

Learning from Our Failures

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I think most of us have seen or heard the man James Dyson. If you watch television any, you will probably have seen him do commercials for his own company, Dyson Vacuums. And he's this kind of engineering-looking guy. If he had a pocket protector and some slide rules sticking out, he'd be right at home. And he is standing up in front of the television camera with this weird-looking vacuum cleaner. And he is the founder and the chief engineer of Dyson Vacuums.

I read an article in Newsweek back in June about him. And I'll just give you a brief overview and then it obviously applies to the sermon, but he started with a vision. Here he is a guy that's just he and his wife. He had this vision of making a vacuum that didn't have a bag. He was passionate about this. He's an engineer. So, his wife supported him while he did the research to develop this vacuum cleaner.

And he said in the article, he said, "After five years of testing, tweaking, fist-banging, more than five thousand mistakes (or prototypes as engineers call them), it was there. So, his wife supported him for five years while he did the research on this vacuum. And he built in excess of five thousand different models. And, at one point after these five years, he had a workable prototype that met his vision and met his requirements. So, at the end of the five years, he thought, "Well, I'm going to license this to a vacuum cleaner manufacturer and get royalties. They'll make it and, then, I'll get a certain percent of each vacuum that's made."

So, over the next three years, he took that prototype to every major vacuum cleaner manufacturer to try to convince them to license it. He went to Electrolux and Eureka and Kirby and Hamilton Beach and Black and Decker. And he said one time as he was waiting to get into the president's office of one of these manufacturers, the assistant to the president said, "James, you have two minutes." And he thought to himself, "How do you distill five years of work into two minutes?" And he went in and made his presentation as he did with all the others.

And they all refused. Every one of them turned him down. It took him three years to get appointments and cycle through all the manufacturers. And everyone turned him down, because they all said, "Nobody," (meaning customers), "don't want a bag-less vacuum. Besides," they said, "we make lots of money on the bags," as you all know if you have a vacuum cleaner that uses a bag because you just come back and buy more bags and buy more bags for the life of the vacuum cleaner. So, they make money off of that and they weren't willing to give that up.

So, now it's eight years later, five thousand plus mistakes, failures, as he said, prototypes (He calls prototypes failures and they were.), and then plus three years of failures in the form of rejection from every major vacuum cleaner manufacturer. So, he came to a crossroads. He had been rejected and turned down. And he said, "I've got this vacuum cleaner that works, but nobody wants it. So, either I just quit and give up and go try to find a job, or I make it myself."

So, he decided to make it himself. Within eighteen months of the first production run of that vacuum cleaner, it became the largest selling vacuum cleaner in the world! And today, he is a billionaire, this fellow that's on the TV screen. He's a billionaire.

Now, the key is that James Dyson, human being with a vision, he learned from his mistakes—over five thousand of them. He learned and he did not give up. He kept at it and he kept at it and he kept at it for over eight years. And he came to view failure, as he said in this article, he said, "I came to view failure as a learning tool that will eventually lead me to success. Because with every prototype he made, something failed or something wasn't working right and he had to figure out what that was. And then he designed a new model that overcame the failure. And so, he began to learn. And he learned and he learned and he learned for over five thousand mistakes, as he called them.

As I was reading the article, I thought, there's a sermon in here. From the standpoint that shouldn't—I kept asking myself, "Shouldn't we be doing the same thing as Christians? Shouldn't we be learning from our mistakes? And shouldn't we have a vision? And learn from those mistakes and, then, go forward?" So, the title of the sermon is "*Learning from our Failures.*"

Now, Dyson failed, as I said, over five thousand times, plus the rejection from these other manufacturers. So, what I'd like to do, at least as we start out, is to look at some examples in God's Word of those who failed, and in some cases miserably failed, and they learned from their mistakes and they moved on. And they grew from those mistakes.

Let's take the most obvious example. And that is David. We all know of David's sins in the affair with Bathsheba. And, by the way, Dale and I, I did not know what Dale was talking about today and he didn't know what I was talking about, but these are going to go just like this. And it makes me pleased because it gives me the idea that maybe God was inspiring both messages to sync together. So, were going to cover much of the material that Dale did in his sermonette and tie his message in with this.

Now we all know of David's sins in his fiasco with Bathsheba. We also know that nothing happened for over nine months while the little baby was carried in her womb and she gave birth to him. And now, we come on the scene where David is at court and all the government leaders are there, all the mighty men of valor, all of the heads of his military are there in his court in the throne room. And God tells Nathan to go up and talk to David and give him this message. I think I'll just

summarize it. You can be turning to 2 Samuel chapter 12 and we'll skim over that because Dale has covered it already.

But let's understand the preamble to this because Nathan came to David and told him this parable. He said there were two men. There was a rich man and a poor man. And the rich man had multitudes of flocks and herds. And the poor man had this one little ewe lamb. And this little lamb was much more than just an animal to be eaten. This lamb ate at their table, slept in their bed, was like a part of the family, like one of his children and he treasured this little lamb.

Now the wealthy man had somebody come to visit, a friend of his from out of town, we would say. And rather than take of his vast flocks and herds, he took this little lamb that was part of this man's household, the only lamb that he [the poor man] had, and he [the rich man] killed it and fed it to his guest. And Nathan told this story to David. And we all know, David said, "That man ought to die." And, then, in verse 7 of 2 Samuel 12, Nathan said to David, "You are that man!"

And, now all of a sudden, the rubber meets the road. All of a sudden now in David's mind, everything that happened with Uriah came flooding into his head that he tried to repress, tried to ignore, tried to put down, but now in front of all of those at court, it's right in front of his face.

Nathan goes on to say in verse 7:

2 Samuel 12:7b. *Thus [says] the [Eternal] God of Israel, [He said, Look at what I've done for you.] [I've] anointed [you] king over Israel, [I've] delivered [you] out of the hand of Saul;*

8) And I gave [you your] master's house, and [his] wives ... and [I] gave [you] the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have given [you a lot more, He said].

9) [Why then, because of all that, he says, Why have you] despised the commandment of the [Eternal], to do [this] evil in his sight? [You've] killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, (KJV)

Everybody in the court probably knew that through rumor, but now it's all out in the open.

2 Samuel 12:9b. *... and [you've] taken his wife to be [your] wife, and [you've] slain him with the sword [by our enemies] the children of Ammon.*

10) Now therefore... (KJV)

Now, again, the rubber meets the road and David is going to have to pay some penalties.

2 Samuel 12:10b. *... the sword shall never depart from [your] house; because [you've] despised me, and [you've] taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be [your] wife.*

11) Thus [says] the [Eternal], Behold, I will raise up evil against [you] out of [your] own house [from Absalom], and I will take [your] wives before

[your] eyes, and give them unto [your neighbor, referring again to Absalom], and he shall lie with [your] wives in the sight of this sun. (KJV)

The sun that's out there, he's not going to do it at night. He's not going to do it in secret. He's going to do it on the rooftop in front of the whole city. And David is going to have to endure that. Verse 12:

2 Samuel 12:12. *For [you did] it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel [He was doing it right then in front of the whole court], and [He says,] before the sun.
13) And David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the [Eternal].*

The light bulb went on; the gong went off in his head; and, finally, he admitted that he had sinned.

Now he failed miserably. I mean look at all of the sins—from lying and deceit to murder to adultery, and then, the example for the nation, and it goes on and on and on and on.

Now, we want to jump forward to the time that Dale was referring to. He [David] was fleeing for his life from Absalom and he [David] is fulfilling the prophecy that Nathan said in front of the whole court. Now we go to chapter 16. And Dale read this and I'll just quickly summarize it again.

And when David came to Bahurim, behold there came out a man of the House of Saul and it was Shimei. And he was coming forth—now it took some guts on Shimei's behalf, from him. He was obviously angry and upset. But he started throwing rocks at David, throwing rocks at the king. And the king had an entourage here and there were some soldiers there and there were swords and all of that. And he's throwing rocks at the soldiers and at David. He's throwing dust up in the air. He's cursing and all of this!

And in verse 7, he says:

2 Samuel 16:7b. *Come out, come out, [you] bloody man, (KJV)*

The margin says, "a man of blood." And indeed he was.

He [Shimei] says, "[you] man of Belial". Now Matthew Henry's Commentary says it means, in those days it meant, "you child of the Devil."

Now those are serious accusations against a king even though he is on the run. And [Abishai the son of] Zeruiah (as Dale said), he says, "Let me just take this guys' head off and end this problem right now." Now before, as Dale pointed out, before David would have done that. He wouldn't have thought twice about it. But because of the events with Nathan and the sins and all of that and he had come to himself and he had repented, notice what he did. In verse 10, he says:

2 Samuel 16:10b. *What [on earth do I have I to do with you, [you house] of Zeruah? (KJV)*

Meaning: What he is saying is "I'm not going to listen to your counsel. Things have changed. My life is different. I see things differently now." And David said to Abishai and all of his servants:

2 Samuel 16:11b. *Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, [seeks] my life [And this was part of the prophecy by Nathan.]: [he says,] how much more now may this Benjamite do it [seek my life and come out]? let him alone, and let him curse; [for God has] bidden him. 12) It may be that the [Eternal] will look on [my] affliction, and that the [Eternal] will requite me good for his cursing this day. (KJV)*

Now what he meant by that is maybe God will requite me good because I don't take his head off.

2 Samuel 16:13. *And as David and his men went by the way [He didn't retaliate.], Shimei went along [by the side of the hill] over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust [on him]. (KJV)*

He was on a little hill right beside the road and within easy tossing of stones and dust. And here David, with humility, walked through all of that, kept his mouth shut, and probably kept his anger in check and just went on. He was humiliated. He was humiliated by this man that he could have easily have killed.

And he learned lessons. He learned what we see in the New Testament and what Christ instructs each one of us to do. He learned that very same lesson. Matthew chapter 5—Dale referred to it—beginning, we'll read verses 38 and 39 and then jump to verse 43 because he did what Christ instructs us to do. Matthew 5 verse 38:

Matthew 5:38. *[You] have heard that it [has] been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: (KJV)*

Oh, well, David knew that.

Matthew 5:39. *[He says,] But I say unto you, That [you] resist not evil: (KJV)*

And evil was coming David's way and he didn't resist it. He didn't fight back.

Matthew 5:39b. *... but whosoever shall smite [you] on [the] right cheek, turn to him the other also. (KJV)*

That's exactly what he did figuratively. And he just walked on. Verse 43:

Matthew 5:43. *[You] have heard that [it's] been said, [You shall] love [your] neighbor, and hate [your] enemy. (KJV)*

44) *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless [those] that curse you, do good to [those] that hate you, and pray for [those] which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (KJV)*

Why?

Matthew 5:45. *That [you] may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he [makes the sun] his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and [sends] rain on the just and on the unjust.*

46) *[He says,] if [you] love [those that] love you, [what's the big deal]? [He says,] the publicans the same? (KJV)*

And verse 47, "If you salute those and greet those with backslaps and shaking of hands and hugs and kisses," He says, "Don't even the publicans do the same thing? What's the big deal there?"

Matthew 5:48. *Be [you] perfect [mature, complete], even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (KJV)*

He [David] learned from his mistakes. He learned that this is not the way to success. He learned to do it a different way. And that's exactly what David did. So, we've seen the example of David.

Now, let's go to the New Testament. What about the apostle Peter? Peter failed miserably twice. And he learned from those mistakes, those sins, and he went on.

Now, we know—let's turn to Matthew chapter 26—that Peter denied Christ three times. Let's look at this example. He absolutely insisted he wouldn't do it, but he did. Matthew chapter 26, we'll begin in verse 33. Notice:

Matthew 26:33. *Peter answered and said unto him [Christ], Though all men shall be offended because of [you], [He says, "Everybody in the world can be offended because of you," and he said,] will I never be offended.*

34) *Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto [you], That this night [this very night you're making this promise], before the [rooster crows], [you're going to] deny me [three times]. (KJV)*

And, of course, Peter in his mind, just absolutely "No way. Not gonna happen!" Verse 35:

Matthew 26:35. *Peter said unto him, Though I should die with [you], [I'm not going to deny [you]]. [And the other] disciples [chimed in and said, "Yeah, we're with Peter. We won't do that either"]. (KJV)*

Jumping to verse 69:

Matthew 26:69: *Now Peter sat outside the palace. Christ was in being interrogated and a young woman came and said, "Hey! You also were with Jesus of Galilee. You're one of His cohorts." (KJV paraphrased.)*

Verse 70:

Matthew 26:70. *But he denied [Him] before them all, saying, I [don't know] what [you're saying]. (KJV)*

He failed—absolutely failed! Verse 71:

Matthew 26:71. *And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them [all those] that were there, This fellow [pointing to Peter] was also with Jesus of Nazareth. (KJV)*

And now Peter has an opportunity to make up for his failure and admit and not deny Christ. Again, he denied, but this time he did it with an oath. He swore! "I do not know the man." Another huge failure, horrible failure. Verse 73:

Matthew 26:73. *And after a while [there] came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely [you're one] of them; [because you have the accent that betrays you].
74) Then began [Peter] ... (KJV)*

He had an opportunity to rectify the two previous failures. He cursed and he swore and he said, "I don't know this Man." Third failure. All in a row. And, then, immediately the rooster crowed.

Matthew 26:75. *And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the [rooster crows, you shall] deny me [three times]. And he went out, and [he] wept bitterly. (KJV)*

Now, the implication is obvious. He wept bitterly because he saw himself as David did. David said, "My sins are ever before me." He [Peter] saw those sins and he went out and repented and wept and wept and wept bitterly because he hated himself for his failures and for what he did.

Now, you see, God accepted his repentance. Peter was one of the—probably the—most outspoken of the apostles, certainly one of the leaders of the apostles. And God chose him to open salvation to the Gentiles. And this is found—you don't need to turn there necessarily—it's found in the middle of Acts 10 and then on into the middle of Acts 11. And I'll just summarize for you.

Peter, as you remember, he dreamed a dream. And he saw this great sheet coming down from heaven. And in this sheet were all kinds of animals, clean animals as well as unclean animals. And he was commanded to kill those animals and eat them, including the unclean animals. And he refused by saying, "I've never in my whole life eaten anything that was unclean." Well, now this was repeated in this dream, it was repeated two more times. And a voice, at the end of the third time, told him, "Don't call 'unclean' what God has cleansed."

And Peter, when he came out of the dream, he was confused because he really at that moment didn't know what all this meant. He was bewildered. But as he

came out of the dream, he was told that three men were waiting down stairs and "Obey them and don't doubt."

So, in the early part of Acts chapter 10, it tells the story of Cornelius. And these men were sent by Cornelius to the home where Peter was. And he was told by an angel (Cornelius was) to send for Peter. So, the next day, Peter went to Cornelius' house. And Cornelius' men came with a vision and said, "We want you to follow us and go back to our master's house," which he did. And when Peter got there, there were many other people there.

Now, let's understand that Cornelius was a centurion. He was a Gentile and the house was full of Gentiles. [There] weren't any Jews there. And, so Peter told them, when he got into the house looking around, he said, "It is unlawful for a man that's a Jew to keep company with somebody from another nation." He was saying, "According to the Jews' religion, I shouldn't be here." But then he said, "But God has shown me," (now everything came together in his head), "God has shown me that I shouldn't call any man 'unclean' or 'common.'"

So, now Peter understood what the purpose of the dream was. It wasn't about clean and unclean meats. It was about Gentiles and whether or not God was going to open the gospel to the Gentiles. And also God was showing him that "I, God, am not a respecter of persons. All of My children are My children."

And so, while he [Peter] was speaking, the holy spirit came onto all of those in the room as a demonstration of what God's will was. Now the gospel is open to the Gentiles. Salvation is open to the Gentiles.

So, Peter went back to Jerusalem and reported all of this to them and what God had done. And the Church accepted that miracle, and what Peter said, and rejoiced that the Gentiles were now part of God's Church, could come into God's Church—those that God would call. And so, God used this man that denied Him three times and repented and changed. Now, God used him to open up the gospel to the Gentiles.

But guess what? Peter failed miserably again. Let's go to Galatians chapter 2. Paul is writing to the Church in Galatia and he's describing an incident with Peter involving the Jews and the Gentiles. Now, you would think that because of the visions and because of the miracle of having God's spirit come on the Gentiles that Peter would not have a problem; that he would learn from his lesson, learn from this and go forward; but he failed again. Galatians 2 verse 11:

Galatians 2:11. *But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.*

12) For before that certain [individuals] came from James [who was in Jerusalem (Jews coming down from Jerusalem)], [he says, "Before they came down, Peter ate] with the Gentiles: (KJV)

Because, obviously, he was responsible for opening up the door to the Gentiles and God is not a respecter of persons. So, he freely ate and freely socialized with Gentiles.

Galatians 2:12b. ... but [Paul says] when they [from Jerusalem, the Jews from Jerusalem came down], he withdrew and separated himself, fearing [those] which were of the circumcision. (KJV)

Gigantic failure! He should have known better, but a huge failure on Peter's part.

And, then, the other Jews, the King James says "dissembled." That means, the Greek means to act hypocritically. They acted hypocritically with him. They followed the example and so they just left the tables over here with the Gentiles and moved over with the Jews. Much to the consternation of the Gentiles, I'm sure! And he [Paul] says, "So much so that Barnabas also was carried away with their hypocrisy." Verse 14, Paul says:

Galatians 2:14. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, (KJV)

He didn't take Peter aside privately because this was now out in the open and the Gentiles were affected. He said, "I said to Peter before everybody":

Galatians 2:14b. If [you], being a Jew, [live] after the manner of [the] Gentiles [as you did before, you associated with the Gentiles], and not as do the Jews, why [do you now compel] the Gentiles to live [like] the Jews? (KJV)

"Why do you compel [rather] the Gentiles to be separate? And here the Jews are over on this side of the room and the Gentiles are over on this side of the room. Why do you do that?" Verse 15:

Galatians 2:15. We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,
16) Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.
17) But if, while we seek to be justified by [God], we ourselves also are found sinners [by separating, being respecters of persons], is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.
18) For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.
19) For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. (KJV)

What he is saying here is "Peter, you tore down the wall of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles, but by your acts here in this room today, you're building that wall up again. You're rebuilding this huge wall of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles and you're going against the very visions and the very miracles that you yourself experienced." Now, you've got to believe that this was really embarrassing to Peter—very embarrassing, humiliating to Peter to be called out in front of everybody for this sin, this error.

He failed miserably, but with God's help, with God's spirit, it is obvious Peter repented and Peter changed. And he took heed to the admonition and he changed who he was. David changed who he was, as Dale bought out. [He was] not the same man. Peter changed who he was twice—not the same individual. He repented and he learned from his failures.

Let's go to 2 Peter chapter 3 and let's see that. 2 Peter chapter 3, we'll begin in verse 13. It is obvious Peter repented. Peter understood. Peter also said in a couple places, "God is no respecter of persons." This was written after that event occurred. 2 Peter 3:13.

2 Peter 3:13. *Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein [dwells] righteousness.*

14) Wherefore, beloved, seeing that [you] look for such things, be diligent that [you] may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. (KJV)

Now, before Peter was filled with blame. Lots of fingers could point at Peter. He says, "But we all need to be without spot and blameless and in peace." And what he had done is cause division again with the Gentiles. Verse 15:

2 Peter 3:15. *And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; (KJV)*

Now, if anybody knew that, it was Peter. Christ was longsuffering toward him because he denied Him three times and this fiasco with the Gentiles. And Peter of all individuals knew how merciful Christ was and how longsuffering and forbearing Christ was. And he says:

2 Peter 3:15. *And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul ... (KJV)*

He had no hard feelings toward Paul. He was a changed man. He was a changed man!

2 Peter 3:15b. *... also according to the wisdom given unto him [has] written unto you; (KJV)*

And here he is calling Paul a man filled with wisdom who has written unto you, too. Verse 18, he says—and now if anybody could say this with credibility, it was Peter—

2 Peter 3:18. *But grow in grace, (KJV)*

Do you think he has grown in grace? Do you think he has grown since he denied Christ three times and then had this disaster, this failure with the Gentiles?

2 Peter 3:18. *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (KJV)*

He had to learn God is not a respecter of persons. He had to learn the flesh is weak and will deny Christ. But he grew and he learned from his failures.

He says:

2 Peter 3:18b. *To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen. (KJV)*

Peter learned from his failures. He repented and he changed. He grew as a human being.

Okay, we've seen David. We've seen Peter. Now, let's turn to Paul. The three examples we'll use today.

Now, you can start turning to Romans chapter 7 because Paul is now lamenting about his failures. He is sorrowful about his failures. In Romans chapter 7, I will read it out of NIV because the King James, the language and construction is pretty clumsy. Romans 7 verse 14:

Romans 7:14. *We know that the law is spiritual; (NIV)*

Boy, we need to learn that! It's not a physical law. It's a spiritual law involving the mind and the heart.

Romans 7:14b. *... but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin [he's saying].*

15) *[He says,] I [don't] understand what I do. (NIV)*

Now have we ever been there? "Why did I do that? I don't understand why I said that!" We all have.

Romans 7:15b. *For what I want to do I do not do, (NIV)*

That is failure. Just like Peter. Just like David.

Romans 7:15 continued. *... but what I hate I do. (NIV)*

That is failure. Just like Peter. Just like David.

Romans 7:16. *And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good [because it points out my sin].*

17) *As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but [it's the] sin living in me.*

18) *I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. (NIV)*

What he is saying is "Apart from God's spirit in me, there is nothing good in me. And if I don't have God's spirit guiding me and leading me, I'm going to go nowhere except to the Lake of Fire."

Romans 7:18b. *For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. (NIV)*

He says, "I fail. I screw up. I do things; I say things; I think things that are bad and wrong." Verse 19:

Romans 7:19. *For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I [don't] want to do— this I keep on doing. (NIV)*

Failure! And he's saying, "I fail. I fail. I fail. I fail." Now, let's keep going though because he's now comes out of this lament and he is telling us, "Yes, I fail, but I learn and I change. Romans 8 verse 1:

Romans 8:1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus [He says, no condemnation], who walk not after the flesh [like he was talking about in the previous chapter], but after the Spirit.
2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus [has] made me free from the law of sin and death [the things that he was doing in chapter 7].
3) For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:
4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (KJV)*

Meaning: When Christ died for our sins and opened the door to salvation and opened the door to access to His spirit on the Day of Pentecost, he says, "Now, we can replace the sin that lies in us with righteousness through the spirit of Christ."

Verse 5:

Romans 8:5. *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh [everything he was talking about in chapter 7]; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.
6) For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and [Guess what?] peace [tranquility through God's spirit].
7) Because the carnal mind is [an enemy] against God: [it's] not subject to the law of God, neither can be. (KJV)*

He's saying, "If we don't let God's spirit lead us, we become the enemy of God and Christ. And what he is saying is by extension, "Who are we, what are going to allow to lead us? Our human nature—all of this in chapter 7 that he talked about? Or the spirit of God and the spirit of Christ, the holy spirit?" as he is saying here.

Verse 8:

Romans 8:8. *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (KJV)*

If we behave carnally, God is not happy with us.

Romans 8:9. *But [you] are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God [dwells] in you [he says]. (KJV)*

He says, "We, then, can please God by the spirit that dwells in us that is His spirit."

Romans 8:9b. *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his [meaning Christ's].*

And so, this we know is the textbook definition of a Christian, but the key is in verse 14. He says:

Romans 8:14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (KJV)*

And what this tells us is you can have God's spirit, maybe a tiny little grain and not grow it and not bear fruit and that's going to get you nowhere in the end because ultimately you'll lose it. The key is whether you allow this spirit to lead you in your thinking, in our deeds, in our words. Do we allow God's spirit to lead us?

And, obviously, Paul by his fruits showed us and shows us that he repented and he learned from his failures. Just as Peter did and just as David did.

Now all three of these endured, endured to the end, endured to the end of their lives by learning from their sins and, then, by growing, growing spiritually. They got up from their failures. They learned from them and they moved forward learning the lessons that God wanted them to learn.

One of my interests is aviation and I was watching a program the other day about the early X-planes. The first one was the X1, designed right after World War II and that was the first plane to break the sound barrier, but there was a whole raft of X-planes, a couple of dozen of them, over the ensuing twenty years of so. And there were interviewing one of the engineers because they were exploring realms that they didn't know anything about. Some people said, "You can't break the sound barrier. The plane would explode. It would just be torn to pieces." And they were investigating areas of aerodynamics that were just unknown.

And they were interviewing this engineer. And he said, "Failure is often the best teacher." And they lost a lot of planes and a lot of pilots through failure. And what he said, it struck me because I think we all know failure is a very, very, very effective teacher. Why? Because failure often involves pain and pain is a very effective teacher.

If we hurt enough, we'll stop doing what we're doing. And often, we won't turn there, but in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, you remember he was eating at the pig trough. He was eating pig food. And then, finally, he woke up and said, "My father's servants eat better than I do." And the light bulb went on and he said, "What am I doing?" And the Bible tells us "he came to himself." Enough pain, enough suffering, and we will change, hopefully.

Now, let's look at Christ's parable in Luke chapter 18 talking about enduring and learning from our sins and growing. Luke 18, we'll read the first seven verses. There's a reason behind his parable. It says so in verse 1. It says:

Luke 18:1. *And he [spoke] a parable unto them [for] this end [or for this purpose], that men [or women] ought always to pray, and not to faint [to endure, not to give up];*

2) *Saying, There was in a city a judge, [and this judge didn't fear God, he didn't fear men, he didn't regard men]:*

3) *And there was a widow in [the] city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of [my] adversary.*

4) *[But] he [wouldn't do it!] (KJV)*

Failure! She would go to plead to him. He wouldn't have anything to do with her. He wouldn't listen to what she said. So, she failed.

Luke 18:4b. *... but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard [men];*

5) *Yet because this widow [troubles] me, (KJV)*

Meaning she kept coming back and back and back and back. And each time she would fail and each time he wouldn't listen to her. And she came back and back and back. She faced failure after failure after failure just like James Dyson did, but she wouldn't give up. She kept coming back.

Luke 18:5. *[And he says] because this widow [troubles] me, (KJV)*

I mean she's at his – in front of the bench as we would say in today's terms. She's there every day, standing there. "I'm getting tired of this!"

Luke 18:5. *[And he says] because [she comes back], I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she [wears] me [out].*

6) *And [Christ] said, Hear what the unjust judge [said].*

7) *And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? (KJV)*

Absolutely! David cried day and night after the situation with Nathan. He came back and back. He said, "My sins are ever before me." And he repented and re-repent-ed and re-re-repent-ed before God over and over and over again and God granted him mercy. God granted him forgiveness.

This woman failed many times before she received her wish, but she got up after each rejection, after each failure, and she carried on until ultimately she succeeded. She endured to the end.

Now let's jump to Matthew 24 and verse 13. You know where this is going. Matthew 24 verse 13. Christ tells us this very thing.

Matthew 24:13. *But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. (KJV)*

[This is a] very familiar Scripture.

Now the Greek word for "endure" is the Greek word *hupomeno* (*hoop-om-en'-o*). And it means to stay behind. The literal meaning is to stay behind. Meaning: You're the only one left; you're the one that remains. After all is said and done, you still are there. It can mean have fortitude or persevere or to remain. All the others have fallen by the wayside, but this individual still remains, still stays there, still is present because they endure to the end.

And those who endure allow God to mold them and shape them to become someone they were not before. Dale said that David was not the same guy after the event with Bathsheba. He's absolutely correct. Peter was not the same man who denied Christ three times. He was not the same man after Paul called him out—different man. Paul, the same, sin after sin after sin, but he grew and he changed and he became a different person.

Now Dyson had a vision in his head. He had a vision of this perfect bagless vacuum cleaner. And it worked well; it was reliable; and didn't need a bag. That was his vision. It took over five thousand failures for him to get to that point over five years. And he called the prototypes failures. He says, "We engineers have this fancy term 'prototype,' but it means it's a failure."

Planes have failed; prototype airplanes have failed. Vacuum cleaners have failed. And the definition of a prototype is a full-sized functional model. So he would design this full model, the very first one. And it obviously did not meet his requirements or it actually broke and failed, broke into flames, whatever. He would design a new one that would that would not fail in that area, but it failed in a different area. Or in fixing this problem, he created another problem. And so, he would solve that problem and build a new prototype and that new prototype had a different problem.

And he went on and on over five years and five thousand prototypes. Each time he designed one he thought the next one would be perfect, but it wasn't. And he kept going and going and going. He would design another and another and another all the time getting closer to the vision of this vacuum cleaner that he had in his head that didn't need a bag, had great suction, worked well, and was reliable. He learned, he grew, and he stayed with it for five thousand plus prototypes. Why? Because he had a vision. He had a vision in his head of the perfect thing.

Now, what should our vision be? Because we need a vision! Let's go to Proverbs 29 and verse 18. And if we don't have a vision, we're not going to be there. We're not going to make it. What should our vision be? Proverbs 29 and verse 18, we are told:

Proverbs 29:18. *Where there is no vision, [Guess what?] the people perish: (KJV)*

They will fail. They will die.

Proverbs 29:18b. ... but he that [keeps] the law, happy is he. (KJV)

Of course, the Law helps us have that vision.

But we could also say this proverb, "Where there is no godly vision, people perish," because we can have the wrong vision. We can have a carnal vision. I mean Dyson had a—talk about a mundane vision! It was a vacuum cleaner for crying out loud. And [that's a] very plebian, very mundane vision. And we need to have a godly vision.

Now there is a theory. I'm going to just digress a little bit, but make the point. There's a theory in modern psychology that says what a human being visualizes in their head is what they become or what they attract. A human being, what they visualize in their head is what they become or what they attract.

In other words, if you have a negative vision in your head, a life vision, let's say about life in general. And if that negative vision involves loss, despair, loneliness, and failure, guess what? That person will become or receive all those things, if that's the vision (loss, failure, loneliness, despair, bitterness). If that's the vision, that's what you will become or that's what you will attract. You will attract like-minded people that have the same miserable vision. On the other hand, if we have a positive visualization (happiness, joy, peace, serenity, success), then that's what a person will become or what a person will attract.

Now, Dyson had a vision and he succeeded in his vision. He made a vacuum cleaner. Now, let's take that and understand God is the Master Potter, the Molder and the Shaper. Let's go to Isaiah 64 and verse 8 and see that. We're very familiar [with this], but let's just read it for reference. Isaiah 64 verse 8 says:

Isaiah 64:8. But now, O LORD, [You are] our father; [Yes!] we are the clay, and [You] our potter; and we all are the work of [Your] hand. (KJV)

Now, if we are the clay—the stuff that gets molded and shaped—and God our Father is the Master Potter, then, if you know anything about a sculptor or a potter, they have a vision in their head about what they want to make. In fact, a famous sculptor was interviewed by this young cub reporter and she said, "Well, how do you know how to make this? How do you know what to do?" And he says, "I chip away everything that doesn't match the vision I have for this." He was making a horse and he said, "I chip away everything that doesn't look like a horse." And she kind of gave him this blank look, but that's the way it is.

God has a vision for us. And He molds us and shapes us into that vision that He has for each one of us. Let's understand that.

Let's go to Ephesians chapter 4 and look at—we'll read verses 11 through 13. This is the vision the Master Potter has for each one of us. Ephesians 4 verse 11, [this is] a very familiar Scripture, by the way.

Ephesians 4:11. *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and [some] teachers; (KJV)*

In the Pacific Church of God, we have some pastors and we have some teachers. No apostles, no prophets, no evangelists.

Verse 12, why are there pastors and teachers? What's the vision?

Ephesians 4:12. *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying [the education] of the body of Christ: (KJV)*

And then it goes on to say in verse 13 this edifying the body, this shaping and molding of the body is:

Ephesians 4:13. *[Until] we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, (KJV)*

And what is that perfect man?

Ephesians 4:13b. *... unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: (KJV)*

So, the Master Potter is telling us that "I have a vision for each one of you. And I'm going to mold you and shape you until you are in the image of My Son Jesus Christ (and, by the way, He's going to marry you down the road), until you are in His image!"

Therefore, our vision for ourselves should be to become like Christ, to allow God to mold us and shape us to be like Christ. As I said, Dyson had a vision of a mundane vacuum cleaner, but our vision should be incomparably superior to a vacuum cleaner for crying out loud. It should be a spiritual vision.

Now, the beauty of this whole process is that each day we get to make a new prototype. And what's the prototype? It's us. We're the prototype! "Each day," as my good friend Harold Lee says, "Each day we get a do-over." Peter had a do-over. Paul had a do-over. David had a do-over. Each day is a new do-over. We get to make a new prototype the next day. We learn from the mistakes of the previous day just as Paul did, just as Peter did, just as David did.

Look at Colossians 3 and verse 10. This is what we get to do each day of our lives. And what a blessing it is! Colossians 3 and verse 10, we are told:

Colossians 3:10. *And have put on the new ... (KJV)*

The word "man" is in italics.

Colossians 3:10. *And have put on the new ... which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him [Jesus Christ] that created him [the new man]: (KJV)*

So, through the power of the holy spirit, each day through increased knowledge as we learn from our mistakes and our sins, we get to make a new prototype. We get to make ourselves afresh, anew. We get to remedy the errors of the past that have caused us to fail, just like Dyson did. Whatever the prototype that failed yesterday, he makes a new prototype that hopefully solves the problem. We, in essence, do exactly the same thing.

And God looks on improvement or fruit over time. It's not like we have to be perfect tomorrow, but He wants us to grow and develop fruit over time. And with Dyson and his five thousand prototypes, each one got a little better, a little better, a little better until it finally reached his vision. God does the same with us. Every day He wants to see growth. He wants to see fruit.

Let's go to Matthew chapter 7. Again, I know you know where we're going here, but look at it from the standpoint of making a new person every day, a new prototype every day. Matthew chapter 7 beginning in verse 16, we'll read through verse 20.

Matthew 7:16. *[You] shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of [a thorn bush, He says], or figs of [a thistle bush]?
17) Even so every good tree [brings] forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree [can't bring forth good] fruit [it brings forth evil fruit].
18) A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
19) Every tree that [brings] not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (KJV*

We know that ultimately is the Lake of Fire.

Matthew 7:20. *Wherefore by their fruits [you] shall know them. (KJV)*

Or we could say, "By our fruits will we be known of God and Christ. They will know us by our fruits—what we do every day." And are we growing? Are we being [molded] closer into the image of Jesus Christ? Or are we not?

And, I'll tell you. Do you know what the greatest frustration of a minister is? What the greatest sadness of a minister is? And I tell you this from personal experience. [It] is to watch beloved Brethren make the same sins and the same mistakes over and over and over and over again. They are making the same mistakes and the same sins today as they did five years ago or ten years ago or thirty years ago. And you just sit there and watch them. This train wreck is happening. And the train wreck happens over and over and over. And it is the saddest, most frustrating thing you can imagine because, as we've said before, and our good friend James Smyda says, "One of the definitions of insanity is what? To keep doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result," that's insane! Just keep repeating the same mistake over and over and over again.

Let's go to Proverbs 26 verse 11 and see a very graphic Scripture that illustrates this principle—[the] same sins over and over and over; no growth; no learning; no change. Proverbs 26:11 [is] a very graphic picture.

Proverbs 26:11. *As a dog [returns] to his vomit, so a fool [returns] to his folly [over and over and over again]. (KJV)*

And when somebody makes the same mistake, it's like watching the dog barf up on the grass and then sniff around for a second and then turn around and start eating it—over and over and over again. And here's a principle that all of us need to understand.

It is not the job of the Church, nor is it the job of the ministry, to take away the consequences of someone's actions or decisions.

I'll say it again.

It is not the job of the Church, it's not the job of the ministry to take away the consequences of someone's actions or decisions or sins.

Because some people make the same mistake over and over again; and, then they call the Church and want the Church to save them. This is a mistake that has been made over and over and over again and yet each time they want the Church to wave a magic wand and to rescue them from the consequences of their decisions, the consequences of their sins. But if we do that, we, then, circumvent God's Law that says we have to reap what we sow.

And ever so often as a minister, you're put in the position of saying, "No, I can't help you. We've talked about this. You did this here and here and here and here. We have helped you and we have rescued you. We've told you not to do it again and you did it again." And finally you just have to say, "You're on your own on this one because you have to take responsibility for your actions. You have to accept that and you have to suffer the consequences." Then, and only then, maybe the light bulb will go on like the prodigal son at the pig trough and say, "You know this isn't working out for me. This isn't successful for me. So, maybe I ought to change," as David did and Peter did and Paul did.

Let's go to I John 3 and we'll read verses 2 and 3. Peter says—I mean John says the same thing. Notice what he says, I John 3 verses 2 and 3. As Paul said in Romans chapter 8, this kind of follows the same line [of thinking]. He says:

I John 3:2. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, [but he says,] it [doesn't] appear what [we're going to] be [like; I don't know what we're going to look like]: but we know that, when he [appears (Jesus Christ)], [we're going to] be like him; for we shall see him as he [really] is. (KJV)*

Verse 3, this is the key.

1 John 3:3. And every man that [has] this hope in him [purifies] himself, even as he [Christ] is pure. (KJV)

And so, by building a new prototype every day, we purify ourselves every day through the power of the holy spirit. But it says, "He purifies himself." Yes, we have access to the power, but we've got to do it. We've got to put the effort and the energy in. It is hard work to change, but we must do that. It takes constant effort by exercising the holy spirit.

Now, unlike Dyson—he relied on his own training, his own engineering, his own brain—we have access to power. In making our prototype, we have access to power that is unlimited, that is beyond measure. Let's go to Zechariah chapter 4 and verse 6. This is the power we can call on every day in making a do-over, in making a new person. Zechariah 4 and verse 6, notice what it tells us, the second to the last [book] of the Old Testament.

Zechariah 4:6. Then he answered and [he spoke] unto me, saying, (KJV)

This is the key, Zechariah 4 verse 6.

Zechariah 4:6b. This is the word of the [Eternal] unto Zerubbabel, saying, (KJV)

This is what we must incorporate into our brain and learn!

Zechariah 4:6 continued. Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, [says] the [Eternal]. (KJV)

It can only be done by God's spirit. We can only make ourselves over into the image of Jesus Christ by God's spirit by being led by God's spirit. And it is a gift. It's there. It's free. We can use it anytime we wish.

2 Timothy 1 and verse 7, let's turn there. Notice what Paul is telling this young minister about this spirit. 2 Timothy 1 and verse 7, he says:

2 Timothy 1:7. For God [has] not given us the spirit of fear; (KJV)

But notice what he says about this spirit, 2 Timothy 1 verse 7.

2 Timothy 1:7b. ... but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (KJV)

We have access to that power. And, if we call on that power, we will not be afraid even if our life is on the line. We will be filled with love and, as a result of all of that, we will have a sound stable mind. Not a double-minded mind. Not somebody being dragged to and fro, but a sound stable mind. So, the onus is on us. It is our duty to use that power to transform ourselves into the image of Jesus Christ every day with a new prototype.

Now, let's conclude.

All of us have failed this year. I have failed miserably many times this year. You think, "Why did I make that decision? How could I have done that? What was going through my head?" Or, you think, "How could I have thought that?" Or, "I shouldn't have handled it that way." We all fail. We all make mistakes. And David made mistakes; Peter made mistakes; Paul made mistakes and sins.

But we should not lose heart because every new day, God gives us the ability through His spirit to make a new us, a new prototype, to do it over only this time do it correctly. The key is:

We must learn from our failures and not repeat them.

It's not wrong to make a mistake. It is wrong to sin, but we all sin. The key is whether we learn from it and don't do it again. The horror is if we keep doing it over and over and over again, and then wonder why life is falling apart all around us. Never looking to the self and saying, "What am I doing wrong? Where am I coming up short?" So, we have to learn from our failures and not repeat them.

And a beautiful physical example is James Dyson. He stuck to it for eight years. Five thousand prototypes, failures in the form of rejection from every major vacuum cleaner manufacturer, but he stuck with it. And today he's a billionaire, a very successful man, but his was only physical learning. He learned how to make this physical thing. [He] did a good job of it, but it was only physical.

Our learning must be spiritual in making ourselves, making over ourselves, creating a new prototype, a better prototype every day of our lives. And we can only do it through the power of God's spirit. We can't forget that we have access to this power. All we have to do is use it. Call on it. Exercise it. Have our mind on God and we will be successful.

But sometimes we get discouraged. Sometimes we get down. You just mentally kick yourself in the fanny when we fail. And when we do that—let's go to Philippians 4 and verse 13—and remember this Scripture, Philippians 4 and verse 13 because as Paul said, "The thing I want to do I don't do. The thing I don't want to do sometimes I wind up doing," and it can get discouraging. Philippians 4 and verse 13, Paul says:

Philippians 4:13. *I can do all things through Christ which [strengthens] me. (KJV)*

We need to remember that and call on that power.

James Dyson had a physical vision and he persevered through many physical failures. And he achieved, finally at the end of the day eight years later, a physical vision. And it was there and he became very successful. But we cannot lose sight, you see, of our spiritual vision. He never lost sight of his physical vision. We can't lose sight of our spiritual vision.

Let's turn to a final Scripture, Revelation 19 and verses 6 and 7. And, as we look forward to the Feast to celebrate this time, we need to remember these two verses. Revelation 19 verse 6:

Revelation 19:6. *And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent [reigns].
7) Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife [has]... (KJV)*

What?

Revelation 19:7b. *... made herself ready. (KJV)*

In other words, the wife put in the effort, the energy, the toil, the labor to change herself from the carnal human being to the image of Jesus Christ. That is our vision. That is our calling. That's where we want to be.

And as with Dyson did with a physical vision, we must never lose sight of our spiritual vision. And we must persevere through many failures. And we must achieve our vision. We must achieve it and be there on this day that we see in Revelation 19 and verse 7. So, let's dedicate ourselves to learning lessons from our failures.