



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Few troubles are as hard to endure as the heartache that accompanies failure. The failure may have been a mistake in judgment that led to financial ruin, a violation of trust that collapsed a relationship, or a fall into sin that hurt those you love. Maybe it was a promise you broke or a principle you compromised or a tender soul you wounded. Whatever it was, living in self-blame can be unbearable. Regret, like a Sahara wind, can scorch a person's soul.

You may be trudging through life under guilt's searing sun, and if so, that's no way to spend your days! Our Lord desires you overcome your failure. As a God of love, mercy, and grace, He wants you to find victory over past failings. He knows that you are weak and imperfect, and He is willing to hear your confession and forgive all your transgressions. Then He will enable you to move beyond failure and live a productive life.

The Scriptures are filled with accounts of those who overcame failure, recovered from their shame, and went on to be greatly used by God. There's no better example than a man named Peter.



DIGGING DEEPER

Stamped across Peter's case file in bold, red letters is the word, *hope*. Although he failed by denying Christ, he overcame his failure through the grace of God. Peter's example gives us hope of our own new beginning. "For whatever things were written before," Paul pens, "were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4 NKJV). When we've failed, hope is what we desperately need!

Peter's Failure Examined

Peter's story of failure and restoration begins on the night of the Passover when Jesus was arrested. Jesus warned Peter of a menacing storm on its way: "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat" (Luke 22:31 NLT).

Quotable

*What do we need
in moments of
failure?*

*The grace of God.
Grace says, "I'll
reach down and lift
you up. I'll
give you a future
and a hope."*

— Charles R. Swindoll



Observe the wording of Jesus' warning. Why do you think He twice used Peter's Hebrew name, Simon? A clue might be in Jesus' original meeting with Peter. Read John 1:42. Why might Jesus, at this moment, want Peter to recall his first encounter?

Also, note that Satan requested to sift "each of you," referring to all the disciples in the room. Satan intended to scatter the weak disciples like chaff in a stiff wind, and he was particularly interested in exposing Peter's paper-thin loyalty.

Why target Peter? What impact would the failure of Peter have on the rest of the disciples?

Jesus allowed Satan to sift His disciples but shielded Peter with prayer. He assured Peter:

"I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:32)

Jesus prayed that Peter's failure would not destroy his faith but strengthen it through repentance so that he could strengthen others.

We might think that Peter's failure would disqualify him. How might Peter be better suited to help others after his failure?



At this time in his life, Peter saw himself as immune to failure and was insulted by Jesus' insinuation that he was weak. Instead of humbly acknowledging his need for prayer, he proudly puffed up his allegiance for the others to admire: "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" (Luke 22:33).

Impetuous Peter had yet to learn the lessons that only experience teaches. Freezeframe this prideful moment, and let's fast-forward to a time in his life when he is older and humbler as we correlate this passage with a passage from 1 Peter.



Searching the Scriptures Tip

When studying a Bible character, don't miss the opportunity to look for personal growth over time. Often, Scripture sketches portraits of individuals throughout their lives, such as in Peter's case. As a brash, young disciple, Peter trumpeted himself and took no mind of Satan. After the events of that night, his tune changed regarding both the value of humility and the seriousness of Satan's threats.

Read 1 Peter 5:6–9. How does his attitude when he wrote 1 Peter compare to his attitude in Luke 22:31–34? What does the difference suggest that he had learned?

In the furnace of failure, the dross of our lives is purged away revealing the precious qualities of humility and dependence on Christ. Can you see growth through failure in your own life? If so, in what ways?

Picking up the action in Luke 22:34, Jesus deflated Peter's pride with a sobering prediction: "Peter, let me tell you something. Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me" (NLT).

Jesus then led His disciples to the garden of Gethsemane where He was arrested and brought to the high priest's home for His first trial. The other disciples scattered, but Peter followed at a safe distance and entered the courtyard hoping to watch from the shadows. The stage was set for Peter's fall.



In the chart below, read parallel accounts of Peter’s denials and write down who speaks, what is said, and Peter’s response.

	Speaker	Accusation	Response
Denial 1 Matthew 26:69–70; Luke 22:55–57			
Denial 2 Matthew 26:71–72; Luke 22:58			
Denial 3 Matthew 26:73–75; Luke 22:59–60			

Matthew cast Peter in the same light as the cursing and swearing soldiers who arrested Jesus. Peter’s raw humanity exposed, he was no better than they were. Luke included a heart-wrenching look from Jesus just as Peter’s third denial crossed his lips and the sound of the fated cock crowed.

The look from Jesus exposed Peter’s sin and his real, weak-willed self. His true nature stripped bare, Peter ran . . . not from the soldiers with their swords but from Jesus with His searching eyes. According to Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase, Peter “went out and cried and cried and cried” (Luke 22:62 MSG).

A look can sail a message deep into the private harbor of our hearts. What cargo did Jesus’ look carry to Peter? Did His look deliver shame — “I knew you’d never amount to much;” guilt — “Look at the mess you’ve made;” blame — “I warned you but you didn’t listen;” or condemnation — “You will suffer for what you’ve done”?



Knowing our Lord's love for sinners, His look most likely conveyed empathy, not shame; grace, not guilt; compassion, not displeasure. What do you see in Jesus' eyes when you sin?

In the space below, reflect on this question, and if it's a negative message that you imagine, what would be Christ's message of compassion to you?

Grace-Filled Glimpses of Hope

The next regret-filled days passed like a living nightmare for Peter. However, hope arose when Jesus rose from the grave. To the women who found the tomb empty, the angel announced Jesus' resurrection and pointed them back home: "Now go and tell his disciples, *including Peter*" (Mark 16:7 NLT, emphasis added). Why single out Peter?

In another post-resurrection scene, Jesus spoke to Peter face to face. Read the account in John 21:1–17, focusing on the three times Jesus asked Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" in verses 15–17. What do you think is the connection between these three questions and Peter's three denials?





Bring It Home

With each question that Jesus asked and each response by Peter, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You,” Jesus revealed deeper layers of debilitating shame, covered it with grace, and enabled Peter for the task ahead: “Tend my lambs.”

Wounded and healed, Peter was then fit for the healing work of ministry. Brought low and raised up, he was ready to lift up others. Guilty but forgiven, Peter was qualified to preach the gospel of grace—with power! When he preached on the day of Pentecost, three thousand souls were saved in one day (Acts 3:14–41)!

Reminders of your failure will haunt you. Every dawn, roosters will crow your failure, but do as Peter did: hear the rooster’s crow as a reminder of Christ’s compassion and a daily calling to share your restoration with others. Let’s face it; we’ve all failed. But by God’s grace, your failure need not define you or linger as a disabling presence in your life.

As we close this study, write in a journal about a past failure that may be holding you down. See Christ’s look of compassion. Receive His outstretched arms of forgiveness. Hear His call to a hopeful, productive future.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I hear Your voice saying, “Trust Me to take care of your sin.” I do trust You and desire to release my past failures into Your hands of grace. You say, “I offer you a future and a hope.” Thank You for giving me a reason to live and the power to overcome and move on. Guide my steps as I humbly and gratefully depend on You each day. In Jesus’ name, amen.



WISE COUNSEL FOR TROUBLED TIMES

Overcoming Failure

Luke 22:31–34, 54–62

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

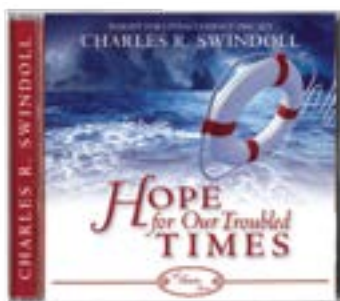
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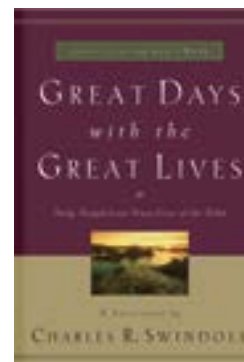
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