

GREAT FAILURES OF THE BIBLE

The Ultimate “Failure”

Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left. And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, “You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, “I am the son of God.” Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing. Matthew 27:38-44

We all experience failure to some degree in our lives. And even when we may feel we've got it made, our lives and our fortunes can be turned upside down over night.

Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. Isaiah 40:30

We fail because of our own weaknesses and mistakes. We become overconfident and self-sure often becoming blinded to our own short-comings until we find ourselves in the middle of a mess of our own making. We then become discouraged and disheartened and give up when we need to press on. But God has something better in mind for His children.

Our greatest failure is our falling short of the righteousness of God. The result of such failure is not simply embarrassment or discouragement but eternal separation from God. It was our failure, our sin, that caused Jesus to be identified as one of the greatest failures ever when He died on the cross.

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

2 Corinthians 5:21

1. OUR FAILURES AND THE CROSS

Although the crucifixion took place nearly two thousand years ago, all of us were represented by the crowd surrounding the cross. Notice those mentioned in our text. Where you there?

- **The wicked who knew better**

The robbers or thieves mentioned were more than just petty thieves or even common robbers. In many cases, the Romans would execute patriots who would plunder them to help secure the freedom of their country. However, these men do not appear to be patriots but rather cruel bandits who were as great a threat to their own countrymen as to the Romans.

They probably were Jewish or at least lived in the Jewish society of Palestine. Consequently they would have known about a coming Jewish Messiah. They also probably knew something about this Jesus of Nazareth including the fact that He claimed to be the Messiah.

Why did they seem to hate Jesus so? He certainly had done them no harm. Yet, even though they were also being crucified, they joined in on the cruel mocking. Like many today, the lives of the two thieves revolved around material possessions and fleshly satisfaction. They had no concern for the things of God and were using their dying breath to vent their pent-up anger on the only one who could give them hope.

- **The fickle crowd**

The ones which the Scripture describes as “*those who passed by*” were mostly Jewish pilgrims who had come to celebrate the Passover. Thousands and thousands of people would make the journey to Jerusalem during this special feast. Many of them were inhabitants of Galilee and the areas surrounding Jerusalem. Therefore many of them had probably heard Jesus preach and seen the miracles He performed. Perhaps some of them had participated in His triumphal entry a few days earlier and had joined in shouting hosannas to His name.

However, it is almost certain that many of these had been part of the crowd which had shouted for Jesus to be crucified earlier in the day. This fickle crowd had a place for Jesus only when He satisfied their wants. They were fascinated by Him, knew who He claimed to be, and had witnessed countless demonstrations of power that verified that claim.

But while they were grateful for His miracles, they had no desire to be cleansed of their sins or to give Jesus control of their lives. They had expected a Messiah who would throw off the Roman yoke of oppression and the battered and bloody man on the cross did not fit their idea of a Messiah.

Today there are still many people like this fickle crowd. They may have been raised in church, heard the truths of the gospel many times, and know that Jesus Christ claimed to be the Son of God. They may have even made a profession, been baptized, or gone through some type of religious ritual. However, they never became true followers of Jesus Christ and because Christ does not fulfill their worldly, selfish expectations, they have lost interest in the things of God.

- **The religious wicked**

The religious leaders who spent a good deal of time studying the Scriptures which spoke of the coming Messiah should have known more than anyone else who Jesus was. But Jesus was not their kind of Messiah and they had no desire to follow Him. They did not want to be made righteous but successful. They did not want to be cleansed but selfishly satisfied. They did not want to give up anything for God but wanted from Him only the worldly, material advantages they cherished. They wanted God only for what they could get out of Him.

2. OUR FAILURES AND THE TOMB

Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given

to him. When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. Matthew 27:57-60

Tombs are not usually considered to be symbols of victory. In fact, tombs illustrate the fact that death has gained another victory. The followers of Jesus did not at this point really understand what was happening. Their Master, their dear friend, the One who had healed the sick and raised the dead, now was simply a mangled body lying in a cold tomb. All hope was gone; their dreams were crushed. As far as they were concerned Jesus's life and ministry had ended in failure. To them the tomb represented failure, but to us today, it represents something far more.

...Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. Psalm 30:5b

We do not usually understand why we experience the things we do, but God always has a purpose. The tomb (grave) has a major part in the Resurrection.

- **The tomb was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy And they made His grave with the wicked - but with the rich at His death... Isaiah 53:9**

- **The tomb housed the body of the Lord**

The bodies of most criminals (and that is exactly what Jesus was considered by the Romans) were unceremoniously dumped in a common garbage pit and burned. It would be no problem for Jesus to be resurrected from ashes, but how would it be truly known? A body, wrapped in grave clothes, would be an important part of the Resurrection story when the followers of Jesus found it to be missing.

Another important factor is the insistence of the Jewish leaders to place a guard on the tomb and seal it. Although the soldiers would later be paid to tell a story of falling asleep while the disciples stole the body, such a fabrication would not be believable.

- **An empty tomb would provide one of the greatest**

testimonies of the Resurrection

All the Jewish leaders needed to do to quench the preaching of the Resurrection would be to produce the mangled body of Jesus. They could not because the tomb was empty. They did try to make up stories of a “stolen body theory” but deep down inside they knew something miraculous had happened.

Sometimes, we go through our “tomb days.” We can’t make sense of what may be taking place in our lives, but we can continue to trust Him, for He knows what He is doing.

Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:30-31

3. OUR FAILURES AND THE RESURRECTION

Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said, Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.” So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. **Matthew 28:1-8**

The followers of Jesus did not wake up that first “Easter” morning in a spirit of celebration. The women who made the trek to the tomb were mourning as they walked for they were preparing to anoint the dead body of Jesus. The

disciples were in hiding for fear they would be the next to be crucified. There were no joyous songs of praise or services of celebration.

But when Jesus’s followers finally realized that He indeed had been resurrected from the dead, they would never be the same again. Sorrow and mourning gave way to joy and rejoicing. The men who had failed Jesus so miserably would now lay their very lives down to share the good news of His resurrection. A living Savior makes all the difference.

Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:25