

There is not a person here today who hasn't been disappointed by another human being. Abused by a parent, burned by a lover, fired by an employer, betrayed by a friend; we've all been let down by someone we once trusted. There is only thing worse than being disappointed, it's being the disappointer. Try as we might to live up to the expectations of others, we fail, we fall short, we let people down, or worse, we let God down. The good news is that even when we are faithless, God is faithful. As we follow the narrative of God from the Garden of Eden to the Glory of Heaven, God keeps His promises but one of the themes hidden in plain sight is that **the failure of mankind magnifies the glory of God**. Like diamonds on velvet God's glorious grace shines brightest against the dark backdrop of human failure. There is one hero in the whole Bible, God, and it is the admiration of God that is the beginning of worship.

"The quality of our worship is enhanced as we move away from the thought of what God has done for us, and move nearer the thought of the excellence of His holy nature. This leads us to admire God. The dictionary defines 'admire' as to regard with wondering esteem accompanied by pleasure and delight, to look at or upon with an elevated feeling of pleasure.' According to this definition, God has few admirers among Christians today. Many are they who are grateful for His goodness in providing salvation, or answering their prayer in a troublesome situation. It is good and right to render unto God thanksgiving for all His mercies to us but God's admirers—where are they? The simple truth is that worship is still in infancy until it begins to take on the quality of admiration. Just as long as the worshiper is engrossed with himself and his own concerns, he is a babe. We begin to grow up when our worship passes from thanksgiving to admiration." A. W. Tozer. The closer we look at the grand narrative of the Bible the greater our admiration grows.

Today we retrace the steps of God's people on their journey home and discover that the road climbs over peaks of divine promise and grinds through valleys of human failure. Last week we saw that the people of Israel escaped captivity in Egypt and headed for the Promised Land. On the way they learned that the shortest distance between two points is a zig zag. This is a pattern repeated over and over in the biblical record. God makes a promise, man gets lost, God finds us, man gets transformed. It's not just THE story – it's YOUR story. It's not just a story of "lost and found" but "lost and found, lost and found..." (Show on White Board).

At **CREATION** God commanded Adam and Eve to fill the earth and take care of it so that the glory of God would cover the planet. They sinned and, as a result, **FELL** short of the glory of God. God was not taken by surprise. He had a plan to **REDEEM** and **RESTORE** His people. God initiates a restored relationship with fallen mankind through promises called covenants. We have seen how He initiated a covenant agreement with Abraham. Over time Abraham's descendants got lost in the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land. Once they get into the Promised Land they got lost again. Rather than trusting God they compromised and worshiped the gods of the pagan nations surrounding them. They were ruled by judges for a time while "everyone does what is right in his own eyes." Eventually God raised up His man, David, to be the king of Israel. I want you to see God's covenant with David: **2 Samuel 7:8-16...**

There are some notable features in this promise that affect you and me. There is the promise of

a permanent place, a permanent rest, a permanent kingdom. We know that these things did not happen in David's life time. They didn't happen in his son Solomon's life time. In fact, the kingdom disintegrated through civil war and the people went into captivity once again. But God, who cannot lie, will keep His promise. The covenant passed through the line of David and is ultimately fulfilled by "David's greater Son." In fact, Jesus used the promise God made to David to prove He was the Messiah. **Matthew 22:41-46**, "Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: ⁴² 'What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?' They said to Him, 'The son of David.' ⁴³ He said to them, 'Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, ⁴⁴ 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET?" (Ps. 110:1) ⁴⁵ If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?' ⁴⁶ No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question." The promise of God to restore the relationship lost in the beginning of the human story winds through Abraham and Moses and David and is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. Only Jesus can guarantee us a permanent place, a permanent rest, and a permanent kingdom. Here is what I want you to take away. Here is what I want you to admire about God. **In spite of our frequent failures God is relentless in His love for us. Even when we are faithless He remains faithful.**

If you think your past sin disqualifies you from bringing God glory, think again. Paul summarizes The Story beautifully in the New Testament: **Romans 5:18 - 21** ¹⁸ So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹ For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. ²⁰ The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The next verse precludes the obvious question, "Well, if sin brings God glory then I'll help God out by sinning." Paul says, "God forbid." God paid a high price to cover our sin, the precious blood of the lamb. His sacrifice is not to be taken lightly. He has not only provided a means of redemption but He has also provided us with a map so we can get safely home. He has given us a way to stay on course and keep growing as we travel through life. **2 Timothy 3:16-17**, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." Teaching (informing) – reproof (warning) – correction – training (disciplining) in righteousness.

God keeps His promise to bless all people through the seed of Abraham. No matter how many times we fail, God will keep His promises. This is a rock-solid truth that Paul used to motivate

young Timothy who was very unsure of himself. Like most men he was haunted by the question, “Do I have what it takes?”

2 Timothy 2:11-13, “It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; ¹² If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us;

¹³ If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.”

When we come to understand the Story, when we humble ourselves and admit our failure, then we will bring God glory. That’s the lesson Chuck Colson learned in a prison cell. Colson realized that it was out of his failure rather than his accomplishments that God used him to minister to others. In *Loving God*, he recounts how he made this discovery while speaking at an Easter service in prison:

As I sat on the platform, waiting my turn at the pulpit, my mind began to drift back in time...to scholarships and honors earned, cases argued and won, great decisions made from lofty government offices. My life had been the perfect success story, the great American dream fulfilled. But all at once I realized that it was not my success God had used to enable me to help those in this prison....No, the real legacy of my life was my biggest failure—that I was an ex-convict. My greatest humiliation—being sent to prison—was the beginning of God’s greatest use of my life.

He later concluded, *“It is not what we do that matters, but what a sovereign God chooses to do through us. God doesn’t want our success; He wants us. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of paradox, where through the ugly defeat of a cross, a holy God is utterly glorified. Victory comes through defeat; healing through brokenness; finding self through losing self.”*

What a story. What a God.