

Failures – Learn from Them, Don't Be Defeated by Them

Failures, slips, missteps, errors, bad judgment, and even deliberate sins can be parts of the Christian walk. Faithful followers of Christ always strive for perfection but understand we are not perfect – just forgiven.

Satan is skilled at highlighting our failures, magnifying the negative, and kicking us when we're down, persuading the broken that failures in your past disqualify you from future service for the Lord. Satan works to shackle believers with the chains of doubt, discouragement, and despair. The good news is Jesus came to set us free (John 8:34).

Negative thoughts, memories, and comments have a profound impact on our mood and behavior. It takes several positive comments to counter the impact of just one negative comment on your mind. Satan knows this and is an expert at attacking the mind (2 Cor. 10:3-6). He loves to whisper, "You are a failure. You are unworthy. Stay down. Give up."

We all have regrets. It's often easier to remember our failures than our successes, but we cannot live in regret. Regret breeds doubt – doubt breeds despair. When we live in despair, we are vulnerable to Satan's attacks.

Satan will work to discourage you by all means possible. He does not "play fair." He will knock you down, then kick you when you're down, then tell you it was your fault. Remember two things: First, Satan is a liar. Second, and more importantly, remember we serve the God of a second chance. The Bible promises: *"the Lord upholds those who are falling and raises all who are bowed down"* (Psalm 145:14).

If a failure led to sin, we must confess the sin and ask Jesus for forgiveness (James 5:16; 1 John 1:9). Then we must forgive ourselves, make amends with the offended parties, and get up and move forward. Time is short. You are in a race, and the finish line is almost in sight.

When you fall – and you will – every second you stay down on the track of life is precious time lost. Get up! Remember God's promise, *"as far as the east is from the West, that's how far He removed our sins from us."* Also, claim Romans 8:1 when Satan attacks: *"There is now no condemnation, for those who are in Christ Jesus."* Satan condemns you, God does not.

When you fall, some may claim you are disqualified from serving the Lord. I don't see it this way. There may be rare exceptions, but remember, your spiritual calling comes from God, not man. Scripture says that *"God does not revoke His calling"* (Rom. 11:29).

I share with confidence that God loves the prodigal who repents. Failures are something to learn from, not something to relive and let them haunt you. The Apostle Paul explains that God wants us to comfort and teach others what we learn from our experiences, both good and bad.

Consider Peter: Scripture records his spectacular faults and failures in Matthew 14:22-23, Matthew 16:21-23, John 13:3-10, Matthew 26:64-75 and Gal. 2:11-14. Peter was human, and

he made mistakes, some worse than others. Yet Jesus loved Peter and used him as a noble messenger as long as he lived. The disciples weren't perfect. They had a lot to learn. Jesus once asked them, *"Have I been with you so long and you still do not understand?"* (John 14:9).

The Christian Walk is a journey. This race is a marathon, not a sprint. The Holy Spirit provides comfort and strength and helps us persevere. Jesus stands ready to forgive our sins and be our Advocate (1 John 2:1-2).

Just like the Father in the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), God watches, waits, and hopes that when we fall or fail, we will turn to Him to be restored, reassured, and set again on the path of righteousness.

Focus on doing right and doing your best. God is looking for perseverance more than perfection. King David wrote that "God remembers our humanity. He knows we are but dust" (Psalm 103:14). His love is secure even in our failures and weaknesses.

When you fall, get up and rejoice in what Scripture promises:

"The steps of a man are established by the Lord who takes delight in his journey. Though he may fall, he shall not be overwhelmed, for the Lord is holding his hand." Psalm 37:23,24