

# Failure Is Not Final

By Ben Godwin

A wise man once wrote, *“Failure should be our teacher, not our undertaker! Failure is delay, not defeat. Failure is a temporary detour, not a dead-end street.”* Failure is the inevitable price of trying to do something. Abraham Lincoln said, *“Those who never fail, never do much of anything.”* We can all relate well to this subject along with the Biblical character Simon Peter.



Don't be a prisoner of your past!

## Miracles, Signs and Blunders

Let's take a moment to chronicle Peter's failures. The purpose of doing so is not to belittle him but to illustrate that the people God uses in great ways are still very human. And if we can see how God's grace enabled him to overcome his failures, it will fortify our faith that God can and will do the same for us. Researching the life of the Apostle Peter, I have discovered the following failures:

1. Peter sank when he took his eyes off Jesus—Mt. 14:30.
2. Peter verbally rebuked Jesus (not a good idea)—Mt. 16:22-23.
3. Peter wrongly compared Jesus with mere mortal men—Mt. 17:1-5.
4. Peter refused (at first) for Jesus to wash his feet—Jn. 13:8.
5. Peter slept through prayer meeting in the Garden of Gethsemane—Mt. 26:40-43.
6. Peter, trying to defend Jesus, cut off Malchus' ear—Jn. 18:10.
7. Peter denied any association with Jesus whatsoever—Jn. 18:25-27.
8. Peter quit the ministry and returned to fishing—Jn. 21:3.
9. Peter was hypocritical about fellowshipping with Gentile believers—Gal. 2:11-14.

My focus here is not to scrutinize Peter's failures but to learn from them and see how he overcame them. It would be easy to criticize how Peter sank on the stormy Sea of Galilee and fail to realize that he did something no other human being (except Jesus) has ever done—walk on water! So it's better to try and fail as to not try at all due to fear of failure. Obviously, Peter rebounded and became a prominent leader in the New Testament Church. This proves that defeat doesn't have to have the final word in our lives. Failure is not final if we learn to do the following four things Peter did:

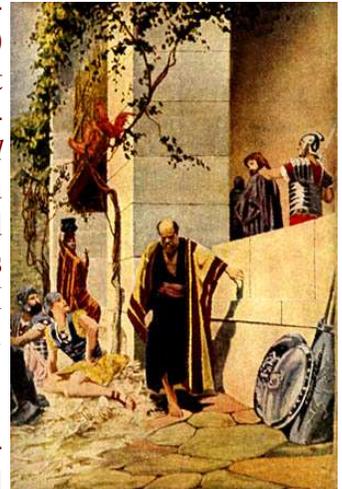
### 1. Keep an eternal perspective.

While Peter adamantly swore he would never deny Him, Jesus predicted the very opposite: *“Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.”* In the next few verses Jesus added, *“Let not your heart be troubled...in My Father's house are many mansions...I go to prepare a place for you.”* (See John 13:38;14:1-3) To paraphrase, Jesus was saying, “Peter, you are going to fail but you will recover from it. Your failure is only temporary but my plan for you extends into eternity. Don't focus on your temporary failure, focus on my eternal purpose for your life.”

Failures are merely events in life. Just because you fail doesn't mean *you* are a failure. It simply makes you human. Welcome to the club. The Bible states that things seen are temporal; things unseen are eternal. Failure is just a temporary part of life. If we learn to keep an eternal perspective, then failure won't defeat us. Stay focused on the big picture of God's eternal plan. One day you'll look back and laugh at your failures, realizing that they weren't so important in the grand scheme of things. Keep an eternal perspective.

## 2. Sever the ties with the past.

Christ's crucifixion coincided closely with the Feast of Passover. Approximately fifty days later Peter preached his Pentecost sermon and garnered 3,000 souls in the Gospel net. But immediately after Jesus' death and burial, Peter must have felt worthless. After all, he emphatically denied Jesus and let a girl intimidate him into cowardice. When the rooster crowed, "*The Lord turned and looked upon Peter...and Peter went out and wept bitterly.*" (Luke 22:61-62) Can you imagine how dejected he must have felt after doing the very thing he swore he'd never do? He felt condemned and unworthy to even be called a disciple. Perhaps he thought, "I'm a complete failure. I'm such a miserable disgrace. Maybe I should go back to the only thing I was ever any good at—fishing." And so he did. "*Simon Peter said unto them, 'I am going fishing...'*" (John 21:3)



Then he had an encounter with Jesus that was very similar to their first meeting (compare Luke 5:1-11 with John 21:3-19). A repentant Peter was restored and became the main spokesman for the 1st Century Church. How did Peter overcome such major setbacks? He severed the ties with the past! He learned the importance of "*forgetting those things which are behind...*" (Phil. 3:13) He chose to live in the provision of God's grace instead of being a prisoner of his past. He avoided the mistake of those who live in the past and, consequently, forfeit their future.

## 3. Never stop believing.

After Peter's denial, Satan surely drove him to the brink of suicide just like Judas. After all, Judas and Peter basically committed the same sin—they denied/betrayed their Lord. The key difference was motive: Judas was motivated by greed, while Peter was motivated by self-preservation. They both failed, but Judas' faith also failed. If Judas had truly repented, he could have been forgiven and restored just like Peter. But somehow he couldn't muster the faith to believe that Jesus would forgive him. In contrast, when Peter failed, his faith didn't fail. Why? Because Jesus had prepared him—"*I have prayed for you, that **your faith should not fail**; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.*" (Lk. 22:32) Peter boasted that he would go to prison and even die for Jesus (Lk. 22:33) Jesus, in essence, said, "Peter you will let me and yourself down, but your faith will enable you to survive." So no matter how many times we disappoint God or ourselves, we should never stop believing. We are not a failure unless we quit! The Bible says, "*A just man may fall seven times, and **rises up again...***" (Pr. 24:16). If you, like Peter, get knocked down, bounce back up again more determined than ever to keep believing in the power of God's grace.

History is replete with people who used failure to find a formula for success. Walt Disney, for example, was fired by a newspaper editor for a lack of ideas. He then went bankrupt before making Disneyworld a household name. Henry Ford went broke five times before he became a successful pioneer in the automotive industry. Albert Einstein was expelled from school and his teachers said he was mentally slow before he made his mark in science. Babe Ruth struck out 1,330 times on his way to hitting a then record 714 career home runs. Thomas Edison had little formal education but still managed to patent over 1,100 inventions in 60 years. After performing 10,000 experiments on a particular project a friend tried to console him. Defensively Edison retorted, "*Why I haven't failed, I've just found 10,000 ways that don't work!*" Friend, you may fail, but don't let your faith fail. Never stop believing!

#### 4. Always keep growing.

Later in life, as a seasoned veteran of the faith, Peter wrote, “*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*” (2 Pt. 3;18) God sees our potential and puts up with our present. When Jesus first called Peter, he was spiritually immature. “*Come after Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.*” (Mk. 1:17) Peter became something great but not overnight. It was a growth process. Growth takes time. Failure can be a springboard instead of a setback if we learn and grow from it. Peter made many blunders, but look at how God used him—preaching to masses, healing the sick, even raising the dead, boldly leading the New Testament Church and giving his life as a martyr. Despite his failures, he became an overwhelming success. As one author put it, “Failure is like a trip to the dentist—it doesn’t make you tingle with anticipation but, then again, it’s not the end of the world.” Take heart, friend, there is no sin you’ve ever committed that is too big for the blood of Jesus to handle. There is no failure in your life too great for the grace of God to overcome. Failure is not final in your life if you...

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2. Sever the ties with the past.
3. Never stop believing.
4. Always keep growing.

Note: This article was adopted from a message Ben preaches with the same title—*Failure Is Not Final*. The entire message is available on either CD or DVD and can be ordered from our online store. The store can be located by clicking *resources* on the homepage menu.