

Father, this morning, we just come to You, we just thank You. We just thank You, Lord. We just thank You, for You are good and You are good all the time. We just thank You, Father. This morning, Lord, even as we look into Your Word, we pray You'd continue to speak to us for Your Word is truth. You prayed to the Father, "Sanctify them by Your truth, Your Word is truth." Sanctify us, Lord, even today, through Your Word, so that we can become a noble vessel in the hands of the almighty God, O Master, use for Your glory, use for Your purpose, use for Your Kingdom. Sanctify us, Lord. Speak to us. For in Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

God's Word says; we don't need the reference because we know it so well by now – that God's people perish because of lack of knowledge which is true in the world and in the Kingdom of God – either way. Kids who are going to do their exams, if they fail, it's because they don't know the answers. The questions were there but they didn't know the answers and therefore, they failed. In the Kingdom of God, God says the same thing, that we will fail if we don't have knowledge. The problem is – in the schools, we are very aware because there is an examination and there is an answer paper that comes back and you will see whether you passed or not and if you passed, how did you pass? It is very clear. We look at success in the world and think we are successful in the Kingdom. We may look at failure in the world and think you have failed in the Kingdom which is both wrong. You can think you are incredibly successful in the Kingdom and be absolute failure when we stand before God or you could think you failed by the standards of the world and then, be translated one day to find you are an incredible success in God's estimate. So, do not judge anything by what the world says. That's why we need to know the knowledge of God's Word because that is what sets us free. See, we have a saying in English about the law, the saying is, 'When you stand before a judge for a crime, ignorance of the law will not be taken as an excuse.' Let's say you broke a traffic law and you've been given the ticket and you have been asked to appear before the traffic court. When you tell the Judge you did not know this particular rule, it doesn't help you. In the same way, God says, "My people perish," because the laws of the Kingdom will operate whether we know it or not; whether we break it knowingly or whether we break it unknowingly, the laws will work. You cannot escape it. It's simply like the law of gravity. It doesn't matter whether you jump knowingly or you fell accidentally, you will still break your head. Because you fell accidentally, gravity won't suddenly cease, 'O Poor fellow, he did not know.' No, it doesn't work. So, ignorance, that's why we are continuously meditating, studying on the Word of God so that we understand how, the Kingdom of God works. The knowledge of the Kingdom. The second is the power of the kingdom. So, God offers us both. He offers us His Son, which is the wisdom of God Himself and He offers His Spirit which is His power and He offers both to us and says, "Nobody should be a failure when you stand before God. Nobody should be."

So, remember when we began this year, we were looking from the *Book of Joshua* about a new generation entering into the Promised Land, an entire generation failed, they came out of Egypt but they could not enter the Promised Land because they did not take God seriously, or His Word seriously. Therefore, they failed. Another generation is going to enter under a new leader and we know what Joshua tells them. One of the things Joshua tells them is in *Joshua 3:3*,

Joshua 3:3

³ and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it.

In today's context, what he's saying is "Keep your eyes on the ark that represents God and the priest who are carrying it on their shoulders. Keep your eyes on both; the ark and the priest." The New Covenant writer of *Hebrews* will tell it this way in *Hebrews 12:1-2*,

Hebrews 12:1-2

¹ Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, (The men and women of God who have gone before us. The genuine men and women) let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for

the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and those who have carried His testimony. So, you will see it is practically the same. It's the same in the Old and New Covenant. Keep your eyes on Jesus so that we do not fail. Keep your eyes on the ark and the priest and in the New Covenant, keep your eyes on Christ and those who carry His testimony. The letter of Hebrews was written to the second generation not the first generation of believers, the second generation. Persecution was intense and believers were falling away or drifting away from the faith and they have been encouraged to keep their eyes on Jesus. See, so many things happen, like, we have brethren who have come from the west. It's a free country. In so many ways, it's much more free than our nation is a free country. So, our country is not so much free when it comes to Christian worship. So, I will tell you, you have to balance this always. That's something which I tell all my Pastors in India. In the western nations, you have the freedom because you have your won spaces, you have the freedom to shout and scream and worship in the way you like. In our country, the first thing they for is to shut you down because we are in a very enclosed space. The first thing the nun came and said was, "Please do not make too much noise. All the Hindus around are complaining the Churches are making too much noise." Understand that, that's how the government will shut you down. You will see small Churches with five people with a speaker outside, which blocks you because you should be very careful. That's why I came and shut all these windows. We need the freedom to worship loudly without ever giving a reason to the enemy to work through the system to shut us down because that's what they do everywhere, okay. So, always, yes, praise; but also, be wise. Shut the windows. Where we have open spaces, where there are no neighbors around, scream. In your houses, shut the windows and worship loudly. The other extreme is if you go to the persecuted country, there is no sound; yet, they worship incredibly. So, balance it, always balance because we are living in very difficult times. So, the *Book of Hebrews* was written in very difficult times, people were falling away under the intensity of persecution. The first generation of leader had gone and people were drifting away and to them they are told, keep your eyes on those witnesses who have gone before us. Keep your eye on Christ Jesus. See, Israel, the new generation that went into the Promised Land, you know Israel failed in their second battle. They won the first battle incredibly and they became overconfident or rather, their leader became overconfident and they lost the second battle to a very tiny little town called Ai and usually we lose our battle to I, not to you but to I. Believers also fail.

This morning, I want to look at this. How do believers cope with failures? You see, we may fail over and over again but we do not become failures unless we choose to give up. Some of those incredibly might men we even know in secular history are people who failed so many times but refused to give up. Because you failed till this morning, God doesn't call you a failure. Failures are people who have given up fighting, giving up trying. It is the attitude. When they lost their second battle, which was the first battle they lost, immediately, Joshua is on his face crying, "Why did You bring us here? We are finished." God says, "Get up from your face! I didn't bring you to lose, I didn't bring you into the Promised Land with all these promises so that you'd be a failure." He said, "Get up. There is a problem. Deal with the problem. You'll win." God did not die on the Cross, He did not defeat the devil so that His children can be defeated every day. He says, "No," Just because you fail does not mean you are a failure. So, today, we are going to look at a very specific person. The one if you look at it, who failed so badly and we will see also, why we fail, what do we need to do so that we don't end up as failures. In *Mark 14:27-31*, Jesus is getting ready for His end,

Mark 14:27-31

²⁷ Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'²⁸ "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."²⁹ Peter said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be." (That's Peter! That Peter, not this Peter. Jesus said to Him.)³⁰ Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times."³¹ But he spoke more vehemently, "If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" and they all said likewise.

Many times, so many times, we're also like that. We said, "This is the last time. I am not going to fall in that area again." We don't even have a rooster or an alarm bell to ring, we have fallen. Peter is going to fail terribly that night, all the others too and there is nobody in this room who has not failed Christ multiple times over and over again and Jesus has something to say to Peter and to all of us. This is what He says the same context in *Luke*

Luke 22:31

³¹ **And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you,** (Satan has asked for everybody. Satan asked for everybody. If he asks for Job the righteous man, he asked for the stumbling man. He asks for everyone,) **that he may sift you as wheat.** (God said, “Ok!”) ³² **But I have prayed for you,** (What is it that I pray for?) **that your faith should not fail;** (If you stumble and fall, your faith should not fail) **and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”**

Believers, those who profess their faith in Christ will be allowed by God to be sifted by Satan but always remember when you are being sifted, Christ has prayer for us and He's even now praying for us because Scripture says, “He is forever making intercession for those who are being saved.” He allows us to be sifted but He is praying for us, what? While these things happen, our faith does not fail us. That we will turn back and the lessons we have learnt we will use to strengthen others who are in the same journey. That's what He tells Peter. So, the question is: how does a follower of Jesus get to the place where they can deny the Lord? How do we reach that place where we end up failing God, failing Christ, the One who loves us most and the One whom we confess to love more than anybody else? How do we reach that place where we deny Him?

Second, more important, how does he or she after having failed, recover? You see, Peter was a leader, one of the first to be called and he was the most outspoken of Jesus' disciples. Therefore, his failures are very vividly described in the gospels. You see, if you keep on proclaiming, “I will never leave You, I will never forsake You, I will never fail You,” all your failures will be very clearly written as a lesson to others, okay. Another person in the Old Testament was David, “How I love You. As the deer pants. . .” All that, God says, “I love you. Now, all your failures will be written clearly for all ages to come. One, to know your failures. Second, your recovery too. So, others will learn.” There is a pathway to failure. People don't fail just like that, there is a path way to failure, believers. Nobody fails suddenly, nobody falls suddenly. When we study the lives of those who have failed in their walk, we see the steps downwards to failure. These are the same steps other believers also take before they deny Jesus, okay. Let us look at the steps;

First step – Jesus had taken His disciples apart, to Caesarea Philippi where He asked them this important question. “Who do people say that I am?” It is found in *Matthew 16:21-23*. This is where He asked and. “Some say You are John the Baptist, some say You are Elijah, some say You are Jeremiah.” Depending upon, if one day, Jesus comes and preach a fire and brimstone message like, Repent! The Kingdom of God is here and that is the only message you heard. If you ask him, “Who is He like?” “He's like John.” If you were there where He did miracles, they will say, “He is like Elijah!” If you heard Him pray, you will say, “He is like Jeremiah.” So, people have different perceptions. What do people say? Who do people say that I am? Then He asked, “Who do you say that I am to the Apostles?” Peter said, “You are Christ, Son of the living God.” And Jesus said, “This is a revelation from My Father.” It is after this Jesus, the next thing, after this incredible revelation God has given Peter as to whom Jesus is

Matthew 16:21

²¹ **From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.**

He gave them His plan. This is what the Word of God says I have to go through. This is My Father's will for Me. When He showed all these things, Scripture says,

²² **Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”** ²³ **But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”**

Do you see that? What is the first thing? The first step towards denial of Jesus is, we disagree with the revelation of who God is, we start disagreeing with the Word of God. That is the first step and I was incredibly happy yesterday because, you see all these men of God who've been there before and when they go off tangent, we still love them, we don't agree with them but we love them and yesterday when Shiju puts the post of Benny Hinn and how Benny Hinn is now repenting and changing, that he went wavered with the prosperity gospel and he realizes it is not right. I said, “O Lord, thank You. At sixty-five years old, he at least found the truth now.” Because these are very powerful voices but our first step of straying way is we disagree with the Word of God. We pick pieces. See, when we read the Word of God, we don't read or study or listen with a surrendered heart. We take our idols to the Word. If you are person who doesn't like any discomfort, no suffering please, then you will pick your teacher accordingly. Peter was a prosperity preacher from the beginning, before Pentecost.

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So, when Jesus talked about suffering, he said, “No, Lord! Please, because you suffer, I will also have to go through it. No Lord, change your doctrine, change your doctrine please.” And Jesus rebuked him. You know what he said? He said, “You know what? This is the doctrine of the devil!” You don’t understand. The first step a child of God takes toward failing God is disagreeing with the Word of God. I always tell brethren and pastors, everything in the Word is true, but it is in the sovereignty of God. Never take the sovereignty of God from the promises of God. God is sovereign. God is absolutely sovereign. Because there is this word of faith movement which teaches you to take God out of the picture and you become God and the confessing and the confessing, you make things happen. That’s not Christianity, it’s there in Japan also. It’s a form of Buddhism. They sit there and meditate and confess over and over and things come to pass as they confess too. Our God is sovereign. He is always sovereign. So, we have to be very careful. Our major step of falling away. You see, we don’t fall away. We drift away. Drifting is very difficult to notice. Let us say you sat in a boat by the side and you tied the rope to the pillars on the wharf and then the rope came off. But you were lying in your boat, in your sun chair and you’re reading, you will never know after a couple of hours, you are somewhere in the middle of the sea. Because drifting is so unnoticeable. You drift away. That’s where it begins. Drifting away begins simply with disagreeing with the Word of God. I don’t have to like the Word of God. But I don’t disagree with the Word of God. God doesn’t say, “You’d better like My Word.” He says, “You’d better agree with My word.” Because He won’t change His Word for anybody. We are like that king, what is his name in the Old Testament, when the scrolls are opened, any portion he doesn’t like, he cuts it off – king Jehoiachim. And God had a terrible indictment towards Jehoiachim. He said, “You are the only one who will not receive the burial of a king. You will receive the burial of a donkey, because you cut My words out according to your liking.” The first thing is agree with the Word of God whether you like it or not. *Because in the beginning was the word, the word was with God and the word is God.* It doesn’t change. *“Heaven and earth will pass away not a dot from My Word.”* And so many pastors have gone through this nation and other nations till today, when I showed them that Scripture, I’m not talking about believers, I’m talking about pastors, not a single one of those pastors knew *Psalm 138:2*. They did not know. They hadn’t seen it. Can we have it on the screen?

Psalm 138:2

² I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.

Above all Your name, You have magnified Your word. We have many names, many names of God: Jehovah Jireh - the Lord is my provider. I will never lack. God says, “Please don’t exalt it above My Word. There will be times for you Mr. Elijah, you will eat only two meals a day. You won’t get a third meal. At that time, don’t start confessing Jehovah Jireh, three meals a day!” Why? This is the rider Jesus gives us in *Matthew 7*, He will say, “Many will come to Me on that day and say, ‘Lord, Lord! We did this in Your name.’” Everything they did was good and beneficial to the people. But God says, “I do not know You.” Why? Because they had not aligned His name with His word. They used His name without coming under the sovereignty of His word. So, remember the Word of God. Our first step is that, some preachers say something in some Church, you feel offended. That’s why Jesus said, the final blessing? *“Blessed are those who are not offended because of Me.”* Offended because something was said. And you know I don’t agree with it. Then, you will start searching for someone who will agree with you. The word doesn’t have to agree with me. I have to agree with the word. That’s the first step. The first step of falling away, drifting away is when we start disagreeing with the revealed Word of God and we start contending with it. And Jesus rebukes. People do not realize how much of a mess we are in because we have continuously disagreed with the Word of God. You see, it’s very clear. All over the news if something happens in India nothing comes, if anything happens in the US, it’s all over the news. They will talk about taking the guns away. They will talk about arming the teachers. They will talk about everything except one thing. They will not say, “Bring God back.” That, they will not say. They will not touch the real issue. They will never talk about the real issue. God said, “You took Me out. Now, handle it. I have told you this is what will happen to you.” He told Israel. He told America. This is exactly what will happen because you are the only two nations who put it there - In God, We Trust. Well if you said it, keep it. India and all won’t go through those crises, because we never made a covenant with the living God. Our crisis is normal to anybody. But people who take the name of God and make a covenant with God, God says, “Your lives shall be determined with what I have said and ignorance is not an excuse.” He will be merciful. But the consequences follow. And God is very very clear about almost everything that concerns life.

Like we talk about marriage, we just had a marriage. Parents will look at everything: what is the height? what is the color? what is the race? What is the salary? Everything. It’s not fundamental. The fundamental thing is – is he/she a believer?

That's the first law of marriage. If the first law doesn't match, all the others will fall apart. It doesn't matter because when you get married, you will have to compromise on the first one. Thou shall not unequally yoked. But that's not a criteria. That is not a criteria for most. Even Christian parents, that is not a criteria. The only thing is, "How much does he make? How is the girl?" That is not the first. That is the second and the third. But we always put the first one away and we don't even talk about it. And then, things start going wrong. And when things start going wrong, we hit the panic mode. We take counseling and everything. Nothing seems to work. Why? Rule number 1 was broken and they are not willing to align to rule number 1 again. But if rule number one is there, two, three and four are a little shaky, you can always bring them together and hold them together. But 1 doesn't work, who's going to listen? For everything you say, "Who said so?" "Well, it is written." "I don't believe! That is your opinion. I don't believe." So, you don't realize how it goes. Many believers have forsaken this(the Bible) as the only source of what is right and what is wrong; the only source of what is right and what is wrong. And we have replaced with the opinions of men. To obey God, you need only one reason – He said so. To disobey God, you can come with thousand reasoning. You see when God uses this what He means is, God has bound Himself to His word. He says, "I will not change. I do not change." Why people do not get out of their mess is because they are still trying to circumvent the Word. God said, "I have put this rock in Zion." You cannot move that rock. It's immovable. You cannot go around it also. It's too large. You cannot go over it. It's too high. You have two choices: either fall upon it and be broken, accept its verdict. And God says, "You can move on. I'll take you through." Or one day, it will crush you. A lot of Christians, because they are not able to accept what actually God says about the situation is being crushed by the word. The devil is sifting them. And God says, "My prayer, Peter, is that your faith will not fail." We cannot debate with the word. We must always agree with the word whether we like it or not. We don't even have to fully understand it. That's why Jesus said, He brought a little child and put it in from of them and says, "Unless you become like this little child, you cannot enter or receive the Kingdom." When you tell them, today's little children are, of course, different. But I'm talking about a generation back. If you told them, 'Go and brush your teeth', the child is not going to ask what and why, where and how. Nothing. Today, if you read something from Scripture, they need to know why. They need to check fifteen different commentaries to see different opinions. God says, "The little children you know, you tell them. They do it." He says, "Like a child, you and I need to approach the Word of God." I've always seen this. When men of God or women of God look into Scripture and they find something they don't like they are searching outside Scripture to justify their rebellion - a way out. Honestly, commentary is necessary not for obedience. Commentary is for deeper understanding. For obedience, I need only this(the Bible). It's very clear. God is very clear. There is nothing confusing about Him. Those who study commentaries and all the others, should only study because they want a deeper revelation of God, deeper understanding of how he dealt with other people, not for obedience. If you're ever checking other people to obey or disobey something, the Word of God check your heart. There's something wrong. Because to obey, you don't need a commentary. Israel was never given a commentary. They were given the law and the prophets. That's all they were given. And when the commentaries came, the Pharisees made life difficult for them. Please understand, we study the Word of God so that we understand the God of the word, not to choose whether obey or not. So, the first step a believer makes where he will reach the point where he denies God, he starts debating with the Word of God. He starts disagreeing with the Word of God.

Second step – even if everyone denies you, I will not. Second step is overconfidence, which comes from pride. Knowledge, experience, all this can be dangerous if you lean on it alone, even in the secular world. When you are a classroom teacher and you've taught the same subject and over and over. A new session has begun. You go like I don't need to prepare. I know my subject like the back of my hand. That's what teachers will say. Then, there is a smart fellow who will ask you a question and you have no clue what the answer is. You're teaching in your usual flow with confidence and suddenly, one new fellow puts up his hand and says, "Sir, what does this mean?" And you're like, "Where did this fellow come from? He spoiled my day." Overconfidence in any field. God had told Joshua, keep a close eye. Joshua got overconfident. Jericho fell like a pack of cards. They just overtook it. Took it all. They forgot it was God who brought the walls down. It had nothing to do with them. Nothing to do with them. And the next town is a small little town. Joshua said, "No problem. Just take three thousand men and go. There's no need to take the whole army." He never inquired of the Lord, "How do I need to fight?" The thing is that when we are facing something huge like our final exams, all the things children will ask, prayer for exams. Have you ever heard anyone of them ask prayer for class test? No. Because they say, "I can handle it." But they fail in the class test. This is our issue. In a larger perspective, when it comes to small situations, we never lean on God. I can handle it. I can handle it. I can handle it. God said, "I never asked you to handle anything on your own." Overconfidence. That's what He says in *Joshua 3:4*. Why do we need to keep our eyes on this thing? Because, you must keep, because you have not passed this way before. Nobody has seen tomorrow. Have you seen tomorrow? Not even today we are sure of. Ask Sammy in the morning the confusion. "Pastor, I don't know what to do." One place, the meeting is going on. Another place is locked.

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What to do? Stuff is there. This is locked. Calling the sisters. Nobody is picking up the phone. "What do we do?" You see, we cannot even handle today. Then, things all fell into place by 8:15. What I'm saying is, you're very confident. But God says in *Joshua*, "Be very careful, Joshua. You're going into a place and into a journey. You have never gone this way before. Don't be overconfident." Joshua was overconfident. The walk of faith is an unknown road. Even if others have taken the road, it is no the same steps. Our steps will be different. That's why the writer of *Hebrews* will tell, "Keep your eyes fixed on Christ Jesus." Jesus was clear. Otherwise, you will fall away. Peter was overconfident in his own strength. *Mark 14:29*, Peter said,

Mark 14:29

²⁹ Peter said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be."

Even if all, John I know. James, Andrew, all of them, no. But me, not possible. May be all these guys, not me. Jesus said to Peter, before the rooster cries two times, you would have denied Me three times. *Mark 14:31* What did Peter say?

Mark 14:31

³¹ But he spoke more vehemently, "If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all said likewise.

The Word of God warns over and over against pride and overconfidence. Because overconfidence is basically a symptom of pride. And this is what Scripture says in *Proverbs 16:18*,

Proverbs 16:18

¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

Before a fall, a haughty spirit. The devil knows. What does the devil know? He knows the proud from far away. Why? Because we don't realize now, we all look good. All of you smell good. All kinds of perfumes are wafting around, but you don't know, spirit gives out an aroma and the proud stink in the spirit just like the devil. He knows you from far. He knows the proud from far. You may look the most gracious outwardly, but if your spirit is tinged with pride, the devil knows that. Because pride did not start with anybody, it began with him. What are we usually proud about? Two things – either our knowledge or our beauty. Our beauty, our looks; it is good to look good. But it is terrible to put your trust in your looks. Beauty and knowledge, let us look at the devil.

Ezekiel 28:12, 17

¹² "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God: "You were the seal of perfection,(When I made you, you were full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. And then what happened?) Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. ¹⁷ "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty..."

How many beautiful people you see who are humble? They don't have to be beautiful. They just have to think that they are beautiful. Same thing for men too. How many smart people have you found who are humble? One Narayana Murthi and all will be there. All these Mallya's and all, you know how they walked. How they walked when a little money came in, suddenly everything changed. How they walked. Knowledge comes in. You don't see this.

...You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, That they might gaze at you.

Your heart was lifted up. Have you noticed all these stars – in Hollywood, Bollywood, Tollywood, Mollywood, whatever woods are there. None of them will keep other good looking ones around them. Have you notice when they walk, they will have ordinary looking people around them because they don't want attention being deflected? Next time, if you watch, observe. Unless there's an award show where they sit together and give these fake plastic smiles to each other, you will never see them in each other's company. They cannot handle it. Because their heart is lifted up by a micro-millimeter of skin complexion. That is why this is the biggest industry in the world. Why do people shop shop shop till they fall? What is our saying? "Before the fall comes the mall." Your heart has been lifted up because of your beauty and you're corrupted your wisdom. That's what God is talking about. It's very very very difficult for the fallen man to excel in something and remain quiet and remain humble. And the proud really despise others. They look down. They look down. These guys are weaklings. Even if the others, not me. Peter didn't realize he was looking down on his brethren who had served the Lord

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along with him. That's why when He talks about, Scripture says, "Esau I hated, Jacob I loved." What's the reason? Malachi talks about that.

Malachi 1:2-4

² *"I have loved you," says the Lord. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Says the Lord. "Yet Jacob I have loved; ³ But Esau I have hated, And laid waste his mountains and his heritage For the jackals of the wilderness." ⁴ Even though Edom has said, "We have been impoverished, But we will return and build the desolate places," Thus says the Lord of hosts: "They may build, but I will throw down; They shall be called the Territory of Wickedness, And the people against whom the Lord will have indignation forever.*

Who are the kind of people at whom God will be mad always? Why is He so upset with Esau, with Edom? Obadiah will give the answer.

Obadiah 1:1-3

¹ *The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom (We have heard a report from the Lord, (not from man) And a messenger has been sent among the nations, saying, "Arise, and let us rise up against her for battle"):² "Behold, I will make you small among the nations; You shall be greatly despised. (Why?)³ The pride of your heart has deceived you, You who dwell in the clefts of the rock, Whose habitation is high; You who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?'*

See, what we don't understand is, when Esau is hungry and he comes and Jacob says, "Give me the birthright and I'll give you the soup." He says, "Take it!" You know why people are very casual about spiritual things? Because they are proud. They are proud. Humble people will never debate with this. They will value the things of God because they know life and death is dependent on the mercy of God. But proud people are very casual about the things of God. And Esau was very casual about things of God. And God says, "I'm watching this guy dealing with my things and I despise him and his entire race. His pride has deceived him." You build as much as you want. God says, "I will pull it all down. I will pull it all down." God is dealing with Peter. Peter has no clue his words are being read, but did he say even if all, I will not? Overconfident. Proud. James will say in *James 4:6*, we know it very well.

James 4:6

⁶ *But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God (opposes) resists the proud, (It's like a terrible thing for a believer who's proud. It's a misnomer, but a believer who is proud.) But gives grace to the humble."*

Quite possible. Because God resists him and the devil is behind him. He's literally between the rock and the hard place. Devil is after you. God is resisting you. You're not going nowhere. God says, "I am not going to move an inch until I've humbled you, because I am humble and I will make you humble." God is humble. God is meek. One of the way God humbles and makes people meek is by allowing them to fail. That doesn't mean you are a failure. He's humbling you. If your children are rebellious, it doesn't mean you're a failure, because God is humbling you. Because He wants to interact with you at a deeper level. If you failed with your job, it's because He's humbling you sometimes. That is why sometimes you've done everything right. You've confessed. You've gone. You've prayed. You've fasted. Yet, no breakthrough is coming. God says, "Breakthrough will come, when you humble yourself. It's got nothing to do with what you are saying. I'm trying to humble you, so that I can raise you." Because He's the only one who exalts. Failing in itself does not make someone humble. Please remember that. It can also make you bitter and hard. That you will see in so people in marriages bitter and hard. Why? Because their marriage has failed. But they did not become humble through their experiences.

Either you end up blaming others or you end up blaming God like Naomi. Her life was a mess. Husband gone. Sons dead. Ten years of famine. Stripped of everything. But she's not humble yet. You cannot humble Naomi. What more can God do to humble Naomi? Nothing. She cannot be humbled. She's mad. You know what she says when she comes back.

Ruth 1:20

²⁰ *But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.*

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"The problem is not me, the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me. He was not fair to me." People become like that. All these circumstances, God allowed the devil to sift you. Through many opened doors, they came in. But through it all, God says, "If you love Me, it will all work out for your good." *All things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose.* But if you don't, it will mess you up. It will really, really mess you up. So, remember, failing itself does not guarantee that you will meek and humble. Naomi did not. Or like Cain you will end up like a wanderer. In *Genesis 4:12*, Scripture says,

Genesis 4:12

¹² ***When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you.*** (You can work work work. God says, "You will not prosper. Moreover,") ***A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.***

You know how many vagabonds are there in all the Churches? They never stick to any place. They keep on going around, going around and going around. That vagabond spirit. Because God cannot deal with that one thing in their life which God detests, that's pride. These are all people who refuse to accept. He failed God says, "If you do right, you will be accepted." No. Where is your brother? I'm not my brother's keeper. In *2 Corinthians 12:7*, this is what Paul says,

2 Corinthians 12:7

⁷ ***And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.***

He had incredible revelations of heaven which he was not allowed to share with anybody. He who came last after all the Apostles had gone farther ahead and knew more than all of them. God says, "You know what, Paul, I love You. One thing I want to do. We have conversed so much because you're a humble dude. We could talk really well, but now you so much I don't want pride to set in. So, I'm going to do something to you. I'm going to break a piece of you." Something in his life, is not going to go away. You can pray, fast, do anything. It will not go away. It will be very visible. It will keep you humble. It will keep you humble because I love you. I don't know what it was. Many theories, but nobody knows what it was. But it was clearly allowed by God and sent by the devil himself to Paul. People could get healed and everything happens, but this one thing won't go away. Paul had to humble himself. He had to really humble himself. Because God says, "Because I really love you. I don't want you to be proud." Because He had an incredible plan for Paul. He had an incredible plan for Peter. He has an incredible plan for everybody. But he couldn't use Peter as he was proud and overconfident. So, God was going to take His hand off and allow him to fall and what a fall it would be. Peter's fall was the worst among all the apostles; leave Judas alone. Terrible fall. That's why the right position to sit is to sit at His feet. That's what He said, "One thing Mary has done. It's not only that she is listening; she is sitting at My feet." Because if you sit at the floor, you cannot fall any further. That's one of the reason Jesus said; Jesus said, "You know what? I am teaching you the practical ways of humbling yourself. You go for a party. Go sit at the last seat. Don't go and immediately sit in the front seat." And then, somebody bigger than you invited and then, the MC comes and says, "Sir, please move to the back," you will be humiliated. On the other hand, you go and sit at the back and the MC comes and says, "Sir, don't sit there. Please come," you will be honoured, right? Because God is teaching us practically deal with the flesh because the flesh always wants. One thing which I always find interesting about pastors is that when you meet, (I love them, the senior pastors) "Are you a pastor?" "No, I am a reverend." Okay, reverend; there is One who is revered and reverend. How we cling to our title! How much we cling to our titles! That title has become our identification mark. Can you imagine, I told this before, Jesus printing a visiting card? What will He put? Jesus Christ – Creator of this Universe; the Word that became flesh; where is it is going to stop? And He says, "Jesus Christ – Son of Man."

We struggle and it is a really daily battle and that battle has to fought practically the ways which God has said it and you have to do it. And here is Mary, found the right position, sitting there at His feet, humbling and Martha is getting angrier and angrier; not a different context when she says, "Lord, how can You allow?" She was contemptuous about herself. You why she was contemptuous about her sister? Because once upon a time, she was demon possessed. Therefore, she considered her useless. "Now, she is sitting there and wasting time, while I am working." We always have this; you know somebody's past and his past has changed, Christ has redeemed that person and made them very nice and holy and useful, but we will judge them by their past, because we are not happy with their present. So, we will always go back and remind them of that. And God say, "You know what? The other way, Martha. One thing you don't have, she has. One thing she doesn't have." How do you remember people? By their present or their past? Because there are so many people who are

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overconfidence. Because of their beauty or their knowledge or their ability and their talents. That is what I tell the worship team members who come to me; it doesn't matter how talented you are, you can only sing, you cannot worship. To worship, you need the anointing. Without that, you cannot do anything. You can entertain but you cannot worship. To worship, you need the Spirit of God. Without Him, you cannot worship and the Spirit of God, you cannot Him easily. He is also meek, He is also humble; So, the extremely talented person, too, will be like Pastor Sharon, early in the morning; she is up, sitting and working and working and practising and working and ready before anybody.

We have two bits of talents, two days later, we come late and we take it casually. "Okay, no problem. I can manage." God says, "It won't work in My Kingdom. It simply doesn't work in my Kingdom." Couldn't Jesus have gone and preached? No, early in the morning, in the wilderness, He goes and He is crying out to the Father to get ready for today's ministry. If He has a ministry, He is preparing for that. He did not take His position for granted. He knew that, "I have to earn it." That's why Scripture says, "He was heard because of His obedience." And God says, let none of these things make us overconfident. Anything. Let nothing make us overconfident. We should always take every day as a new day, where we are entirely dependent upon God and God says, "I will come through for you."

First Step – he started debating with the Word of God.

Second Step - he was proud and he was overconfident

Third step – *Mark 14: 54*

Mark 14:54

⁵⁴ But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire.

One of the signs of trouble in a believer's life is that, those he followed Him closely, started following Him from a distance. When you know you have distance yourself from God and His visible body, the Church, you are in trouble of falling and failing Him. People who were very regular, suddenly, they slacken off. They start following from a distance. They started follow Him. The one who walked with Him for three and half years, is following Him from a distance. Why? Very careful. Sundays, we sing 'a closer walk with Thee' and Mondays, we follow Him from far away. We don't want anybody even to know that, if we are a Christian. So, we try to jell in with the crowd, in our offices. The problem is – if you follow Him from a distance, very soon, you will be sitting with the wrong crowd. There is pattern; first, you follow Him at a distance and then, a little later, you are sitting with the wrong crowd, with the very crowd; and very soon, you will be doing what the crowd is doing. Peter was sitting now and warming himself with a crowd that was hostile to Christ. The hostility to Christ is increasing day by day, everywhere.

You see the persecution in the Muslim world – China, India and all – it is a religious thing. It's a simple religious thing. Everybody is fighting for a territory, they all are afraid; religious people are afraid, if they lose 2 people what will I do? because they don't know God. Even if you lose hundred people, God and you still a majority. They don't know that. So, they are always fighting for the numbers and space. It's a religious thing. The hostility to Christ is not in persecuted places; it's in the West –the Christian nations. Hostility to the Christ, "Don't utter the name of the Christ here." Religious persecution is completely a different thing. The hostility to Christ; this is a hostile crowd. They don't like Christ for what He stands. Like Hindus running around with Saffron flag have no clue who Christ is. He's been told by his leader, "Just go," and he goes; he doesn't know Christ; but there are people all over Christian (Western, so called Christian) nations, they are very hostile to Christ. You know what the CNN Reporter interviewed, what she said about Mike Pence, Vice President of America? She said, "Mike Pence is more dangerous than Trump. You think Trump is dangerous? Because he says, Jesus talks to him." Then, immediately, all the reporters say, "He must need a mental check-up and medical check-up because he says, God speaks to him." Then, what kind of religion are you talking about? "I am also Christian. I am also believer," she claims, "but God doesn't speak to me." This is all over. This is not in persecuted nations; these are in Christian nations. Because a man stands up and says, "I pray to God and He speaks to m'", you are immediately ridiculed. In Christian nations; not in persecuted nations. It doesn't matter who you are; they will ridicule you, because they are very hostile to Christ. You follow Him far. Soon, you are sitting in a crowd that is hostile and warming in the fire that is lit by them. Your fall is very close. That is why we tell children you know, walk away in your offices, in your class rooms, in your break time, when they are sitting there doing things that mock God or mock His principles, just walk away.

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This is something which I been telling people for years, “Why do you want to go to theatre and watch a movie when most of it mocks God?” Once, one of my friend said, “James, I went to this movie, I was so agitated because in the middle, the deliberately said holy spit instead of Holy Spirit, and I walked away.” I said, “Why were you there in the first place? Those are not the places for us.” If you want to watch, watch it on your computer because you are sanctioning something by your very presence there. I am not; Hollywood is against Christ; it is not Christ. They are absolutely anti-Christ. Why should I pay for them to succeed? Why should I legitimise them by being in the presence of mocking crowd? I am not; if I want to watch through the things and at the movie which has got something good moral and a good story line and I will watch in the privacy of my home. I am not going to a theatre and sit with a crowd that are hostile and warm in their fire. No way Jose. I am not going to that place. These are the choices we make because we want to be like that crowd. That’s why I said, “Falling away doesn’t happen suddenly; it happens gradually and these are markers and these markers are very important.” Therefore, continually examine your faith; because faith is a walk.

Listen to the Psalmist, okay? Very beautifully, the psalmist puts this in *Psalm 1:1*,

Psalm 1:1

¹ Blessed is the man, who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

“Don’t walk, don’t stand, don’t sit.” Very clear. Do not walk in the steps with the wicked. Do not stand in the way of the sinners. Do not sit in the company of sinners. Where is Peter sitting now? In the company of mockers. Yesterday, you said, “I will not deny Christ; today, who are you sitting with? Company of sinners.” He started walking with the wicked; he stood with them. Soon, he sat with them and soon, what will he do? He will be cursing in the same language like them. That’s what happens to the young people. They are so under pressure, “I want to be like them.” So, they use their language to be in the crowd. Peer pressure is powerful, whether you are young or old, it’s very powerful. That’s why I teach these pastors, and tell them, “Why did all of you start preaching? Did you understand the theology? No, because you looked in the TV and you saw this man, talking and name it-name it-claim it and have radical grace and you saw the offerings coming in bags and you saw the crowds and say, ‘let me change my theology. Did people come for you? No. But you compromised. Why? You are under pressure by seeing some scenes on the TV and not defined by the Word of the God. Because you did not learn how to correctly handle the Word of God. Every two years, your doctrine is changing. You are looking for who is the current popular one on TV and then, you change accordingly.’” Peer pressure for a child or for a man of God. So much. That’s the pressure that’s upon Moses, “Change, Moses.” The pressure is as he comes down from the presence of God; his brother has compromised and changed; then Miriam and Aaron is standing over there, “You are the younger than us. We are the older ones. What do think, you are the only one God speaks through?” A little later, the entire leadership stands and says, “What do you think, that you are the only one? Our theology is also right.” It’s all about doctrine that Gods speaks through us too and he says, “No, what I have received, I received from Him. I cannot change it.” That’s what Paul says, “Tomorrow, if an angel comes and preach to you, even I myself comes and changes the Gospel, let me be cursed because this is not negotiable. This is His; not mine.” Pressure. Young people are under enormous pressure.

So many people act like Christians only on a Sunday, simply to be accepted. And then, Monday, they are somebody else. Why do you think Ananias and Sapphira tried to fool Peter? Just to be accepted. They saw Barnabas coming and selling; that’s only one, many sold and gave, nobody’s names are mentioned; only Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira. Barnabas was a godly man, he sold and gave it, they watched it and they heard he was included into leadership circle; they saw, “This is a good way.” Pressure – “I also want to join. I also want pastor to call me one of the elders.” So, the best is way is to give a big offering. Look at Peter and look at today. Today, if somebody gives a big offering, we will say, “Hallelujah, Lord. You answered my prayer,” and we include them in the decision making and they create havoc in the Church. But when the first group of people included in the Bible, Peter said, “Pick seven people full of the Holy Spirit and full of wisdom, for what? To do the refreshments, to handle refreshments.” Why? Because there was a conflict between the Hebraic, the Jewish believers and the Greek believers over the feeding of the widows. Now, you go back and do your homework and look at the names of the seven; almost all seven are Greek names; because Jewish Apostles said, “We will not allow race to be a factor; only character.” Can we do that? And not look at these factors and look into the heart of the man and say, “You know, Lord, show me trustworthy people; it doesn’t matter whether he is Telugu or Kannada or Tamil or Mallu, I don’t care; just give me people who can be trusted.” Here is the issue with the Jewish believers and Greek believers, leadership is all Jewish and they pick the next seven, who are almost all are Greek. You need to walk with God to make selections like that, humble

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before God and God speaks. That's what he is talking about because pressure is too much; because people are struggling for acceptance and they don't know the Scripture; and they haven't really experience God; where God says, "I have accepted you in the Beloved."

Eric and Joanna are sitting over there. If Eric looks at Joanna and says, "You know, Joanna, you always look beautiful to me," she doesn't have to spend two hours before the mirror every day and keep changing her costume, because the only person's approval on earth that matters to her should be Eric. But people don't dress for their husbands; they are dressing for the world to be accepted. In the same way, every believer has been accepted in Christ. You don't have to struggle for it anymore. Accepted. You don't have to give in to pressure anymore. God says, "You are accepted in the Beloved. You are accepted." Because most of the things which people do is for acceptance; while God says, "Most of the things you do should be because you are accepted already." You don't have to do anything; you do because you are already accepted. We struggle with this and that's what happened to Peter. That's what Jesus will offer this antidote to believers. He doesn't talk; He says, "Those who have come to Me, know you have accepted; I will tell you how to guard yourself from this." In *Matthew 6*, He gives the antidote. He will say:

Matthew 6:1

¹ ***"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven."***

If you want to do anything, do it secretly. That's why we say in our Church, "Please don't put your names; unless it is a cheque, by chance, somebody has put, till today, in ten years, I have no clue who gives. It is including, to be continuously faithful like that for ten years is an incredibly liberating to you. You have done this secretly. You know what? What is the reward you get from the Heaven?" Otherwise, He says, "You will not get reward from heaven." Look how consistently He says;

Matthew 6:4

⁴ ***that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."***

You will always know in your heart, "I am my Father's child and I can never change that position. He loves Me and absolutely confident in any situation." We will sing today's songs but those songs should be experienced like Habakkuk; Habakkuk has this song – "The wines have failed, the cattle (barns are empty); everything is empty; yet, I praise the Lord my God." God says, "Write it down. Make it for history because that guy knows Me. He is not performing. He knows he is accepted in the Beloved." He says, "You will know it openly, I will reward you openly."

Next one.

Matthew 6:6

⁶ ***But you, when you pray,***

God is not saying you shouldn't pray in public, but He is saying, "You should be praying more in secret before your Father and nobody needs to know about it."

...When you fast ...

See, He is making all spiritual things – giving, praying, fasting; He says, "Do it in secret where only you and your Father in Heaven know." You know what? You have an antidote to try to please people. Otherwise, what do we become? Hypocrites! What are we? We do our charitable deeds before others. You know, boss is coming. So, immediately, the sweeper begins to sweep. Next one is putting things and everybody is acting busy. Boss goes out, everybody is lazy. Boss comes back and like a machine they start working. We are like that. Boss is there we are kind to everybody. Boss is gone, we start showing our true colours. Why? It's because they really do not know Him. God says, "Everybody is fighting inside and trying by your failures I am trying to show you. You know what? This is why you failed. This is the reason why you failed. Peter will fail miserably. So, what does God say there? "Stand, don't stand, don't walk and don't sit." You know what God actually does? He reverses. The writer of *Ephesians*, Paul will say beautifully in *Ephesians 2:6*,

Ephesians 2:6

⁶ He first seats us in Christ Jesus...

Don't sit in the company of mockers remember whom you are seated with always. You are seated with Christ. Be careful how you walk. What will he say?

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Be careful what we walk in. Again, going quickly to,

Ephesians 4:1

¹ I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling, with which you were called,

Again,

Ephesians 4:17

¹⁷ This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,

On the other hand,

Ephesians 5:2

² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself...

So, He says that, "First, you are seated." This is how you should be walking and then, *Ephesians 13*, what does He says? *Walk as children of light*; then, *verse 15*, *see then that you walk circumspectly*. You see, so much is talked about walking. You are seated in Christ. So, this is how you need to walk. When you walk this way, Scripture says in *Ephesians 6:13*,

Ephesians 6:13

¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand firm against the wiles of the devil.

Because we don't heed, we are not aware we are seated and because we don't walk the way God walk where do we end up? We are not able to take a stand against the devil and he just rolls us over. So is Peter rolling over but that's not enough, right? We need an antidote. We need to come up from this mess; remember these three steps. First is – we start disagreeing with the Word of God. Like I said, to obey, you need only the Bible; to disagree, we need commentaries. You need many God channels, TVN, CBN and every channel you need to see which preacher prescribes to my disobedience; who will give me legitimacy, one signature.

That's like how children do. Dad says, "Don't go out." And then, Dad goes out. So, quietly, he goes to Mummy, "Mummy, can I go out to play?" And he goes out to play. Mummy doesn't know. Daddy comes back and asks, "How come you are here?" "Mummy told me to go." How come you are going this thing this way? Isn't this what the Bible says? "No, Joel Osteen and Joseph Prince said you can do it." And the same thing I tell you – if you don't have conviction, when somebody asks you, "Why do you do this?" "Because Pastor taught us that." No! Pastor did not teach you; it is written in the Bible. Therefore, I taught you. Until you pick what is written in the Bible, it doesn't become your conviction. I cannot live your life. You have to live this life. I can only teach you. Some of you have said it, "Pastor has told us." No, Pastor didn't tell you. He taught you from the Word. When you go to your examination and write your physics exam do you say, "Teacher told us"? You write from the physics text but when it comes to taking decisions in life, you always want to push up responsibilities to others because you don't want to go by the text because deep inside, we know that the text demands something from us. That is our problem. Don't disagree with the text it is forever settled in the heaven. *Heaven and earth will pass away not even a dot from it.*

Second thing – don't be overconfident, don't be proud. Everything we receive is a gift. What is the meaning of a gift? We don't deserve it; it was just given. When it's your child's birthday, do you go through your diary to know how many months he was good, "Did he listen to me? Okay, this year, he is not going to get." Does any father decide that? It's called a gift. Everything we get from God is a gift. Even your ability, talent, your experience, everything is a gift. Maybe you are forty years a doctor, Dr. Richard is here. He is not even forty years old but I am just saying. Let's say he is forty years a doctor and now, he is an expert. Even that was a gift because God gave him forty years to work. He could have taken him out on the first day. You could have failed on the first day of your work and they would have said, "Get out of here. We don't want you. The patient is lying dead on the table because of you," and your license is revoked. God didn't do that. Can you imagine everything is a gift? So, God said, "Don't be proud. Don't be overconfident." Because what is man? Like vapor, here and gone. Like grass, gone. Just be humble and meek. God will stretch you. He will extend you.

The third thing – don't walk at a distance. You will end up ultimately in the wrong company and end up doing what they do. That is when people play hide and seek. Don't play hide and seek with God or parents. Peter walked at a distance, next stood in their company and little later, he is sitting in their midst. For restoration, God has His own ways. Step 1, *Luke 23*, here is Peter sitting in their company in the courtyard and everything. Then, Jesus after probably after a terrible meeting. He has been beaten up; probably, His face is all swollen. Probably, His eyes are also swollen and everything from the beating is passing by and,

Luke 23:59-61

⁵⁹ *Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, "Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean."* (Peter is a waste fellow. He is one of His disciples) ⁶⁰ *But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying!" Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.* ⁶¹ *And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."*

Out in the physical, you can do anything to that man Jesus but He hasn't forgotten anything. You see, Peter must have been through one eye; the other eye is already closed because of swelling. When you and I fail, we have two choices – we can either hide it or admit it. Only two choices! Bible is very clear; in *Proverbs 28:13*,

Proverbs 28:13

¹³ *He who covers his sins will not prosper ...*

Your marriage will go down, your life will go down, your career will go down; everything will ultimately go down. You will be a wanderer like Cain. You will end up bitter like Naomi or you will end up alone; why? It's because you did not admit it. You cannot make restoration in most cases but God says, "Admit it." Even if you need mercy from a court of law. you have to plead guilty. If you plead innocent, you don't not get mercy. You know that? Even here, you won't get. If the judge is a nice person; he looks at Deepika and says, "First offence? How old are you?" "Fourteen." "Did you do it?" "No, sir." "Call the witnesses." "Yes, Sir." "Okay, let her go. Next time you come, I will throw the book at you." He lets you go. Why? It's because you pleaded guilty. If you don't plead guilty, you don't receive mercy. Lots of people are walking without mercy because they refuse to admit. It was his problem! That's what it is; Jesus didn't come into the Garden to throw Adam and Eve out. He came to restore them. Did anyone of them say, "I did it"? No, the women said that it was the snake. So, God said, "Okay, that fellow cannot deny. So, He said 'let him be cursed', you out!" All they had to do was put up their hands and say, "Lord, Oh dada, have mercy! We messed up." God would have said, "Okay. let Me see what I can do with you."

To the next fellow, "Where is your brother?" "Am I my brother's keeper?" Father ate a fruit and son killed another brother. It's going harder and harder now; you see. God says, "No, don't cover. Whoever confesses and forsakes sin will have mercy." What did the judge say? "Don't come back to my court again," meaning, don't do it again. It doesn't matter what your sin is. A woman was caught in adultery, law says, "Stone her to death." Jesus said that who is without sin, stone her. Everybody left her. Jesus asked, "Is there nobody to condemn you?" "No!" "Go, do not sin again." God said, "Okay, how many years were you lying here?" "Thirty-eight" "Pick up your mat and walk." He picked up, walked, went to the temple. Jesus met him and told him in his ears, "Don't sin again or else you will miss the mercy which you just received." Admit it and forsake it. God says, "You are free." Admitting it means to confess it to God, quit it, stop, He will give you the power to

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serve and then, after that, forget it. Accept God's forgiveness and you are free. When the Blood of Jesus cleanses somebody's sin, not even a mark or tracing is left. When you use your eraser, it still leaves marking; what the Blood of Jesus cleanses, there is nothing left because some people walk under condemnation for forgiven sin also. Why? That is a sign of pride. They won't accept God's forgiveness. "I was like that." God says, "I am telling you, you are not like that." "No, I have to remind You. Do You remember, Lord, 1977 January 22, what I did?" God says, "Don't remind Me. I have forgotten it." Admit it, quit it, confess, Blood of Jesus cleanses and then, forget; walk free; then it doesn't matter how many people write biographies or auto biographies about you; in heaven, those pages will be blank. Don't worry. Only heaven's report will matter at the end.

Abraham said two times, his wife was his sister, deceived her, he did all kind of junk things but God's report about him at last was – "My friend." That is the only thing that matters. David committed adultery, murdered a man, deception, lying and everything but at the end of God's report, "Man after My own heart." He finished his purpose, rested with his fathers, His Son's throne will be called the throne of David forever – that is the only thing that matters because that is what the blood of Jesus does but the thing you have to do is admit it, quit it and forget it.

John 16:7-8

⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you ...

People don't understand; Jesus walked with His disciples and Judas was among them. Was Judas with them? Was Judas stealing from the offertory box every day? Did Jesus ever rebuke him? No! He says, "It is good for you that I go. When the Holy Spirit comes, He will make you very aware of your sins." The day you put your hand in the money box, He will tell you that you put your hand in. The day you haven't given, He will tell you that you haven't given. Which I won't do but He will do. He will say, "Lord, Please, I wish You would come and walk with me." He says, "Better the Holy Spirit comes and tell you where you are right and where you are wrong." Jesus never caught Judas. He said, "You walk. You don't listen to the anointing, Holy Spirit that is with Me and on you; you are not going to listen to Me." Right? Did you see Zacchaeus stand up and say, "From whoever I have stolen, I give four times over"? How come you are not pricked, you are not moved? Jesus said that it was good for the Holy Spirit to come. When He comes He will convict the world of sin. This is the first thing He does. The first thing He will do in everybody's heart who is willing to listen is that, "You know you did something which is not acceptable to Me and your Father. Put that right. Admit it, stop it and accept God's forgiveness and move on. We have got some work to do together".

Second step, *Luke 22:61*,

Luke 22:61

⁶¹ And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." (What did Peter do? See one person alone knows because that man cries. I have seen him crying therefore he knows because those who don't cry don't know scripture) ⁶² So Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Everybody thinks this is a sign of weakness. This is a sign of a true man or woman of God – they weep bitterly when they sin. You don't have to do in public, you cry before God. You go cry, that is how children are. When children get hardened and are small, they love their parents in their little emotional way and when you scold them, it's enough. They start crying. You didn't even touch them; you didn't do anything to them. You tell them, "Don't take anything that chocolate. Don't take." They couldn't handle temptation and they went into the chocolate jar and ate one. Then, you have come back home; they cry and admit, "I took that chocolate." Three or four years later, "Did you take the chocolate?" "I don't know. Maybe, she took it." They have become Cain. You need to realize, old days, in Churches. there was one room just for the people who come to weep over their sins. Now, we have all dry eyes, singing and dancing. All that is good if it is true. Otherwise, it is an abomination to God. If you are walking in sin, rebellion, consciously disobeying and in rebellion with God and then, come and jump here is an abomination, should be weeping and not jumping.

But if you have wept before God, now, you don't need anybody to tell where your hands or anything, you will worship in the way God has made you. Everybody is not the same, God has made people differently. You will worship because truth will

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make you worship. You know you are free; free people worship God. It is slave who don't worship. Free people always worship God because they know from where their freedom comes from. It has come from God. This man was bound for thirty eight years. Jesus only told him, "Pick up your mat and walk." He knows he is free. He says, "You know what? I have to go to temple to worship today. Now, I need to go because I have been unbound." Freedom always brings worship. We may need to be taught how to pray; we need not to be taught how to worship. All we need is to lead people to the truth, they will worship because only free people worship. That is what he is talking about; he went out and wept bitterly. Paul will say this in *2 Corinthians 7:10*,

2 Corinthians 7:10

¹⁰ ***For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation ...***

There is always sorrow with repentance. As soon as they heard this man whom you have crucified, God has made they were cut to their heart and they said, "What should we do?" One of the reason people don't feel grief over their sin is honestly because people have no longer have any deep relationship with either man or God. So, they are not bothered if they sin against somebody or sin against God; it doesn't bother them. They don't! David loved Saul. Saul didn't love David. The one who sinned against, Saul sinned against David but David once he sinned which we won't even think he has sinned. He thought he has sinned. Man had gone into the cave to relieve himself. He is sitting at the back of the cave. He has got the opportunity to kill his enemy and get rid of him instead what he does. He takes a knife and cut a bit of his robe. He doesn't even know. Saul is gone. He is not even able to sleep. He says, "What did I do? I cut the edge of the anointed one's robe." That is his conscious. Today, people will say things, use foul language and call people name and shout. The kind of things people say, believers, after being in the Lord will make your belly go puke. They have no qualms. No issues at all. The kind of language believers use. I've heard and shut my eyes. When I hear about it, I get very upset. After these many years, you cannot. There is something seriously wrong. We don't use that languages anymore. We can deal with issues but we have to look at every person made in the image of God, whether believer or unbeliever. And if he is a believer, he is a child of God. No affection either for God or man. Therefore, there is no sorrow which can bring real change. No change. Restoration has its steps and this is the steps of God. Admit it. Quit it. Forget it.

Second – let your repentance have real sorrow. Peter went out and wept bitterly. Did he do anything? Was he the one betrayed Him? No, Judas was the one who betrayed Him. Did he tie Jesus and give him over? He didn't do anything. He just told three people, "I don't know Him." But for him, it broke him. Jesus looked at him. Like God says, "I will guide you with My eye." He looked at Peter and asked, "You don't know Me?" That was enough. He broke. That was the difference between Saul and David and Judas and Peter. That was the difference. Which group do you want to belong? Learn from Peter because today, we live in a Christian culture that celebrates sin and rebellion. Celebrates it and there are no more tears. No tears. They went outside.

Luke 22:62

⁶² ***So Peter went out and wept bitterly.***

Leave your company that causes you to sin. You need to get out. If you have to stand alone, stand alone. It's worth it. In your classroom, in your college, in your workplace, if the company is a company of mockers, walk out. Stay out. He went out from that company. That's the first step. Get out and don't stay there anymore and cry out to God. We don't want to be part of that crowd, the mocking crowd.

And then, don't stay there.

Luke 22:32

³² ***But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."***

Return. Come back. A lot of people, I've seen over and over again, when they sin, they don't come back to Church. "I will be better and then, I will come back." It's not going to happen. The only place that can make you better is the house of God. If you sin, don't run away from God. Don't run away from Church; run to Church.

Luke 22:32

³² But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail...

John 20. Resurrection Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene, poor girl; she is the only one who truly in that whole set, you have to give it to her; nobody really had affection for Him like she had. She understood deliverance. Mother did not wait; disciples did not go; brothers did not go; nobody went. She was always there and there she is.

Mark 16:7

⁷ But go, tell His disciples—and Peter...

How God knows! He knows the ones who cry. If you have come to this house this morning having cried in your closet last night over something you have done, you will hear God speak to you very clearly and you will know He is speaking to you. People don't hear on Sundays, it's because they haven't cried on Saturdays. You cry on Saturday, come here and you will see, it doesn't matter who the preacher is. We think we need preachers and eloquent preachers. No, when Ezra stood there on a podium and read the law, people broke down and cried. He didn't even preach. Ask yourself if you heard the reading of *Leviticus*, will you cry? They cried because the Holy Spirit will move on any Word. It is His Word. He will speak. "Go tell Peter." One word. "I know they have all betrayed but this guy really fell. I know he is hurting. Go tell him 'I saw your tears'."

Resurrection Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene goes. She is there.

John 20:1-3

¹ Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

You know, I wonder about this simple girl. She must be watching whatever clock they had and they were looking at it and said, "Five more minutes, six more minutes, Sabbath will finish now. Five minutes, four minutes." Everything is ready. "Five minutes, four minutes, three minutes, two minutes, one minute – let's go! Sabbath is over." Because they cannot go till Sabbath is on, right? "Let's go anoint His body." Do you come to Church like that? What did she go for? She didn't know He has risen. She didn't know she was going to receive the resurrection. What is she going for? To anoint the body. That's what happens here on a Sunday morning – the anointing of the Body. Do you rush like that? You will see the risen Lord because she was rushing to anoint the body. "This is My Body," He said. For a 9 o' clock service, if you come at 10:30, do you think you will experience the resurrected Lord? If you do, it's just mercy. There she is, early.

² Then she ran and came to Simon Peter...

It's beautiful, right? She came to Peter. So, Mary knew where Peter was. We don't know the stories. One day, in Heaven, we will know because ePeter and all of them must have been sitting there, praying and crying, "Lord, what we have done? Where are You, Lord?" Then, suddenly, she breaks in and says, "The tomb is empty."

***...nd to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."* ³ Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb.**

It is very simply written as 'went out'. It's not as it actually was – they ran. Peter ran. He ran. Come back. Run back to the Cross. Run back to where Jesus is. Don't run away. Run. Don't be angry like Cain and walk away. Don't be offended like Naomi and walk away. Run.

Resurrection Sunday evening,

John 20:19

¹⁹ Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

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Who is there? Peter is there. You see Peter. Next scene you have in the Gospel according to John is a few days later, they all go fishing. Peter said, “Let’s go fishing.” They all go fishing. They catch nothing. Without Christ, you catch nothing. Jesus is at the shore. He has cooked breakfast for them and He says, “Friend, kuch mila aaj? (Did you get anything today?)” They said, “No.” “Put the net on the other side.” The net is full. What do the disciples say?

John 21:7

⁷ Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter...

You see how humble they are! They even won’t mention their name. Can you imagine us? We will say, “I am James, Jesus’ pet-udu.” In Telugu, we will add a ‘du’ to it. Nothing. He won’t even mention it. We have to imagine and think, “Maybe, this is John.” But they will not. The fact that Jesus loved him is a huge thing – it’s a matter of pride. But they are humble. So, they will not mention their name. You decide what it is. “I know about a man, fifteen years ago, he went to the third heaven and heard so many revelations.” He won’t mention it is he. Today’s prophets, one dream; I don’t know whether it is real or not, “I went to Heaven,” it’s all over YouTube and WhatsApp – every group, they will know. These people won’t even mention their names. Understand.

...“It is the Lord!” Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea.

Did you see? They are rowing with the fish. He says, “I just can’t wait for the boat to reach the shore. I just need to be with Him.” He jumped into the sea and swam towards Him. Did you see what forgiveness does? When you have been cleansed of your iniquity, did you see what it does to you? You are rushing to Jesus and not rushing away from Jesus. He rushes and Jesus said, “Did you catch anything?”

John 21:10-11

¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have just caught.” ¹¹ Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land...

He is the one who goes again and drags them. He is so ready to obey the Lord. Even His small little wishes. This is what God’s Spirit does to you. Not only will you rush to Him, His every desire becomes a command for you. That’s why He said, “I will write My laws in your heart.” You will know. How transformation takes place! This is the man who went into the pits because of his denial and now, he is there.

And Jesus will ask him, “Peter, do you love Me?” The actual word is, “Peter, do you agape Me?” And he will say, “No, I phileo You. No longer confident – I cannot honestly say that I love You the way You love me. No, Lord. I don’t.” Earlier, he would have said, “Of course, Lord. You know I love You more than all these others.” Now, he won’t even use that term. “No, Lord. I don’t love You the way You love me.” Three times. The third time, he gets upset and says, “Lord, why are You asking me this, three times?”

John 21:17

¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.

A few days later, just a few days later, he and a group of disciples, hundred and twenty of them would be filled with the Holy Spirit. And he will stand up. What does Scripture say? The man who failed the most,

Acts 2:14

¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.

It’s the beginning of the Church. Through the man who failed most, the Church begins. Just because you have failed, it doesn’t make you a failure. There is only One who can make you a success. Go back to Him today. You are not a failure. The

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only one who can proclaim you are a failure is you yourself. God doesn't give up on anybody. We give up on ourselves. But His ways are very simple. It's not complicated. Just admit it. Go back. Admit it. Receive His forgiveness. Let there be sorrow and say, "Lord, help me to change. Cleanse my tongue. Help me to be kind. Help me to deal with issues as issues, to see the people behind it and respect and honor the people behind it but deal with issues." Issues have to be dealt. That was the wedding message – worship is your communication with God; fellowship is your communication with each other and your fellowship is what the Church is built on – doctrine and fellowship because there will be no unkind people in Heaven. If you continue that way, God will break you. If you have taken His Name, He will break you because He wants people who are all cleaned up. Before He takes you up.

How many of you cook fish the way it comes from the market? Jesus loved fish. His final episode is with fish. You clean it, scale it, wash it with salt and everything; then only, you will cook it. Why do you think you will go to Heaven the way you are? He will cut you, clean you, scale you, wash you with salt and then, take you in so that there is no stink in Heaven. If you have doubts, read *Revelation 22*. Nothing unclean will enter this city. And unclean is not what you and I think; it is what the Holy Spirit thinks is unclean and He will clean us. He will make us ready so that we can be taken.

But remember this – steps are very clear, of folly and steps of recovery. I've made it very simple with three steps. Amen? Shall we stand this morning? The final Sunday of the second month. Ten more months to go. Next Sunday, when we come back here is the first Sunday of the third month. But let's look to the Lord this morning.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we just come to You, Lord. We just thank You, Father, for today. You gave us life. One more day to put things right with You. For Your Word says, "If you confess, He is faithful." We are not putting our trust in our confession; we are putting our trust in Your faithfulness because Your Word says, "Even when we are unfaithful, You are still faithful because You cannot deny Yourself." We are coming to You, Lord, because You are a faithful God. Your very Name in Heaven is, "He who is true and faithful." If we confess, You are faithful to cleanse us of all unrighteousness. Today, I pray, Father, there will be sorrow in our lives even as the Holy Spirit shows where we have fallen – away from Your grace, fallen short of Your glory so that we will admit it and in Your power, quit it and knowing that we are forgiven, we will forget it and we will run back to You and we will serve You even in the littlest things, O Lord, Your desire will be our command because we joy, rejoice to obey You, Lord. Help us not to contend with Your Word. No one in history has ever contended with Your Word and won. For everlasting to everlasting, Your Word will stand and God is a Man of war and no one fights Him. Nations and states and civilizations that fought Your Word have passed away. Twenty of twenty-one civilizations have been wiped away by the Word of God and the Word of God still stands. And I pray, Lord, we will never ever fight Your Word. We will humble our heart to Your Word for You have exalted Your Word above all Your Name. We will not be obstinate; we will not be stubborn; we will not be proud; we will humble ourselves, Lord. Help us this morning that the youngest to the oldest, there should be clarity on how God restores His people, Lord; that we will stop following from far; stop standing in the midst of scorers and scoffers and sit and warm ourselves in their company; but we will walk out and weep bitterly for betraying You, Lord and You will have a Word for us. No longer even through an angel but through Your own Holy Spirit You will tell us, "Go tell Peter, Go tell Vijay, Go tell that person I have gone before you and I will make your crooked paths straight." Help us today, Lord, for You are a God who comes to restore, to give back all that the locusts have eaten. You are a Restorer. The devil comes to steal; You come to restore. The devil comes to afflict; You come to heal. The devil comes to weaken; You come to empower. Today, You are here, Lord. Empower here, today, that we might once again walk in Your grace that we might find joy for salvation restored and have the joy of serving You in our schools, in our colleges, in our offices, in our homes – everywhere, Lord. And I pray, Lord, above all, Lord, the young ones here and the older ones – cleanse our tongue with Your fire that the words we speak are not harsh. The words we say are acceptable in Thy sight. The working out of our salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that one day, we will have to give an account for every idle word that we have spoken. Cleanse us with Your blood. Sanctify us with Your fire, Lord, that the words we speak be words of grace. Thank You, Father. As we go into the rest of the week and to a new month, we believe, like You told the angel to tell Peter, You are going before us. You are going before us, Lord. Therefore, we will not fear about March because You are going before us. And each day, You will prepare for us so that we can stand in Your strength and testify and be a witness to the Living God, O Master. Thank You, Lord. I commit the dear brethren who are travelling tonight and tomorrow back. Thank You for them. Thank You for their lives. Thank You for bringing them to our midst, Lord. As they go, I commit them into Thy grace and I pray Your hand will be always upon them and You will continue to open doors for them and use them more and more in the days to come, Lord, because it is never over until the hour You appear, O Lord. You have much to do through each one of us, O Lord. Thank

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You, Lord. We praise You; we worship You; we glorify You. Now, by faith, we lift up holy hands and bless Your Holy Name. Thank You, Father. For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

Benediction:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with each one of us, Amen.