

2 Peter 3 There's Hope For Someone Like Me J.D. Farag

KAPONO: Would you join me in a word of prayer? Heavenly Father, thank You so much, Lord. We thank You that we can gather in Your house this morning, Lord. We thank You for Your word and Your teaching. So would You be with us, Lord? Would You calm our spirits, Lord? Would You settle any anxieties or just anything that's going on within us, Lord, that we may be able to focus on what You have for us, Lord, in *2 Peter*, Lord.

So would You speak to us? And we thank You for this time that we can gather here all together, Lord, and praise Your name. We ask this in the mighty name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

PASTOR JD: Amen and amen. Good morning and welcome. You can remain seated if you want for the reading of God's word, or you can be seated. Did I say seated? Wow, let me try that again. Hold on. [Laughter]

Good morning. Welcome. You can remain standing if you want for the... Wow. It's going to be a rough one today, huh? verse-by-verse, literally today, because we're going to start in *verse 15* and make it all the way through *verse 15*.

I'm not in a hurry, as you can tell, to finish this book, which, Lord willing, we will next week. But I think you'll see why here in a moment. So *verse 15, 2 Peter*, the Apostle Peter by the Holy Spirit writes, ***"Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him."***

All right, let's pray. If you would, please join with me. Father, thank You so much. Oh, Lord. Lord, we're so grateful to You for Your word and this portion that we have before us today here in Your word. But we readily admit, humbly confess, that absent the Holy Spirit, we're not going to get it. We're not going to see what it is that You have for us today and want to show to us today. Nor are we going to have ears to hear what the Spirit wants to say to us today. So Lord, will You as only You can and are always so faithful to, just keep the distractions away, get our attention, keep and hold our attention.

That's You, Holy Spirit. That's not me. So once You've got our attention, Lord, then speak into our lives. Speak Lord, Your servants are listening. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen and amen.

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Now you can be seated. It's been a rough week. But there's hope for people like me. That's actually what I want to talk about. It's arguably one of the most encouraging truths in all of Scripture concerning hope, and it's namely that there is always hope even for someone like me, which is what the Apostle Peter has just written and is now going to show us vis-à-vis the Apostle Paul.

So let me try that again and say that again. The Apostle Peter is going to demonstrate for us that there's always hope, even for someone like me. And he's going to do that by way of the Apostle Paul. If you'll kindly allow me to, I want to share with you from this verse that there is always hope. Never give up on anyone whom you might see as being a lost cause. Because, by the way, you were that person. Are we good?

There's always hope. There's always hope for the one that you would think would be the last one on earth that there could ever be hope for. Why? Because that's who God is and that's how God is. So here in *verse 15*, Peter is reminding us about the patience of the Lord, because "it's not His will that any should perish, but that all should come to salvation."

And then, as a perfect example of just how patient the Lord is, Peter brings up, quote, "our dear brother Paul" who wrote With God's wisdom. So the Apostle Peter is using, you'll forgive the illustration, as the poster child, the Apostle Paul who was known as, also known as, one Saul of Tarsus.

And that's the guy that Peter is going to use. I'm sorry. I totally would not have done that. No, I would have picked somebody else. I'm just saying. And you probably would have, too. So the question is: Why would Peter use Paul of all people as an example?

I mean, you would think that this would be the last guy that Peter in his parting words, no less, by the way. His last letter that he would write. And he knows that. And he's going to bring up Paul and write about "our dear brother Paul." In *Galatians 2:11-21*, this alone, stand alone would be why I would not have used Paul. We're told that Paul opposed Peter to his face, publicly concerning his hypocrisy in front of everybody.

Paul is in Peter's face calling him out. Doubtless, calling him a hypocrite. I'm like, forget that. I'm not using Paul as an example, just for this. And if this weren't bad enough, this is the same guy that was an enemy of the early church.

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This was the same guy that persecuted the Christians and had them killed thinking that he was helping God out by getting rid of them. And Peter's going to use him as an example? So back to our question, why? Why would Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, use someone like this as an example of the Lord's patience?

Because the Lord's patience meant there was hope for this guy that was having Christians killed. And if there's hope for someone like him, there's hope for someone like me. Not only did the patience of the Lord lead to the salvation of Paul, so too did it also lead to profoundly and powerfully using Paul. I mean, think about it. The Apostle Paul.

God would choose to use to write the majority of the New Testament. The Apostle Paul. See, I wouldn't have chose him. And again, neither would have you. So don't look at me all spiritual like you're looking at me right now. I certainly would have picked somebody else. I mean, after all, this guy was killing my people, having them killed.

Let's – who else we got? But see, as the Apostle Paul would write by the Holy Spirit to the church in Corinth, “God chooses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, and He chooses the weak to shame the strong.” Why does God do that? What does God choose to use someone like this? And if there's hope for someone like this, then certainly there's hope for someone like me. Why does God choose someone like this? And why is there hope for someone like this? And why is there hope for someone like me?

Because then only God gets the glory, right? I mean, there's no way, even if you wanted to, that you could ever give credit to this guy. You're looking at this guy going, only God could do that. That's the point. Only God can take Saul of Tarsus and make him Paul the Apostle.

And aren't you glad He did? And oh, by the way, that should give us all hope for that one in your life. And right now they come to mind as I'm saying this. At least I hope they do. You've been praying for them for years. Never give up on them. Yeah, but it just, it just seems so hopeless. Oh, really? You might want to ask Paul about that. In fact, while you're at it ask Peter about that, too.

Well, wait a minute. Didn't Peter and Paul kind of have a testy relationship? Apparently not. I think we do err greatly when we kind of read into it. I think that Peter respected

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Paul for having the spiritual spine. And the wounds of a friend are faithful and can be trusted. This Peter is not the same Peter in the Gospels, by the way. This Peter has grown in grace and matured in Christ.

And so whenever this exchange happened, and this confrontation took place between Paul and Peter, Peter appreciated it and so much so that the Holy Spirit would inspire Peter to use Paul as an example, an example of God's grace, God's mercy, God's love, God's patience.

Listen, we want God to be patient with us, but we're impatient with everyone else. Oh, come on. Let's be honest. We want God to be merciful to us, but we're not merciful to others. Can I invite you to join me in Luke's Gospel, the 6th chapter. We're going to be in Luke again later. You might want to keep your finger there. I want to begin reading in verse 27. Jesus is speaking. This is going to sound familiar as well it should.

He says, ***“But I say to you who here: [That’s interesting] Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.”***

Okay, we've got a problem right there. I haven't even got to *verse 29* yet. Wait. This is describing someone like Paul. Paul was the enemy. Paul hated the Christians. Paul was cursing them, having them killed. And Jesus is saying to those who will hear, that's a qualifier, by the way, love them, do good to them, bless them and pray for them.

Stephen, as Paul is there, by the way, recorded in the Book of *Acts*, the first martyr. I am of the belief that Paul signed off on it, endorsed it, approved it. Approved the death of Stephen, who was stoned to death after preaching the Gospel. And Saul of Tarsus was just, I mean, being chewed up from the inside out.

And there's Stephen before he takes his last breath. No doubt he knows who Saul of Tarsus is. And he's there. Right there. And he prays. He prays as the Savior prays, “Lord forgive them for they know not what they do.” I truly believe he prayed for Saul's salvation. And God heard that prayer and God answered that prayer. Let's be honest with ourselves. Wouldn't you agree that I'm not really interested in praying for Saul of Tarsus?

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I'm praying against him; not for him. But Jesus said no, pray for them, because, see, when you pray for your enemies, your heart changes toward your enemies. Because prayer changes the pray-er. It changes us. Now, *verse 29. "To him who strikes you on the one cheek..."*

Beat them mercilessly. Oh, that's not what it says. [Laughter] I'm sorry. That was the JDV. You'll forgive me. *"To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back."*

That's us. You find out that somebody doesn't like you. Well, I don't really like them either. Oh, but conversely, you hear, hey, you know, somebody really likes you. Well, as a matter of fact, I'm pretty fond of them, too. What credit is that to you?

"But love your enemies, [Verse 35] do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil."

Romans 2:4 "It's the kindness of God that leads a man to repentance."

I've actually been toying with the idea of doing a topical teaching just on the topic of kindness. Just kindness. Oh, would the God that we as God's people were kinder.

So it's been said that you can always tell the spiritual maturity of a Christian, when they give to someone something, expecting nothing in return. When you do what Jesus says to do here, God takes notice. And God will be the debtor to no man. He's got a ledger. He keeps track. He keeps perfect books, by the way.

And so He notices that you've done that, and He knows that they cannot return to you what you've given to them. So He makes note of it and He rewards it in ways that you could have never imagined. But I want to draw your attention to *verse 36*, because it's

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really the gist of what I believe the Lord wants us to see in this verse in 2 Peter 3:15. He says, ***“Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, [Pack it in] shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”***

All right, let's get back to Peter. You see what Peter's doing here? What Peter did here? He's doing exactly what Jesus said to do here. He is the recipient of such mercy. Why? Because He was so merciful. He's the recipient in the same measure that he was gracious, he's the recipient of grace.

And by the way, I think I'd be grossly remiss were I not to point this out, but this has been taken so far out of context by many a money grabbing, name it, claim it, blab it, grab it, you know, sorry, faith teacher. You know, give! There's somebody out there that has a, you know, and it will be given to you: pressed down, shaken together!

I don't think that's what this is about. If I'm not mistaken, it's in the context of mercy. In other words, the measure of mercy you show will be the measure of the mercy that is shown you. It works across the board.

Let's insert the word patience. The measure of patience that you use will be the same measure of patience that you receive. Put any word you want in that equation, and it works. You know, we pray, God, be merciful to me. Okay. You're not merciful. When the Lord taught us to pray, it's effectually referred to as the Lord's prayer. It's not really the Lord's Prayer.

It's our prayer that the Lord taught us to pray. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who have trespass against us. Now, stay with me on this. When I understand and embrace how merciful God has been to me, how much that God has forgiven me. And what, I'm going to withhold forgiveness from someone else? Why is that? I believe one reason is, is that I fancy myself and think more highly of myself than I ought.

And in so doing, I look down on them. And that's the problem, isn't it? And we need to talk about it. We're all prone to fancy ourselves as being better than others. And when

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this happens, what ensues is what always ensues, which is that we become full of ourselves and as such, full of pride.

And we completely disregard the grace and mercy God has shown us, which explains, it doesn't excuse, it explains why we're not gracious and merciful to others. Listen to what the Apostle Paul wrote in *Romans 12:3*. ***"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith."***

In other words, you need a change in your perspective. Because somewhere along the line, you fancied this notion, Hey, I'm good. No, you're not. Who do you think you are? Let's go back to Luke. This is a parable, Jesus speaking *chapter 18:9*. ***"Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others."***

Right there. That alone. When you think you're good and you're full of self-righteousness, full of yourself, full of pride, of course you're going to despise others. I mean, it's a package deal, right? So here's the parable. Now, before – I need to preface this parable. If you'll just kind of hang in there with me because I'm going to include myself in this, I'm just as guilty as the next guy in doing this.

When you read a parable like this, when you read a passage of Scripture, you always shed yourself in the most favorable light. So this is one of those contrasting parables. And there's the bad guy and the good guy, right? And we're always the good guy.

Come on. Am I right? Okay, let's talk about what I call the contrasting proverbs in the teens. You know, the righteous do this, but the wicked do this! And you're like, those wicked people! No, you're the wicked people! You think you're so righteous.

No, that's you! I'm going to take this one step further. Why not? Here's how you can tell. And don't look at the person sitting next to you when I say this. You just did this.

(Chuckle) It's like, don't think of a, you know, elephant. And you think of an elephant, I guess. But you look at this person and you look down on that person and you think of that person that they're the sinner and you're the righteous.

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And it's called pride. And the way you can tell, is with a sermon like this, you think to yourself, So-and-so needs to hear this. I'll send them the link. Telltale sign. Well, this isn't for me. It's a great handling of the passage, Pastor.

Oh, I wish so-and-so were here to hear this. Actually, you know what? You need to hear this. All right, so here's the parable. ***“Two men [Verse 10] went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.”***

Stop right there. You mean to tell me, I've got a religious leader and an IRS agent? Yeah. Just to, again, put it into perspective. Well, of course, the Pharisee, the religious leader, is righteous. (Making a holy sounding tune) Right? And then you've got an IRS agent? What's he even doing there?

So **verse 11. *“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, [Listen to this prayer] ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men – extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as [This is so interesting] this tax collector.”*** [Over here next to me that's praying to You too] I think there's a word here. There's a takeaway here.

When we pray and you're thinking about somebody else and you're praying like this. Oh, and it's going to get worse in **verse 12. *“I fast twice a week. [Bowing motions and saying, I'm not worthy] I give tithes of all that I possess.”***

Translated – This is his prayer, you guys. This is the religious leaders prayer. Translated: Thank You, God, that I'm not like the rest of those wicked, dirty, rotten, stinking sinners, like this guy over here. I wonder, did the IRS agent hear that prayer? I don't know.

We're going to find out in **verse 13** because we're told, ***“the tax collector, standing a far off, [Maybe he couldn't] would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven.”***

Please use your God given imagination and picture the scene here. I mean, he's actually kind of distancing himself, not close in proximity to this religious leader. Perhaps thinking himself unworthy to even be close in proximity to this religious leader. I mean, after all, everybody knows he works for the IRS, right? So he's kind of a standoffish.

And I just can't – the contrast is so stark. Because you got to know the Pharisee's praying like this: Thank You, God. Chest out. Nose up. I'm not trying to overdramatize it here. I'm trying to make the contrast here, because that's the point of the parable.

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It's to contrast this guy with this other guy that's over here. He's on his face, beating his breast. What is his prayer sound like? "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" Notice the Pharisees prayer was pretty elaborate and I would argue even eloquent. And what's this guy's prayer?

God, please be merciful to me! And he's beating his breast and he won't even look up. His face is just flat on the ground. And listen to what Jesus says, **verse 14. "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. [And here's why. Listen very carefully.] For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted."**

What if I told you that God is humble? Does that jam your gears? Now think about this. He's all powerful, all knowing, all present, and yet He's humble. He's not just powerful. He's all powerful, yet humble. Think about when Jesus was here, which I'm convinced this is the reason why children were attracted to Him, flocked to Him, not intimidated by Him.

He was approachable. What was it about the Savior that was so inviting to young children that they would want to run to Him? Children don't run to me; they run from me. What was it about the Savior's countenance and His disposition? It must have been so much love, humility, kindness, there's that word again, and gentleness, compassion.

The children would want to come to Him. He was meek. Please, please, please, I beseech you. Never make meek synonymous with weak. This is God incarnate. This is fully man, fully God. He had at His disposal all of the power of God Almighty.

And yet to be meek is to have power under control. Could you imagine being all powerful and still being humble? We know nothing of this. This is foreign to us. It's been said that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

That's power and yet He was humble. Replete throughout Scripture, particularly in the aforementioned Book of Proverbs, you'll find passage after passage that paints for us this picture on the canvas of man's pride. And the picture, it's an ugly picture. So ugly is pride that God says, Get away from Me! I know the proud from afar off.

I cannot even be around pride because I'm humble. And isn't it true, when you put humility next to pride, it just comes screaming out? The pride becomes even more proud

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and the humility becomes even more humble because of the contrast. He knows the proud from afar off.

James says, **"He resists the proud."** Listen, I got a lot of things against me. The last thing I need is God resisting me. But do you realize every time you have an attitude of pride, you're harboring pride in your heart, God is resisting you.

God is resisting you. He afar off from you. You know that one proverb that says, **"Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up."** I hope you don't mind; I personalized it. Again, this is the JDV. I had to because I have a Ph.D. in pride. I'm very humble about my pride. I'm very proud of my humility, too. Just ask me. I'll tell you. So I've had to personalize that particular proverb.

So now for me it reads like this: JD, humble yourself in the sight of the Lord before He does it for you. No, for real. Because pride, last time I checked, still precedes the fall. And here, Jesus is reiterating this profound principle.

By the way, this is a principle you don't break. It breaks you if you go up against it. It reminds me of that great illustration. At sea, the captain of the ship comes upon a light in the distance and radios ahead and says, This is, you know, Captain So-and-so. And he rattles off his rank and he says, Change course.

We're heading in your direction. And the answer comes back something like this, very loosely paraphrased. I'm not changing course. You change course. Oh, now the captain's incensed. You don't know who I am? I'm the captain of this ship. I'm not changing course. You change course. And the response comes back, Oh, we're doing this. No, actually, with all due respect, Captain, man, you're going to change course. You want to know why? I'm a lighthouse. I'll give you a moment on that one.

I know it's pretty deep. That's what God's word is. The principles, the truths of God's word. You don't go up against them. If you do, you don't break them, they break you and they humble you. And this is one of those principles.

Oh, you're going to exalt yourself? You're going to think more highly of yourself? You're going to, well, you're going to be humbled. Here's an interesting thought. It's not a play on words. You know that humility comes from humiliate? Have a nice afternoon.

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Did you catch that? It's a humbling, a humiliating that you bring upon yourself every time you exalt yourself. Now Pastor, where are you going with this? (Bumbling his words) I got whiplash here. We were in 2 Peter 3:15. You got me in Luke and you got two guys, and one of them's an IRS agent.

How does this all fit in? I'm very glad you asked. Here's the answer: Peter humbled himself. And so too would the Apostle Paul also humble himself. You know what the lost art in the Christian church is today in these last days? In a word: Humility. Humility. Do you realize that when you're rooting for the underdog, which we want to root for the underdog, right? It's because of their humility.

I rarely use – I'm pretty stingy when it comes to using movies as an example, but I can never pass up the opportunity to use the example of Rocky. I'm not talking Rocky 28. I'm talking about the very first Rocky movie.

And you've got Apollo Creed. And over here, you got Rocky Balboa. Southpaw out of nowhere. You know the entry, oh, the pomp, the pride, you know. (Humming an upbeat tune) are you getting a flashback again? I mean, he comes in and you know, the band's playing, and then here comes... Who's that guy? Instead of the who's who, it's, who's he? Oh, that's so nice of Apollo Creed to give this guy a chance. Oh, it's just a show. It's just a, you know, we're just going to put on a show for the people, you know? Nobody has any hope that this guy is going to win. Then he comes in and it's kind of like, Oh, no, you're going the wrong way, sir. You need to walk down this.

You know, everybody's still praising Apollo Creed. Beginning of the fight. You know, everybody's: Apollo! Apollo! Halfway through: Rocky! Rocky! Rocky! At the end of the movie, we want I mean, maybe I should just speak for myself, we want Rocky Balboa to basically rip to shreds this Apollo Creed.

He's the underdog. Why are we rooting for him? Because he's like, Oh, thank you, Apollo. What a profound privilege it is to be in the same ring with you. Oh, that's humility. That's what that looks like. And then here's pride over here in this corner. Let's get ready to rumble! That's because humility is attractive and pride is repulsive.

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If there was anything that you could say about the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul and the reason to answer our question at the beginning that the Apostle Peter would be inspired by the Holy Spirit to use the Apostle Paul as an example of the Lord's patience.

No, everybody's given up hope on that guy. No, there's hope for that guy. God can change that guy. If there's anything that could be said about these men of God, it's that they were humble. Humble. Now, Peter, I have to mention one more thing about Peter, because we've gotten to know him, haven't we? Very different guy than the Peter in the gospels again, right? How many times was he humiliated in the Gospels?

How many times was he humbled? Do you know that every time that he was humbled, he had exalted himself? Can I just use one example? How about – well, there's so many. Yeah, let's just go with the – no, that ones the – there's so many. Okay, Caesarea Philippi, there, we'll use that one.

For those of you that have been to Israel with us, you've been there. Okay. So He takes, Jesus takes the disciples to Caesarea Philippi, very demonic place. They worshipped the god, Pan. It was the gates of Hades. And that's where we get the word “panic.” It was a fearful thing. And Jesus takes them to this place, and He asked them this question: “Who do you say that I am?”

And now here's Peter puffed up. You are the Son of God, the Christ, the Savior, the Messiah. And Jesus is like. Good answer, Peter. I wonder, I know it's not in the narrative, but I just wonder if he looked back at the other disciples and said, Did you hear that? I got it right. Look at you guys, you're going, (Mumbling sounds). Good answer, Peter. And then just a few verses later, Jesus says to Peter after he exalts himself, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” Every single time Peter exalted himself in the Gospels, he got humbled. I think it worked. So here's this man now, he's grown, matured. He's a humble man. He's not the same guy that he was back then.

And he's also not the same guy that Paul had to confront back then. Because, you see, what comes with humility is teachability. Let me expound on that just real quick and then we'll close. To be teachable is to be humble. You cannot separate them. Correctable. See, Peter had to be corrected.

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You have to humble yourself because see, if you're full of pride, 'Who are you to say that to me!' After all, I was one of the A-postles. You're a B-postle. [Laughter] No, right? Because Paul had to defend his apostleship. You can see it in the letters. That's another sermon for another time.

But Peter surely could have used and played that card. He didn't. He received it. How come he received it? How was he able to receive it? Because he humbled himself. Listen, he could only be humiliated so many times before you finally think, you know what, it's not worth it. (Chuckle) I think humble mo' bettah. It's better to be humble. Because when you're humble, then you're exalted.

You know that you can take this and flip it around. Every time Peter was exalted was when he was humble. And that goes for every single one of us. And throughout Scripture, you see it time and time again. And James brings it up in a very dramatic way. And he uses the illustration of somebody walking in to, like, a church service like this; they think they're all that. And they walk in with the bling. And they come in and they take the seat that has the reserve sign on it. Just hang in there with me on this, okay? They sit up there. (Looking proud) Then someone has to come to him and say, Sir, I'm so sorry, but this is not your seat. This is for somebody else. You need to go to the back and find another seat. That's a very long walk. I know we don't have a very long sanctuary, but that would be a very long walk because everybody's looking at you like this. How embarrassed are you? You've exalted yourself and now you've been humbled. Every time in Scripture, you see humility, you see God exalting them.

And conversely, every time you see somebody exalting themselves, you see God humbling them. Here's the bottom line. There is hope. Never give up. If God can do that for even Peter. See, I don't know about Peter either. Forget Paul for a moment. I don't know about Peter. I mean, he gave me a lot of heartburn in the Gospels, right? I mean, he's always the one. How about the time he walked on water?

He gets so much bad press for that. I mean, you know, we always talk about, you know, he took his eyes off of Jesus and he started sinking and he prays a three word prayer. Thank God He answers three word prayers, "Lord, save me" as he's going down and the Lord saves him.

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And we come down pretty hard on him. I've even heard someone humorously, it's only humor. Just get over it. Humor is serious, but it's still humor. Someone suggested that when he took his eyes off of Jesus, when he's walking on water, it was actually to look back at the disciples to say, check it out guys, I'm walking, and then he started sinking because he was all proud that he was walking on water.

Pastor, what are you talking about? What's your point? My point is, is that pride always leads to the fall. But these men, Peter and Paul, both were humble men. And yes, they're probably the last guys you would ever think that would have any hope. But God. Look what God did with these guys. You look at just the life of the disciples that God called, I would have absolutely not called them.

I would've totally went with 12 different guys. I especially wouldn't have called Judas, who, by the way, had the most impressive resume, seriously. But you know, Jesus prayed and fasted all night before He called the disciples. That should tell you something right there. So let me close. Some of you are saying, please. I want to do something a little bit different. I want to share with you a recent entry of mine in my prayer journal.

And I do so with the hope that it will be an encouragement to you. Because it comes from a guy, me, who's been on the receiving end of God's mercy and grace and love and kindness and compassion and long suffering. And if there was ever a guy that you would think, there is no hope for that guy, that guy was me.

And look what God did. I don't know if you know this about your pastor, but it's not an impressive resume. I don't even have a resume. God chooses the foolish things to confound the wise. So when you say to me, wow, pastor, that was really amazing. Well, praise the Lord. I didn't have anything to do with it. Wow. Where did – I always love this one.

Where did you go to Bible College. I barely graduated high school. What are you talking about? So only God gets the glory. I just want to share with you this entry. It's just from the heart. I did have to edit it because when I talk to the Lord it's a little bit more sappy.

“Jesus, thank You for being so merciful to me, in Your unfathomable and incomprehensible grace for me. Your patience and long suffering with me, and more importantly, Your absolute, unconditional, agape love of me. Now Jesus, help me to be

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merciful too, have grace for, be patient with, and more importantly, have Your agape love of others.”

I want to do what Peter did here. I want to be like Peter to a Paul and vice versa. Kaponu, come on up. Why don't you stand and we'll pray. Father in heaven, I (Sigh) It is amazing grace that saves a wretch like us. For those for whom the world would say there is no hope, You say otherwise. Because You are able. You can take anyone and do anything. You're the God of hope. There's always hope.

Lord, I pray for anyone who might be discouraged. That discouragement is giving way to hopelessness and hopelessness is giving way to despair. I pray that You would just rush in as only You can and are always faithful to and encourage and strengthen their hearts. Renew their hope, not in themselves, but in You Lord. That we would all be numbered amongst those of whom it can be said, My, how they put their hope in the Lord. No one who puts their hope in You, Lord, will ever be disappointed. Thank You for hope. In Jesus' name. Amen.