

Failure: The Backdoor To Success

Joshua 8

Pastor John Miller

The great automaker Henry Ford defined failure, quote, “as an opportunity to begin again more intelligently.” I love that. Failure is an opportunity to begin again, new beginnings, more intelligently as a wise person that learns by their mistakes. There are two things that are hard to deal with in life. One is success and the other is failure. Two very difficult things to deal with. We can be swelled up with a big head over our success, or we can be discouraged and disheartened and unwilling to go on because of our past failures. Every one of us have failed in some area. Maybe it's been a marriage, maybe it's been in your finances, maybe it's been in some relationship, maybe in the things that you said or did or something in your life where you failed miserably. You're looking back and you're fearful to try to venture into the future. God doesn't want you to be held by your past. God wants you to be free to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Joshua and the people of Israel have just experienced the agony of defeat, chapter seven. They were defeated in Ai because of hidden sin, unbeknownst to Joshua and the people of God. They were defeated in Ai because of self-confidence, a lack of prayer, relying on human wisdom, rushing ahead impatiently and before the Lord. But now God wants them to get up, brush yourself off, and begin again and see victory come into your life. God is able to turn our failures into successes. Failure often is the back door to success. I love Psalm 37, verse 23 and 24. The psalmist says, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not utterly be cast down, for the Lord holds him up with his hand.” Isn't that great? We fall, but God holds us up with his hand. I thank God for his sustaining power. The victorious Christian life has been described as a series of new beginnings. We don't go from victory to victory to victory. Many times we do fail, but the victorious Christian life is new beginnings. We start all over again. We rededicate, we reconsecrate, we obey God's word, we learn from our mistakes. How do you respond to your failures? Paul said in Philippians 3, “But this one thing I do, I forget what is behind, and I reach forward onto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. I reach for that which is before.” We need to have the same philosophy. We should learn from the past, not to let it control us.

Now as we look at this chapter eight of Joshua, there are four things that we need brand new in our life after we fail. If you're taking notes, you can write them down. Four things, four ingredients to a new beginning. After we have failed, we need a new beginning in God's Word. We need to pick up the Bible, and we need to read the Word of God, and we need to hear God speak to us. You say, “Pastor John, you're always talking about the Bible.” What else do preachers do? It's God's Word that is central to the victorious Christian life. So we pick up God's Word, and we begin to read His Word once again. Now this is seen in verses one and two, follow with me, chapter eight, says “The Lord said unto Joshua...”, so who is speaking here? When we open God's word, the Bible, who speaks? The Lord. God speaks through what he has spoken in his word. So God speaks again unto Joshua and he tells him “Fear not or don't be

afraid and do not be dismayed...", or literally discouraged, "...Take all the people of war with you and arise and go to Ai. See, I have given unto thy hand the king of Ai and his people and his city and his land. And thou shalt do unto the king of Ai...", or "...unto Ai, and her king is thou didst unto Jericho, her king only...", excuse me, "...and only to spoil thereof and the cattle thereof, and all that you can take the prey for yourself. Lay thee in ambush for the city behind it."

Now, if defeat came because of disobedience, victory comes because of what? Obedience. Defeat comes because of disobedience, victory comes because of obedience, and the obedience is to what? God's word. God is going to give Joshua very specific instruction how to conquer Ai. God has given us very specific instructions in the Bible how to live the Christian life. Did you know that? If you're married, guess what? God's word has instructions for you. If you're a child still living at home, God's word has instructions for you. If you are serving the Lord, you're living for Christ, then God's word has very specific instructions. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and he delights in his way. Do you delight in God's word and being obedient to God's word? Do you hear God speak daily through his word and direct your life? The sin that defiled the camp had been destroyed. They had dealt with it, chapter seven, verse 26. So us too, we need to deal with sin. When we do, God's blessings will come. They deal with sin, and guess what the first thing is? God begins to speak again. When we deal with sin in our life, then and only then can we begin to hear the voice of God. And what does God say? God says to Joshua, "Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged. Get up, get going, go back to Ai."

Now, notice what the Lord says. I love it. The word of encouragement, verse one, fear not, be not dismayed or discouraged or beaten down. Guess what? God knows when we get discouraged. I can't imagine the Lord saying to Joshua, "Don't be afraid, don't be discouraged." And Joshua goes, "What are you talking about? I'm cool. God, you don't know what's going on. I'm fine, I got it together." And the Lord knows you, you know, sometimes a friend will say, "Don't be discouraged." I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm okay. But because God said this to Joshua, it indicates to me that the great man, Joshua, was afraid and discouraged. Now let me tell you something. If you have moment times of fear and times of discouragement, don't get overly distraught. They're in good company. Joshua was discouraged. Joshua was fearful. God's people are people. And we have our weaknesses. Sometimes we put ourselves [down], "Oh gosh, I'm such a lousy Christian. Why am I so afraid? Why am I so discouraged?" Because you're a human being, all right? You know, sometimes you just need to go to bed. (Congregation Laughing) I'm trying to learn that. There's times they get crabby. Yes, Pastor John gets crabby and he's cranky. My wife will just look at me. You need to go to bed right now. (Congregation Laughing) No, I don't. I'm perfectly fine. Yes. You just need to get some sleep. You need to get some food. There's times that I just need food. What's wrong with you? I just need to eat. Elijah got discouraged. He laid down and took a nap. God woke him up and he made him a cake. I like that. It says, "The angel of the Lord brought Elijah a cake." I'm sure it was angel food cake. Probably the best cake he ever ate. It was heavenly to eat. And then God told him to go back to sleep. I love that verse. Praise God, naps in the Bible. Food, cake, sleep, I'm loving this. And sometimes that's all you need. You just need a good meal and a good nap and you wake up and the sky will be blue again, okay? So you're going to jump up right now and go home taking a nap.

We do get discouraged. We do get fearful and God speaks to us through His word. So when we fail and we are fearful of the future, open your Bible, let God speak to your own heart. Then God gave to him not only the word of faith, the word of don't fear, but God also gave him the word of instruction. God had a plan for them to follow. God told them very specifically what they were to do. Take all of the people of war with you and arise and go to Ai. Now notice the instructions here. Take the army, verse one, take a get up, verse one and then go, go where? Go back to Ai. Ai was the place that you were defeated. You know, sometimes we need to go right back and face our failures. We need to go right back and try again. You know the famous Babe Ruth, the home run hitter? Did you know that he struck out about 1300 times? He only hit about 700, 714 home runs, struck out over a thousand times. I'm just not going to play anymore. I'm just not going to play anymore. If you don't go to the bat, you can't hit a home run. You go, "I might strike out." Yeah, but you might hit a home run. So we need to try again. We need to go back again. So don't be afraid. Don't be fearful. Get up. Go back, begin to fight again. Falling down doesn't make you a failure. Staying down does. Falling down doesn't make you a failure. It's when you stay down that you're a failure. God spoke to Abraham when he was afraid of the coming battle and gave him the fear not of protection. God spoke to Hagar when she was, she was afraid and gave her the fear not of provision. And God gives now Joshua the fear not of prospect. I will give the king into your hand. I will give the city to your hand. I will give his land unto your hand. And I will give you the spoils. Did you notice that? In verse two, "Only the spoils thereof, the cattle thereof, shall you take for a prey unto yourselves."

Oh, that Achan would have waited on God and only a few days later he would have enjoyed the spoils of Ai. God gives the best to those who leave the choice to him. Don't get impatient. Someone here today might be thinking I'm impatient, I'm just going to get the divorce. They'll never change. I'm just going to steal the money. They won't ever give me a raise, I'm just going to take it. I'm just going to run away, or I'm just going to do it. You get impatient, you no longer trust God or wait on God and you run ahead of God and you miss out. You miss out on all the blessings of God because you didn't wait, you didn't persevere, you didn't trust, you didn't obey. I love the verse in the Bible where it says, "Be not weary and well-doing, for in due season you will reap if you faint not. Sometimes we just need to put one foot in front of the other and the other foot in front of that. That's all walking is by the way, it's just getting one foot in front of the other and keep doing it and keep following the Lord. He wants you to walk in His ways. You need to be able to plod along and persevere and trust in Him and wait on Him and God will bless you. God gave him the word of promise, I've given unto you the land and to thy hand, the King of Ai, verse one. Not I might, not if you're lucky it'll be okay, but you will be victorious. Verse two, "Thou shalt do unto the king of Ai as you did to the king of Jericho." So to turn your defeat into victory, you need to hear and to heed God's word.

Here's the second thing that you need new after a failure. You need a new strategy for life. You need to follow a new strategy and God gives that to him in verses three down to verse eight. So Joshua, verse three, "he rose up and all of the people of war to go against Ai. And Joshua chose out 30,000 mighty men of valor...". Not just 3,000 to go against the 12,000 in Ai, but 30,000, a strong army. So now he's following God's plan. "And he sent them away by night. And he commanded them saying, Behold, you shall lie in wait against the city, even behind the city,

go not very far from the city, but be ready. And I and all the people that are with me, we will approach into the city, and it shall come to pass that when they come out against us, as they did at first, that we will flee before them.” So they were going to feign that they were running from the men of Ai and draw them out of the city. “And then you shall rise up from your ambush...”, verse seven, “...and you will seize upon the city for the Lord your God will deliver it unto your hand. And it shall be that when you have taken the city that you shall set the city on fire according to the commandment of the Lord shall you do. See, I’ve commanded you.”

Now this very explicit instruction, detailed instruction was given to Joshua by the Lord. They didn’t follow God’s strategy when they first went up against Ai. Now I can imagine Joshua was thinking, “No, we can just let A go. Let’s just leave them alone, let’s try something else. And the next city, we’re going to go back to the old plan of marching around and tooting on the horns. You know, if it ain’t broken, why fix it, right? Let’s go back to the parade. Let’s go back to the walking around, tooting the horns and the wall comes down. I like that better.” You know that God is not bound by the same strategy, the same plan, that he’s a God of second chance, but he’s also the God of infinite variety, that God has a new purpose and a new plan. Maybe you failed, but maybe God wants to redirect you.

Here’s what I believe. I believe, and I’ve experienced it in my own life, that God can bring us to a place of failure, where many times we are ready to throw in the towel, call it quits, I’ll never try again, and that God has actually shut a door because he wants to open another door and send us a new direction. That God many times, His disappointments are his appointments. And you learn in time to thank God for even unanswered prayers. That God shuts the door because he wants to redirect you because God, God has another plan. So when God doesn’t answer your prayers and God doesn’t do what you want Him to do, and maybe you failed in a certain direction. Then say to the Lord, “Lord, I will wait for your direction. I will wait for your purpose. I will wait for your plan. Lord, I will follow your strategy. What do you want me to do?” You see, God is redirecting us. Where do you want me to go? How do you want me to serve? What do you want me to say? God will redirect us through our failures.

So the strategy was that they would actually take these 30,000 soldiers and they would hide in ambush behind the city of Ai. This is a cool story. This is a guy’s story. And they marched 15 miles at night. Had their swords, they had camo on their face, they had black stuff all over their face, dressed in camouflage, you know, and they had their night goggles on, they’re just okay, we’re marching, we’re here. I could just see these Rambo dudes, you know, they’re on their way to take Ai. And then they hid. So they marched all night, hid behind the city, and they’re waiting. Then Joshua, he takes a cohort of soldiers, and he approaches in the morning, broad daylight, right up in front of the city of Ai, kind of like, “Yoo-hoo, we’re here.” And the king of Ai goes, “Those guys are out of their mind. Last time they fled from us.” So he says, “Come on.” And then Ai grabs all of their soldiers, the king rallies all his men, and they burst through the gates, and they go running after Joshua, and Joshua turns tail with his men, and they go running away from them. And the men of Ai are like, “Yeah, yeah.” And they’re running them down, and then they reach a point where Joshua stops, turns around, And oh, this is a man’s story, I love this. (Congregation Laughing) Sorry ladies. He lifts up his sword. Lifts up his sword or might’ve been

a spear or a javelin. You know, they couldn't get on the radio and go, "okay, attack now." They didn't have that kind of stuff. So he had to like, the signal was I'm going to lift my sword. And maybe the morning sun was hitting the sword and sending a light signal, glistening light signal to the man, you're like, "Time to go, time to go," you know. They see the sword of Joshua and the men who were hiding behind the city, they come out of hiding, they rush into the city, they wipe everyone out, and then they set that sucker on fire. This is a man's story, I like it.

Flames are leaping into the air and it's burning and the men of Ai look back and they see their whole city on fire. And Joshua and his men went to battle. Then the men of Israel who had set the city on fire, destroyed the inhabitants, they come flooding out and they caught the men of Ai in a pincher move. They were on both sides, they had them surrounded. What an awesome picture that is. That was the strategy. Now, what's the lesson? God is not limited to one method of working. God is not limited to one method of working. Every city they took, they would have loved to do a little parade, toot their horns, and the walls came down. but God is a God of infinite variety.

Now I'm thinking of us as a church. We as a church need to be flexible and open to where God wants us to go, how God wants us to do it, just because we've done it this way in the past, just because this has worked in the past, doesn't mean that this is what God is doing in the present. Many times churches grow old and they get in a rut, and this is the way we've always done it, we've always done it this way; you know, don't change anything. God raises up new leaders, God raises up new methods. Now, principles never change. This is what I'm trying to get through, they're some of the younger pastors that I minister to. Principles never change. They must be biblical principles of ministry. But methods change. Whether we have a rock band or a choir or an orchestra, it doesn't matter. God can work through both. and the way we do things can change, but we hang on to our principles, even though God brings different methods. I think of how Jesus healed people. You ever notice when Jesus healed people in the Bible? He never did it the same way? Sometimes you just speak a word at a distance and they'd be healed. Sometimes he would lay a hand on them and they would be healed. Other times he would spit in the dirt, make mud and put it in their eyes. Spitting evangelist. Imagine someone trying to copy that method. You get arrested spitting on people. I've always thought it's a good thing to do with blind. You didn't know what Jesus was doing. Like, "What are you doing, Lord?" Don't ask questions. "Oh, that's gooey, Lord. What is it?" Don't ask questions. Just go wash it off. It's spit dirt. That's what it is. You wash it off and you come seeing and go, "That's the secret. When people are sick, we're going to spit in the dirt and throw it on them." (Congregation Laughing) God is a God of infinite variety.

In your own life, I want to encourage you today, God may have a new thing for you to do. I never thought I'd teach Sunday school. I never thought I'd go street witnessing. I never thought I'd go to the rest home on Saturday and visit people there. God wants to open a new door. He may shut a door through your failure, but he'll redirect you through a new door, and God is a God of infinite variety. Be open to the different strategies that God may give you to do. Be willing to change. Be willing to do God's work, God's way. God is a God of infinite variety. And we are through, when we go through this time of changing, God will use us for His glory.

Here's the third step. Verse 14 to 29, a new victory, and I can't read all these verses. But God wants you to have a new victory. You failed in the past, but God has victory for your future. God has a future and a hope for you. Even areas that you thought, "I'll never get victory over this habit. I'll never be able to be free of this besetting sin." God can give you victory. If you look to Him, if you trust in Him, and you surrender to Him, I believe with all my heart, God can set you free, amen? (Congregation Applauding) But today you need to take the steps to say, "God, I believe that you're going to give me a new victory."

So in verses 14 to 17, Ai empties, and they initiate the plan. The men of Ai come rushing out with their king after Joshua. Then Ai is captured, verse 18 to 20. And then Ai's army and people are destroyed, [verses] 21 to 26. Now, people have problems with the people of Israel and God instructing them to wipe out all of the people of Israel. Notice in verse 21, when Joshua saw all Israel, "When Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city and that the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again and slew the men of Ai. And the other issued out of the city against them, so that in the midst of Israel, some on this side, some on that side. And they smote them so that they let none of them remain or escape. And the king of Ai, they took alive and they brought him unto Joshua." Verse 26, "Joshua drew not his hand back, therewith, he stretched out the spear and he utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai, only the cattle and the spoil of the city. Israel took as a prey unto themselves according to the word of the Lord which he commanded Joshua. And Joshua burned Ai...", verse 28, "...he made it a heap forever, even a desolation to this day. And the king of Ai, he hung on a tree until the evening as soon as the sun was down. Joshua commanded that they should take his carcass down from the tree, cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and rise therein, a great heap of stones that remains until this day."

This was utter, complete, and total victory. God wants you to have victory. Now, just a little footnote here. Some people are bothered by the idea that God would send Israel into the land of Canaan, against the Canaanites and the Amorites, to destroy them. And you say, "Well, how could God instruct His people to wipe out this entire city?" Isn't this a horrible thing? This God of the Old Testament, He's a God of wrath and a God of judgment. Well, let me say this. The same God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament. Same God that says, "For He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that who Whoever believes in him will never perish, but have..." what? —"Everlasting life."

Now let me remind you of a couple things. Number one, God had been patient with these people. In Genesis 15, God said, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." He uses a word picture here; their sin is filling up a cup. The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. And the inference is once it's full, God would judge them. You know how long God waited for that cup of iniquity to fill? 430 years. I'd say God is pretty patient. 430 years before God sent his people in to wipe out the Canaanites. We also need to remember that in Jericho, that Rahab the harlot was saved because she put her faith in God. We need to remember also the wickedness of the Canaanites and the Amorites. The inhabitants of the land were very, very wicked. They were involved in human sacrifice. They would take their little babies and they would offer them to their pagan gods as sacrifice. They were licentious, They were licentious, excuse me. They were

immoral, there was great perversion, there was great wickedness. God had waited and waited, so he's judging them for their sin. Now, I can't change this. I can't try to explain God, other than God is holy. God is righteous, and God judges sin. God is holy, God is righteous, and God does and will judge sin. Anything less is not the God of the Bible. We don't like to face that, we don't like to admit that, we don't like to believe that. God is love; yes, He is, but he's a holy God. Because God loves us, he hates sin because of its destructive effect.

So He's judging a wicked culture, the Canaanites. When the Israelites did not obey God and exterminate the Canaanites, the Canaanites polluted Israel. We need to remember that the people's cup, whenever it's full, God will judge. You ever heard the story of Noah and the flood? Guess what? God hates and judges sin. I've always wondered why we decorate little kids' rooms with Noah and the ark and the flood and the little cute animals. This was the story of judgment, and you got your crib and your little nose on the wall, it's like, "Good night, Johnny, sweet dreams." (Congregation Laughing) Wait a minute, God killed everybody. Oh kid freaks out when it starts to rain. That's the story of God's judgment. Only eight people, the entire world. By the way, I believe in a universal flood. People proponing it was just a localized flood. Then why didn't He just tell Noah to move to the next county? Why do you have to spend a hundred years building a boat if you could just move to the next town? I believe the whole world was destroyed. The Bible says that God looked a man's heart and he saw the wickedness and the evil of his heart was only evil continually. That's so close to our culture today. So close to our culture. I fear and tremble when I think about America's sin and I think that God is just and God is righteous and God is holy and God judges sin and when America's cup of iniquity is full there will be judgment come upon this nation. I know this week is Thanksgiving, and I thank God for the United States of America but I also weep for our country. We've thrown God's law behind our backs. We murder children in the womb. We spend billions and billions and billions of dollars on pornography and perversion. Billy Graham said, "If God does not judge America, he owes Sodom and Gomorrah an apology." This story reminds us that God is holy and that he hates and judges sin. When Jesus comes back in his second coming, He will put an end to sin and bring judgment.

The fourth thing, and lastly, verse 30 to 35. When we sin, when we fall, when we stumble, we need a new commitment. And this is the most important point I'll make in closing. We need a new commitment, new consecration. Follow with me, verse 30, "Then after the victory, Joshua did..." what? -"He built an altar." Priorities, priorities, priorities. It's not time to rush out, flush with victory, and takes the next city. He says, "It's time to stop and re-consecrate our life to God." "He built an altar into the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal. As Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses...", which is by the way Deuteronomy 27, "...an altar of the whole stone over which no man has lifted up any iron that they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the Lord and sacrifice peace offerings unto the Lord."

Why a natural offering with no stone carving it? Well, number one, God didn't want him to turn back to idolatry, and He didn't want that which symbolized sacrifice to have anything to do with the works of man's hands. That's the picture of the cross. Jesus died on the cross, our altar of

sacrifice, and we have nothing that we can do to save ourselves. Nothing in my hand I bring simply to thy cross I claim. And so you're not to take a tool to the altar, you're just a pile of the stones. Man has no place in this salvation.

Then notice also, it says that he wrote upon the stones, verse 32, "a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel." Now whether he did the whole Decalogue or the cursings and the blessings, I don't know, but they would take the ash from the fire of the altar, they would mix it with water, they'd make a paste, like a plaster, they would put it over the stone, and then they would write the law of God on the stone. "And all of Israel...", verse 33, "...and the elders and the officers and the judges, they stood on this side of the ark, and the side before the priests and the Levites, that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, as well as strangers, and he that was born among them, half the tribe over against Mount Gerizim, and half the tribe over against Mount Ebal, as Moses, the servant of the Lord, had commanded them before they should bless the people of Israel. And afterward...", verse 34, "...he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the cursings, before all that was written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel with the women, with the little ones, with strangers, which were conversant among them."

So here's what's happening. After the victory, when we are most vulnerable, Joshua says we're going to go 30 miles to the north to this valley of Shechem. We read about it in John's Gospel chapter four where Jesus met with a woman at the well of Jacob. Part of the ground that Jacob gave to his sons. He put a well there. But now we find in the Old Testament, they go up to Shechem and there's two mountains there. Those two mountains are Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. Mount Gerizim was the mountain that they would pronounce the blessings and Mount Ebal was the mountain they would pronounce the cursings. You go, "I don't understand, what is this?" In the Old Testament, God instructed them through Moses that in the center of the land, that the ark is in the center, the people are gathered in the center, there were these two mountains that they would gather. They would put half the tribe, six on one mountain, six on the other side of the mountain, and they would flow into the valley. It made a natural amphitheater. And then they would read the law of God from up on this mountain, and they would read the blessings and the cursings. That's what they were doing there on that mountain.

So three things, he built an altar, he wrote the law on stones, and then he read the law and the blessings and the cursings. Now I suggest to you that this applies to us as Christians. When you have failed, re-consecrate your life by building an altar, so to speak. The burnt offering symbolized total consecration, the peace offering symbolized fellowship. Burnt offering, totally consumed, lighted on fire. So what he's saying to us is when you fall and you fail, you need to re-consecrate your life to God. You know, your minds will do that anyway, and you don't own anything, nothing belongs to you. Nothing belongs to you. Your life is not your own, you're bought with a price. Do you know that you're not your own, you belong to God? You can't do whatever you want with your time, your talent, and your treasure. You belong to God. If you're married, your wife belongs to God, I don't want to hear any "amen's, praise God." (Congregation Laughing) First service, I'm like, "Amen, brother, my wife belongs to the Lord, he can have

her.” (Congregation Laughing) Your husband, he belongs to God. You know, praise the Lord for that. Your children, they belong to God. They're not yours. You go, “I have four children.” No you don't. You've been loaned four children. God let you borrow them for a very short time. They go so quickly. Your money, your health, your job, your home, everything belongs to God. So why wouldn't you put it all on the altar, light the fire and say to “God, take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord to be?” Take my silver, take my gold, not a mite will I withhold. You go, “I don't know about that preacher boy.” It all belongs to God.

So this altar that they built with this sacrifice of fire speaks of total consecration. Then they had a peace offering, verse 30, or 31, excuse me, the peace offering. And the peace offering symbolizes fellowship, communion with God. And then he wrote on the stones, verse 32 to 33, God has written his law upon the fleshly tablets of our heart. He doesn't write it on stones; He writes it on our heart. Only the Spirit of God can make you like Jesus and bring victory to your life. Only the Spirit of God working through the Word of God can you find victory in your life.

Then the third thing is that they read the law. From Mount Ebal, the cursings; from Mount Gerizim, the blessings. Each time the curse was read or the blessing was read, guess what the people did? They yelled out, “amen,” amen. That's all they said was “amen,” which means “so be it,” so be it, so be it. I wonder when you come to church on Sunday and you hear God's word, do you say amen, amen? Or do you say too long, too long, too long? (Congregation Laughing) I always know I'm going too long when people are hitting their watch and going like this and going, “Can't believe he's still going.” I love it that we have in this church, God is giving us such a hunger for His word. People are coming to Revival because they want to hear the Bible. What else is a church supposed to do? We're here to preach the word and read it. This is why I say, bring your Bible, open your Bible, follow me in your Bible. I want you to see it, I want you to hear it, and I want you to say amen, amen, amen. Don't just come on Sunday here, the word of God, and then leave as though nothing happened. I want you to have a new encounter, a new experience. I want you to leave here today and say, “I'm going to be a better husband. I'm going to re-consecrate my life to God. I'm going to love my wife, as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it. I'm going to be a supportive, loving wife. I'm going to submit to my husband. I'm going to be an obedient child. I'm going to walk in holiness. I'm going to resist sin. I'm not going to think those thoughts anymore. I'm not going to do those acts anymore. God, I'm going to consecrate my life to you, and then you're going to walk in victory.” God's new strategy. How wonderful it is that God picks us up, dust us off, forgives us, and puts us on the path of obedience.

Now in conclusion, I will say this, one defeat or failure does not mean the end of success. Don't be discouraged. You say, “Well, Pastor John, you can't realize [how] all weak I am.” Yes, I can. God knows our frame, He understands that we are but dust. We're all weak. But Paul said, “When I'm weak, then I can become strong.” God can give you victory over a habit, over a temptation, over an attitude, over, you know, being irritable and crabby and just a whole spectrum with things that you're dealing with. God can give you victory over [it]. But you need to go back to the Bible, you need to hear His voice, you need to re-consecrate your life and walk in obedience to the things of God. A new victory and a new sense of His presence will come into

your life. God will forgive you, restore you, and use you once again. Never permit past sin or failure to rob you of present victory. Begin anew with God's word, seek God's strategy or plan and purpose for your life, and God will bring a new victory. And after the victory, after the victory, when you are most vulnerable, reconsecrate your life, build an altar, build an altar, and dedicate your life completely to God.