

Comfort and Hope

Sermon #0632

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—March 02, 1968

Our text is Romans the fifteenth chapter and the fourth verse.

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” Romans 15:4.

The Scriptures were written to give us what? Comfort and hope. Do they give you comfort and hope? That is what they were written for, “that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”

I want to share with you some thoughts that have been very precious to me in recent days concerning why God put certain things in the Bible. You know we read in the Bible about Joseph, and Elisha, and Daniel, and Enoch, and there is nothing I have been able to find about any mistakes those men made. I wouldn't go so far as to say they never made any mistakes, but there is nothing in the Bible about the mistakes of Enoch. Have you found any? Or Joseph. Or Daniel? Or Elisha? Probably a few others if you would look around through the pages.

I wonder why that record is there? And then, on the other hand, we read about the life of Abraham. We read about him telling a lie. And some time later we read about him telling the same lie over again. And then some time later we read about Isaac, and he tells the same lie. And then Jacob comes along, and he tells a some lies. Those aren't all the faults recorded concerning those men.

We read about the terrible fall of David, and some of his other failures. We read about Peter denying his Lord, cursing and swearing. What is all that in the Bible for?

Well, my dear friends, I have come to the conclusion that both of these records, the record of success on the part of Enoch, and Daniel, the records of failure on the part of Abraham, David, and Peter, and yet their final triumph, that all of these things are put in the Bible so that you and I can have comfort and hope. I rather think that if we had written the Bible, we would have either filled it with stories like the first, or else with stories like the second. God didn't do either one. He put both kinds in. Both are real, both are just as they happened, and the Spirit of God inspired the record.

The first, as I see it, is to help you and me to see what God could do with everybody if they would let Him. That is encouraging, isn't it? Shouldn't it encourage us to believe that what God did for Enoch, He can do for us. And what God did for Enoch, He is going to do for a hundred and forty-four thousand down here today, isn't He? Yes. There are going to reach that point of likeness to God that while they walk the ways of this world, their hearts will be at home with Jesus in the sanctuary above. They will walk with God as Enoch walked with God.

And so as we read the lives of those men that succeeded, and walked with God, we say, Thank God, that can be my experience, and we aim for that. And remember friends, that is not put in there to tease us. You have seen somebody hold an article of food above a dog, just out of reach, and the poor dog wants it and tries to get it, but they hold it out of reach. God doesn't tease us.

“High and holy attainments are within our reach” *Ministry of Healing*, page 503.

So let's get all the courage and inspiration out of the life of Joseph that we can. What do you say? And Enoch, and Daniel, and the rest of those that walked that road so close with God.

But now these other experiences as we have mentioned, Abraham's failure, Isaac's, Jacob's. But you know when God appear to Moses at the burning bush, He says, “I am ... the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, ... the God of Jacob.” Exodus 3:6.

“You mean, Lord, you would be mixed up with folks like that? Would you be identified with men that told lies, and made other failures?”

Yes. He says, “I am the God of men like that.” Not that God was proud of their sins, He was ashamed. They were too. Weren't they? Yes. He doesn't say, “I am the God of Judas,” or the God of King Saul, of course He would have been the God to them if they had let Him. But the thing that appealed to God about Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob was this. No matter how much they failed, they got up and went on again.

I was reading where someone, who had made what is called a success in the world, was asked the secret of his success. Well, he said, if I have made any success, if there is any secret to it, about all I know is this. I got up every time I fell down.

I have been thinking about it friends. I think that is one of the great things that the stories in the Scripture are designed to teach us, to get up every time we fall down. And the man that does that is going to arrive at last at the pearly gates. There is not question about it. The honor of the throne of God is at stake.

“He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come

unto God by Him” Hebrews 7:25.

And the life of Abraham demonstrates that. He was called the friend of God. You mean, Lord, You would call him Your friend after all he did? And mind you, never forget it, Abraham is called God’s friend not because he told a lie, and not because he did it over again, and not because he made some other failures, but in spite of those things. That gives you and me comfort to know no matter how much we have failed, we can still have God as our friend.

Now turn to Romans the fourth chapter, and we will see what pleased God about Abraham.

“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” Romans 4:3.

God was so happy that Abraham believed Him. Now even on this point Abraham’s faith faltered at times. Like the time when he took Hagar instead of waiting for the son of promise to be born miraculously. But nevertheless, all through the years, God saw in Abraham that deep down in his soul he wanted to please God, and he chose to believe God.

My dear friends, if you and I will bring to God what we have, if it is nothing but failure, and say Lord, I believe You, I believe Your promise that You can make something out of nothing, make something out of me, we will arrive at last with Abraham in the city of God. Won’t it be wonderful? The glory will all be the Master’s.

Now I think of Jacob, poor fellow, he wanted God’s blessing. In fact, he wanted it so bad, he cheated to get it. And yet deep down in his heart there was along with all the selfishness, and the crude scheming, there was a longing to be like God, and to please the Father in heaven. And so God kept working with him. God will keep working with us as long as we will work with Him, friends. Oh, how wonderful the record is.

But now I would like to look a little deeper in this thing. Why does God allow these failures? Well, we say, it is because He gives men the power of choice. True. But why does He allow us to fail? I have come to this conclusion. God let’s men make failures to keep them from making greater failures. He permits them to make mistakes to keep them out of greater mistakes. He even allows them to fall under some terrible temptation because, under the circumstances, if that didn’t happen something worse, and more fatal would happen a bit later.

Now don’t misunderstand me, I don’t mean that God causes any of these failures. Not at all. But let me illustrate it. Suppose that when Jacob is about to go into his father with that goat hair on his arms pretending to be Esau, suppose that an angel comes and touches Jacob on the shoulder and says, “See here Jacob, I want to tell you

something. You are headed for trouble. You had better take that goat hair off and get out of the tent.”

What would Jacob have done? He would have obeyed. I have no question at all about it. Well, why didn't God do that? Because my dear friends, there was something in Jacob that had to come out one way or another. I don't mean it had to come out the way it did come out, not at all.

Perhaps I can illustrate it in a better way with the experience of Peter. Turn to the twenty-second chapter of Luke. Peter had been with Jesus, you remember, for three years. He had been quite close to the Master. He was one of the chosen three. Jesus appreciated his devotion, he was just whole-souled for Jesus, but Peter had some things in him that he wasn't too well acquainted with.

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” Luke 22:31-32.

Was this a bit of a reflection on Peter? Yes. How did he take it? He felt offended. And you notice instead of saying, “Lord, You say the Devil is after me, and I need prayers, and you are praying for me. But look, Lord,” the thirty-third verse, “I am ready to go with you both into prison and into death.” In other words, “Lord, you don't know how loyal I am.”

What was Jesus answer?

“I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me” Luke 22:34.

That kept Peter from doing it didn't it? No. Do you see what I mean friends? There was something in Peter that had to come out one way or another. And Jesus longed to have it come out while He was there to give him some help. So while Christ didn't cause the fall, not at all, He did everything He could to keep him from it, He allowed it to come at a time and in a way, when, just at the right moment, He could turn from His frowning judges, and look out there in the courtyard where Peter had suddenly come aware of a shrill crow of the cock.

And with the sound of those degrading oaths fresh in his mind, he looked up and he saw that face, the face of Jesus turned toward him in sorrow and love. That look said, Peter, My dear disciple, I tried to keep you from it, but now that it has happened, remember, I still love you. And remember what I told you a few hours before, I have prayed for you. And I am still praying for you.

Then Peter got down to business and got what he should have gotten several hours before. He went back to Gethsemane, and this time he didn't go to sleep. Oh no. Right there in the garden where Jesus had fallen prostrate to the earth, Peter fell on his face and wished that he might die. His tears of deep repentance mingled with the bloody sweat that had been left there by our Lord.

That was a terrible failure on the part of Peter, but my dear friends, the point is out of that came an experience that enabled Peter in less than two months to preach the pentecostal sermon where three-thousand souls were brought to God. Isn't it wonderful?

What had Peter learned?

Ah friends, that leads me to the next point. You heard me say a few moments ago that I believe that God has allowed men at times to make failures to keep them from making greater failures.

Do you know what the greatest sin is?

Well, it isn't lying. That is bad. I wouldn't minimize it at all. It isn't stealing. It isn't adultery, nor murder. All of those are terrible things, violations of the law of God. And if they are persisted in, they will keep men out of heaven. But there is a sin that is worse than any of those, or all of them put together. I will tell you what it is.

It is pride.

When Lucifer started sinning in heaven, that was the problem, pride. And do you know why pride is worse than all these terrible things? Because pride feels no need. That was Peter's problem that night in the upper room, and on the road to Gethsemane. When Jesus tried to reach him, pride was just like a turtle's shell, no way to get through it. He was encase in that armor of self-righteousness.

Listen friends, of all kinds of pride, spiritual pride is the worst. A man may be proud of his money, and a crash in wall street may take care of that. A man may be proud of his automobile, and an accident can get that out of him. A man may be proud of his physical strength, and there are various germs or other things that can humble him. But what is going to humble spiritual pride? Let me tell you what may humble spiritual pride, and that is to make a terrible, spiritual failure in the eyes of people generally.

You see, people are not ashamed of pride. If they were, they wouldn't be proud. But believe me, my dear friends, Peter was ashamed of cursing, and swearing, and denying his Lord. Wasn't he? He could see that he was a failure.

Now he really wasn't any greater failure at six o'clock in the morning than he had been at six o'clock at night, twelve hours before, but he found out he was. That is the point. You see, the problem with Laodicea that the True Witness points out is that Laodicea thinks she is what? Rich, when she is poor. She thinks she can see when she is blind. She thinks she is well-clothed when she is naked.

She reaches the acme of spiritual pride. And you notice that the True Witness says, Anything but this. I wish you were hot, on fire for God, and if that couldn't be, I wish you were cold, the cold, chilling, lifeless experience of the open sinner.

Why?

Because the sinner who is sinning openly, and knows that he is, he may be led to feel a need, and therefore to accept the Savior, but pride feels no need.

Let me read it to you.

"God does not regard all sins as of equal magnitude; there are degrees of guilt in His estimation, as well as in that of man; but however trifling this or that wrong act may seem in the eyes of men, no sin is small in the sight of God" *Steps to Christ*, page 30.

Are there any little sins? No. If they are sins, they are big.

But are some bigger than others? That is what this says.

"Man's judgment is partial, imperfect; but God estimates all things as they really are. The drunkard is despised and is told that his sin will exclude him from heaven; while pride, selfishness, and covetousness too often go unrebuked. But these are sins that are especially offensive to God; for they are contrary to the benevolence of His character, to that unselfish love which is the very atmosphere of the unfallen universe" *ibid*.

Listen now carefully.

“He who falls into some of the grosser sins may feel a sense of his shame and poverty and his need of the grace of Christ; but pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give”
Ibid.

So my brother, along the pilgrim way your feet stumble, and you go down in disgrace, if you lose your temper and you think, “oh my, what a disgrace,” and it is, remember, you didn’t have to, you could have been like Enoch and Joseph, but nevertheless, you can get up and go on again like Abraham did, and like Peter did. And remember, it was permitted, not caused, but permitted by a loving God to keep you from something worse. That’s right.

And you say, as you are covered with shame, what could be worse than this? Indeed, what could be? Ah, my dear friends, the ability to go along, everybody thinking I am good, and I think I am pretty good, that is a thousand times worse than some shameful failure that humbles you in the dust, and makes you look like a fool in the eyes of other people, and in your own eyes too. We need to be broken in order that we may be healed. We need to be conscious of our weakness in order that we may cry for and receive strength from our Savior.

The more I have been studying this thing, my dear friends, the more I am persuaded that a lot of us are in danger of wanting religion in order to make us respectable so that people will think well of us. But that is what the pharisee’s wanted. Wasn’t it? Precisely. Ah my dear friends, God is seeking to lead us into an experience with Him where we shall know indeed that apart from Him we are nothing, and that our job is not to work our a reputation for ourselves that people will think we are something, but that all the glory shall go to God.

He says:

“My glory will I not give to another” Isaiah 42:8.

And if in your religious life you dote on showing that you live out the health reform, and you live out the dress reform, and you live out Sabbath keeping, and you pay tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin, be careful, it just could be that you are headed for Peter’s failure, or Jacob’s failure, or David’s failure. God loves you, and something must happen to break up all pride, all self-righteousness, all self-sufficiency.

Now listen, don’t think for a minute that Peter had to learn the lesson that way. Jesus invited him to pray with Him in Gethsemane. Didn’t He? And if he had really got down to business and accepted Jesus’ warning, he could have prayed it out before the failure instead of after the failure. It had to come one time or the other. That is my point.

You don't have to lose your temper and be disgraced. You don't have to do some other terrible failure and look like a fool to others, but I will tell you this friends, unless you and I are willing to get down at the foot of the cross, and see how weak and full of failures we are, alone with God, then we will have to learn it before the multitude. But if we will go to God in the secret place of prayer and let Him teach us our weakness, if looking at Calvary we will discern our inherent pride and selfishness, and look at the cross until, by God's grace, we can be humble, living His life, instead of having to be humiliated in failing to do it, I say if we can learn that lesson there are glorious things ahead for us.

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I get comfort from these thoughts. I get hope, and by God's grace, I choose to keep walking the pilgrim pathway with Him with my eyes set on that goal, knowing that He will finish what He has begun.

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