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God's Purpose In Peter's Failure

by Zac Poonen

In Luke chapter 22 verse 31. We read of Jesus warning Peter of a danger that lay ahead of him. He told him "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." We all know that Peter denied the Lord three times that very night. In verse 34, we read that Jesus told Peter, "I say to you, Peter, the cock will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me." Does God allow failure? Does He permit it? Is there a purpose in failure? Or is failure something that has no purpose at all in God's perfect will and something that God cannot use to further his purposes! When we read this passage, we see that God did not prevent Peter from denying Him. Why didn't Jesus say "Simon I have prayed for you that you will not deny Me even once." Why did the Lord pray only that Peter's faith may not fail, even if Peter himself fell?? Isn't it interesting that the Lord did not pray that Peter might not fall? Some of us would like the Lord to pray for us that we might never fall. We would like the Lord to say to us "My son, my daughter, I have prayed for you that you will never fall and never fail." But interestingly enough, our Lord doesn't pray such a prayer for us. What did Jesus pray for Simon? That when Satan tempted him, his faith would not fail. He didn't pray that Peter should not fall in temptation, but that when he did fall, his faith in God's perfect love would not fail him - so that even when Peter reached the bottom of the pit of failure, he would confess, "God still loves me". That is faith - and that is the confession we must always have on our lips and in our hearts - no matter how low we may have sunk or fallen - that God still loves us, JUST AS WE ARE. That was the confession of the prodigal son. When he had reached so low that he could not go any lower, he still believed that his father loved him. I can't imagine anyone reaching any lower than the prodigal son had reached - eating what the pigs eat. That boy was at rock-bottom. But when he reached rock-bottom, he remembered one thing: That his father still loved him. Otherwise he would never have returned home. Supposing he'd heard that his father had died and that his elder brother was now running the house, do you think he would have come back home? No. He knew what his elder brother was like. And knowing that, he would never have come back. He came back only because he knew that his father loved him. There's hope for all who've failed thoroughly, who've made a mess of their lives, and who've reached rock bottom. From there the Lord can pick you up and take you to the heights of glory. His prayer for us is that our faith in God's love should not fail at any time. When you hit rock bottom. Remember one thing that God still loves you, no matter where you are, or how low you have fallen. May your faith in God's love not fail in that hour.

It was with a purpose that God allowed Peter to fail. That purpose was to sift Peter. What Satan really wanted was to destroy Peter altogether, but God would not allow him to do that. God does not allow us to be tested or tried beyond our ability. So Satan was allowed to sift Peter. As a result of his failure, Peter was cleansed of a whole lot of chaff in his life. That is the real purpose with which God allows us to fail too. Isn't it a good thing for the chaff to be removed from our lives? Certainly. When a farmer harvests the wheat, he has to sift it before he can use it. Only then will the chaff be removed from it. The Lord uses Satan to remove the chaff from our lives. Amazingly enough, God accomplishes this purpose by allowing us to fail repeatedly!! God used Satan to fulfil that purpose in Peter and He will use Satan to fulfil that purpose in our lives too. There's a lot of chaff in all of us - the chaff of pride, self confidence and self righteousness. And God uses Satan to make us fail repeatedly, in order to remove that chaff from us completely. Whether the Lord is succeeding in fulfilling this purpose in your life or not, you alone know. But if the chaff is being removed, you will be humbler and less self righteous. You won't look down on others who fail. You won't consider yourself better than anyone else. As I said, God permits Satan to remove the chaff from us, by allowing us to fail repeatedly. So don't get discouraged if you fail. You are still in God's hand. There is a glorious purpose that's being fulfilled through your repeated failures. But your faith in God's love for you must not fail at such times. That was what Jesus prayed for Peter and what He's praying for us today. He's not praying that we may never fail, but He's praying that when we do reach rock-bottom, our confidence in God's love will still be unshaken. Only through many experiences of failure do we finally reach a "zero point", where we're truly broken. It was when Peter reached that point, that he had a second "conversion" (Lk.22:32 - KJV). He turned around. The proof that at Jesus' prayer for Peter was answered is seen in the fact that when Peter hit rock-bottom, he turned around. He didn't just lie down there discouraged. He didn't lose his faith. He got up. God had let him go on a long leash. But when Peter reached the end of that rope, God pulled him back.

It's a wonderful thing to be a child of God. When God lays hold of us, He puts a rope around us to protect us. There's a l

ot of slack in that rope, and you may slip up and fall many thousands of times and even drift away from the Lord. But on e day, you'll reach the end of that rope. And then God will pull you right back to Him. Of course, you can decide at that p oint, to cut off the rope and run away. Or you can choose to be broken by God's kindness and mourn and return to Him. That's what Peter did. He wept and turned back to the Lord. But Judas Iscariot didn't do that. He cut away the rope - in r ebellion against God's authority over his life - and was eternally lost. But I trust you'll do what Peter did. Jesus then told P eter, "When you turn back and are strong once again, strengthen your brothers ". It is only when we are broken that we can be strong enough to strengthen others. It was only when Peter was weak and broken, that he became really strong - so strong that he was able to strengthen his brothers and sisters. We could say that Peter's preparation for Spirit-filled s ervice came through his experience of failure. If he had been filled with the Holy Spirit, without this experience of failure, he would have stood up on the day of Pentecost as a proud man, as a man who had never failed, who could look down, despisingly, at the poor lost sinners in front of him. And God would have become his enemy, for God resists the proud!!

Re: God's Purpose In Peter's Failure -poonen - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2007/6/15 21:03

This is powerful truth that can instantly cut through the sticky "Arminianism-versus-Calvinism" tape that encumbers so m any believers. It's also able to bring relief to a weary, fainting soul. No matter how far you've fallen, how far you've wand ered from God...the Father is still able to pull His prodigal children back to Himself. This, my friends, is balanced gospel preaching.

A man cannot preach God's remedy for failures if he himself has never failed God. God uses failures, the broken, misera ble outcasts, those that have let Him down time and time again...and who come back home to Him broken and repentant . A righteous man can and will fall many times; How else can the chaff be separated and sifted from the true wheat? I fin d it curious that recently there's been many messages of this nature on SI. A time of dire testing is at hand, and we who are being tested ought to pray and not faint! Messages like these aid in encouragement. They are a true God-send.

Thanks, Greg, for being God's postman this hour.

Brother Paul