**St Martins C3 – November 26, 2023**

**Fear Not – Overcoming the fear of failure**

**Sermon Summary:**

Many of us can develop a fear of failure through believing that wemust do certain things well or meet certain standards to feel good about ourselves. We internally connect our performance with our self-worth. We do this because we want to feel acceptable or worthy. We think that when we fail, others will think we are unworthy or unacceptable, which feels horrible, so we slip into fearing failure, to avoid that unacceptable feeling.

**Internalising our worth in Christ, sets us free from the fear of failure.**

**Read: Ephesians 1:4-5**

God chose you. The fact that the God of the universe chooses you is one of the first things in regard to our worth we need to hear.

**Read: Romans 8:14-17**

In Christ, God adopts you into His family. In God’s family we inherit the life God has for us. Not because of any worthiness that we naturally have, but because of Christ’s worthiness. All that we will ever receive from God, is because of God’s grace towards us. We are not worthy in ourselves, but with Christ, He has made us worthy.

**Read: Ephesians 2:1-10**

None of us deserved the inheritance that God has for us. None of us receive what God has for us through our good performance. Everything we will ever receive from God is a gift of grace. For us to enter into that life, we need to repent of living our way and begin living God’s way.

**Through what Christ did on the cross, we are forgiven from our unworthiness due to our sin and find our real worth in the righteousness of Christ, which He imparts into us, as we put our trust in Him.**

What is driving the fear of failure in your life, is your need to feel worthy. However, when we get the revelation that God has already made us worthy through Christ, then we simply have no reason to fear failure anymore. By God’s grace, Christ has made us acceptable to God.If God approves of us, the approval of others pales into insignificance.

**Your worth is based on God’s grace, not your performance.**

You are important, not because of what you contribute, but because of who God created you to be. When we deeply internalise the truth of who God says we are, it will set us free from the fear of failure.

When we are free from failure, we won’t fear failure anymore. We will simply treat failure as a learning experience, rather than a condemning experience. When we are free for fearing failure, we are also free to receive God’s love for us. We receive God’s love and free ourselves from fear, when we surrender our fear to Christ, then ask God to reveal to us, who we truly are with Him.

**Suggested questions for Connect Group discussion:**

*When you fail at something, do you see it as a learning experience or a condemning experience?*

*Why are we so fixated on performance in our western culture?*

*Which Biblical truths about your identity as a child of God that we covered on Sunday resonated with you?*

*How might the reality of your identity in Christ help you overcome your fear of failure?*

*What might, being free from the fear of failure, look like for you?*

Songs we sang on Sunday:

* King of Glory
* God so loved
* Son of suffering
* Jesus you alone
* Holy ground

**Monday’s Devotion – Repentance is powerful**

**1 John 1:8-9**

*If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth.**But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.*

This week we are going to explore how failing at something can benefit us. None of us like failure, however, our response to a failure can be very beneficial to us.

The first thing the Bible encourages us to do when we fail, is to repent. Obviously, we don’t need to repent of something that isn’t sinful, but when we sin, repentance is powerful. When we own up to our sin and bring it to Christ, we discover the forgiving cleansing power of God.

Notice the steps of repentance mentioned in these verses:

1. Own up to your failure. Don’t try and hide your sin or manage your sin, own up to it.
2. Confess our sin. Come before God and admit to Him how you have failed God. We need to acknowledge the seriousness of our sin. We haven’t only done something wrong; we have offended the God who loves us. Our heart needs to be centred on God’s will and purposes again.
3. The confidence we have is that God is consistent in His character and His grace towards us. He will forgive us. He will remove sin from our lives and make us holy again.

Failure isn’t fatal. God’s grace and forgiveness is available for all.

**Tuesday’s Devotion – Failures keep us humble**

**Hebrews 3:8**

*Do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness.*

**James 4:6**

*God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble.*

Imagine how proud we would get if we didn’t fail at anything. The sinful side of our nature leans towards pride. We want to look good in front of others. We look to our achievements to feel better about ourselves.

We easily forget how destructive pride can be. We focus all our attention on ourselves and our attention has been turned away from God. God notices this and works against us, rather than for us, which is not a place where we want to be.

So, let us learn from the prideful mistakes of others, rather than having to learn the lesson for ourselves. Let us learn from Israel’s rebellion in the wilderness and stay humble and learn from our failures.

Reflecting on our failures is helpful, when we are willing to learn from our failures. However, we will only learn from our failures, if we have a humble attitude. So, are you willing to learn from God and others. Do you approach a critique with humility or with pride? Keep in mind that God blesses those who are humble.

**Wednesday’s Devotion – Helpful feedback builds character**

**James 1:2-4**

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.**Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

At the time, I hate failing. However, one of the things that helps me through it is the knowledge that I will be a better person in the future if I learn something from the experience.

James takes this thought one step further and encourages us to see the joy in the trials of failure that we face. That sounds a bit crazy until he explains the reason that we can find joy in the trials we face.

One of the great purposes of the life we are living now, is for God to prepare us to partner with Him in the present as well as the future. For that partnership to be effective, Christlike character needs to be formed in us. That character formation happens as we learn from the various trials that we go through. So, how do we do that?

In regard to failure, the key way we grow through failure, is to treat any failure as helpful feedback. It isn’t about an assessment on you as a person, but feedback on an area of your life you could improve on. Imagine if we took some time and reflected on how we could improve every time we failed. We might just become, mature and complete, not lacking in anything.

**Thursday’s Devotion – His purpose are greater**

**Proverbs 3:5-8**

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

We often make our failures bigger than they need to be. We think it is the end of the world when we do something dumb. However, we need to keep in mind that God has our lives in His hands, and He is still working out His purposes, even in the midst of our mistakes.

I was just reflecting today on some big financial decisions I have made in my life. Some dumb ones, which I very much regret and lots of better ones that have turned out well. However, through it all, I (and Ginia and I) have seen God’s hand in the background providing for what we needed at the time. The lesson I needed to learn was that God’s purposes are greater than a bad financial decision.

Notice the progression in these verses:

1. Trust in the Lord – Faith underpins our relationship with God. The question is, do we really trust Him? Trusting Him with our whole heart. Trusting Him when life is going well and when we are making mistakes.
2. Don’t rely on your way – We make mistakes, God doesn’t.
3. Surrender all of our lives to God.
4. It is when we do all of the above, we will see the result of God making a way through life which we will be able to navigate.

**Friday’s Devotion – Fear not, God is with you**

**Isaiah 41:10**

*So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Let us end this series with the verse that we started with. Here God is reminding His people that they are not alone. God is WITH His people.

We can feel very alone when we fail. It is easy for us to sit alone in our self-loathing and have a pit party. What we need when we fail is support. Support from a trustworthy source. Support that will help us regain perspective and assure us that life will go on.

What God is encouraging us with here, is the pervasiveness of His presence. He is always with us, both in the good times and the bad. He won’t let us down.

God will be there when we fail. So, there is no need to fear failure. Our failures will not overwhelm us, because we have the One who is above all with us. He will bring comfort and He will help us grow through the experience.

Hopefully this week God has revealed to you how He can redeem failures in our lives. God will forgive us of our sins. He will teach us, if we are humble enough to learn. He will develop Godly character in us. He will achieve His purposes in our lives, even when we fail. He will always be there to support us. So, when you fail, turn to the one who can redeem your failures.