
VICTORY OVER FAILURE AND GUILT

1 John 2:1-2

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“My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the world” (1 John 2:1, 2).

Even Christians suffer the frustration of failure. We all hate failure and I still do, even more. More painful is the guilt we feel that makes it worse. *“Failure is a curve in the life of success if not navigated properly may become a clog in the wheel of life”*. This is very true for Christians. When we got baptized, we really want to ensure we please God always. We really do. But notice the devil has not gone on leave, he is still on duty. We still sin. We do not sin on purpose. Sin is not the habitual pattern of our lives anymore. But we do sin.

As we learn in the classroom of experience, failure is usually followed by disappointment, a loss of self-esteem, fear, and guilt. If failure is not handled properly, it can debilitate us. In fact, it can even prove fatal to us. A necessary part of the Christian life, therefore, is learning to deal with failure God’s way. God’s wonderful plan for our lives equips the Christian to bounce back from the brokenness of sin. This was the case of Judas, he was broken and could not bear the guilt, that he committed suicide. Have you noticed the rate of suicide in recent years? Guilt has led many to depression and even more sin and death.

1 John 2:1, 2 urges Christians to face failure with faith. John has already said, *“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8)*. After conversion, sin is not just possible, it is probable! But what should a Christian do when he sins?

1 John 1:5—2:6 is one of the classic passages in the New Testament about fellowship

with God and sin. John has said that Christians must walk in the light, acknowledge their imperfection, and need of God’s grace, and confess their sins to God. He says he is writing that Christians might not sin. If they do sin, however, God has a plan for us to follow. When you sin, what should you do? When you fail, what should you do? We must understand, God hate sin, but not humans. In other words, He

really love us and would us know that. When failure comes, consider what He has done.

1. Consider What He Did At Calvary (1 John 2:2)

We must remember that Jesus died on the cross so that our sins could be forgiven. John writes, “*And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world*” (1 John 2:2). John uses a difficult Greek word which is translated “*propitiation*” by the NASV and “*expiation*” in the RSV. This word declares that Jesus took our place by bearing the penalty of our sins at Calvary. His death is both permanent and universal in purpose. His death was “*once for all time*” and for all who would live in this world. It is comprehensive and complete in its efficacy, personal in impact, and universal in potential and scope.

The center cross at Calvary was, in fact, our cross. On it, Jesus paid the price for our sins. On it, He became “*the propitiation*” for our sins. Without His cross—hope was absent, and sinners were doomed. With it—everlasting hope is present for everyone who turns by obedient faith to Christ. The cross does not give us a license to sin; it does guarantee forgiveness for the one who trusts Jesus for salvation and honestly obeys Him.

Christ is our expiation as well as our example. If Jesus’ death atoned for my sin when I came to Him by gospel obedience to become His follower, will it not atone for my sin when I confess my failures to Him as His follower? If it avails to create the redeemed life, will it not avail for its continuation?

When you fail, remember Jesus’ death is adequate to atone for your sin. It was yesterday; it is today. He does not excuse your sin, but He will erase it. He does not approve of it, but He will remove it. As a Christian, you have access to God’s cleansing grace and forgiving mercy.

2. Consider What He Does in The Court of Heaven (1 John 2:1)

Second, when you fail, remember Jesus will plead your case in heaven. John says, “*And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ...*” (1 John 2:1). John pictures Jesus as our Advocate. Toward the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as our Other Comforter (John 14:16, 26). He used the same word John used in this verse for Jesus. The word means “*one called alongside to help*.” When you fail, Jesus comes alongside to help. He speaks to the Father in our behalf.

Occasionally, our friends remind us that we are in their prayers. The knowledge of their praying for us gives us determination to hang on and drive to go on. Can you imagine the lift that comes with the knowledge that Jesus is praying for us? To Peter, Jesus said, “*I have prayed for you*” (Luke 22:32). Those words must have stayed with Peter. Can you imagine how stirring it must have been to the apostles

to hear Jesus pray for them the night before His death (**John 17**)? It is doubtful that they ever forgot that prayer. But do you realize that Jesus will pray for us each time we make a mistake, each time we fail? He is always ready to intercede with the Father for us.

More than our minds can comprehend, Jesus waits to help us resolve our sin with the Father. Upon the penitent Christian, pardon is freely bestowed. As we pray, the Holy Spirit assists on the earthly side (Romans 8:27) while Jesus assists us on the heavenly side (**Romans 8:34**).

When you sin, turn to your Father in penitent prayer. If others have been sinned against, apologize to them, and try to undo the damage that has been done. If it is a personal, private sin, resolve anew to do better as you pray. You have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

3. Consider Who He Is in Character

Third, when you fail, remember the character of the One who intercedes for you. John says, *"We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"* (**1 John 2:2**). His name, Jesus, suggests His identification with humanity. He was *"just as much human as if He were not divine at all and just as much divine as if He were not human at all."* He was tempted but did not sin; He was fully human but completely righteous. Without exemptions or special privileges, He became a man, suffered, lived with the shadow of death over His life, and was obedient to the Father.

His title, Christ, expresses His deity. He understands both the righteousness of God and the frailty of man. He has seen the glory of heaven as well as the depravity of earth. He has tasted of pain. John describes our Advocate as *"righteous."* The One who comes to our defense has never transgressed the Father's will. He is righteous—sinless, flawless, perfect. He does not plead with the empty words of a worthless rebel. He pleads from a righteous life which was sacrifice for sin.

While Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments, the nation of Israel yielded to an abominable sin (**Exodus 32**). They constructed a golden calf and bowed before it in worship. When Moses returned, he broke the tables containing the Ten Commandments in righteous indignation and said to the people, *"You yourselves have committed a great sin; and now I am going up to the Lord, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin"* (**Exodus 32:30**). The Israelites needed someone to intercede for them, or divine judgment would fall upon them. Moses, a great servant of God, went out to pray for them. Who would not want Moses to pray for them? Can you imagine how relieved you would feel if you knew Moses were going to pray for you? *"Surely,"* we would say, *"God will hear Moses."* But greater than Moses is here!

Jesus Christ the righteous will pray for you! We are disappointed when we sin. Sinning against our heavenly Father is never our intention. But often we accidentally fall into sin. We have an Advocate with the Father. Our Advocate is the righteous One. How effectively He can speak to the Father for us. If you will repent of your mistake and ask God to forgive you, Jesus will ask the Father considering His righteous life and atoning sacrifice to grant your prayer. The Father, the God of light and love, based on what Jesus did and who He is will answer your prayer with grace and forgiveness.

Conclusion

Face your failure with faith. When you fail, remind yourself of who you are and what God has done for you. Remember what Jesus did at Calvary, what He does in the court of heaven for God's children, and who He is in character. God's plan of salvation not only cleanses us at the point of our birth into God's family, but it also keeps us clean as God's children. Jesus yearns to bring us into salvation, but He yearns even more to keep us in that salvation. God does not excuse sin in sinners or saints, but, because of Jesus' perfect life and propitiatory sacrifice, He can forgive His children when they come to Him in confession and prayer.

God is moulding our lives; we are not yet what He wants us to be. As we reflect on our lives, we must conclude that God "*He is done with us*". We must admit that we do sin. We are growing, but we are not yet grown. How encouraging it is to realize that when we do sin, we have an Advocate with the Father. God does not want us to sin. A true Christian has no desire to sin. However, if in the daily battles of life we sin, God has a plan for our forgiveness. That plan is a Person, Jesus Christ the righteous. When you fail, remember Him.

Reference:

When You Fail, Remember This by Eddie Cloer, Truth for Today, 1989, 2003