

Fil-Am Community Church

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"YOUR FAILURES AND GOD'S GRACE"

Good morning Fil-Am, it is good to be back in the house of the Lord with you today. Like we say here at Fil-Am, every Sunday is like a Family Reunion, so let us get into the Word of God, but more importantly let us get the Word of God into you!

Today we're going to continue in the series No More Fear.

When doing research for the sermon, looking at illustrations and facts I discovered that there is actually a Phobic Society of America for people with different fears. It was founded in 1980 and has thousands of members treating all kinds of phobias.

Over the years ADAA has launched several national educational campaigns to promote awareness about anxiety disorders and encourage people to seek treatment. ADAA has also funded more than \$1.5 million in anxiety disorder research.

They have thousands and thousands of members, however at their convention last year only around 200 showed up because they're all afraid to go -- flying, large groups, etc.

It's interesting to me that we have different fears. We're all frightened by different things.

- Some of military men and women may have fought in combat but are afraid to visit a dentist.
- Others climb mountains and cliffs but if somebody were to ask them to speak in front of 15 people it would kill them.
- Some have business minds making huge decisions make every day – many million dollar decisions -- but when things go creak in the night, they send their wife!

We all have different kinds of fears. Today we're going to look at the second most common fear -- **the Fear of Failure.**

- In North America we idolize success.
- Failure is almost the unpardonable sin.
- Nobody wants to fail.
- Some people would do anything to win!
- Lower their morals or whatever it takes!
- This however, creates great stress on people.

The fear of failure has many different faces. It can cause you to be **indecisive.** You can't make decisions because you're afraid you're going to make the wrong one.

The fear of failure can make you a **workaholic.**

- You never **slow down**,
- never **rest**,
- never **relax**
- Because you're **afraid** of failing.

The fear of failure can make you a perfectionist.

- You're never satisfied.
- It's never just right.

Research has shown that the more successful you are the more you tend to fear failure.

The fear of failure, experts say, is most severe among talented people. How many of you have known the answer to a question but you were afraid to raise your hand?

The Bible tells us there are four antidotes to the fear of failure, that we are going to talk about today.

1. **Remember**, everybody fails.
2. **Realize** it's not fatal.
3. **Recognize** the benefits.
4. **Relax** in God's grace.

1. **REMEMBER THAT EVERYBODY FAILS.**

Have you ever made any mistakes? Welcome to the human race. It just validates your humanity.

James 3:2 says *"We all stumble in many ways."*

I often hear people say, "What if I fail?"

I want to say, "What do you mean "if?"

You should say **when!**

The facts of life are you have failed many, many times in life.

- You're a failure right now in some areas.
- You're failing in some areas of your life right now and you're going to fail a whole lot more in your future.

You're going to fail so welcome to the human race. We all stumble in many ways. *"There is no one on earth who does what is right all the time and never makes a mistake."* Nobody is perfect.

The closest you're ever going to get to perfection is when you're filling out a job application. That's the perfect you right there.

Nobody is perfect. We all make mistakes. We all stumble. Even among super stars. The average NBA player only makes 50% of his shots.

Michael Jordan once said, *"I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."*

In 1923, Babe Ruth broke the record for most home runs in a season. That same year, he also broke the record for highest batting average.

There is a third record he broke that year that most people don't know about. In 1923, Babe Ruth struck out more times than any other player in Major League Baseball.

The fact is everybody fails. Failure is going to be a part of the rest of your life. It's Ok, its normal; it's part of being human.

The Bible says it like this, *"All have sinned and fall short..."*

When you let go of your image of being perfect the fear of failure will let go of its grip of you. Just realize: I have failed, I am failing, and I'm going to fail but it's part of being a human. I'm not God, therefore everybody fails.

2. REALIZE IT'S NOT FATAL

We vastly over exaggerate the effects of failure. We blow it all out of proportion. Failing is not the end of the world. It's probably not going to kill you. The fear of failure is far more damaging than failure itself.

In the Marine Corps we have a saying that goes, liker this; That which doesn't kill you only makes you stronger and Pain is nothing but weakness leaning the Body!

Proverbs 24:16 *"No matter how often an honest man falls he always gets up again."*

- Even good guys stumble.
- Even the righteous.
- Even the people who are trying to do what's right, they make mistakes, they blow it, they stub their toe.
- Even good guys make mistakes.

Successful people are not people who never fail. They're people who get up again and keep going. Successful people just don't know how to quit. They keep on keeping on.

Paul is a good example of this. In 2 Corinthians 4:8-9

"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed. Perplexed but not in despair. Persecuted but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed."

Psalms 37:23-24 says, *"The steps of a man are established by the LORD, And He delights in his way. When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, Because the LORD is the One who holds his hand."*

God says, I'm going to take care of you. You don't need to be afraid of failure.

Paul says, I take my lumps like everybody else.

- Great people are simply ordinary people who have an extraordinary amount of determination.
- They just keep on going.
- They realize that you're never a failure until you quit.
- **You're never a failure until you give up.**

Muhammad Ali, said, "I am the Greatest, I said that even before I knew I was."

5-year old Johnny was in the kitchen as his mother made supper. She asked him to go into the pantry and get her a can of tomato soup, but he didn't want to go in alone. "It's dark in there and I'm scared." She asked again, and he persisted. Finally she said, "It's OK—Jesus will be in there with you." Johnny walked hesitantly to the door and slowly opened it. He peeked inside, saw it was dark, and started to leave when all at once an idea came, and he said:

Jesus, if you're in there, would you hand me that can of tomato soup?"

How do you reduce that **fear** of failure?

Redefine failure. What is failure?

- Failure is not failing to reach your goal; Failure is not setting a goal.
- Failure is not, not fulfilling all your dreams; Failure is not having a dream.
- Failure is not falling down; Failure is refusing to get back up again.

Failure is refusing to try. That's the greatest failure of all. Refusing to try. Paul says, I get knocked down **but I'm not knocked out**. I keep on going.

On the first day of kindergarten I got in the wrong line, and went into the wrong classroom, or even got on the wrong bus. Can you imagine that happening? I would venture to say that we have all fallen victim to one of the above, however, can you imagine coming home to your mom and dad and saying, "I'm a failure at education? This school thing just doesn't work."

I did the same thing trying to take the bus to the Pentagon, and ended up somewhere between the Navy Yard and the Pentagon, at around 5:15 AM.

When you learned to play softball, did you hit the ball the first time you took a swing? No.

When you learned to ride a bike, did you get it the first time? No you fell down a lot before you got the hang of balancing the bike.

How many of you have ever missed a meal?

- Does that mean you're a failure at eating?
- Do you give up?

If you can't be consistent do you just not do it?

No. You just keep on going. Everybody fails. It's not fatal.

Here are some more famous failures:

- George Washington lost two thirds of all the battles he fought. But he won the war and later became president.
- Napoleon graduated forty-second in a class of forty-three. There's hope! Then he went out and conquered Europe!
- J.K. Rowling, at a point in her a life Rowling was nearly penniless, depressed, divorced and had to raise her child on her own. She was also on welfare back then while writing up the manuscript of Harry Potter. Adding to that, 12 publishers rejected the manuscript. She created Harry Potter, a global brand estimated to be worth \$15 billion today.
- R.P Macy failed seven times at retailing before starting Macy's department store.
- Colonel Hardland David Sanders despite having the now-famous fried chicken recipe, he was rejected 1,008 times before a restaurant accepted it.
- Stephen King wrote his first book Carrie and it was rejected 30 times, so he proceeded to throw it in the trash, it was his wife who retrieved it from the trash and encouraged him to try again. And he's another one you know! He's the king of horror and his books have sold more than 350 million copies worldwide.
- In 1954, Clint Eastwood was fired from Universal Studios when a couple of studio executives noticed his Adam's apple was too big. The rest is history!

Here is the last example I will give you this morning, When Billy Graham was in seminary at Bob Jones University in Tennessee he admitted he knew he was not fitting in there and asked for an interview with the Director Bon Jones. Once in his office Billy told him about his discontent and thoughts of leaving, Bob's voice was booming, he pronounced me a failure and predicted only more failure ahead. Billy said I left his office disillusioned and dejected.

He wrote his mother and said, "I know Jesus Christ, but I've lost my feeling, I can't seem to get anywhere in prayer. I don't feel anything anymore."

His mother responded, "Son, God is testing you. He tells us to walk not by feeling, but by faith, and when you don't feel anything, God may be closer to

you than ever before, through the darkness and through the fog, put your hand up by faith you'll sense the touch of God.

You just keep on going. If at first you don't succeed it's no big deal. You're never a failure **until you give up**. You recognize that everybody fails. You realize it's not fatal.

3. YOU RECOGNIZE THE BENEFITS

We usually think of failure as being a negative experience. But wise people that the Bible talks about in the book of Proverbs know how to take advantage of failure.

- They learn from it.
- They make the most of it.
- They use it as an education.

One of the primary tools that God uses in your life to make you what He wants you to be is failure. What possible good is failure in your life? Three reasons:

- a. **God uses failure to educate me.** Mistakes are simply learning experiences. There are some things we only learn through failure. Some of us are highly educated! For some, that's the only way you learn.

Proverbs 28:13 *"A man who refuses to **admit** his mistakes can never be successful."*

How do you learn to become a success?

By learning what doesn't work and not doing it any more.

Kids understand this process, by playing video games, how do you think they know how to advance to the next level? They do it by making a lot of mistakes along the way.

If you're not making any mistakes you're not growing. You're not learning. If you make the same mistake every week, now you're in trouble! But you should be making a new one every week. If you're not taking any risks you're not growing.

The freedom from the fear of failure is the freedom to grow. God uses failure to educate me.

b. God uses failure to motivate me. Proverbs 20:30 *"Sometimes it takes a painful situation to make us change our ways."*

A lot of times we change, not when we see the light, but when we feel the heat.

During his years as premier of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev denounced many of the policies and atrocities of Joseph Stalin. Once, as he censured Stalin in a public meeting, Khrushchev was interrupted by a shout from a heckler in the audience. "You were one of Stalin's colleagues. Why didn't you stop him?" "Who said that?" roared Khrushchev. An agonizing silence followed as nobody in the room dared move a muscle. Then Khrushchev replied quietly, "Now you know why."

When you fail, maybe God's trying to get your attention and saying

- I want you to go in a new direction,
- I don't like you going that way,
- I want you to go another way.

There's the story of Elijah in the Old Testament where he goes down by the brook and the ravens were coming down and feeding him, the water was there. But one day the brook dried up and he gets mad. "God, why did the brook dry up?" Sometimes that happens in your life.

The brook dries up. The resources aren't there anymore. God said, "It's real simple. I don't want you there anymore." As long as the brook was there, Elijah was going to hang out there. It was comfortable but God said, "I want you to move on!"

So God lights a fire under us.

Sometimes it takes a painful situation to make us change our ways.

c. God uses it to cultivate me, to build my character.

Romans 5:3-4 *"We can rejoice when we run into problems and trials." Is this really your typical reaction? No, not really. "... for we know that they are good for us. They develop strength of character."*

Pay attention to "strength of character".

- Failure has a way of softening our hearts, and humbling our spirits.
- It helps us grow up and be mature.
- It makes us sensitive to others.
- Failure makes you less judgmental,
- Helps you be a little more sympathetic to people around you who are hurting.

Can you imagine how difficult it would be to live with you if you had an unbroken string of successes?

You'd think you had the Midas touch. If you never had any failures you'd be unlivable! We couldn't live with you. God uses it to cultivate us.

Failure does not automatically grow your character.

- Failure just makes some people bitter.
- Failure only builds your character when you respond to it correctly,
- When you learn from it,
- When you grow from it,
- When you say, "What didn't work here and what can I change?" You've got to respond correctly.

4. I NEED TO RELAX IN GOD'S GRACE.

Psalm 103:14 *"God knows what we are made of. He remembers that we are dust."*

Sometimes the Lord calms the storm. Sometimes he lets the storm rage and calms his child.

God isn't surprised when I fail.

- He expects it.
- He knows what I'm made of.
- He knows I'm just human.
- He doesn't expect me to be perfect in every way.
- He knows our frame and He isn't surprised.

Even if you do fail, God's not going to stop loving you. If you think that you have to be perfect in order for God to love you, you've missed the central message of the Bible.

The central message of the Bible is this:

- God loves you not because of who you are but because of who He is.
- Not because of what you do, but because of what Christ has already done. He made you. He loves you. It's settled.
- You can't make God love you more.
- You can't make Him love you less.
- He loves you just as much on your bad days as He does on your good days.

Because it is not performance based. **That's called grace.**

And it is amazing. God looks down and says, "I choose to love you. And you can't make me stop loving you."

Sometimes we might try to make Him stop loving us, show Him what a jerk we can be. God says, "No, you can't make me stop loving you."

It is amazing grace. When you realize that's the way God treats you then you can relax because no matter how many times you fail God isn't going to stop loving you.

Have you ever had an area in your life that you habitually failed in? The first times you really felt bad about it. "God, I'm really sorry! I blew it. Help me with"

Then you blow it again and you come back, "God, I'm really sorry. Please forgive me." And after three or four times you start thinking,

"I don't want to go back and ask for forgiveness because I'm just doing this over and over." You think God must be getting real tired of it.

God never gets tired of you talking to Him. And He's never too busy. You can relax in His grace. It's unconditional love. **It isn't dependent upon you.**

Many of you may have grown up in homes that were performance based.

It was deeply ingrained in you. "If I fail, it means I'm worth nothing!"

- Success is everything.
- Getting the A's.
- Making the grade.
- Doing the right thing.
- Success means I'm valuable.

Failure means I'm worthless. You're wrong!

That's a wrong idea. Please don't transfer the image of an unpleasable parent onto God.

God doesn't treat you that way. You can relax in His grace. When you do that, you don't have to fear any future failure because you know God's never going to stop loving you no matter what. You can face the future.

Colossians 2:14 *"God canceled our debt which listed all the rules we failed to follow..."*

He took away that record with its rules and nailed it to the cross."

The Christian life is not a mistake free life. But it can be a guilt free life.

I love the Bible because it always tells the truth, it doesn't just gloss over.

When you read biographies a lot of times it only shows the good side. But the Bible, when it tells about these great believers in history, it also tells us about their failings.

It tells us how God saved the world because of one guy named Noah and then after the flood was over it says he got drunk and got naked and blew it all!

God tells us David was a man after his own heart, yet it also tells us David committed adultery and murder.

The Bible tells us Moses was a great man and he led the children through the Red Sea but it also tells us...

- He killed a guy and one time he got so mad he threw down the Ten Commandments and they broke.
- Another time he got so mad he struck a rock instead of speaking to it and his anger kept him out of the Promised Land.

The Bible tells the good and the bad. God chooses ordinary people. If God only used perfect people what do you think would get done in this world? So relax in God's grace.

Fellow Saints just consider this: What is our primary witness in this world is simply how we handle mistakes.

Maybe if you claim to be a believer, maybe the greatest witness you have is how you handle your failures. **How you respond to it when you blow it.**

What is so amazing about God's grace is not just that He forgives our failures but He gives us the power to start over.

- What have you always wanted to do but you were afraid because you might fail?
- What would you attempt for God if you knew you couldn't fail?

God wants to rid you of this fear of failure by just saying...

- I've failed,
- I am failing,
- I will fail, but God uses failures!

The worst effect of the fear of failure is that it paralyzes your potential.

- It locks you in a self-imposed prison.
- It stifles your creativity.
- It keeps you from being what God meant for you to be.
- It causes you to Miss God's best because you don't even try.

Don't be the person that is afraid of trying and does nothing.

If you fail to plan, then you plan to Fail!

Are you letting the fear of failure keep you from being all God wants you to be?

You can change that right here, right now. Turn the failure over to the one who knows how to use them.

Remember every time the Devil tried to keep you focused on your failures, every time he reminds you of your past, remind him of his future!

Let us pray....