

## Our Deepest Failures

We all have deep failures that we regret. We've gone our own way and done our own thing. We've sinned against God in thought, word, or deed. When we experience such failure, we are tempted at times to go in one of two opposite directions. Sometimes we resolve never to fail again. "God, from now on I'm going to prove to you that I'm worthy of your love." And sometimes we go the opposite direction. We give up. "What's the point! I'll never get it right." The passage we are looking at today suggests that when we've failed God in some deep way there is another option. Instead of a self-focused response to our failure, there is a God-focused response that is possible. Let's see what we can learn from Peter's deepest failure.

### Read Luke 22:31-34

1. What spiritual reality did Jesus reveal to Peter?
2. What words of encouragement does Jesus speak to Peter?
3. What did Peter truly not understand about himself?

### Read Luke 22:54-62

4. After Jesus is arrested Peter stays close to see what will happen. How would you describe Peter in this passage? How would you describe his failure?
5. What do you think Peter was thinking and feeling when he heard the rooster crow and became aware that Jesus was looking at him?
6. How might Jesus' words of encouragement in verses 31-32 been important for Peter after his denials?

7. Over the past several weeks we have been studying the early chapters of Acts. In what ways does Acts reveal that Jesus' prayer for Peter came to fruition?

Steve said:

Do you think Peter's experience was the exception or the norm? In other words, do you think that Satan wants to take you down (destroy your faith), but that Jesus knows your heart better than you do and that he has prayed for you that your faith may not fail. . . and that after you turn back to God, you (like Peter) will be useful to God to do significant things in this world? When you read through the Bible, you find many examples of people who repent after their deepest failures and find the grace of God to be extravagant:

- Remember the guy who made a golden calf in the wilderness that the children of Israel worshiped (while Moses was on the mountain getting the Ten Commandments)? He became the very first High Priest who led the people in worship.
- David sinned in spectacular ways (adultery and murder) and yet is forever known as "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14).

Peter's experience wasn't the rare exception. It is the norm. The details of Peter's experience are unique; but the same factors at play in Peter's failure and restoration are at play in the life of every believer.

8. What do you think about this idea that Peter's experience wasn't the rare exception, but the norm that is at play in every believer's life?

9. Read Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34; 1 John 1:5-10. What do these reveal about God's extravagant grace in our lives?

Steve said:

Some of you, no doubt, are followers of Jesus, but you're in the middle of your deepest failure. You are like Peter sitting around the fire in that courtyard; in some way you are denying Jesus. There is some aspect of Jesus' teaching that you're abandoning. Satan is whispering lies into your ears and he is sifting you like wheat. You haven't yet decided what you are going to do. . . Learn from Peter! Make eye-contact with Jesus and see his compassion. Know that he has prayed for you; you're not surprising him by what you've done. I've got a friend who's convinced me over the past year or so that God is never disappointed in us. He's grieved by our sin, but not disappointed. If you're disappointed in someone it's because you thought they were one thing but it turns out they are another; that never happens with God because he never misunderstands who we are. He knows us perfectly and loves us anyway.

10. When you find yourself in a place of failure, what might it look like to "make eye contact with Jesus" and see his compassion?