

The God of the Second Chance

“...And John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.”

Acts 13:13

“And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.”

Acts 15:37-38

“...Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”

2 Timothy 4:11

Missionary Runs Home to Mama

John Mark was a first generation Christian in the Book of Acts and the young cousin of Barnabas. He had gone on the first missionary journey with Barnabas and Paul but for some reason turned back to Jerusalem. Paul viewed this young man as a weakling and a deserter and refused for him to go on the second missionary journey.

Something took place in the life of this young failure and he later became a success. He is referred to by Peter as “my son.” (1 Peter 5:13) It is commonly believed that he wrote down the testimony of Peter which became the Gospel of Mark. Paul also calls for him and says that he is “profitable.” John Mark’s story is an encouragement and proves that failure is not final and that God extends the promise of a second chance to each of us. Some of the Bible’s greatest successes were once failures.

Converted Failures Write the Bible

John Mark later wrote the Gospel of St. Mark; the shortest account of the life of Jesus Christ. Mark focuses on Jesus as the “man of action.”

The Book of Jonah was also written by someone who had failed by running from the Lord rather than preaching to Ninevah. After three days in the belly of a great fish he repented and surrendered to the will of God. God proved Himself as the “God of the Second Chance.” Jonah preached to Ninevah and they also repented.

1 and 2 Peter was written by the Apostle Peter who shamefully denied the Lord three times. At least Peter followed “...him afar off...” (Matthew 26:58) when all of the disciples “forsook him and fled.” (Matthew 26:56) Peter was not the only failure among the disciples because they all fled. So it was a failure, empowered by the Holy Spirit who delivered the first sermon in the baby church on the Day of Pentecost (which resulted in 3000 conversions).

The first five books of the Bible were written by Moses, a murderer. (Exodus 2:12) However, this failure who became a success, was used to deliver the children of God out of Egypt.

King David, the writer of much of the Book of Psalms, committed adultery, later repented, and God continued to use him (even though the reproach was never removed).

“Failure is Not Final”

“For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.” (Proverbs 24:16)

“Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.” (Micah 7:8)

“Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.” (Psalm 37:24)

To fall is not failure but to refuse to get up again that is where the real failure takes place. Even when we fall into sin we can repent and get back up again and continue living for God.

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 2:1)

- 1831 Failed at business.**
- 1832 Defeated for legislature.**
- 1833 Failed in business again.**
- 1836 Had a nervous breakdown.**
- 1838 Defeated for speaker.**
- 1840 Defeated for speaker.**
- 1843 Defeated for Congress.**
- 1848 Defeated for Congress.**
- 1855 Defeated for Senate.**
- 1856 Defeated for Vice President.**
- 1858 Defeated for Senate.**
- 1860 Elected President of the United States of America.**

Mr. Abraham Lincoln refused to allow his failures to discourage him. He kept on going until he won. He turned his stumbling blocks into stepping stones. It has been said before that “by perseverance the snail made it into Noah’s Ark.” Perseverance is at the top of the list of qualities needed by a leader and a Christian. Psalms 78:9 says concerning Ephraim, “...being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.”

“If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.” (Proverbs 24:10)

PERSEVERANCE ...

is the opposite of the "Let's-just-quit" attitude.

Paul Reynolds

Another account concerning President Lincoln reveals:

- At Age 7** **His family was kicked out of their house.**
- At Age 9** **His mother died.**
- At Age 22** **He lost his job as a clerk.**
- At Age 23** **He was left a huge debt.**
- At Age 28** **The girl he wanted to marry said, "No!"**
The lady he wanted to marry before this one, died.
- At Age 41** **His four year old son died.**

You might remember the story about the two frogs given in an earlier lesson. The frogs fell into a can of cream, one gave up and died, but the other kicked and kicked until he hopped out on butter.

John Maxwell, in *Be All You Can Be* wrote that "we successfully fail when it stirs us to keep trying. The setbacks that look as though they will finish us off can spur us on to come out on top."

You Can't Bury a Good Donkey Alive

Maxwell tells of a story where a farmer's donkey fell into a well. The farmer decided that he couldn't pull the donkey out so decided to bury it. He got a load of sand and dumped it on top of the donkey. When the sand hit the donkey it started tramping and made its way to the top of the sand. As the farmer continued to pour loads of sand into the well the stubborn donkey continued to kick and climb to the top of the sand. It finally made its way out of the well. "What was intended to bury it turned out to be its salvation." This story reminds me of what Joseph told his brothers who had abused him by selling him into slavery.

"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." (Genesis 50:20)

One proverb says, "Yesterday ended last night!" We cannot allow yesterday's failures to hinder tomorrow's successes. The past is past, it cannot be changed, but there is hope for the future. "For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope..." (Ecclesiastes 9:4) "And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD..." (Jeremiah 31:17) "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 29:11)

Life Is
Carol Shaffron

Life is...
keeping focused,
staying calm
being faithful to your dreams;
ignoring all the other stuff,
no matter how it seems.

Life is...
doing what needs doing,
whether you like it or not;
getting up and starting over,
climbing to the top.

Life is...
keeping on,
when the going is tough;
proving you're tougher
than tough.

Life is...
seeing the trouble,
as a stepping stone,
to take you to the sky;
and flying on the winds of dreams,
higher than the sky.

Life is...
enjoying all the simple things,
And taking time to see
that what really counts is keeping on
no matter what may be...

Study Questions

1. Who was the young missionary that turned back on the first missionary journey? _____

2. How do we know that this young missionary later became successful? _____

3. What are some of the books of the Bible that were written by converted failures? _____

4. Provide a Scripture that proves that "failure is not final." _____

5. Abraham Lincoln turned his stumbling blocks into what? _____

6. What does the Proverb about "yesterday" tell us? _____

7. What lesson do we learn from the donkey that refused to be buried alive? _____

8. We cannot allow yesterday's failures to hinder _____.

9. What is "perseverance" the opposite of? _____

10. How did the snail make it into Noah's Ark? _____

11. What is one of the main leadership qualities mentioned in this lesson? _____

12. What did John Maxwell say about our failures and setbacks? _____
