



“Restorative Grace”  
 Luke 22:31-34

**Idea:** With Jesus, failure does not mean finality. He is the God of second chances.

**Intro:** There is an ancient rock fortress located in the northern Matale District of Sri Lanka called Sigiriya (see-gee-ree-yah) Lion Rock. It is known for its massive column of rock that reaches nearly 200 meters high, and it is one of the historical wonders of this beautiful island nation. The site dates back to the reign of King Kasyapa (477-495 AD), who chose it as his new capital. He decorated the walls with frescoes, and he built an impressive palace on top of the rock column, which was accessible only through the mouth of an enormous carved lion. It is an amazing place to see, and tourists flock there to view its beauty, grandeur, and craftsmanship. Among the highlights of Sigiriya are those frescoes painted on the rock walls.

Sadly, many years ago, some of the frescoes were vandalized by an unknown group of people. They defaced them by throwing ink and paint down the sides. Several experts had to be brought in to restore the frescoes back to their original state. Thankfully, they were able to recondition them.

Similarly, as God’s people, we sometimes go through crushing and damaging experiences. The damage can be the work of external vandals who seek to destroy our faith and spiritual vitality. Too often, however, the damage is caused by our own hand. This personal vandalism of our own hearts and minds is caused by the choices we make. In such situations, we feel far from God, and it seems like the distance that separates us can never be crossed. Due to the choices made and actions taken, we believe there is no return because there is no way God could forgive and receive us back. We have gone too far, and the damage is too great.

Perhaps, this is how you feel. You feel like you have gone too far. Your decisions have made the Lord seem so distant and unapproachable. It could even be that your life choices have removed the desire you once enjoyed to be near to the Lord. Today, you are walking at a guilty distance. This is a lonely and guilt-ridden place to be. If this is your current state, I have good news for you. The Lord does not want you to reside on the backside of the wilderness, far from God. He wants you home, and His grace will make the way. Thankfully, failure does not mean finality with Jesus.

One of the amazing character studies in the Bible is to look at the failures of the great heroes of the faith. Almost everyone who did anything of significance in the Bible failed on some level. Adam plunged humanity into sin. Abraham got ahead of God’s plan. Moses made excuses and lost his cool. Gideon could not decide. David peeked through a woman’s shower curtain and killed her husband. Moving from the Old Testament and into the New Testament, we see that the disciples also had their times of failure. None of them were willing to believe the things Jesus had said about His death, burial, and resurrection. Then when Jesus was arrested, they all scattered and left Him. Many of the churches were also a moral mess. For example, the Corinthians openly

celebrated their tolerance of sexual sin and bragged about their spiritual gifts. But what we see in each and every situation, is that restorative grace was extended and brought the wayward wanderers home. They were given a new opportunity to walk close and clean before the Lord.

Second chances, on the other hand, are not always welcomed. Did you know that thousands of cars are damaged or destroyed by floods every year? Those cars and trucks, however, do not all get sent to the junkyard. Some are repaired and resold in other parts of the country without the buyer being aware of the car's waterlogged history. According to Carfax approximately 378,000 flooded cars were back on the roads in 2021. After Hurricane Ian and numerous storms that brought flooding to California, Nevada, Texas, and other states in 2022, there were another 399,000 damaged cars added to the used-car market.

As you know, water can be very destructive. It can wreak havoc on automobiles: rusting out floorboards and short-circuiting electronics that control much of the car. It may take months or years, but corrosion can find its way into the crucial systems of the car, and the long-term effects of water damage will haunt buyers for the life of the car. Now, no one is going to want to buy a used car anytime soon, and all our CarMax employees are uncomfortable. I am confident CarMax does everything they can to sell quality cars. They know that no one wants to buy a lemon because it is worthless.

When it comes to the choices and the actions we take in life, many times they can leave us feeling like a lemon. We fully understand why other people would not want to reinvest in our lives because we are a broken mess. Spiritually, we can even wonder if the damage caused by the sudden storms of sin has caused God to regard us as worthless and write us off. Thankfully, He never does. Storm-damaged people are valuable to God, and by His grace they can experience redemption, forgiveness, and restoration. As we move to the next pericope in Luke 22, we discover that God is in the business of restoring the damaged places and periods of our lives. With Jesus, failure does not mean finality. He is the God of second chances.

[Read Luke 22:31-34.](#)

**Inquiry:** I find it interesting that this word of warning follows the dispute between the disciples over who was the greatest in the Kingdom. Imagine how they must have felt when they heard that not only would one of their number betray Jesus, but that their spokesman and leader would publicly deny Him. If a strong man like Peter was going to fail the Lord, there did not seem to be much hope for the rest of them. Yet, even in the warning there was a glimmer of hope. Jesus mentioned that Peter would return, and when he did, there was work to do (vs. 32). Restorative grace is on display for Peter's future. Allow me to point out three things.

### **1. The danger of misplaced strength.** (vs. 31, 33-34)

The disciples have been arguing about which of them is the greatest. Their pride was setting them up for a mighty fall, and Satan demanded access to them. It is interesting that the pronoun "you" in verse 31 in the Greek text is plural, but in verse 32, it is used in the singular tense. Satan's goal was to destroy all of the disciples in order to annihilate the Church in its infancy, and their prideful argument opened the door for it. Verse 31 reminds us that this old dragon knows God's Word better than we do. He demanded access based on the nature of sin described in the Bible. Maybe he even quoted Proverbs 16:18, which says, "*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*"

As Jesus addresses Simon Peter, He tenderly repeats his name as He states a startling fact: Satan has taken a personal interest in Simon's destruction. Even more surprising is his response. He seems unconcerned about Satan's interest and expresses confident self-reliance. Peter's trust was in himself and his abilities. He believed he could and would follow Jesus even if everyone else walked away (Matt 26:33-35). For that reason, Peter was horrified when he did fall. Luke tells us that when the rooster crowed and Jesus looked at Peter, he ran out and wept bitterly (Luke 22:60-62).

Like Peter, we foolishly put too much confidence in ourselves. As believers who genuinely desire to walk close and clean with the Lord, we never think that we could be that one who falls into sin and makes a mockery of the faith. Therefore, we are horrified when it does happen. In reality, we should live with the understanding that but for the grace of God, it is possible to fall into any sin.

Peter's confident boasting in his abilities is a warning to us that no one really knows his or her own heart (Jer 17:9). Each of us can and very well might fail in the point of our greatest strength. This is exactly where many of the great heroes of the faith failed. Think about it. Abraham's greatest strength was his faith, yet his faith failed him when he went down to Egypt and lied about Sarah (Gen 12:10-13:4). Moses' strength was in his meekness (Num 12:3), yet he lost his temper and spoke carelessly, disqualifying himself from entering the Promise Land (Num 20). Peter was a brave man, but his courage failed him as he denied Christ three times.

Being strong is a good thing, but a strength that is not tethered to God as the Solid Rock is a double weakness. It places you on dangerous footing with the Enemy, and it twists your understanding of God and His grace. You are left thinking that He could never forgive and welcome you back. For this reason, it would be wise to heed Paul's word to the Corinthians: "*Therefore, let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall*" (1 Cor 10:12).

We see in Peter the danger of misplaced strength. All is not lost though.

## **2. The gift of divine prayer. (vs. 32)**

In the face of Peter's pride, Jesus prayed for him. This is an amazing thing. The Son of God told Peter that He had prayed for him. What an encouragement it is to know that someone is praying for you.

I saw Maddie walking down the hall at the high school last week, and my mind immediately went back to those difficult days for the Boland family in the hospital five years ago. Maddie is literally a living miracle of God. There were many days, after the accident, when the Boland's did not know what was going to happen to their little girl, but what they did know was that God was faithful and His people were praying. In the darkest moments of that journey, God encouraged and strengthened their faith through the prayers of His people.

It is one thing to know that God's people are praying for you, but it is quite another thing to know that the Lord Jesus is praying for you. It is also one thing to know someone is praying for you through a tragedy and quite another to know someone is praying for you when you have failed in the faith. Well, Jesus is praying. We read in the Lord's High Priestly Prayer that Jesus prays for His Church (John 17:9-19). He prays for us during the good and the bad times. In our conflict with Satan and temptation to sin, even when we seem unable to pray, there remains One who prays and intercedes for us. Jesus has chosen intercessory prayer as His continuing ministry at the right hand of God the Father. Therefore, let us never forget that even during our worst failures in sin and temptation, He is already praying for us. He pleads on our behalf, and His blood intercedes for us. In Jesus, we have an advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1).

Peter's faith would bend during Jesus' arrest, trial, crucifixion, and burial. It would, however, not break. We see in Jesus the gift of divine prayer. This gift enables the fullness of restorative grace.

## **3. The assurance of a second chance.**

Just as Jesus predicted, Peter is asked three times about his relationship with Jesus, and three times he denies knowing the Lord. With the final denial, the rooster crowed, and Jesus turned His face to look at Peter. In that moment, everything Jesus had said came flooding back into Peter's mind as shame and

regret filled his heart. He ran away and wept bitterly. I have thought a lot about the look that Jesus gave Peter. Was it a frustrated look, an angry frown, or an inviting smile? In no way do I believe Jesus expressed frustration or anger toward Peter. I believe his look was one of love. It was a call to return. It was an offer of a second chance. Then after His resurrection, Jesus formally restored Peter.

Read John 21:15-19.

Peter is asked three times if he loved Jesus preeminently. Each time he declared his love and appealed to the Lord's sovereign knowledge of him. The three questions were God's gracious assurance of Jesus' forgiveness and restoration. Now, he will have a renewed opportunity to faithfully follow Jesus even in the face of death. The key will be his abiding in Christ as he follows Him (John 15:4).

I cannot think of anyone in history who bore more shame and disgrace than Peter. He boldly and confidently had declared his allegiance, stating that he would not fall away even if everyone else did. Yet, it was he who backed away from the challenging question of a young girl (22:56). Nevertheless, Jesus never turned away from Peter. You see, when Jesus is betrayed, He becomes a perfect Priest for us. He suffers what we have suffered, so He is able to identify with us and to intercede for us.

Today, perhaps you are a backslider. You have turned from Christ. Your heart by some degree has hardened toward the Lord. For a season, you have indulged in sin. You may be reminded even now of your betrayal. The memory of His love haunts you. Possibly, you have been tempted to think that there is no way back, that you have gone too far in sin, and that Christ would not have you. Please know that those are nothing more than the whispers of Satan and not Jesus. Remember what the Lord said to Peter in verse 32, "*when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.*" The Lord already anticipates Peter's restoration and usefulness. This is the reason Jesus restored him after the resurrection. Likewise, the Lord has anticipated your restoration and usefulness in the Kingdom.

We see in Jesus the assurance of a second chance.

**Conclusion:** In no way does failure have to mean finality. We serve a God of second chances. Just as the frescoes of Sigiriya could be cleaned and reconditioned, the failures of the great heroes of the faith could be cleansed and repaired. The same was equally true for Peter. He would "*turn again*" after that rooster's dreadful crowing.

All four Gospels record Peter's betrayal of Jesus punctuated by the crowing of a rooster, just as Jesus had prophesied. The three synoptic Gospels say Peter "*wept bitterly*" at the sound. Our senses are powerful memory holders. Smells, tastes, and sounds attach themselves to our memories. I can only imagine what kind of memory the rooster's crow evoked for Peter. Every dawn after that first terrible morning of betrayal, the proclamation of his bitter guilt would have rung afresh in his ears. Carried in the crowing would have been the memory of his colossal failure. Whatever his relationship had been with Jesus, whatever his calling, during those next few days it appeared to have been finished.

"*I am going fishing,*" he announced to his companions one evening (John 21:3). They fished all night and caught nothing, but just as day was breaking, a sound rippled across the water. A voice was heard. There was an announcement of a miracle: "Try the other side of the boat." Recognition dawned. As the others hauled in fish as fast as they could, Peter hurled himself into the water and thrashed toward shore. There sat Jesus, serving up a fresh breakfast menu of restoration, forgiveness, and an end to his exile of guilt.

I wonder, as the two conversed, if Peter could hear in the surrounding countryside the sound of roosters. I suspect that every morning thereafter, Peter affixed a new memory to that clarion call. The sound of homecoming. Each day, the sound that had announced new-morning guilt now spoke a better word. All hail the rooster, that fine-feathered herald of forgiveness and megaphone of new-morning mercies.

*“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”* (Rom. 8:1). What memory of past guilt announces itself to you at every turn? Friend, hear the annunciation of your emancipation: “Morning has broken, and with it, fresh mercy.” Come and experience God’s restorative grace.