

# Just Because You Failed, Doesn't Mean You're A Failure

If I were to ask, "**Name a great baseball player,**" Who would you name? You might say Reggie Jackson, Pete Rose, Hank Aaron, or you might say Babe Ruth. Most of know Babe Ruth as the guy who hit 714 home runs, the home run king. For many years Babe Ruth held the record until Hank Aaron broke it several years ago. But most of us would say that Babe Ruth is a great baseball player. Do you realize, ladies and gentlemen, that Babe Ruth struck out 1330 times? He hit 714 home runs, but struck out 1330 times.

**Babe Ruth failed, but Babe Ruth was not a failure!**

If I were to ask you to name for me a great football player, a great NFL quarterback, you might say Joe Montana, Joe Namath, Bart Starr, you might even say Terry Bradshaw. Terry Bradshaw led his team to four Super Bowls. Remember the mighty Steelers? Yet, do you realize that Terry Bradshaw threw more incomplete passes than 99.9% of the players who ever played the game?

**Terry Bradshaw failed, but Terry Bradshaw was not a failure!**

If I were to ask you to name for me a great President, you might say George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Ronald Reagan, you might say Abraham Lincoln. I think most of us would say Abraham Lincoln was a great President. What do we call him? We call him honest Abe. And yet do you realize that he lost eight elections. He failed in business twice and he had a nervous breakdown.

Abraham Lincoln failed, but Abraham Lincoln was not a failure!

I want to take you back to a story in the Bible. **A story about a disciple of Jesus. A son of God who failed, but who obviously was not a failure.** Jesus

has been betrayed by Judas, the story has taken place in the Garden of Gethsemane and Jesus has been arrested, and now He is at the house of Caiaphus, the high priest; He's on trial. The Apostle Peter follows at a distance.

**The story begins in Mark 14:66-72**

I want you to imagine that in just a few minutes a crazy man runs down this aisle. He gets up here on the stage and pushes me aside. He pulls out a gun and begins to wave this gun all over the audience. He points the gun at you and says, "Deny Jesus or die." What would you do?

I'll be honest with you. I don't know what I would do. You say, "**Mark, you don't know what you would do? You're the preacher! You're a Christian! Stand up for Jesus! Stand up and say, 'I believe in Jesus.' Give Jesus your life!**"

I know the verses. I know what Jesus taught in Matthew 10:32-33: "**All those who stand before others and say they believe in me, I will say before my Father in heaven that they belong to me. But all who stand before others and say they do not believe in me, I will say before my Father in heaven that they do not belong to me.**"

And I know what Paul said in Romans 1:16: "**For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ...**"

If that crazy man held a gun to my head, I wish I could say, "**Go ahead and shoot me.**" I wish I could say that, but I don't know what I would do.

**You see that's the situation Peter is faced with in Mark 14.** It's a cold, springtime night, and Peter is warming himself by a fire in the courtyard of the high priest, Caiaphas. A girl maybe 14 or 15 comes along and she looks at Peter and studies his face and says, "**I know who you are. You are one of the Jesus boys.**" You know what Peter says? "**Who'd you say? Jesus? Ha! I don't know a Jesus!**"

**What are you talking about? You're crazy!"** And all of a sudden in the background a rooster crows.

Few minutes later, another servant girl passes by and she studies the face of Peter and says, **"Hey. Haven't we met? I know who you are. You belong to the Jesus gang."** You know what Peter says? **"Jesus? Jesus who? Ha! I don't know of a Jesus! You're crazy, woman!. You're crazy! I don't know the man!"**

About an hour later those standing around the fire looking at Peter said, **"Haven't we met? We know who you are. You're one of them. You're one of the disciples, aren't you?"** Somebody else says, **"Yeah, I know this guy. I saw him in the Garden just a while ago. He's the guy who cut off the ear of Malchus. You're one of the Jesus boys. You belong to Jesus."** Peter gets angry and upset and begins to curse and swear and says, **"You're crazy!. I don't know a Jesus! What are you talking about?"**

**All of a sudden, again in the background, a rooster crows.** Jesus turns and looks at Peter and Peter remembers the words spoken by the Lord, "before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." And Peter goes out and cries and cries and cries; he weeps bitterly.

I don't know how you feel about it, but when I read this story I get a little angry at Peter. What about you? Don't you get a little upset with Peter? Aren't you a little aggravated and disappointed?

We want to fuss at Peter. We want to take Peter and shake him and say, "Man, what in the world have you done? You're a disciple! For three years you walked with Jesus! You heard the sermons and you saw the miracles! You were there in Capernaum when Jesus walked into your house and healed your mother-in-law."

We want to say, "Peter, weren't you there at the house of Jairus along with James and John when Jesus ... said to that little twelve year old girl, 'Arise.' And all of a sudden the incredible happened to that little twelve year old

body. Her eyes began to open; that little heart began to beat again. You were there! You saw Jesus raise the dead! What's wrong with you, man?"

Don't we want to fuss at him?

"Peter, you were there at the sea of Galilee, when the storm came up and all of a sudden a figure appeared. 'Lord, is it You? Is it really You? If it's You, Lord, let me come. And Jesus said, 'Come.' And Peter, you're the one who got out of the boat. You're the one who walked on water as you walked on dry ground. What's wrong with you, man? You deny Jesus? And you saw in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus stooped down and picked up the ear of Malchus and the most incredible thing happened. He put it upon the head of Malchus and instantly that ear was restored.

Peter, what's wrong with you? You saw all of these miracles and you were there. Ah, we want to fuss at Peter, don't we? At least I do. I'm a little disappointed in Peter, but that's not God's response. Let me show you how God responded to Peter.

It's Sunday morning. The tomb is empty. Jesus has died. He's been buried. He's been raised. The women go, looking for the body of Jesus and the angel appears. I love what the angel says in Mark 16:7

"Go and tell his disciples and Peter that he's going ahead of them to Galilee. There they will see him, just as he told them."

Have you ever wondered why the angel singled out Peter? Think about it.

Why didn't the angel say, 'Go tell His disciples --- and John'? or James'? or Philip'? Why do you think the angel singled out Peter? Why Peter of all people?

It's as though the angel is saying, **'Peter, I want you to know that just because you failed, heaven does not believe you are a failure.'**

The women show up. It's a Sunday morning. **'Whom are you looking for?'**

the Angel says. **'We're looking for Jesus.'** **'He's not here. He's risen. Go, tell His disciples,'** and it's as though the angel pauses and smiles ... and says, **'especially tell Peter. Tell Peter that though he struck out, he gets to bat again; that just because he threw an incomplete pass, he doesn't have to sit on the bench. 'Tell His disciples --- and Peter.'** Tell Peter that just because he failed he's not a flop! Tell Peter that just because he failed, that doesn't mean he is a failure!

**Go tell His disciples, and especially tell Peter.** Peter was not a failure. In fact, do you realize that the Apostle Peter went on to be an elder in the church!

**Peter identified himself as one of the elders of the church.** Now I want you to imagine again and this time imagine that an Elder of the Lords Church appears on national TV. He curses and swears and says, 'I don't know Jesus.' Can you imagine? You know what we would do? We would go to that elder and say, 'Brother, you need to resign. You need to quit right now.' Wouldn't we?

Imagine a brother in this congregation goes to Nebraska Furniture Mart and publicly gets into a fight with somebody and curses and swears and says, **'I don't know Jesus. I'm not a Christian.'** ... The news media is there and later, during the news, ... he is seen and ... says, ... **'I don't know Jesus Christ.'** ... We would say, **'That brother needs to be dis-fellowshipped.'** Wouldn't we? Can you imagine appointing that brother as an elder of our church ten or fifteen years down the line?

Why we would say, **'I remember what that brother did at the Mall of Georgia. We're not going to ask him to be an elder of the church.'** And yet, the Apostle Peter went on to be an elder in the church of Christ. That's amazing to me.

**And then who preached that great sermon on the Day of Pentecost?** Who stood up before that group and said:

**"People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus of Nazareth by doing**

**wonderful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. But you followed God's prearranged plan. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to the cross and murdered him. However, God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life again, for death could not keep him in its grip. Acts 2:22-24**

We've seen the resurrection! Who said that? Peter!

Who preached to those Jews: **"Repent, and be baptized"** Peter!

What about the sermon in Acts 10? Cornelius and his family. All the relatives are there. Somebody shows up and says: "... **I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right....So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.**" **Acts 10:35, 48**

**Who preached that sermon and who baptized Cornelius?** Peter!

What about **Acts 3?** The Lame man. He's sitting there, begging. Somebody passes by and says:

**"I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene-- walk!" Acts 3:6**

**Who raised that lame man and enabled him to walk again?** Peter!

Who wrote, "Add to your faith virtue and to virtue, knowledge, knowledge temperance, temperance patience, patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness"? I'll tell you who wrote that! The one who denied Jesus! The Apostle Peter!

Just because Peter failed that does not mean he was a failure!

Let's make an application. I want you to think about the most horrible sin that you've ever committed. Everybody think with me! About the most painful, ugly sin of your life!

Maybe you publicly used God's name in vain.

Maybe you have been addicted to alcohol. You've been drunk.

Maybe you have been addicted to drugs.

Or, maybe you've gone through a divorce, and been told that we in the Church don't do that.

Or, maybe you have committed fornication. You're not married and you've lost your virginity.

**Maybe you've even tried and experimented with some other Sin.**

Maybe as a teenage girl you slipped off one night and got pregnant. Then you slipped away again and had an abortion. You took the life of that innocent baby.

All of us have been there, haven't we! All of us have been there! But I've got news for you, folks: Just because you have failed, doesn't mean you have to be a failure!

**Are you listening to me?**

Just because you've failed, that doesn't mean you're a failure! You can turn your life around and accept the love of Jesus!

There's an interesting part of this story that Luke includes in his Gospel. Luke says that when Peter denied, cursed, and swore, **Jesus turned and looked at him.** I don't know what you see in those eyes of Jesus. Let me tell you what I see. All of a sudden you curse and swear and say, 'I don't know the Man.' And Jesus looks at you. What do you see in the eyes of Jesus?

**I see LOVE!**

When I look into the eyes of Jesus, as He looks at Peter:

**I do not see eyes of anger. I see eyes of acceptance!**

**I do not see eyes of bitterness. I see eyes of benevolence!**

**I do not see eyes of criticism. I see eyes of compassion!**

**I do not see eyes of guilt. I see eyes of grace!**

**I do not see eyes of hostility. I see eyes of hope!**

When Jesus turned and looked at Peter, it's as though Jesus is saying, 'Peter, I'm disappointed, but I want you to know: Just because you have failed, that doesn't mean you're going to be a failure!'

**All of us have skeletons in the closet!** All of us have dark, ugly sides about us. And Jesus turns and looks, but I want you to know:

He's looking with eyes of love, and hope, and compassion.

**Today, You can accept His love: and just because you've failed, doesn't mean you have to be a failure.**