

Dealing With Personal Failure

Review Jesus' Command not to let Trouble Dominate our Hearts

A. Jesus Commanded the disciples not to let trouble dominate their hearts

B. **7 reasons why they were troubled:**

1. Trouble #1—Death of their beloved leader and friend: (Jn. 13:36-38)
2. Trouble #2—Personal failure: (Mt. 26:31; Jn. 13:38).
3. Trouble #3 (Last week)—Bitterness of betrayal: (Jn 13:21)
4. Trouble #4—Crisis in the culture: Pressures disrupted the social order (Mt. 24:4-12)
5. Trouble #5—Persecution: (Mt 24:9)
6. Trouble #6—National destruction: Jerusalem and the temple destroyed (Mt 24:2)
7. Trouble #7—Delay of God's promises.

C. Personal failure: (Mt. 26:31; Jn. 13:38)

31“Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED.'... 33But Peter said to Him, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." 34Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."” (Mat 26:31-34)

II. Case Study: A Tale of 2 Kings (with MAJOR failures)

A. King Saul

1. Saul's failures stemmed from a pattern of disobedience, pride, and deep-rooted insecurity.
2. Fear of man caused him to disobey the prophet God's command to wait for Samuel. While facing a panic among his troops prior to battle, Saul attempted to rally them by taking Samuel's role and offering the burnt offering himself (1 Sam 13:8-14). Later he again disobeyed God's explicit command to completely destroy the Amalekites. He spared their king Agag and kept the best of the livestock for himself, falsely claiming only the troops did this (and not also himself) and that it was intended to be sacrificed to God (1 Sam 15:8-21).
3. Even though he was the people's choice for king and was a giant, renowned warrior among his peers, Saul was consumed with jealousy and insecurity. He was told by Samuel after wrongly offering the sacrifices himself that God had found a man after God's own heart to replace him as king. After sparing Agag and the best livestock, Samuel told him the throne would be “given to your neighbor who was better than you.”
4. Saul turned to witchcraft. Desperate as he faced the Philistine army and God's silence, Saul tried to force a consultation with the deceased prophet Samuel through a medium. All mediums were supposed to have been killed, but his men were aware of one hiding in Endor. To **everyone's** surprise, Samuel actually showed up. Instead of offering any comfort or assistance, he rebukes the king from beyond the grave.

B. King David

1. David's failure to lead his army in battle allowed him to be tempted into adultery with Bathsheba which he covered up with the murder of her husband, Uriah (2 Sam 11-12).
2. David's failure to discipline his sons contributed to rape and murder within his household. The resulting turmoil enabled Absalom to sow division, ultimately sparking a civil war that temporarily drove David from the throne (2 Sam 13-18).
3. Late in his reign, David ordered a military census of the kingdom. This act was widely interpreted as an exchanging of his trust in God's protection for military strength, resulting in a devastating plague sent by God as a consequence (2 Sam 24).

C. Differences in heart response

1. King Saul consistently responded with pride, and blamed others for his failures. He turned to his own strength when trouble came. Instead of repenting for the sins that caused him to lose his throne, he justified himself and blamed others.

***"8Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him. 9So Saul said, 'Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings.' ... 10As soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came... 11Samuel said, 'What have you done?' And Saul said, 'Because I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, 12I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the LORD.' So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering.'"* (1 Sam 13:8-12)**

- a) This was reminiscent of the original human failures in Eden (Gen 3).
 - b) Saul's position was established by God. And even though it was God who gave the throne to another, Saul was determined to root out who the successor would be. He treated God's judgment for his sin as personal betrayal and human-led coup. He tried multiple times to kill David and even tried to kill his own son for staying loyal to God instead of joining in his conspiracy.
2. King David also had MAJOR failures. What distinguished him from Saul was how he responded. He took responsibility for his failures, and repented.
 - a) When the prophet Nathan rebuked David for killing Uriah and taking his wife, David's immediate response was, "I have sinned against the LORD."
 - b) When Absalom led the coup against David, David fled Jerusalem to avoid battling there. As they went along, a man from the family of Saul flung rocks and cursed him. When one of David's mighty men asked to go kill him for cursing the king, David stopped him in case God told the man to curse David (2 Sam 16:10-11).

“It may be that the LORD will look on the wrong done to me, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing today.” (2 Sam 16:12)

- c) When God judged Israel for David’s census, He told David to choose between three different types of judgment. David’s response was to throw himself and Israel into the mercy of God.

“Then David said to Gad, “I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into the hand of man.”” (2 Sam 24:14)

- 3. This difference in responses shows a key difference in what the two believed about God.
 - a) Saul was anxious, and didn’t believe God was kind. He relied on his own strength, and when that inevitably failed him, he **retreated** into the self-righteous defense of blameshifting and accusation.
 - b) David clearly believed God’s nature was intrinsically kind and merciful. He also failed. But when he did, he **relied** on God’s goodness and power, as evidenced in how he again and again repented and threw himself into the goodness of God. In his Psalms, he describes God as his Protector, Defendor, Shield, Redeemer, and Hope. He believed if he sincerely repented, God would be merciful even in judgment.

III. Do not let your hearts be troubled: What to do with Failure (and weakness).

A. What it doesn’t mean: “It doesn’t matter, God won’t judge”.

- 1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer defined cheap grace as the preaching of forgiveness without repentance, superficial belief without obedience, and the sacraments without confession. Calling this the “deadly enemy” of the Church, he described it as “Grace without price, grace without cost!” It is the justification of sin rather than the justification of the sinner, offering a superficial comfort that fails to free the believer from the actual power of sin.

“1What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?...6We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him... 11So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 14For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” (Rom 6:1-2, 6-8, 11-14)

B. What it does mean: God’s grace is greater.

1. By contrast, Bonhoeffer defined costly grace as the free gift of God that cost Him the life of His Son, demanding total surrender, active obedience, and the sacrifice of our life to follow Jesus. He said, "It is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ." Because it cost God the ultimate price—the cross—it is a treasure worth selling everything to obtain. It requires genuine repentance and intentional, daily obedience. Rather than leaving the believer passive, costly grace shatters worldly conformity and transforms the believer into a true disciple.
2. We can be sincere in our love and devotion, and still experience failure due to immaturity. This is not the same as moral failure. God is patient with us, seeing the final fruit of His work in our lives while delighting in the journey (Song of Solomon 1:5). We can draw courage from this truth to keep pressing on and not give up.
3. The command to “not let your heart be troubled” is coupled with another: Believe. “Believe in God, believe also in Me.” He tells us *what* to do, but also *how* to do it.

C. The great hope of the saints: Maranatha!

1. Not that God became a Christian or suddenly “became nice” when Jesus came, so now He just overlooks our sins. This is a “form of godliness that denies its power” (2 Tim 3:5), and leads to dissipation (1 Pet 4:4).
2. Our hope is something much greater... the hope of transformation now and glory at His return! (2 Cor 3:18) (1 Cor 15:50-53)

D. 4 promises Jesus gives us to believe in (John 14):

1. “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places... I go to prepare a place for you” (14:1)
2. “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.” (14:3)
3. “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.” (14:16-17)
4. “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” (14:27)

IV. The ultimate solution: Abide in the vine (John 15:4)

- A. His grace, not our grit. His strength in our weakness.
- B. We have an invitation to be transformed/renewed into the likeness of Christ *now*, and embrace the cross while we wait for the day of the Lord.
- C. Set your eyes on things above: a command to be transformed by holy preoccupation with the goodness and promises of Jesus. (Col 3:2)
 1. Fill your mind with glory. Be so heavenly minded that you are some earthly good.
 2. Promise of coming glory in the resurrection *at His coming*