all of us. He frequently acted impulsively before he thought things through. He loved the Lord but sometimes failed miserably. Ah, Jesus was right when He told Peter, James, and John in Matthew 26 verse 41 that "the spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak." We're going to look at some of Peter's life to see what we can do to overcome our failures.

Now to learn more about dealing with failure, we offer a free printed copy of this lesson. Mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website www.searchtv.org and on YouTube.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Psalm 51:10 to 13, and consider what to do about failure.

Our reading today comes from Psalm 51 verses 10 to 13. And it is a psalm of David after Nathan the prophet came and confronted David about his sin with Bathsheba. David said:

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation
And sustain me with a willing spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners will be converted to You.

That's the hope we have but yes we can change and God will forgive. Let's pray. Father we're thankful that You give us hope each day. And that we can change our lives and become the people that please You. Father help us to repent of our sins. Help us to do Your will. Help us to love You always. In Jesus name, Amen.

Many of us try and fail. The New Testament tells of a man whose faith failed for a time. When the circumstances are unusual, the experience of trying and failing happens to all of us.

Matthew 14:22 to 32 says: Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away. After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone. But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!"

Peter showed his faith here. He got out of the boat, he walked on the water and as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus he did well; but when Peter saw the wind and became frightened, he began to sink. People often take their eyes off of Jesus and put it on their circumstances. They forget what Jesus can do. When Peter sank, he cried out for Jesus to save him; and Jesus rescued him. We all need saving from sin and help in times of crisis. Peter doubted in fear, but the Lord still graciously helped him. He'll also help you even in those times when your faith seems small. Call to Him. He'll reach out his hand and help you back to safety.

The Bible tells when Peter failed to see the truth. Matthew 16:21 to 23 says: From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid *it*, Lord! This shall never happen to You." But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but (on) man's."

Peter had just confessed Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. And the Lord Jesus blessed Peter for saying so; but Peter later missed the word "must" in Jesus' prophecy about his upcoming suffering and crucifixion. Peter didn't rebuke Jesus out of spite. He loved the Lord and he didn't want to see anything cruel happen to him. But the suffering "must" take place to fulfill God's will. And so Jesus rebuked Peter not accepting the Father's will. Peter didn't understand God's plan for Jesus, that is was to suffer, die, and be resurrected. Peter would eventually witness all of it. But when Peter stood in Jesus' way, Jesus said, "Get behind me, Satan!" Peter had become a stumbling block to the will of God and was acting like Satan. People fail when they oppose the will of God. Thankfully, Jesus didn't completely forsake Peter.

Matthew 17:1 to 5 gives another occasion: Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, He led them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for

Elijah.” While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!”

Now God chose this mountain to reveal the glory of Jesus, a greater glory than that of Moses the Lawgiver or Elijah the prophet. Jesus, however, is the Son of God. We are to listen to Jesus, to obey Him always. Many people fail by listening to the wrong sources. Moses and Elijah were God’s servants; and each had a ministry to Israel. And God used them to do great things. And so Peter regarded Moses and Elijah as his great heroes. Well it’s easy to see why he wanted to show them respect. But the Bible teaches that God now speaks to us through His Son Jesus (Hebrews 1:1 to 3). And Jesus isn’t just another lawgiver, not just another prophet; He is not merely another holy man. Jesus is God’s Son, and God wants all men to listen first and foremost to Him, not to any other.

Now if you put your preacher up on a pedestal, you’ve made the same mistake Peter made. If you put a human creed or ideology before Jesus, you’ve made a great mistake. Jesus is our authority—our only authority. Now God spoke out from the bright cloud a correction for Peter, expecting Peter to understand the place Christ must have in our lives. When we’re mistaken, we too should get our thinking straight. Today, many people need get rid of their human books and start listening to Jesus. Even people with the best intentions can be wrong. We must listen to the Lord.

On another occasion Peter stumbled badly. Matthew 26:31 to 35 says: Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.’ But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” But Peter said to Him, “*Even* though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.” Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you that this *very* night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.” And all the disciples said the same thing.

But you remember what happened that night. Matthew 26:69 to 75 tells the story: Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, “You too were with Jesus the Galilean.” But he denied *it* before them all, saying well, “I do not know what you are talking about.” When he had gone out to the gateway, another *servant-girl* saw him and said to those who were there, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” And again he denied *it* with an oath, “I do not know the man.” A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Surely you too are *one* of them; for even the way you talk gives you away.” Then he began to curse and swear, “I do not know the man!” And immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, “Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

Even though Peter boasted of his commitment to Jesus, and even though Jesus forewarned him, Peter still denied the Lord three separate times. Peter allowed his fear to overcome his love. Remarkably, Jesus was not far from Peter when he denied him the third time; and Luke 22:61 reveals that Jesus turned and looked at Peter. And then Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Have you ever committed such a sin, that you wept bitterly for it. Sin brings such guilt and regret; it makes a man hate what he has done and hate himself. Sin is the greatest single destroyer of self-esteem. As for Peter, we need to know that the Lord has a way of seeing beyond the present. He also sees the future.

Luke reveals the heart of Jesus toward Peter, even though Jesus knew what Peter would do. Jesus said in Luke 22:31 to 34, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like

wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” Jesus knows when we stumble and fail. Have you considered Jesus might be praying for us? Jesus knew Peter would come back after his failure. “Once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” God knows better than anyone the weaknesses of humans beings. And yet he loves them and stays with them and gives them another chance.

What can we do about our failures? Well, we must learn from them. The Apostle Peter failed. He denied Christ three times before the cock crowed. His failure was recorded four different times, four different times, in the world's all-time, runaway, best-selling book, the Bible. Yes four times. Now two thousand years have passed, and we still know what Peter did. Maybe you feel like Peter on that fateful day. You've failed, and you worry if God will forgive you. My friend don't lose hope. As Peter discovered, failure does not have to be the end for the believer. Don't give up.

This is what you can do. First, take your failure seriously, but not hopelessly. God is ready to forgive the penitent and contrite person. Psalm 34 verse 18 says that, “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” God loves people, even when they sin. My friend, God loves you.

Second, confess your failure. Don't blame others but accept your responsibility. 1 John 1:8 to 9 says that, “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful (you can trust Him) and righteous (He'll do the right thing) to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Oh the blood of Jesus can cleanse us from every sin. Talk to trusted, spiritual friends to gain their wisdom. James 5 and verse 16 says, “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” God can bring the healing in your life that you need in answer to confession and prayer. Ask God to help you use your failures as a training ground for your spiritual growth.

Third, repent of sin. Repentance is a change of heart and a reversal of course. You must stop the things that offend God and start living according to His will. You can't wish sin away. Nor can you merely reform your life. You must die to sin if you want to live for God.

Fourth, ask for help. Yes, ask for help. We all need the strength of God in our lives. Paul gave us a divine promise in 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 13: “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” Ah, we need to believe that God will be with us, that He'll strengthen and He'll help us by making a way of escape. We mustn't forget, even if we have failed in the past, that God is still on our side and loves us.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for Your love and patience. Even when we are at times so weak. Help us always to turn to You in repentance. To be willing to be honest with ourselves and confess our sins. And also to ask You to forgive. Father we're thankful that we can be Christians. Father we pray for those who are not yet Christians, to help them to learn to do what is right. In Jesus name, Amen.

The Lord is eager to forgive anyone who's truly sorry for his sins and willing to change. If Jesus could forgive Peter for denying Him three times, He can forgive you. David said in Psalm 51:17 that, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.” A contrite heart, filled with godly sorrow, will lead a person to repent. Repentance is not merely being

sorry or even hating sin. Repentance means that we must also change our ways. Peter turned again, and so must we. Repentance leaves the old way of sin and turns to the way of the Lord to follow Him and His teaching.

When Peter preached the first gospel sermon on the day of Pentecost, his words pierced the hearts of those who were listening. They wanted to know what to do. And Peter said in Acts 2:38 and 9, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

That's the same message that we bring to you, if you're not yet a Christian. It's the gospel message for all people in all places for all time. The gospel brings hope and deliverance, joy and salvation. And you can go to heaven and live forever with the Lord if you'll repent and obey Him. Now no matter what you've said or done in the past. No matter how much pain you've brought to yourself or to others, there's hope for you when you believe, repent, confess, and are baptized out of love. Your sins will then all be washed away, and you'll become a child of God and be added to the church. Won't you obey today?

We hope that today's study of God's Word has blessed you. If you want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. Now SEARCH is also on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and like the programs you watch. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

So show God your love by worshiping at church. Well, you need a church family. So go to church. As always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.