

## Victory of the Lamb – June 17, 2018 – Pastor Bill Limmer

### Ordinary People Extraordinary God – Judges 16:23-31 - Failing Forward

Fathers are . . .

**F** aithful  
**A** lways There  
**T** rustworthy  
**H** onest  
**E** verloving  
**R** ighteous

That's quite a list. Anybody have a dad who was like all that 100% of the time? Yikes. That list is easy to measure but not easy to measure up to, right? Whether we are Christian or not we all have regrets and failures don't we?

JR Smith plays basketball for the Cleveland Cavaliers. In game one of the NBA Championship Series against the Golden State Warriors, Smith's team was down one point with 4.7 seconds left and teammate George Hill is shooting two free throws. Hill makes the first, tying the game. But he misses the second free throw and amazingly JR Smith soars over the taller in position Kevin Durant and grabs the rebound only three feet away from the rim for what seemingly could have been an easy put back in lay-up to win the game. But Smith, instead of shooting the short all but automatic game winning shot, dribbles the ball out to half court in a frenzy and the buzzer goes off sending the game into over time, where the Warriors would gain the victory. Apparently, he thought his team was ahead.  
#Missedopportunity #Fail Do you have any regrets of things you wish you had done?

Then there is Bob who was an amazing national award winning journalist for the Chicago Tribune. He wrote powerful exposes about abandoned and abused children, sounding the alarm to parents and state officials. He wrote best selling books and built a thirty-year career as a voice for those who had no voice. By all accounts, Bob was a family-man deeply committed to his wife and children. Then an anonymous e-mail touched off a shocking scandal that exposed an alleged pattern of philandering.  
#Takingadvantageofbadopportunities #fail Do you have any regrets over past mistakes?

In our series Ordinary People Extraordinary God we have been looking at Sampson. And we have seen when strong men become weak and we have seen small steps lead to big destruction. Today we are going to see that by God's grace when you are down you are not out. Say By God's Grace . . . When you are Down . . . You Are Not Out

Judges 16:23-25 **Now the rulers of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate, saying, "Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands."** <sup>24</sup> **When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, "Our god has delivered our enemy into our hands, the one who laid waste our land and multiplied our slain."** <sup>25</sup> **While they were in high spirits, they shouted, "Bring out Samson to entertain us." So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them.** Samson, the leader of the people of Israel had assumed that his indiscretions would not catch up with him and so he did as saw fit. But he gave over the secret of his strength to his mistress Delilah and Israel leader became the Philistines prisoner. Samson taunted his enemies and now his enemies are taunting him. He came out to entertain them. We don't know exactly what that was all about but

perhaps it was feats of strength that he could no longer do so they ridiculed even more loudly. Or maybe, because his hair had begun to grow again his strength was on display to the amazement of the crowd. I wonder what Samson was thinking as he was looking over his life, literally blinded because his sin.

I don't know about you, but sometimes when I am reading in the bible, I think how dumb that was. Like when the Israelites are wandering around in the wilderness and they ask for food and God provides food for them day after day. It is just there. They don't have to do anything but they do something, they complain. I think unreal. How dumb is that. And then I complain because in my full cupboards at home, we have cookies, chips but no zebra cakes. You know anyone else like that.

In a story of memories, Joshua Harris wrote of a place between wakefulness and dreams. He found himself in a room with only one distinguishing feature. A wall was covered with index cards from top to bottom. The index cards are the like the ones you used to find in libraries. He said he knew right where he was at. These index cards were the catalogue of his life. Here were written the thoughts, words, and actions of his every moment, big and small, with such remarkable detail that his memory couldn't match it. Some brought joy and sweet memories and others a sense of shame and regret to such an extent he was looking over his shoulder to see if anyone was watching. Some of the titles were: Books I have read, Lies I have told, Jokes I have laughed at, Images I have seen, Things I have yelled at my siblings, Things that I have muttered under my breath about my parents or my boss, Things I have done that I said I would never do or do again, Songs I have listened to, Relationships I have wrecked, Fantasies that I have had, Financial mishandlings, People I have shared the gospel with and those I haven't. Anything strike you as I read through the categories – maybe relief that I didn't mention that other thing. Romans 3:23 says, **All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.** This is true of all of us whether we have been life long Christians or this is our very first time in worship. We have all blown it not just the man who was a gambling addict and had run 35K up in credit card bills while he was a professor at a Christian college. We can't un-sin.

And so whether we are Christian or not we all have guilt. We don't have the ability to wipe our human hearts clean. We can't silence our conscience. But we do try to manage our guilt don't we? We compare ourselves to someone who is worse than we are but there is rebellion in that isn't there. We blame someone else. We try to soothe our conscience by pointing to good works we have done or are going to do. Some of us punish ourselves for our sins to assure God, us and others we are bad and we are sorry. Some people plagued by guilt develop a propensity for accidents or a harmful habit, a secret wish to die young. For every failure to live up to some ought, there is the tendency to punish one's self in such a manner as to produce another failure. And it becomes cyclical and we dig a deep hole. And we feel like a failure. Satan uses guilt to accuse you, to destroy you, to convince that you are no good, to shame you, to assure you that you are a failure and that there is no hope. Satan uses guilt to convince you that you are irredeemable. **-And we get caught in a cycle of remorse instead of repentance.** Remorse is looking backward. Repentance is moving forward.

The Holy Spirit uses guilt in a different way, to convict you to lead you to move forward in repentance. I'm sorry. It was my fault. God entrusted me and I blew it. I did what I did. I foolishly didn't think it mattered, didn't think there would be consequences. I thought I deserved it and this was going to be good and no one was going to get hurt. I thought I had it all under control. My bad. I accept God's forgiveness and love. By God's grace when you are down you are not out. Repentance is being honest

about sin and forgiveness and having God place his loving arms around you. Romans 8:33,34 **Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.** <sup>34</sup> **Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.** Even the life-long Christian will fail times but it doesn't mean we aren't forgiven, aren't saved, aren't worth loving. God loves us not because we are good but because he is good. Don't let past failures limit what you think or what you are going to allow God to do in your life. Conviction leads to repentance.

Samson story illustrates this: Judges 16:25b,26 and 28 **When they stood him among the pillars,** <sup>26</sup> **Samson said to the servant who held his hand, "Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them . . ."** <sup>28</sup> **Then Samson prayed to the LORD, "Sovereign LORD, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes."** You see you may have been down, you may be down now but you are not out. God is still ready and willing to have you accomplish his purposes. Judges 16:29-30 **Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other,** <sup>30</sup> **Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.**

How many bad things can you do before God can't use you? Can you lie? Cheat? Steal? Get drunk? Murder? How far can you go? No one knows. Because no one has done so much then turned to God and had God reject them. When you are down you are not out. Proverbs 24:16 **For though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again.**

All this is possible because God has a response to our sin as well, only his Psalm 32:1 he covers it. He removes it. Isaiah 43:25 he forgets it. He has a delete key. John 19:31 he pays for it in full (It is finished) Romans 6:23 **The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus.** You see grace is one sided. We come to God and bring our great need and he supplies the rest. Jesus didn't just die for our childish sins but for our real great, grievous, mocking and damnable sins. Christ is the real Savior for real sinners.

And so today is the day to knock down the pillar of remorse with Spirit led repentance, the day to knock down our guilt with forgiveness of God, the day to knock down the pillar of shame with God's acceptance. You see this father's day and always, it's all about God, our heavenly father working in our life because he is 100% of the time

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