

Deuteronomy 9:1-10:11

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 July 2012

Preacher: Greg Hendrickson

[0 : 0 0] Lord to wrath. And when the Lord sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying, Go up and take possession of the land I've given you, then you rebelled against the commandment of the Lord and did not believe him or obey his voice. You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you. So I lay prostrate before the Lord for these 40 days and 40 nights, because the Lord had said he would destroy you. And I pray to the Lord, O Lord God, do not destroy your people and your heritage, whom you have redeemed through your greatness, whom you have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Do not regard the stubbornness of this people or their wickedness or their sin, lest the land which you brought us from say the Lord, because the Lord was not able to bring them into the land that he had promised them. And because he hated them, he brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness. For they are your people, your heritage, whom you brought out by your great power and by your outstretched arm. At that time, the Lord said to me, cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first and come up to me on the mountain and make an ark of wood. And I will write on the tablets, the words that were on the first tablets that you broke and you shall put them in the ark. So I made an ark of acacia wood and cut two tablets of stone like the first and went up the mountain with the two tablets in my hand. And he wrote on the tablets in the same writing as before the 10 commandments that the Lord had spoken to you on the mountain, out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly. And the Lord gave them to me.

Then I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets in the ark that I had made. And there they are, as the Lord commanded me. The people of Israel journeyed from Beroth-Ben-I-Jachon to Moserah. Then Aaron died, and there he was buried. And his son Eliezer ministered as priest in his place. From there they journeyed to Gudgoda, and from Gudgoda to Jothbatha, a land with brooks of water. At that time, the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord, to minister to him and bless in his name to this day.

Therefore, Levi has no portion or inheritance with his brothers. The Lord is his inheritance, as the Lord your God said to him. I myself stayed on the mountain as of the first time, forty days and forty nights. And the Lord listened to me that time also. The Lord was unwilling to destroy you. And the Lord said to me, Arise, go on your journey as the head of the people, so that they may go in and possess the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

Let's pray. O Lord, we thank you for these words that Moses spoke to the people of Israel, and we pray that you would speak to us and that we might hear and respond to you. In Jesus' name, amen.

Today's passage, Moses prepares the people for the future by recounting their failures in the past. Now, initially, that might seem rather odd, because most of us try to avoid dealing with failure or thinking about our failures. In our culture, we glorify success and achievement. If you're a motivational speaker, you probably don't go to the group that you're trying to motivate and begin by telling them all the ways they've failed in the past. And in the ancient world, it was no different.

[3 : 09] Most of the time, ancient biographies of great leaders, ancient histories of great nations, ancient speeches written to motivate armies, represented them as heroic, great, and glorious.

In the 6th century AD, the historian Procopius wrote an eight-volume history of the military achievements of Emperor Justinian and the Byzantine Empire. And he also wrote a lengthy speech praising the emperor for his extensive building projects. But he wrote another book that he didn't publish and that actually was lost or misplaced for a thousand years called *The Secret History*, where he wrote about the failings that he saw in the emperor and his wife and the court, all the things that he couldn't publish in his public history, in his public writings.

Now, if you begin reading the Bible, you'll notice that the Bible is a lot different from a typical ancient history. The Bible does not overlook or hide or explain away the flaws of its main characters. In fact, today's passage, Moses spends almost the whole chapter recounting Israel's history of moral and spiritual failure. There's no secret history that's been lost.

It's all right here for anyone to see. So what do we learn from Moses' speech about Israel's failure? Well, we'll see three things today. The first thing that we'll see is that God wants us to face up to our failures. Verses 4 to 6, Moses says three times, it's not because of your righteousness that God's taking you into the land. Now, we've seen a similar theme the last two chapters. Chapter 7, Moses said, it's not because you're bigger or stronger than other nations that God loves you.

Chapter 8, he says, when you enter the land and you prosper, it's not because of your power or your effort. Simply a gift from God. And here Moses said, you know, it's not because you're morally superior either. It's not because of your righteousness either. Verse 4, verse 5, and verse 6, Moses says three times, it's not because of your righteousness. And then Moses uses three phrases to elaborate on the people's unrighteousness. Verse 6, he says, you're a stubborn people. Verse 7, he says, you provoke the Lord to wrath. Moses has already said the Lord is slow to anger and abounding in love. And yet they provoked him to anger by their persistent idolatry. Verse 8, he says, from the day you came out of Egypt, you've been rebellious against the Lord. And Moses continues, verses 8 through 24, give five examples of Israel's rebellion, their moral and spiritual failure. Now, the majority of this section, verses 8 through 21, is focused around one particular incident, the golden calf. Now, that story is described in fuller detail in Exodus. If you read Exodus 32, 33, and 34, it gives sort of a full account of that story. So, Moses isn't giving a play-by-play account. He's simply pointing to a couple things that happened during that incident and highlighting a few key themes. And in particular, he's pointing out how quickly the people turned away from the Lord. So, according to

[6 : 28] Exodus, the people entered into covenant with God at Mount Sinai. They had seen God's presence descend on the mountain in smoke and fire. Moses had gone up the mountain to receive the law, the Ten Commandments, along with the elders of Israel. He had come back down and spoken them to the people. And the people said, we promise to obey. And then Moses went back up the mountain to receive the written copies of the covenant. And he was up there for 40 days and 40 nights. But during that 40-day period, before Moses came back down, the people of Israel went ahead and built a golden calf.

So, verse 12 says, they've turned aside quickly out of the way I commanded them. Now, you might ask, why in the world did they build a golden calf? And what's the big deal about a metal image? Well, in the ancient world, almost every other god was represented by some kind of physical object, some kind of image. And actually, the calf was seen as a symbol of strength and fertility. So, the Canaanite gods, El or Baal, were sometimes represented by calves. So, in the people's minds, it would make perfect sense. Well, every other god around us has an image, and why don't we make a nice, golden, ornate, strong image for our god? Of course, the problem was, God had explicitly told them in the first and second commandments not to do that. He had explicitly said, don't make a carved image and bow down to it. Don't make an image to represent me, because I'm the creator of all things. I've made everything. Now, most likely, the Israelites didn't think that they were constructing a different god and abandoning the worship of Yahweh. So, in Exodus 32, the people say to each other, what they say is, they say, Moses brought us out of Egypt, but who knows where he's gone? He's been up on the mountain for a month already, and no signs of coming down. Who knows how long he's going to be up there? We need something that we can see with our eyes and touch with our hands that will help us connect to God. They realized that Moses had been, in a way, their connection to God, but he was up on the mountain. And so, they thought, we need something. We need something that we can see and touch that will help us feel connected to God. And so, they build the golden calf. And when Aaron builds the golden calf, he says, tomorrow, we're going to celebrate a festival to the Lord.

And so, they dance around the golden calf. The people deceive themselves into thinking that they were drawing close to God, when in fact, they had turned aside from his clear command.

And the second commandment, where he says, you shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. It's a little bit like God and the people of Israel got married, and within the first month of their marriage, Israel was already having an affair. That's what the golden calf incident was like. It was the most outrageous example of their many failures.

Now, I wonder, are there places where you failed as you in the past? Maybe you've been part of a marriage that failed. You never thought it would be yours, but it did. Or maybe you're still in a marriage, but it's far from what you expected, hoped, and know it ought to be. Maybe you failed as a parent. You wished that you would raise your kids differently. And you look back on years that you can never relive. Maybe you've been part of a church or a ministry that failed. Twenty years ago, this congregation had a split in 1994, 18 years ago. And it split due to a variety of relational conflicts and unwise decisions. And five years later, this church almost died.

[10:35] Maybe you failed as a Christian. Maybe you got stuck in a pattern of habitual sin. Maybe you've broken relationships because of anger or bitterness or harsh words.

Whatever your failure might be, how do you deal with that? Well, most of the time, we respond to failure by either denying it or despairing.

Now, denial is probably the most common response. And it takes a lot of different forms. So I've thought of four different forms. Maybe there are more. But I think there are at least four different forms of denial. We can ignore. We can try to ignore or hide or just forget our failures. Just not talk about them. Try to stop remembering them and not think about them.

But in verse 7, God says to the people, remember and do not forget how you provoke the Lord to wrath in the wilderness. Or the second thing, second way we can deny our failures, we can blame someone else.

Or some, like Adam in the Garden of Eden, when God comes to him and says, what happened here? And he says, the woman that you gave to me, she made me do it. Of course, God doesn't accept that explanation. And Eve says, the serpent, the serpent made me do it.

[11 : 59] Or if we don't blame our failure on someone else, we might compare ourselves to someone else who seems worse than us. Now, in the case of the Israelites, they were particularly inclined to compare themselves to the Canaanites, whom they were about to drive out. Now, if you have questions about the whole issue of Israel driving out the Canaanites, Pastor Matt addressed that two weeks ago in his sermon. We also have an article on the back table by Tremper Longman. We made it available two weeks ago, but we ran out of copies. So if you didn't get one then, or if you have questions about this issue, how that relates to God's justice, that's something you can read for your own, that may be helpful to you. But in verse 5, God says the Canaanites were wicked. And he says it was because of their wickedness that he was bringing his judgment upon them. In God's view, they had reached a point of no return. And God was sending Israel to execute his final and destructive judgment on them. Now, the Canaanites worshipped idols. Some of them even sacrificed their children to idols. God could have gone on and on about the wickedness of the Canaanites, but actually he doesn't. Because you know why? The people of Israel already knew and they already believed that the Canaanites were wicked. But the book of Deuteronomy spends far more time talking about

Israel's wickedness than the Canaanites. And in fact, this chapter refers to Israel and the Canaanites using almost exactly the same terms. Verse 5 talks about the wickedness of the Canaanites.

Verse 27 talks about the wickedness of Israel. Verse 3, God says he'll destroy the Canaanites. And in verse 8, 19, and 20, God says he was angry enough with Israel to destroy them.

See, the Israelites could correctly identify the sin of other people, but they were blind to their own sin, to their own failure, to their own potential to follow in the same destructive ways.

And you know, it can be the very same way with us. It's possible to get so worked up about evil that you see in the world around us. The evil, the injustice, the wickedness of the culture that we live in, that we can become blind to the evil and injustice and wickedness in our own hearts.

[14 : 25] We can be quick to speak out against the sins of people outside the church, but slow to examine our own hearts and own up to our own failures. And yet the pattern in Scripture is the opposite.

Some of the prophets in the Old Testament do speak to other nations and call other nations to repent, but they almost always start with the people of Israel, with God's own people.

And in the New Testament, 1 Peter 4 says it's time for judgment to begin with the household of God, with the family of God. If we long to see a spiritual renewal in our city, in our nation, in our world, it will begin with us as the church, facing our own failures, coming before God in humble repentance and prayer, calling on Him to renew us and revive us.

So we can be in denial by ignoring, by blaming, by comparing, or finally by minimizing. This is maybe the most common way we do things.

We say, well, yes, I failed, but it was just a one-time failure. That action doesn't actually reflect who I really am. But Moses points out the golden calf was not just a one-time failure.

[15 : 50] It reflected a pattern. Verses 22 through 24, Moses refers to four other events in Israel's history. Tabera, which is in Numbers 11, 1 through 3, where they complained against the Lord.

Masa, Exodus 17, where they tested God. Kibro Thetava, literally that word means graves of craving, where they craved meat.

They demanded meat, and God gave them meat, but He also sent them a plague. And finally, Cetus Barnea, Numbers 13 and 14, where they refused to follow God's command to go up into the land.

Moses says in verse 27, the people's failures revealed their stubbornness, their wickedness, and their sin. And each of those three words actually gives us a picture of what's going on in their hearts and even in ours.

The word stubbornness literally means stiff of neck, like a defiant child who refuses to turn his head in order to listen to his parents. Or like an ox that refuses to accept a yoke placed on its neck by its owner, that refuses to cooperate with its owner's wishes.

[17 : 05] Wickedness. Wickedness is a legal term. Most often in Scripture, it's opposed to righteousness. And so if righteousness means being in right standing with God, wickedness is the opposite. Being hostile or opposed to God.

Being guilty before God. And finally, sin. And the image of this word sin is of missing the mark. Falling short of a goal.

Missing the way. According to the Bible, everything that we do and say flows in some way from our heart. Jesus said out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

And Jesus also said from within, out of the heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

All these evil things come from within. So God doesn't let us to say it was just a one-time lapse and doesn't reflect anything about my true character.

[18 : 09] Now last week we talked about adversity and prosperity. We talked about how they can be a test. They can show us what's in our heart. But that's the point. They show us what's in our heart. You know, adversity can never force you to sin.

In itself, your circumstances can never compel you to turn against God. They will only bring out the rebellion and wickedness and sin that's in all of our hearts.

In the Bible, God insists that we face our failures, that we not be in denial, because He wants us to have no false illusions about ourselves. Now the problem is, if we don't deny our failure, we almost immediately fall into despair.

Because we can't handle the reality of our failure. And despair can just become a downward spiral into isolation and shame and self-condemnation and further failure.

So God tells us, face up to our failures. But the good news is, He also gives us a way beyond them.

[19 : 24] The second thing that we see in this passage is that God calls us to look up to our advocate. God had appointed Moses to be Israel's advocate.

God said, to represent all of them in His own person. So when the people of Israel were in Egypt, God sent Moses. He said, go to Pharaoh and tell Pharaoh, let my people go.

You represent the people and go before Pharaoh and proclaim that I'm bringing them out. When the people left Egypt, God appointed Moses to guide them and lead them and be their shepherd through the wilderness.

And then when they came to Mount Sinai or Mount Horeb, as it's called here, God summoned Moses to go up the mountain as the representative or the advocate of the people and to receive the covenant, to receive the Ten Commandments, to receive the tablets of the covenant on their behalf.

That's what Moses refers to in verses 9 through 11, how he went up the mountain on their behalf as their advocate. And true to his calling, when the people of Israel made the golden calf and provoked God to anger, Moses continued to stand for them as their advocate.

[20 : 37] Verses 12 through 14. It's an interesting set of verses. God speaks to Moses as if he's disowned the people and as if he's decided to wipe them out. God says, your people, whom you brought out of Egypt.

He doesn't even say my people, who I brought out of Egypt. He says, your people, Moses. You brought them out of Egypt. They've turned away. Leave me alone so that I can destroy them and wipe them out.

And I'll make of you a nation greater and mightier than they. So Moses has a choice. Now, of course, if God had decided to destroy them, he actually didn't have to consult Moses at all.

So even the fact that God says something to Moses about it, like God said something to Abraham about Sodom and Gomorrah back in Genesis 18, God's inviting Moses just as he invited Abraham to respond.

But here, Moses has a choice. He can do one of two things. Moses, he can leave the people alone, and God will destroy the people, and then he'll start from scratch with Moses and make a bigger and greater nation.

[21 : 48] So the people get what they deserve, and for Moses, it's all gain and no pain. But Moses doesn't choose that option. Moses identifies himself with the people of Israel who had broken God's covenant and provoked God's righteous anger.

And it's a painful option. Moses identified with his people at a cost. Look at what Moses does, verse 18. He says, Then I lay prostrate before the Lord as before, forty days and forty nights.

I neither ate bread nor drank water because of all the sin you had committed. He says the same thing in verse 25. Now, Moses had previously been up on the mountain forty days and forty nights receiving the law.

But during that time, the people had failed. That's when they made the golden calf. And so Moses goes up on the mountain again. And he goes up on the mountain as their advocate and representative, and he relives those forty days.

Those forty days where the people had failed, he goes up on the mountain and he fasts, he lays prostrate before the Lord, pleading with the Lord, interceding for the people.

[23 : 14] Moses does it all over again, but he does it right. And in a symbolic way, he offers his obedience to God as their advocate and representative in place of their disobedience, in a symbolic way.

And he intercedes for the people. He prays for them. Look at his prayer, verse 26 through 29. It's Moses' prayer. Now notice what Moses says.

Moses doesn't make excuses for the people's failure. He doesn't deny it in any way. And he doesn't say, well, there were a few other times that we were faithful to God, so, you know, can you balance it out?

Because he knows that's a ridiculous argument before God. God deserves our obedience 100% of the time. So there's no way that we can balance out our disobedience with obedience at another time.

And he doesn't say, well, we promise to obey you in the future. We promise to do better next time. Will you take our promise of future obedience into consideration?

- [24 : 16] He doesn't even, he doesn't say that because that also doesn't work either, because God deserves 100% of your obedience, not only in the past, but also in the future. Moses prays for the people, and he doesn't appeal to anything in the people at all.

He simply appeals to God's nature, and God's character, and God's promise. So look at what he says, verse 26 and verse 29. He says, God, you've already done so much for your people.

You've delivered them from slavery in Egypt. Don't abandon them now. Verse 27, he says, God, you've already promised so much to your people.

You've promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their descendants would inherit this land. You've promised so much. Would you fulfill your promise? In verse 28, he says, God, your reputation, your reputation is at stake in the world.

If it seems that you're unable to bring the people into the land that you promised them, that wouldn't reflect your character.

- [25 : 20] See, Moses is a faithful advocate on behalf of the people of Israel because he relies completely on God's grace and God's promise. He's a perfect advocate for the people because he doesn't depend on them at all.

And God listens to Moses' prayer. Three times. Verse 19, verse 20, chapter 10, verse 10. It says, God listened to Moses' prayer and he did not destroy the people.

And in this instance, Moses was a great advocate on Israel's behalf. But there's another advocate who's even greater than Moses. Because, you know, Moses is dead right now.

He can't be your advocate. But 1 John, chapter 2, verse 1 and 2 says this. If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous one.

He is the propitiation, the atoning sacrifice for our sins. And very much like Moses, and even more than that, Jesus Christ had a choice.

- [26 : 28] Jesus could have remained in heaven and left us to perish in our sin as we deserved. But instead, he chose the painful option of identifying himself with us who had broken God's, who had broken our promises to God, who deserved God's righteous judgment.

Jesus came to earth and fully identified with us. He lived a fully human life, the life that we ought to have lived, a life of perfect, faithful obedience.

He was born, He grew, He learned, He even went into the desert for 40 days and 40 nights. He did it all over again, but He did it right.

And on the cross, He offered Himself as a perfect and atoning sacrifice so that God's righteous anger against our sin would be turned away and so that the covenant relationship with God that we had broken could be renewed.

You know, if you haven't already done so, come to Jesus and take Him as your advocate today. Bring all your failure, all your rebellion, all your sin, all your brokenness to the foot of the cross.

- [27 : 43] Lay it all down at His feet and receive instead from Him His forgiveness, His life, His righteousness, a new identity and a new relationship with God.

Jesus Christ is the perfect advocate. Hebrews 7 says, Jesus holds His person, Jesus lives forever and so He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him because He always lives to make intercession for them.

He always lives as our advocate. He stands at the right hand of the Father interceding for everyone who looks to Him and believes in Him.

So if you're a Christian today, if you believe in Jesus, Jesus Christ is pleading your case this very moment and every moment before God the Father. And Jesus is a perfect advocate because He doesn't depend on you at all.

His advocacy for you does not wax and wane depending on your emotional state, your spiritual state, how things are going in your life, how many minutes you prayed this morning or didn't even pray at all.

[28 : 58] Jesus stands as your advocate through His perfect obedience and His atoning sacrifice. He is praying for you now.

Perhaps He is praying something like this as Moses did for Israel, saying, Father, You've already done so much. For Anthony, You've delivered him from bondage to sin.

Continue to lead him and strengthen him. Father, You've already promised so much to Kelly. Open her eyes that she would treasure Your promises today. Father, Your reputation in the world is at stake.

Provide mercifully for Your people at Trinity Baptist Church. Jesus is praying, interceding for every one of His people before God the Father. Think about that, that Jesus is praying to God the Father for you today and holding you before God the Father in His love as your perfect advocate.

And Jesus invites you to come before Him and pray to Him and pray to God the Father for whatever you may need. Hebrews says, Yes, we do not have a high priest, a representative, an advocate who is unable to sympathize with us, but one who is in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet was without sin.

[30 : 21] And so let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Do you confidently draw near to God the Father, to the throne room of heaven, to the King of heaven on the basis of Jesus Christ as your advocate?

Is that what your prayer life is like? Or is your prayer life more like fearfully drawing near to a volatile boss? Or shiftily approaching a bargaining table, trying to find some reason or something that you can promise to God to try to convince him to do something that you want, or just a silent distance?

God calls us to face our failure, but to look to Jesus as your advocate. And when you look to Jesus as your advocate, you can draw near with confidence to God's throne of grace.

Pray for yourself. Pray for others. Not because of how good you've been or how good you promised to be, but solely and simply on the basis of God himself, his character, his glory, his promise.

Come to God, your Father, and say, Father, you have already done so much for me. You've redeemed me. You've shown your power in my life so much already.

[31 : 48] Help me with what I need today, even though my life feels overwhelming. Say, Father, you've already promised so much to your people.

You've been faithful to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the people of Israel and the church throughout the ages. Renew your work in our day. Bring renewal to our church and our city.

Face your failures. Look up to your advocate. And finally, the third thing that we see is rise up and go. This section of Moses' speech both begins and ends with an exhortation to go in and possess the land.

Chapter 9, verse 1 through 3, and chapter 10, verse 11. At the end, Moses says, the Lord said to Moses, arise and go on. Go on your journey so that the people may go in and possess the land.

What does it look like to rise up and go? Having faced our failures and looking to Jesus as our advocate. Well, it means instead of living in denial that we face our failures.

[32 : 54] And instead of ignoring or hiding our failures, we can be open about them. We're free to acknowledge our failures because they don't define us anymore.

If Jesus Christ is your advocate, even your worst failure, your golden calf does not define you anymore. 1 John chapter 1, verse 8 and 9 says this, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

But if we confess our sin, God is faithful and just to forgive us and to purify us from all unrighteousness. You see, confession is the opposite of denial.

Now, confession is agreeing with God about our failure and agreeing that Jesus Christ has stood in the very place where we failed and that His sacrifice has covered all our failure and all our sin.

And so we don't have to hide anymore. We don't have to be overwhelmed by shame and guilt. You know, that's what the church is supposed to be, is a community where you don't have to hide, where we can be open and vulnerable with one another without the fear of being rejected because we all stand together on level ground at the foot of the cross.

[34 : 17] Our identity is in Christ and not in our failure and not in our success. And so we don't have to hide from God. And the more we understand that as a community, the more we'll live this out.

We don't have to hide from God. We don't have to hide from each other. So instead of ignoring openness, second, instead of blaming our past failures on something or someone else, we take responsibility for our part.

Now you are not responsible for what someone else said or did to you. But you are responsible for how you responded or what you said or what you thought or what you did to them.

So if you've wronged someone, even if they've wronged you more than you wronged them, go to them and apologize and take responsibility for your part in the matter.

Now even if you do that, it may take time for broken relationships to heal. God forgives more quickly than people do. And part of the process of restoration is learning to be patient with others and extend God's grace to them as He has extended His grace to you.

[35 : 28] Instead of ignoring openness, instead of blaming, taking responsibility, third, instead of comparing, finding security in Christ.

Instead of comparing, why do we compare ourselves to other people? Well, to make ourselves feel better, right? Because we can look at someone else who's worse than us and feel like we're all right. But instead of doing that, finding our security and our confidence and our affirmation and our justification in Christ alone.

You know, if you're always comparing yourself to other people, you'll never be able to help them. But if you faced your failures and found mercy in Christ, you can help other people face theirs with grace and truth.

Fourth, instead of minimizing our past failures as one time lapses, we deal with the heart issue at the root of them. You know, it's not enough to just leave your failure in the past or sometimes even to just apologize for the specific thing you said or did.

God, in His grace, wants to go deeper. It says, if we confess our sins, He will forgive us and purify us from all unrighteousness. God wants to get to the root issue, to expose and root out the idols in our heart that cause us to fail in the first place.

[36 : 58] Pride, or fear of other people, or discontentment, or whatever it might be that it was at the root of your past failure. Christ died so that we could be cleansed from all unrighteousness.

And finally, it means instead of being paralyzed by despair or only looking backward in regret, that we look forward to the future, confident in Christ's promise.

We read earlier about Peter's denial and restoration. Peter's greatest failure, the worst night of his life.

And yet that was the night when Jesus stood for him. And that very next day, Jesus died on the cross in Peter's place. Now when Jesus restored Peter, He brought him to face his failure.

He asked him those three painful questions. Peter, do you love me? Peter, do you love me? Peter, do you love me? And it says Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him a third time.

[38 : 09] Sometimes the process of facing our failures is painful. But God wants to restore us. You see, Jesus didn't end with simply looking back at Peter's failure.

Jesus said, feed my sheep and follow me. And He even spoke about how Peter would give his life for Jesus as a martyr. One day.

God brings us to face our failure, but He does not want to leave us there. He does not want us to stay there. He humbles us so that we will go forth and follow Him with no illusions about ourselves, but with every confidence in Him.

So like Jacob, after he had wrestled with God, you may walk with a limp. Like Paul, you may feel the thorn in your flesh and know every day that God's strength is only made perfect in your weakness.

Or like Peter, the story of the worst night of your life may be written for all to see, and yet God's grace is greater. God's grace is greater than our worst failure.

[39 : 22] His restoration is more powerful than our deepest sin. From what I've learned, one of the turning points in the history of this church was a prayer meeting in October 1999 where the remaining members who had been left after the split confessed their past failures and sought to be reconciled to one another and to bring things before God.

It was five years after the church had split, and during those five years the church had been crippled by its past failure and the unhealthy patterns that had led up to it. But that time of prayer and confession led to much healing, and it paved the way for the church to move on because just one month later God provided a new pastor for this church.

And Trinity went from being a church that was literally a day away from deciding to close its doors to a church that's alive and growing and proclaiming the transforming power and the good news of Jesus Christ to New Haven.

And brothers and sisters, there's still a journey ahead of us. I don't know exactly where it's going to go, but I hope you come along for the ride because I know that we have an advocate and that we have a good shepherd, Jesus Christ, who's leading us and who's been faithful to us in the past despite our failures and who will lead us and provide for us as we go into the future.

So rise up and go with no illusions about ourselves, but with every confidence in Jesus Christ, your advocate. let's pray.

[41 : 15] Father, we thank you for your promises. We thank you that you choose us and that you love us, not because we're righteous, not even because of what we promise to do in the future, but simply because of your grace.

We thank you for this picture and this passage of Jesus Christ, our perfect advocate. Lord, I pray that you would give us the courage in him to face our failures and our unrighteousness and that we would bring them to the cross and they're at the cross and as we see you died for our sins, you were buried and you rose from the dead, that we might stand in newness of life, that we might rise up and go, that we might be the people that you have called us to be here in this church and here in this city.

We pray this in Jesus' name and for his glory. Amen.