

Falling Forward – How to Fall Forward (Series Summary)

April 2, 2017- Pastor Randy

There are four steps to falling forward. You must:

1. Define the kind of Fall.
2. Discover Hope. (Your fall is not the final word!)
3. Discern THE Move Forward
4. Determine TO Move Forward

1. Define the kind of fall in order to determine the correct response.

Is it due to misfortune, a mistake, or a misstep (sin)

Misfortune – “Falling on hard times”. It is dangerous to confuse a fall that is due to misfortune as if it was a misstep. Years ago a family moved into the community where I was pastoring and began to attend and get involved in our church. As I got to know them and began to develop a relationship with them I came to learn about a terrible misfortune they suffered several years earlier. The wife was pregnant. Following a prenatal examination, they received some heart-wrenching news from the doctor. The child the wife was carrying had a severe health issue that the Dr.’s predicted would result in a still birth. They decided to trust God and she carried the baby to term, praying for a miracle. The baby did not survive. This terrible misfortune was exacerbated by Christian “friends” who told this mother that the reason the baby was not healed was either because the mother did not pray with enough faith OR she had unconfessed sin. In other words, this mother was told that she was to blame. I served as her pastor for several years and I witnessed first hand the anguished battle with false guilt which tortured her soul.

Mistakes - Non-moral failures (failed attempts/accidents/forgetfulness) If we misperceive our mistakes as missteps we will become victims of false guilt. If we misperceive them as misfortune we will fail to recognize our responsibility for them and miss out on the opportunity to learn from them.

Missteps – Sin. Steps in rebellion against God's will.

If you mistake your misstep for misfortune you will end up falling further, rather than falling forward. If we deceive ourselves, treating the consequences of our sin as misfortune, failing to recognize those consequences for what they are, we will miss out on blessing of forgiveness

and the benefit of repentance. When Jonah was running from God, God appointed a storm to turn Jonah back. Fortunately, Jonah recognized the storm for what it was: God's means of stopping Jonah from his rebellion. If he interpreted his circumstances as misfortune, he would have continued in the wrong direction.

2. Discover HOPE. Your fall is not the final word!

You might be down but you are never without hope.

A. Hope for your missteps.

If we have fallen into sin we need to do what the word says in 1 John 1:8-2:2

"If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.

My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world."

1) There is hope of forgiveness. Acknowledge it & seek God's forgiveness. Someone might ask, "Do I need to ask God's forgiveness every time I sin?" Why wouldn't you? You do not lose your status as a child of God every time you disobey and sin against God, but it does affect your relationship with him. My sons did not have to ask for my forgiveness if they disobeyed me, but if they loved me they would. When I sin against my wife she does not threaten to leave me unless I apologize, but if I love her I will apologize and seek her forgiveness. Confession and forgiveness are expressions of love. For true restoration and reconciliation to occur in both our relationship with God and our relationships with people, there needs to be an awareness of and acknowledgement of the offense we are seeking forgiveness for. Imagine the scenario of a husband who becomes aware that his spouse is angry at him, but has no idea why, and he really doesn't want to find out. All he wants is for the tension to go away. He says, Honey, I don't know what I have done but "whatever" it is, "I'm sorry." Don't be surprised if that apology is not accepted.

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You can't apologize and be forgiven for "whatever"! We can only repent of offenses we can define. We can only be forgiven of offenses that have been clearly defined. Confession needs to be specific!

2) There is hope of renewal. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from wickedness". John reminds us that God offers us the hope of being relieved of our guilt, and the hope of renewed attitudes, affections, and actions. The beauty of the gospel is that it not only offers the hope of forgiveness and justification, but it is also the promise of the new creation! Jesus offers us the hope of forgiveness and freedom.

A. Hope for your misfortune and mistakes.

Hope is one of the most vital keys to living an abundant life; especially in those moments when disappointments have knocked us down. Hope is "having something to look forward to".

In the midst of trials and difficulties -whether they result from misfortune, mistreatment, or mistakes – there are two reasons to have hope.

1) Hope in God's plan to do something good in you and through you.

Romans 8:28, 29 *"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters."*

James 1:2-4

"Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing."

In each of these passages we have good reason to hope because God is working in and through all things for the good of his people who have been called according to His purpose; His will for us to become like Jesus!

2) Hope in the future glory we will experience with Christ.

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1 Peter 1:6-7; 13

“So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.”

“So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world.”

Peter was writing to Christians who were suffering persecution. He encouraged them by reminding them of what they had to look forward to when Christ returned. His point was, “We can be glad even in the midst of trials because we are excited about what lies ahead.” Remember, hope means having something to look forward to. The man who believes that his best days are behind him is a miserable man. The man who places his hope in the pleasures and the glories of this present world has set himself up for frustration, disappointment, and disillusionment, because he has unrealistic expectations. He is expecting temporary, earthly realities to provide what only eternal, heavenly realities can provide. Paul communicated this same truth when he wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:17,

“For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!”

Once you have defined the kind of fall you are experiencing and you have discovered your source of hope, you need to:

3. Discern THE move forward.

When Zaccheus encountered Jesus and became the recipient of His grace and acceptance his move forward was to return any monies he had stolen from people and to become a giver rather than a taker. In Matt. 5:23-24, Jesus taught his disciples that if, in the act of worshipping God, they became aware that they had sinned against a brother they should stop worshipping immediately and go make right the wrong. When Paul experienced the

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misfortune of rejection and persecution he didn't dwell on it; he sought out those who would accept the gospel. When I say you need to discern THE move forward I am stressing the need for action, but not just any action. You need to follow the guidance of the Spirit to take the correct next step!

The story of Larry Walters flight over Los Angeles in 1982 while sitting in a lawn chair with 45 helium balloons attached to it has been retold with various conflicting details. According to snopes.com here is the "true version":

"The incredible flight of Larry Walters, a 33-year-old Vietnam veteran and North Hollywood truck driver with no pilot or balloon training, took place on 2 July 1982. Larry filled 45 weather balloons with helium and tethered them in four tiers to an aluminum lawn chair he purchased at Sears for \$110, loading his makeshift aircraft (dubbed the "Inspiration 1") with a large bottle of soda, milk jugs full of water for ballast, a pellet gun, a portable CB radio, an altimeter, and a camera. Donning a parachute, Larry climbed into his chair from the roof of his girlfriend's home in San Pedro while two friends stood at the ready to untether the craft. As friends, neighbors, reporters and cameramen looked on, Larry Walters rocketed into the sky above San Pedro. A few minutes later Larry radioed the ground that he was sailing across Los Angeles Harbor towards Long Beach.

Walters had planned to fly 300 miles into the Mojave Desert, but the balloons took him up faster than expected and the wind didn't cooperate, and Walters quickly found himself drifting 16,000 feet above Long Beach. As Larry and his lawn chair drifted into the approach path to Long Beach Municipal Airport, perplexed pilots from two passing Delta and TWA airliners alerted air traffic controllers about what appeared to be an unprotected man floating through the sky in a chair.

Meanwhile, Larry, feeling cold and dizzy in the thin air three miles above the ground, shot several of his balloons with the pellet gun to bring himself back down to earth. He attempted to aim his descent at a large expanse of grass of a north Long Beach country club, but Larry came up short and ended up entangling his tethers in a set of high-voltage power lines in Long Beach about ten miles from his liftoff site. The plastic tethers protected Walters from electrocution as he dangled above the ground until firemen and utility crews could cut the power to the lines (blacking out a portion of Long Beach for twenty minutes). Larry managed to maneuver his chair over a wall,

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step out, and cut the chair free. Larry became an instant celebrity, but the Federal Aviation Administration was not amused. Unable to revoke Walters' pilot's license because he didn't have one, an FAA official announced that they would charge Walters "as soon as we figure out which part [of the FAA code] he violated." (See "Up, Up and Away" @ Snopes.com)

One version of this story described Larry as a man who was bored just sitting in his backyard in his lawn chair on weekends. Supposedly he was asked by a reporter as he was being taken away by the LAPD in handcuffs if he was going to do it again to which he replied with an emphatic "NO!". The reporter asked why he did it in the first place to which he replied, "Well, you can't just sit there."

There is some action you are better off not taking, but one thing that is certain is that God doesn't want you to become paralyzed from your fall. He doesn't want you to set up camp at the foot of Mt Disappointment. Your fall didn't finish you and God is finished with you! There is a move forward!

4. Determine TO move forward.

It is not enough for us to discern THE right move forward. You can know what to do, but now you have to do it! Jesus faced rejection and betrayal but he couldn't let it stop Him from completing the mission. Luke 9:51 tells us, "As the time drew near for him to ascend to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem." Hebrews 12 tells us that we need to fix "our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame...". Jesus persevered for you.

If you have sinned you have a choice today! Will you stay in your sin and come to Jesus so He can forgive you and free you?!

If you are down due to misfortune or your own mistakes and failures, you have a choice today! You can stay down. You can let the fear of future failure paralyze you! You can turn your focus inward, nursing your wounds with self-pity. OR you can determine to move forward seizing the ministry opportunities that are in every misfortune, taking advantage of the growth opportunities in every mistake and failure. Determine to MOVE FORWARD!

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