

Facing Your Fears with Faith

JUANITA PURCELL

 REGULAR BAPTIST
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Dedication

To Cheri Cooke and Pat Johnson, who have become dear friends and encouragers. They were praying for me that I would have God's wisdom and direction as I wrote this Bible study. When I ask for their opinions or help, they are always there for me. Everyone needs friends like Cheri and Pat!

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Preface

In this series of lessons, we will look at ten fears women have faced, may face, or will face. God knew we would have all kinds of fears. That's why "fear not" is one of the most frequently repeated commands in His Word. He knew that our enemy, Satan, would constantly try to fill us with fear. Second Timothy 1:7 says, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." God doesn't want us to be fearful, but our enemy does. How do we defeat our fears? With faith! Yes, we must face our fears with faith. When our faith is stronger than our fears, we will not live in defeat—cowering in fear, afraid to move.

How do we increase our faith? Reading, heeding, and memorizing God's Word. I would encourage you to start memorizing the "Why Sink When You Can Swim" verses starting on page 8. The next time you are fearful, feed your faith with these verses. Here is a verse that's not on that list: "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee" (Psalm 56:3). Face your fears with faith. You can do it "because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Who is in us? The Holy Spirit of God, Who enables us to say, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

Plan of Salvation

Ephesians 2:8 and 9 tell us salvation is a free gift—we can't work for it. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

Jesus Christ provided the free gift of salvation when He died on the cross for us. But we must each individually receive the free gift.

John 1:12—"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

Romans 10:13—"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Have you been trying to earn eternal life by your good works? If we could do anything to earn eternal life in Heaven on our own, then Christ wouldn't have needed to die to pay for our sins. The price has already been paid. All we have to do is receive the free gift by believing Christ's death paid for our sins. Do you believe Christ paid for your sins when He died on the cross?

Have you ever received that free gift of salvation? If not, you could do that today by praying something like this:

Lord Jesus, I confess that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that Jesus Christ died for my sins and I cannot do anything to earn entrance into Heaven. I now trust only in Christ to save me and take me to Heaven when I die.

“Why Sink When You Can Swim” Verses

Genesis 18:25—“Shall not the Judge [Ruler] of all the earth do right?”

Job 23:10—“But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried [tested] me, I shall come forth as gold.”

Psalm 18:30—“As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried [proved]: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.”

Psalm 31:15—“My times are in thy hand.”

Psalm 34:4—“I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.”

Psalm 37:23—“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.”

Psalm 46:10—“Be still, and know that I am God.”

Psalm 91:1, 2—“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.”

Proverbs 3:5, 6—“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

Proverbs 17:22—“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.”

Isaiah 26:3—“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind [imagination] is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”

Isaiah 40:31—“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

Isaiah 43:2—“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”

Isaiah 50:10—“Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.”

Jeremiah 29:11—“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”

Jeremiah 31:3—“Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.”

Jeremiah 33:3—“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”

Habakkuk 3:17, 18—“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

Luke 1:37—“For with God nothing shall be impossible.”

Romans 8:28, 29—“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.”

1 Corinthians 10:13—“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

Philippians 4:4—“Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.”

Philippians 4:6, 7—“Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:11—“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

Philippians 4:13—“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Philippians 4:19—“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18—“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

2 Timothy 1:7—“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

Hebrews 13:5—“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

James 1:2, 3—“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.”

1 Peter 5:7—“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”

Fear That Comes with Failure

What causes failure? What makes a man come to the end of his life and admit he lived in vain? What motivates a man to commit suicide because he is not as gifted as others? . . . What causes a man to jeopardize his Christian testimony and have an affair with his neighbor's wife? Sin—specifically pride, covetousness, or sensual desire.

Of course, there are failures unrelated to sinful motivations: a student might fail in school; a man might make an unwise investment. . . . However, God often uses this kind of failure to remind us how desperately we need Him. . . . Did God provide a remedy for the most ugly kind of failure? The answer is yes.

—Erwin Lutzer¹

In this lesson we will look at two Bible characters who walked through a time of shameful failure. Yet they didn't end their lives as failures. Failure is not final unless we choose not to face our failure and make a new beginning.

The Prodigal Son

Read Luke 15:11–24.

1. The young man known as the Prodigal Son made a selfish and foolish decision. Why was his decision a sure road to failure?

2. In your own words, summarize his attitude, words, and responses.

3. According to verse 13, the son spent his inheritance on “riotous living.” Read 1 John 2:15–16. Which of the three things “in the world” was the son living by?

4. Read Galatians 6:7–8. What does God say about “sowing to the flesh”?

5. How did the young man’s sowing to the flesh end up in awful corruption (Luke 15:16)?

6. How did he change from a miserable failure as a son to a forgiven son (vv. 17–24)?

7. Do you have, or have you had, a wayward child? If your child or anyone else came home asking God and you for forgiveness, how would you respond?

The Sweet Psalmist of Israel

Having looked at the Prodigal Son’s failures, we will now look at the dark time of failure in King David’s life.

Read 2 Samuel 11.

When the king was about fifty years old, he was at home in bed, not in battle with his troops. He had taken his armor off so he could relax. It appears he also took off his spiritual armor.

8. Read Ephesians 6:10–18. Why do believers need to put on the whole armor of God each day?

9. How does the following statement relate to David’s sin? “We can’t always avoid seeing the actions of immoral people. What we can avoid is taking a second look.”

10. Read 1 John 2:15–16 again. Which of the three things “in the world” entrapped David?

David’s second look marked the beginning of the failure chapters in his life: he seduced Bathsheba, who became pregnant. When covering the pregnancy failed, King David murdered her husband. With her widowed, he married her, and she gave birth to their child.

Read 2 Samuel 12:1–14.

11. When did David admit his sin to God and man?

12. Have you ever tried to hide your sin from God or others? How did you feel?

13. When Nathan confronted David with his sin, did David try to shift the blame to Bathsheba (v. 13)?

14. Why is it tempting to try to shift the blame to someone else?

If you don't think God knows where you are all the time, read Psalm 139. David knew all about this psalm—he wrote it.

15. Read Leviticus 20:10 and 2 Samuel 12:13.

(a) How did God show David mercy?

(b) How did God show David total forgiveness?

16. Read the following passages. What tragedies did David face as consequences for his sin?

2 Samuel 12:19

2 Samuel 13:10–14

2 Samuel 13:28–30

2 Samuel 18:14–15, 33

17. David failed miserably during this period. However, it was only one segment of his life. Read Acts 13:22. How did God describe David?

We are not failures if we fall. We are failures if we don't confess, turn toward God, and go on.

From My Heart

I suppose that each of us might have a dark chapter in her life, a time when we failed to obey God. Then our sin drove us to our

knees in repentance and shame, and God in His mercy and grace forgave us (1 John 1:9; Psalm 103:12). Hopefully, your sin was not written up in the newspaper and made public, as David's was. Even if it was and you were truly repentant, God's record has *forgiven* written beside your name, not *failure*.

For all David's sin and shame that we read about in the Bible, he is not remembered as a failure. He is remembered as the sweet psalmist of Israel. Many people, believers and nonbelievers, are familiar with Psalm 23. Untold numbers of people have lived by this psalm, and multitudes have died with this psalm on their lips: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (v. 4). Many Bible scholars believe this psalm was written in the latter years of David's life. Psalm 23 reflects a heart mellowed by many years of trials. I especially like Psalm 23:1: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." Christ is everything I will ever need for everything I will ever face.

When I say, "It's impossible," God says, "The things which are impossible with man are possible with God" (Luke 18:27). When I say, "I can't go on," God says, "My grace is sufficient" (2 Corinthians 12:9). When I say, "I feel so alone," God says, "I will never leave thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

Do you believe Christ is all you will ever need for every situation you will ever face? Are you living like you believe it?

From Your Heart

If you have gone through a time of failure, what was your biggest fear? How did God speak to your heart during this lesson with verses from His Word or thoughts that will help you face the fears that can follow a time of failure?

Notes

¹ Erwin W. Lutzer, *Failure: The Back Door to Success* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 41-43.