



Standing Tall Against the Fear of Rejection

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Introduction:

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself – nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance”. – Franklin Delanor Roosevelt, Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933

The fear of failure is really a fear of rejection, of embarrassment. (What will my friends say? What will my loved ones think of me?) The fear of embarrassment is the fear of the loss of respect of people who support me emotionally. And the fear of rejection is really a fear of a loss of self-worth, self-esteem, and self-respect. I can live without much money, and I can live with just a few friends, but I can never live with myself if I try and don't succeed.

Thomas Edison invented the microphone, the phonograph, the incandescent light, the storage battery, talking movies, and more than 1000 other things. On December 1914 he had worked for 10 years on a storage battery. This had greatly strained his finances. This particular evening, spontaneous combustion had broken out in the film room. Within minutes all the packing compounds, celluloid for records and film, and other flammable goods were in flames. Fire companies from eight surrounding towns arrived, but the heat was so intense and the water pressure so low that the attempt to douse the flames was futile. Everything was destroyed. Edison was 67.

With all his assets going up in a whoosh (although the damage exceeded two million dollars, the buildings were only insured for \$238,000 because they were made of concrete and thought to be fireproof), would his spirit be broken?

The inventor's 24-year old son, Charles, searched frantically for his father. He finally found him calmly watching the fire, his face glowing in the reflection, his white hair blowing in the wind. “My heart ached for him,” said Charles. “He was 67—no longer a young man—and everything was going up in flames. When he saw me, he shouted, ‘Charles, where’s your mother?’ When I told him I didn’t know, he said, ‘Find her. Bring her here. She will never see anything like this as long as she lives.’”

The next morning, Edison looked at the ruins and said, “There is great value in disaster. All our mistakes are burned up. Thank God we can start anew.” Three weeks after the fire, Edison managed to deliver the first phonograph. [Swindoll, *Hand Me Another Brick*, Thomas Nelson, 1978, pp. 82-3, and *Bits and Pieces*, November, 1989, p. 12](#)

This morning we are going to take a look at Peter and an incident that happened in his life. The story is found in the gospel of Matthew 14:23-31.

Matthew 14:23-31

After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "**Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.**"

"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "**Come,**" he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "**You of little faith,**" he said, "**why did you doubt?**"

On a stormy night between 3 and 6 am. In the middle of the sea, the disciples were fighting heavy winds when what appeared to be a ghost came walking on the rough water toward them. Peter, along with all the other disciples had to face the fear of what they supposed to be some type of spirit approaching them, and they cried out in fear.

The Lord responded to their cry. He told them to take courage in what he said to them. He identified Himself (It is I), and He instructed them to not be afraid.

I. Standing tall against fear includes finding courage in the knowledge we have.

Jesus will speak to us through His word. He will identify Himself so there is no mistaking that He is near us in the storms we go through.

What they feared to be a spirit, was Jesus Himself. Peter said to him, "If it's really you, tell me to come to you by walking on the water." The invitation was given in one word from Jesus. "COME." Peter stepped down out of the boat walked on the water, and came toward Jesus.

I don't know if Peter was more frightened at the appearance of Jesus thinking it was a ghost, or if he was more frightened at the storm. Both of these fears were very real. He may have been thinking, "What

do I have to lose. If I am going to drown, I'd rather be trying to walk on water, than stay in a sinking boat." But at that moment, he made a decision and acted on that decision.

What a horrendous position for Peter to get into. If the sea held him up, he'd be a hero. But failure seemed the more likely outcome. This is a sink or swim, do or die situation. I bet the fear factor was kicked into high gear.

II. Standing tall against the fear of rejection includes crying out to God in prayer.

It says in verse 30, "but when he saw the wind he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, LORD SAVE ME!"

It was not the fear that the Lord corrected Peter for, it was the doubt. How would this appear to the other disciples? Should Peter consider himself a failure? Would the disciples look at him as someone less than they, because he acted and sank, while they didn't act and were safe in the boat?

III. Standing tall against the fear of rejection includes being obedient to God.

Some of you here this morning have experienced the rejection of parents, or children, or spouse, or friends, because you have chosen to live for God. You may be at the edge of making such a decision and your fear holds you back. What will they do? Will they reject me for my stand of faith?

There has been a thread of truth that has been woven all through this series. It is that of *trusting God*. Is God trustable? Is His word true? Will He tell me to walk on water, and then let me drown when I ask Him to save me because of my fear or doubt? NEVER!

Listen brothers and sisters, there is no shame in trying to do something great and failing. It is much more an embarrassment if I am a coward, lacking the courage to try to do something wonderful and worthwhile. There is more self-esteem generated in honest and noble failure than there is in cowardly retreat from great opportunity!

"So I'd rather attempt to do something great and fail, than attempt to do nothing and succeed."

Most people do not achieve a fraction of what they are capable of achieving because they are afraid to try – because they are afraid they will fail.

- Babe Ruth struck out 1,330 times - but we remember the 714 home runs he hit.
- R.H. Macy failed seven times before his store in New York became a retail powerhouse.
- Novelist John Creasey got 753 rejection slips from publishers. But he also published 564 books.

Don't be afraid of failing. Instead, keep your eyes on the opportunities before you and ask God to give you the courage to keep trying!

2 Tim. 1:7 – For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Here's how to stand tall against the fear of failure and rejection.

You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing which you think you cannot do. –*Anna Eleanor Roosevelt*

Step One: Take action. Take bold, decisive action. When you act, act boldly.

Dr. Robert Schuller asks, “What would you do if you knew you could not fail? What could you achieve? Be brave and just do it. If it doesn't work out the way you want, then do something else. But DO SOMETHING NOW.”

Step Two: Persist. Successful people just don't give up. They try different approaches until they finally get the results they want. Often people give up when they are on the threshold of succeeding.

Step Three: Do things differently. If what you are doing isn't working, do something else. There is an old saying, “if you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you always got.” If you're not getting the results you want, then you must do something different.

Step Four: Treat the experience as an opportunity to learn. Think of failure as a learning experience. What did you learn from the experience that will help you in the future? How can you use the experience to

improve yourself or your situation? Ask yourself these questions:

1. What was the mistake?
2. Why did it happen?
3. How could it have been prevented?
4. How can I do better next time?

With Peter, I bet if he had opportunity to walk on water again, he would not take his eyes off of Jesus. He would not let the wind and waves strike fear into his heart and mind. He could have prevented sinking but hopefully he learned.

Step Five: Don't be so hard on yourself. Hey, if nothing else, you know what doesn't work. Failure is a judgment or evaluation of behavior. Look at failure as an event or a happening, not as a person.

IV. Things to remember in standing tall against the Fear of Failure

1. Remember, *everybody fails*

James 3:2 - We all stumble in many ways.

Eccles. 7:20 - There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

Romans 3:23 - For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

2. Realize *failure is not final*

Proverbs 24:16 (Good News) “No matter how often an honest man falls, he always gets up again.”

A key to reducing the fear of failure: redefine failure. Failure is not falling short of your goal; failure is not setting a goal.

3. Recognize *the benefits*. How does God Use Failure?

a. God uses failure to educate me.

Proverbs 28:13 (Living Bible) “A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful...”

How do I know when I have learned to fail successfully? It's when failure motivates me to keep on trying. And when I discover why I failed, I am willing to change.

“*Success does not consist in never making a mistake, but in learning from it.*”

b. God uses failure to motivate me.

[Proverbs 20:30](#) (Good News) - "Sometimes it takes a painful situation to make us change our ways."

c. God uses failure to cultivate me.

[Romans 5:3,4](#) (Living Bible) - "We can rejoice when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us. They develop strength of character..."

d. **Relax in God's Grace.**

What is the antidote to facing the fear of failure?
God's Grace

[Psalm 103:14](#) (Good News) - "God knows what we are made of; he remembers that we are dust."

[Colossians 2:14](#) (New Century Version) - "God cancelled our debt, which listed all the rules we failed to follow. He took away that record with its rules and nailed it to the cross."

The Christian life is not mistake-free but it can be guilt-free.

Conclusion:

If you want to succeed in life, you've got to let go of the fear of failure.

- Did you hit the ball the first time you took a swing with a bat?
- Did you balance perfectly the first time you tried to ride a bike?
- Didn't you learn to swim by nearly sinking to the bottom first?

The reason kids learn so fast is because they aren't afraid to fail. You learned to walk by taking a few steps, falling down, getting back up and trying again. Imagine the absurdity of a child who falls after a feeble first step and says, "I give up! I'm a failure at walking!" Unfortunately, as adults we often hold that attitude.

The *FEAR* of failure is far more detrimental to you and your life than failure will ever be. It keeps you from trying again.

Turning **our focus to Christ** and His power rather than concentrating on the sources of our fears is the first step to gaining a fixed focus of faith. "Better to do something imperfectly than to do nothing flawlessly." — Robert H. Schuller

There are some automatic failure mechanisms that we have to deal with in our lives if we wish to overcome failure and stand against the fear of it.

1. **Procrastination.** The #1 destroyer of success
2. **Negative Attitudes and Beliefs.** Tie for the #1 spot for guaranteed failure.
3. **Lack of Determination.** Success requires drive and dedication.
4. **Lack of Persistence.** Success is the result of a long process. Persistence is the key to finishing the race.
5. **Lack of Effort.** Nothing works until you do.
6. **Lack of Self-Discipline.** You must be willing to sacrifice those things that would keep you from your goals.
7. **Fear of Failure.** Actually, an ego that fears shame and embarrassment. There is no shame in honest effort, regardless of the outcome.
8. **Fear of Success.** Actually, fear of the responsibility of success, or the fear of being incapable of maintaining it - becoming a "has-been".
9. **Over caution.** Truly a lack of confidence.
10. **Inability to make a decision.** Not making a decision is a decision unto itself. Since a decision must be made (even the decision not to make a decision), why not try for a good one?

Once you have identified which, if any of these are culprits in your life, simply replace them with the opposite traits.