

GREATER THAN: Jesus is Greater Than My Failures **Matthew 26:30-35; 69-75; John 21:1-19ⁱ**

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! It is good to see you. To those of you that are guests, we say a very special welcome to you. My name is Chris Wigley, and I serve as one of the Pastors here at Trinity. Whether you are in the room or you are joining us online, we are excited you are with us today. On behalf of our church family, and our staff team, we welcome you here today.

We would love the opportunity to be able to connect with you. You can help us with that in a couple ways. You can text the keyword, "TBCMP," that stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you do that, a reply text will be sent with a link you can click on. That will direct you to a form that will then provide us with basic contact information to follow up with you.

Or you can stop by the information center in the lobby area. We have a gift we'd like to give you there. Again, we look forward to connecting with you.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

We are in the middle of a teaching series we have entitled, "Greater Than." We are taking a look at several different circumstances that we all experience and looking at the truth that Jesus is greater than whatever it is we might face.

We've discussed that Jesus is greater than the grave, He is greater than worry and anxiety, and that Jesus is greater than our grief and greater than family challenges. Today's message is entitled, "Greater Than My Failures."

Turn in your bibles, with me, to two places this morning as we unpack that truth. Matthew chapter 26 and John chapter 21. We will consider other verses today, but those are two places we will spend the bulk of our time in.

Have you ever failed at something? One thing that I have learned throughout my life is that to fail is to be human. All of us at one time or another have failed at something.

Have you ever felt like you were failing in your marriage? What about hitting a bump in the road of your career? Have you failed a class? Are you very aware, like me, of your parenting shortcomings? What about spiritual failure? Perhaps

you have goals regarding spending time with The Lord only to find that you fall short. Maybe you are here today, and you've experienced a moral failure. Or you have fallen into some habitual sin. Or perhaps you desired to take a stand for Christ in the office only to succumb to the pressure to conform. The truth is we've all failed in a variety of ways. To fail is to be human.

The first time you tried to walk, you failed. The first time you tried riding a bike without training wheels, you more than likely failed. The first time someone threw a ball at you, you probably failed at catching it. Like me, I'm sure you've failed a test. We've all let someone down. We've all failed.ⁱⁱ

And did you know that the Bible is full of men and women who have failed? Some of the giants of our faith have failed in miserable ways. Abraham, who is recorded in The Hall of Faith, in Hebrews 13, commended for his faith, failed because he did not trust God and His promise that they would have a son. King David, a man after God's own heart, had a horrible moral failure. And Peter, who we are going to examine this morning, failed the Lord Jesus multiple times.

By the way, how would you like your failures to be recorded in the Bible? The number one best-selling book of all time, and preserved for all of eternity for everyone to read? But consider the cases recorded in Scripture. The majority of those that failed, ultimately failed forward.ⁱⁱⁱ In other words, their greatest failure also served as a catalyst for what God wanted to accomplish in their life. And what we learn from this truth is that God restore and use even our failures.

Graduates, I picked this message for today intentionally. If you have not yet experienced failure in your life, I can tell you that at some point you probably will. And when you face failure, do so in a way in which you fail forward. Failure need not be final. Though Peter fell, he got up. God restored him, and he became the great preacher at Pentecost and the leader of the Church.

There is much we learn from Peter's failure. I want today to examine what caused Peter's failure and how the same is true for us today. Then I want to talk through 4 ways to recover from failure. Those two things will serve as our major outline this morning.

MESSAGE:

Let's first look at what causes failure. 4 causes of Peter's failure. Number one...

1) Pride.

Christian enemy number one is pride. Look at Matthew 26. Jesus is in the final approach of Passion week. He is about to be arrested, tried, and then crucified. He gathered His disciples in the upper room to share the Passover meal with them. He instituted The Lord's supper, or communion. We pick up in verse 30.

*³⁰And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ³¹Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' ³²But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." ³³Peter answered him, "**Though they all fall away** [though all this other foolish disciples fall away] **because of you**, [look at what Peter says] **I will never fall away**." ³⁴Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you [Peter] will deny me three times." ³⁵Peter said to him, "**Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!**" And all the disciples said the same.*

Do you see the pride, though, welling up in Peter? It's obvious, isn't it? And I get it. After all, he is the bold one. He had a big mouth. He had immense potential. He was the one that got out of the boat, remember, when Jesus came walking on the water. And it was Jesus who said upon Peter's confession of Him, "Your name is Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church."

But there's a warning here. Our pride reveals an awful truth about all of us. We all struggle with pride. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?*" 1 Corinthians 10:12 warns, "*Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.*"

Beloved, we all have the capacity to fail and to sin even in the most grievous of ways. I stand before you confessing that I am capable of any sin. And so are you. Why? Because our hearts are wicked. Our proclivity is always toward sin.

Have you ever remarked of someone else's failure, "I would never do that?" Take heed lest you fall. The enemy often attacks us at the point of our greatest strength. That was the case even for Jesus. After His baptism and the inauguration of His ministry is when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness.

Proverbs 16:18 says, "*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*" Pride is the precursor to failure. We must keep our pride in check.

2) Ignoring Prayer.

The second cause of failure in Peter's life, and failure in ours, is ceasing to be people of prayer. Further in Matthew 26, Jesus takes His disciples into the Garden of Gethsemane just hours before he was arrested. He asked them to pray. Yet they failed Him. And Jesus specifically addresses Peter in this failure. Look at verses 40 and 41. Let's continue the storyline in Matthew 26. Verse 40.

*⁴⁰And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? ⁴¹**Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.** The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

This same scenario continues two other times. Peter and company are neglecting prayer. Not only did Peter fail himself, but he let Jesus down. And notice what Jesus says about prayer. Verse 41. Watch and pray [why?] that you may not enter into temptation. Failure occurs when we give into temptation.

And we face temptation every day and the enemy is seeking whom he might destroy. Therefore, we must be people of prayer, asking for God's help in avoiding the pitfalls that lie just around the corner. Listen, you and I don't stand a chance against the schemes of the Devil apart from prayer and reliance upon God's strength. That's why Jesus urges His disciples to watch and pray.

If we are honest, our prayer life doesn't kick in until the failure has already occurred. When we are reeling from the consequences is when we begin turning to God. However, had we been prayed up, we might not have failure.

The causes of failure in Peter's life and in our lives is pride and ignoring prayer. Thirdly, ...

3) The Fear of Man.

The fear of man almost always leads to failure. Continue reading in Matthew 26. As I read, I want you to underline or circle the occurrences where you see Peter succumbing to the fear of man. Verse 69. *⁶⁹Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean." ⁷⁰But **he denied it before them all**, saying, "I do not know what you mean. ⁷¹And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." ⁷²And again he denied it with an oath: "I do not know the man." ⁷³After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you." ⁷⁴Then he began to invoke a*

curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the rooster crowed.

Peter was so concerned about what others were saying that he quickly forgot that his promise to Jesus, that he would never deny Him. See, the fear of man is a powerful thing. For students and adults alike, it is called peer pressure. The pressure to conform to the popular ideologies and practices of the day.

Paul urges us in Romans 12:2, *"2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."* Being conformed to this world is the picture of allowing the world to **squeeze** you into its mold. As believers, we no longer conform to the world. It leads to failure.

The causes of Peter's failure was pride, ignoring prayer, the fear of man, and lastly, ...

4) Ignoring God's Word.

Where we neglect God's Word, failure is imminent. Let's look at verse 75 of Matthew 26. ***75 And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times."*** Peter remembered what Jesus said, but it was too late.

In Matthew 4, Jesus was tempted by the enemy, Satan. The devil twisted Scripture. But Jesus knew Scripture and used it to defeat temptation and avoid failure. If Jesus used Scripture to avoid failure, then how much more do we need to? Perhaps our tendency to ignore God's Word is the result of our lack of knowledge of it to begin with.

What causes failure? Pride gives way to ignoring prayer, and the fear of man takes over because we fail to remember Jesus' words. The recipe for failure. But the good news is that failure need not be final. This was not the end for Peter. And just like Peter shows us the recipe for failure, he also shows us the way to recovery. I want to, in the time we have left, talk through 4 steps to recover from failure. Number one...

1) Take Responsibility.

The first step to recovery from a failure is to confess your failure, to repent. Own your mistake. Peter did that. He allowed himself the ability to feel the

weight of failure. Matthew 26:75, the last phrase. *And he went out and wept bitterly.*

When you fail, don't minimize the failure. Don't pretend it didn't happen. Don't try to rationalize it. Don't make excuses.^{iv} Own it. Now, we don't like this part of recovery, do we? We would rather brush it off and move past it quickly. The problem is that when we do that, we never understand the gravity of our failure. When we take responsibility, we repent.

We see this in both Peter and David. Psalm 51 was written after David's affair with Bathsheba. We see David allowing himself to feel the weight of his failure. Make note of where you see David owning it.

Psalm 51:1-17. ***Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.*** ***2Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!*** ***3For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.*** ***4Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.*** ***5Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*** ***6Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.*** ***7Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*** ***8Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice.*** ***9Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.*** ***10Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*** ***11Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.*** ***12Restore to me the joy of your salvation [why? Because there is no joy right now], and uphold me with a willing spirit.*** ***13Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.*** ***14Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.*** ***15O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.*** ***16For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.*** [Those are easy things to do to get over something quickly. But...] ***17The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.***

Listen, it is not fun, but the first step to recovery from failure is to take responsibility, own it. Secondly, ...

2) Run to The Lord.

After feeling the weight of his failure, after repenting and weeping bitterly, Peter ran to Jesus. Flip over to John 21.

Jesus has resurrected at this point. I imagine that Peter must have thought his failure was the end. Look what he did. Verse 1 of John 21. *After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. ²Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. ³Simon Peter said to them, “**I am going fishing.**” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.* Peter, thinking he had really blown it, went back to what he knew he was good at. Well, I suck at following Jesus. I can’t do anything right. I’m going fishing.

Look what happens next. Verse 4. *⁴Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any fish?” They answered him, “No.” ⁶He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. ⁷That disciple whom Jesus loved [John] therefore said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” [Now, watch this...] When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and [what did he do?] **threw himself into the sea.*** Peter ran to Jesus! The very man he failed in the worst of ways.

Our tendency, when we face failure, is to run from instead of run to. We want to run and hide. Ever been there? You just want to run from the situation? God invites us, instead, to run to Him. It is in the loving kindness of God that we are restored and renewed.^v The Lord grants us a new beginning.

You know, the beauty in Peter’s failure is the connection to the rooster’s crow. A rooster’s crow denotes what? A new day! Lamentations 3:22-23 says, *²²The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³**they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.***

Once Peter repented, wept bitterly, he ran to the Lord. Thirdly, ...

3) Embrace Forgiveness.

Peter embraced the forgiveness offered to him in Christ. Look at verses 15-17 of John 21. *¹⁵When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter,*

“Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.”¹⁶He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.”¹⁷He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.

Jesus asks Peter these questions following breakfast and in front of the disciples. Why would Jesus do that publicly? Well, Peter’s failure was public. One commentator I read said, “A man’s repentance must be as notorious as his sin.”^{vi} A great guideline for repentance.

But once forgiven it is over. See, we have a tendency to not forgive ourselves. We hold onto that which God has forgiven. And that often results in the hindrance of recovery. We think, “I’ve blown it. I could never get back on track.” That’s a lie from the enemy. Peter is proof failure is not final.

Now, I want to be clear. Notice what has taken place to get to that point. Peter owned his mistake, wept over it, repented, he’s worn it for a little bit, and he’s run to The Lord, spent time with Him, all before Jesus gave him this assignment. Embrace the forgiveness of Jesus and in The Lord’s timing, allow Him to restore you. But, when you don’t embrace forgiveness and you continue to beat yourself up, you stall the process.

Take responsibility, Run to The Lord, and embrace forgiveness. The fourth step to recover from failure is...

4) Learn From Your Failure.

When Jesus restored Peter, He gave to Peter what was most precious and valuable to Him, the launching of The Church.

Look at Acts, chapter 2, verse 14 with me. *¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, **lifted up his voice** and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to **my words**.*

So, Jesus has ascended into Heaven, the Disciples are gathered together, The Holy Spirit descended upon their gathering in what we know to be Pentecost.

People were wondering what was happening, and Peter was taking it all in. And then Peter stood up and preached a sermon that started The Church.

Notice the change in Peter, though. The speak first think later guy before his failure is now the wait upon The Lord and be guided by The Spirit guy. What was said was Peter's voice and words coming out of his mouth, but they were God's words, not Peter's. Peter learned from his failure.

Failure isn't final. To recover from your failure, take responsibility, run to Jesus, embrace forgiveness, and learn from it.

CONCLUSION: Invite the Band to come back up.

As we close our time together today, I want to invite the band to come back up and lead us.

There is one great failure that we all have experienced. The Bible says in Romans 3:23, *"²³ for all have sinned and fall short [failed] of the glory of God."* You have sinned. I have sinned. And our sin has brought upon us devastating consequence. Romans 6:23 says, *"²³The wages of sin [what we earn for our sin] is death [eternal death in a real place called hell], but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* God has extended to us, in the midst of our failure, by way of the cross, redemption. Instead of eternal death, we can have eternal life by trusting Jesus as Lord and Savior.

You might ask, how can I do that? Well, take responsibility for your sin, own it. Believe that Jesus died in your place and was buried and then rose again. And confess Jesus as your Lord. Scripture tells us that, *"if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."*

The good news is that just like all have sinned, all can be saved. Romans 10:13 says, *"¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* Have you called upon the name of the Lord? If not, today can be the day of salvation for you.

In a moment, I am going to pray, we will stand and sing, but in that time I'd like to invite you to come and take the hand of one of our elders and simply say, "I need Jesus." We would love nothing more than to visit with you about what it means to have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you're here and you are reeling from a failure. You blew it. Be encouraged today. Failure need not be final. God provides for us a pathway to restoration. If you need us to join you in prayer, you come this morning.

Others of you are weighing other matters. Maybe completely unrelated to the topic this morning. But you would like for us to pray with you. You come. I want you to know that it is our heart's desire to minister to you where you are. You are loved by God and loved by this church. We are eager to minister to you in any way. There is freedom in this time of response. Simply be obedient to The Lord's prompting.

[PRAY]

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation of this message: John MacArthur, “*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 24-28*,” The Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, 1989; John MacArthur, “*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: John 12-21*,” The Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, 2008; J. Hampton Keathley, III, “*Mark #17: The Wisdom to Deal with Failure*,” article published May 26, 2004, accessed: <https://bible.org/seriespage/mark-17-wisdom-deal-failure>; Paul E. Brown, “*Dealing Redemptively With Your Failures*,” article published by PastorLife, accessed: https://www.pastorlife.com/members/sermon.asp?SERMON_ID=3084&fm=authorbio&authorid=3331; Arttu Vesterinen, “*9 Reasons for Failure (Regardless of Industry or Department)*,” article published by Falcony, accessed: <https://blog.falcony.io/en/reasons-for-failure>; Harvey Mackay, “*The 7 Reasons We Fail*,” published by Success Magazine, June 21, 2017, accessed: <https://www.success.com/the-7-reasons-we-fail/>; Dr. Jack Graham, “*The Truth About Failure*,” PowerPoint podcast on April 5, 2022, accessed: <https://www.oneplace.com/ministries/powerpoint/listen/the-truth-about-failure-957466.html>; Pastor Skip Heitzig, “*I Failed! Now What?*,” sermon preached Sunday, April 12, 2012 at Calvary Church Albuquerque, Wednesday; Rick Warren, “*How to Overcome Your Failures Through God’s Mercy*,” posted by Saddleback Church on April 11, 2016, accessed: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qJovp3Zsec>; Dr. Michael Youssef, “*God Has the Answer to Every Problem You Face: Benefit by Hindsight*,” Posted by Leading The Way, accessed: <https://www.ltw.org/watch/teaching/series/god-has-the-answer-to-every-problem-you-face/part-9>.

ⁱⁱ List adapted from examples mentioned by Pastor Skip Heitzig in his message.

ⁱⁱⁱ Dr. Jack Graham used this terminology that I thought captured the redemption of failure perfectly.

^{iv} This advice was mentioned in Rick Warren’s sermon.

^v Statement taken from Jack Graham’s sermon.

^{vi} Charles Spurgeon.