

Sermon: Rising from Failure

IN *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. Who has been an encourager to you? What was the occasion?
2. To whom have you been an encourager? Was there a special situation?
3. Describe a time when you failed. What was the outcome? What did it teach you?

UP *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. In what ways can fear of failure affect a person? How do 'pride' and 'regret' influence these ways?
2. Review the stories of Moses, David and Peter. What were their failures? Why are their stories included in Scripture?
3. Read the several NT verses that include Mark's name:
Mark 14:50, 51 (might the 'young man' have been Mark?)
Acts 12:12; 13:13; 15:36-40; 1 Peter 5:13; Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11; Philemon 24.
Retell the timeline of Mark's life story. How were Barnabas and Peter strong influences in his life?
4. Why do you think Peter would have told Mark what happened by the Sea of Galilee (John 21:15-19)?
5. Pastor Henry concluded this message by quoting Col 1:15-17, 21-22 and 3:12-17. Put into your own words what Paul is saying. Which words and phrases are important to you in understanding what it means to 'rise from failure'?

OUT *Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community*

1. Pastor Henry said, 'It's not about the perfection of your life but the humility of your heart and the direction of your life that God can and will use to impact others.' What are some characteristics of an 'encourager/mentor'?
2. What has been an important reminder for you from this sermon? How will you live that out this week? How can our group pray for you?

UP – IN – OUT *reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).*

Resources:

The lives of Cmdr. Waddle, his family, and nine Japanese families were forever changed on February 8, 2001 when the submarine Waddle was commanding during a tour for civilian guests surfaced and collided with and sank a Japanese Fisheries High School training vessel in five minutes time, taking the lives of four teenage students, two instructors, and three crewmen. Cmdr. Waddle talks about the specifics of the incident, the military trial that followed, and how his faith and forgiveness have helped him move ahead since that day of tragedy.

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THE WORD (NIV)

Mark 14:50,51

⁵⁰Then everyone deserted him and fled. ⁵¹A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, ⁵²he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

Acts 12:12

¹²When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying.

Acts 13:13

¹³From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem.

Acts 15:36-40

³⁶Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." ³⁷Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, ³⁸but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. ³⁹They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, ⁴⁰but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord.

1 Peter 5:13

¹³She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.

Colossians 4:10

¹⁰My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)

2 Timothy 4:11

¹¹Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.

Philemon 23-24

²³Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. ²⁴And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.

Sermon Study Summary

For the final lesson in our study of Colossians, we return to Paul's greetings to a number of close friends whom he loved and cared about deeply. The previous study looked at the background story of four men that helped and provided valuable and selfless assistance and services to Paul in his mission. One more person's story needs to be told, that of John Mark. Pastor Henry began by relating a much-publicized story of failure that made media headlines in 2001. Commander Scott Waddle was given command of a new submarine. He had a distinguished career, strong leadership gifts and together with his crew received recognition and many awards for exceptional performance. All this ended when the sub upon surfacing accidentally collided with a smaller ship filled with high school students, sinking within five minutes and taking the lives of four students, two instructors and three crewmen. As Commander, Waddle was responsible for the tragedy and in less than 12 hours he was fired from his job. He felt humiliated, embarrassed and so despairing to contemplate the taking of his own life. Failure hurts, we despise it and fear it, we do all we can to avoid it.

How does the fear of failure affect us? What effect does it have on our life? Fear of failure can paralyze our decision-making – we're afraid to make the wrong one. It can tempt us to procrastinate, to rationalize, give excuses or blame other people; fill us with worry or hopelessness; overwhelm us into wanting to quit; turn us into a workaholic or a perfectionist. We are concerned about what others think and are never satisfied with what we have done; we're never quite good enough. Fear of failure can prevent us from stepping out to do what God is calling us to do and being all God created us to be. It robs us of joy and peace. And it must grieve the Lord when we allow fear, or actual failure, to have this power in our lives.

The Bible gives several reasons why some people don't recover from failure. **Pride** – we don't want others to know we have failed, our shortcomings, to be seen as weak, inadequate or incompetent. We know it to be true, but we try to prevent others from knowing it and so deceive ourselves, **1 John 1:8**. Until and unless we have an accurate view of ourselves and are willing to admit it, we will not be set free from our fears, nor be able to grow to risk anything new. A second reason is **regret** – we replay our fears in our minds, never getting over them. We need to know these thoughts are not from the Lord; that they are from Satan, your enemy working against you (**John 10:10**). There are many stories in the Bible about people from all walks of life that have failed. Just as for Moses, David and Peter, these stories are meant not only to WARN us to guard our hearts lest we fail but also, even more importantly to give us HOPE. Like them, our failures need not defeat us, but can prepare us for what God has for us, going forward.

John Mark's story starts with and speaks of failure: but failure neither fatal nor final. He grew up in Jerusalem, was a cousin of Barnabas (Acts 4:36; 13:1) and invited to go with Paul and Barnabas as they travelled and talked about Jesus. All went well until they went to Perga, a city in what now is Turkey and dangerous territory then. They would be facing opposition and hostility, possible violence, robbery and even being killed. And Mark decides it's time to head home to Jerusalem: not because he was sick, but perhaps because he was afraid, discouraged or homesick. A few years later, (Acts 15) when Paul and Barnabas are going on another journey, Paul flatly refuses Barnabas' suggestion to ask Mark to come along. To Paul's mind, Mark was a quitter, lacked character and courage – a failure.

Yet many years later Paul speaks highly of Mark in various letters. And God chose Mark to write the Gospel of Mark under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What had happened to Mark? How did Mark arise from failure? **First**, Mark received and embraced the grace of God. He surrendered himself to God and faithfully did what God called him to do. Mark did not let his failure defeat or define him. He did not conclude that God had given up on him. We all fail (**Romans 3:23**) but because Jesus died on a cross, we receive the gift of grace. There is no failure that cannot be redeemed by the cross. **Second**, Mark received and embraced the encouragement of Barnabas. Encouragers extend friendship and unconditional love; accept you where you are, and willing to help get you where you need to be. They let the past be the past, and to start fresh where you are. They realize we have all failed and need the grace of God. They know that failure has painful consequences, but also that failure need not be total or final, giving a second chance, a third and more. Barnabas did for Mark what he had previously done for Paul. **Third**, Mark received and embraced the learning of Peter who refers to Mark as his spiritual son (**1 Pet 5:13**). Who better to teach Mark how to respond to failure than Peter? Peter who had denied that he ever knew Jesus; who went back to fishing, convinced that Jesus was done with him? But Jesus showed up, not with a reprimand, but a question – do you love me, Peter? And when Peter surrendered wholly to Jesus, he became a testimony that God can and does use failures to make an eternal difference in the lives of others. Jesus was defining true success – humble yourself, and know that it is all about knowing and loving God. Peter and Mark both learned the truth Mark wrote in his Gospel (**Mark 8:34-36**) through their own failure: there is no greater satisfaction than knowing and living for Jesus. Both learned that apart from the grace of Jesus of Christ we are all sinners. Like Peter, Mark did not quit or give up; and both persevered to the end. We also need to come alongside others who fall, encouraging them by sharing our struggles and failures, and how Jesus helped us to overcome. As long as there is grace, failure is not final, there is still time to take heart and hope, to find forgiveness, to surrender, to know that He will never leave you or forsake you or lead you astray. Read **Col 4:15-22** and **3:12**, a powerful declaration of who Jesus is, and of the power of His amazing grace.