

Oops... we did it again!

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, Watermark. My name's Chris. For those of you who don't know me, I help oversee the community groups here at Watermark Church. And today, I don't know how you feel after reading that passage. It's pretty intense. I've struggled, I've wrestled a bit with this.

Some passages in the Bible are kind of, yeah, I really want to preach on that. Some passages I just don't want to preach on. And this is kind of one of those passages. So I really want to pray that God would take this and really speak to us and reveal something about what the heart of this is about. Today, we're looking at the issue of failure. And failure is as common to all of us as breathing. We live in a society which tells us that we should be a success in every area of our lives. You should be a success in your exams. You should be a success in your career.

You should be a success in your family. You should be a success in every area of your life. And yet, all of us know that deep down inside, we fail in one or many aspects of those. If we're a success in our business, we may be a failure in our family. If we're a success in our exams or our college, we may feel like a failure in our Christian life. Many people are driven by a fear of failure.

People try and cover up the fact that their companies are failing. They lie after lie just to make sure that everybody sees that they are respectable and they look like they're a success, even though deep down they all know that actually there is something wrong, something where we fail.

And personally speaking, I've had my fair share of failures in my life. A couple of failures. When I was at university, I had to leave university for four years because I had a mental breakdown and depression for four years. When I came back after four years, all of my peers had left. They had got good jobs. They were married. They were having kids. And here was I, almost back at the beginning, at square one. I felt like a failure. As a community group leader in a previous church, I was at one point asked to step down from leading because I was so wrapped up in myself that I was stopped stopping really caring for the people that I was supposed to be caring for. At that point, I felt like a failure. And as a Christian, as a Jesus follower, I failed many, many times. There are people I know I should have shared the gospel with and I didn't. There are times I should have held my tongue and I didn't. There are times that I know I should have considered other people's feelings and I didn't. And it seems that I do this again and again and I say, God, forgive me, and then I seem to do it again and again and again. And this cycle kind of seems to continue in my life. And I kind of sometimes feel like I'm just clinging on for heaven, maybe. We all fail.

[3 : 1 8] But I have four friends who I'd like to talk to you about. My four friends deal with failure in different ways. The first friend I'd like to introduce you to is Beat Yourself Up Bob.

Beat Yourself Up Bob. He has messed up his sales presentation yet again. And he comes to you and he says, I'm hopeless. I've done it again. I'm just a waste of time. There's no point continuing. I want to give up. What's the use? I'm not worth anything. I can never get it right. That's my friend beat yourself up Bob. I have another friend called Defensive Diana. Defensive Diana, she forgot to take her daughter to her piano exam. So she didn't pass her piano exam. But if you confronted her with this problem, she would find at least 20 other culprits for why her daughter didn't get to the piano exam. It was her husband's fault. He looked at her wrong. It was the piano teacher's fault. She didn't remind her. It was anything. It was the war in Iraq. It could have been anything except her. Because the moment it seems like she might have to take some responsibility, the wars come up, the defenses come up, and you're not getting anywhere. Another nickname for her is blame it on anyone but me, Brenda. And then you have my third friend. So beat yourself up Bob,

Defensive Diana. Then you have my third friend who is called Minimizing Martin. Now Minimizing Martin, he forgot his wife's anniversary yet again. But so what? It's not a big deal. I mean, I remembered it three years ago, and there's going to be another one next year. So chill out. Don't worry. It's not a big deal, you know. And yes, I know I should have invited some of my friends to connect with people from my community group. But you know, I've been busy. Jesus loves me. He's going to forgive me.

We can't all be perfect, can we? That's my friend Minimizing Martin. And then my final friend is Tryhard Tracy. Now, Tryhard Tracy, she's a good Christian. She knows that she should share her faith with her friends. But every time she comes to talk to them about the good news, she just bottles it.

She just loses courage. She can't do it. And she feels like a failure. But you know, last week, she listened to an inspirational talk. Now she's determined. She's bought the book, How to Convert the World in 24 Hours. She's enrolled on the course, Share Your Faith in Three Easy Steps.

[6 : 08] She's listened to Oprah Winfrey, who's just told her, you know, when failure comes, it's a chance just to dig deep, find the potential inside of you. You know, you can make it. You've just got to try a bit harder. And so now she's armed and dangerous. She's determined this week, anyone who comes across her path, they're going to get it. They're going to have the full Old Testament to New Testament, Genesis to Revelation. It doesn't matter who it is. And be careful if you're one of her friends, because you might be in for it. I don't know how you respond to failure, whether you respond like my friends. But as we come to the book of Ezra, and we're coming to the last in our series of looking at the prophets, it might be slightly surprising to you that actually Ezra is not a prophet, but he's a priest. And the book of Ezra is basically, it covers about 80 years of history, and it's almost in the Old Testament of the Bible. It's almost in time, one of the last books that happens in the Bible. There's Ezra, Nehemiah, Malachi are the only ones which are right at the end of the story of the Old Testament. So the next things that happened are the New Testament with

Jesus coming. And what's happened? So we're looking after thousands of years of Israel's history, and we've got to this point. And what's the point they're at? They're at the point where previously, in a previous episode, thousands of Israelis have been taken as forced expats, invaded by another country, taken into modern-day Iraq for about 67 years, where they've settled down into the local population. And they've had to settle in with some strange people who have strange customs, with strange gods, with strange food. And some of you may feel like that in Hong Kong.

But the original group of people who are colonized them have changed. And so now, there is a new group of people, and they have a different policy. Their policy is, send people back to where they've come from. And basically, they can do what they like, as long as they give us tax money, and they don't cause any trouble. We just want money, and no trouble. And so, one group of these Jews have come back, and about 80 years later, Ezra comes back. Ezra, who's a man who loves God's word, who loves it, who knows what God has promised in the past, and he gets back. He's excited about being back. He's excited about restoring what Israel has forgotten they were, and was now going to become. And so, he gets back. He settles in. And then, you come to chapter one. Sorry, verse one of chapter nine.

He sorted a few things out, and then it says, after these things have been done, the leaders came to me and said, the people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites. They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. Ezra is devastated. But if you think about it, the crime doesn't really seem that serious.

I mean, it actually seems a little bit racist. Because what is the problem? The problem is, you've married someone from other countries. Now, I've just got married to Fiona.

[10:12] I'm from the UK. She's from Hong Kong. Imagine if we had invited Ezra to the wedding ceremony. There's Ezra in his tuxedo at the back, and the pastor might say, does anyone know any reason why these people can't get married? And there is Ezra running down the aisle, tearing his beard, tearing his hair out, tearing his tux, saying, Fiona, how could you be so unfaithful to marry a guaylo?

It sounds like something that a religious extremist, maybe someone from the Taliban might do.

Is this the God that we serve who doesn't like interracial marriage? Should we suddenly get a divorce, all of those who have married interracial? And if you're a Christian and you read these passages, it feels a little bit embarrassing. Because it doesn't seem very kind of modern.

It doesn't seem very politically correct. It seems just a little bit racist. We want to have an open mind. We want to be tolerant. We want to accept everyone and everything in the 21st century. And Ezra doesn't seem to fit the bill. And I often read people who are not believers. And when they come to the Bible, and particularly come to the Old Testament, this is some of the things they pick up and say, how can you believe in a God who just seems to be racist, seems to be so intolerant in all these things? And I think it sounds like a very good question. But the problem is, many of us who struggle with this don't understand. If you want to understand the Old Testament, you've got to understand the big story of what's going on in the Old Testament, so that you see where this fits in with the big story. Because this is one piece of the story of what God is working out in the Bible.

And so let's just look very quickly, a couple of questions just to get through this. So first of all, let's look at the issue. Is the Bible, Bible story against interracial marriage? Okay.

[12:26] Should we all get a divorce if you are married interracial? The Bible says actually no, because the Bible actually contains some very celebrated interracial marriages. Moses marries a black Ethiopian. And if you read in Numbers 12, actually some people oppose him for marrying someone from another race. And what does God do? God actually judges those people. And strangely, he turns their skin white, which is strange that white skin in that situation was a curse. Go figure.

Particularly if you're trying to use those 24-day whitening creams. I mean... There's another famous book in the Bible called Ruth. Ruth is an amazing story. It's a story about a Jordanian woman, a Moabite, who comes to marry an Israelite. She's a foreigner. She's outcast, but she comes in to the Israelite community. She turns to their God. And this guy, Boaz, he shows her incredible kindness. And he brings her into the family, marries her. And actually, as you look through the story, you find in Jesus' family tree, Ruth and Boaz are right there in Jesus' family tree.

Because the issue here is actually we need to understand what is God doing. We need to understand the story.

Because what's happening in that story of Ruth is actually a little sneak preview of what God had always intended for Israel to be. Back in Genesis, if any of you were here for the Genesis series, we looked at God giving a promise to Abraham. And this is critical. If you want to understand the Old Testament, you've got to understand this promise to Abraham. You will miss much of the Old Testament if you don't get it.

He promises three things. He promises Abraham and his children. You will have a land, a place where you're going to live. You will have a people, a people who are my own special people, a people who are going to be specially for God and God alone.

[14 : 44] So he promises a land, he promises a people, and then he promises blessing. He says, you will get blessing beyond your wildest dreams if you make me the center of your life.

And actually, that blessing is not just for you. That blessing is to go to all the nations all around you. It's meant to touch all the other nations. And the story of Ruth is just giving you a glimpse of what's going on there.

And what is meant to happen is, for Israel, people are meant to see Israel, God is at the center of their community, and all the other nations are meant to look at them and say, wow, there's something different about you. I don't know what it is.

How can you be so generous? How can you forgive people so unconditionally? How can you love the poor? How can you not exploit your workers but give them fair wages?

How can you be a community where your families just work so well, where everything seems to flourish so well? And the Israelites were meant to say, well, do you know what? It's because we serve an amazing God.

[15 : 53] And you need to come and serve him too. And you want to know that blessing too. That's what Israel were meant to be. They're meant to be holy, different, set apart, so that when people looked at them, they would go, I want some of that.

And they would come to know the God of Israel and come to know his blessing. So the issue here is not a question in Ezra. It's not a question of race.

It's actually a question of religion and practice. If you look in verse 1, verse 11, verse 14, you will see these three words.

The nations, their detestable practices. That's the problem. Because each nation had their own set of gods. And if you read what these gods are like, and you can go and research it online, you read what these gods are like, these gods are brutal.

They are sex addicted. They are exploitative. They use humans as slaves. In their stories of these tribes, that's what their gods were like.

[17 : 00] And what your god is like is always reflected in the practice of what the people are like. And so it's not surprising that these people exploited the poor.

And you can read about this. They had widespread ritual prostitution in the heart of their religion. They had abusive relationships. They had even child sacrifice.

And God says, you are not to be like that. You are to be totally different from that. So his reason for saying don't marry these other nations is because I want you to be different and I want you to be a blessing to these people.

I don't want you to just go in and be exactly like them. Because the history of Israel showed that whenever they married people from other nations, what happened? They became just like them.

They followed everything they did. Their society became corrupt. They started exploiting people, abusing people. That's terrible. So, you may have another question here.

[18 : 06] Well, okay, if it's not about race but it's about religion of practice, does that mean Christians should divorce their non-Christian spouses? And, the Bible is very clear.

1 Corinthians 7 says no. Christians should be a witness to your partners of how amazing God is. This command was for Israel at a particular time in a particular place.

And God has said in the New Testament he tells us you're to be a witness to your partners. But he does say don't enter into a marriage if you're going to be spiritually not on the same page because you're always going to be pulling each other apart and pulling away and feeling the tension of what it is to not walk with God.

There's always going to be a tension point. But isn't God against divorce? Because what happens is the people here they end up actually ends up with divorcing their wives.

And isn't God against divorce? Because that seems pretty hard. And the Bible says very clearly in the book of Malachi chapter 2 it says yeah God hates divorce. He hates divorce.

[19 : 20] But it seems that here divorcing the women was the lesser of two evils. And this is really I find this really tough. I just honestly I find this very difficult.

But the choice was either the whole nation turns away from God or a few families will feel the pain of separation.

Because actually at the end of chapter 10 we didn't read it there are actually 110 families which are listed. 110 families are listed. And God says don't allow sin to remain.

You've got to be ruthless with sin and sometimes that is painful. Sometimes that is difficult. And actually this is not a rush decision. They take three months. And if you read on chapter 10 they sit down with every single couple and they work through the issues with every single couple and it takes three months.

But the principle for us here is and Jesus says it himself be ruthless with sin. If there's stuff which is going to draw you away from God don't hold on to it.

[20 : 27] Don't say it doesn't matter. Don't say oh but you know he says be ruthless because Jesus says if your eye causes you to sin what have you got to do? He says cut it out.

That's really hard. That's not that's not very kind of politically correct. That's not lovely and cuddly. But actually God says if you want to know what it really means to live to be with me be ruthless with sin.

So let's just want to have a quick look as we go through the rest of the chapter because I don't know about you but I feel that sense of sometimes I habitually do the same things again and again and again and sometimes I don't really want to be particularly ruthless with the things that I struggle with.

so let's just have a quick look at some of the things that how Ezra and the people respond. So let's look at their response let's look so we've looked at the problem here let's look at their response and then we'll look at the hope that there is.

Okay so if you look at Ezra's response again it seems really extreme. When I heard this verse 3 I tore my tunic and cloak pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered round me because of this unfaithfulness of the exiles and I sat there appalled until the evening sacrifice then at the evening sacrifice I rose from my self-abasement with my tunic and cloak torn fell on my knees with my hands spread out to my God and prayed I'm too ashamed and disgraced my God to lift up my face to you.

[22:15] Ezra's pretty broken at this point. Ezra's pretty broken and I don't know if you've ever got to that point where you just feel that sense of utter despair but normally normally I don't when I've done something that I know has not pleased God but sometimes I do and usually I do because of two reasons one because I feel I've let myself down you know you kind of get that feeling of oh no what have I done and it's for me it's often because I've got this standard and I feel I haven't kind of lived up to my standard and I say that's not normally me that's not like me I don't normally do that and the problem is my standards are pretty low to start with so if I haven't even reached my standards then there's something seriously wrong.

I never normally do that that's one way how I normally respond the second way that I might feel despair is at the consequences oh no my wife's going to find out what are other people going to think about me if they hear that I'm struggling with pornography what are they going to think about me if they know that my business is failing or that I am struggling in my marriage what are they going to think oh no and Ezra's response is not oops oh dear oh dear Ezra's response is oh no and I don't know if you remember the story that Alistair shared last week about his friend who had had an affair and he came back to his wife he felt remorse and he came back and he confessed his sin to his wife imagine if at that moment when he confessed that he'd he cheated on his wife imagine if he'd said sorry love you know

I've cheated on you and I feel so terrible about it because I've broken the seventh commandment and you know I've been doing so well up till then I've done all the other nine really well but you know this seventh one oh I just messed it up and maybe God's not going to bless my marriage now how's his wife going to feel about that because maybe he's not met the standard but actually that's not the issue there the issue is a relational issue that's what makes it so painful it's not because you've broken a rule it's actually because there's something relationally wrong in that setting that's why Ezra is just oh because there's a relational problem and it's very interesting I'm not going to spend time on this but if you look Ezra Ezra's actually not the one who's done something wrong here did you notice that but do you notice what he says he says we have sinned we us our sin our failings do you notice that very interesting because you see

Ezra's got this idea that he's part of God's people and God's got this amazing plan for his people and if one person if one group of people are not living the way God wants that means the whole of the people of God are not living as God wants them to be and it breaks his heart and so he repents and says we have not done what you wanted and I wonder when how often when you see other people even in Watermark in your community group doing things which you know are not right healthy do you ever come to the point of saying not just them their problem but actually say we have an issue it's a family issue because actually we are not living we need to repent we need to say God change us to be the people you want us to be God but again this seems very heavy in many ways but if you look at verse 8 to 10 you see that actually

Ezra's not there thinking God is this condemning judge who is there just to beat us around the head with a stick because actually look at 8 to 10 and he says I'm so cut to the heart because look at this for a brief moment the Lord our God has been gracious in leaving us a remnant he's been faithful and giving us a firm place in his sanctuary and so our God gives light to our eyes and a little relief in our bondage though we're slaves our God has not forsaken us he's shown us kindness he's granted us new life to rebuild the house of God repair its ruins he's been giving us so many things he's been so gracious we've messed up again and again and again and yet God again and again and again he hasn't discarded us he hasn't thrown us on the scrap heap of life he's picked us up again and again and again and his goodness is just amazing and he keeps providing he keeps giving us more than good to us look at what we've done how can we do it again after you're so faithful to us and the story of the old testament is really the story of a self sin addicted adulterous people who just have an incredibly faithful husband who just chases after them again and again and again and yet the people again and again and again just go back in this cycle of going away from him that is the story of the old testament and it's like they've got an addiction an addiction they just can't break out of and

[28 : 12] I have a friend who was a drug addict we'll call him Jim I first met him he was homeless and got to know him over a number of months and eventually invited him just to stay a week or so in our house while we found him some alternative accommodation he stayed there we found him somewhere to live he moved to my friend's place and I thought great this is good he's going to get back on his feet everything's going to be great next morning I get a phone call from my friend slightly distressed saying you know your friend Jim he's just taken he's just taken the equivalent of 6,000 Hong Kong dollars from a new colleague who was staying with me we called the police the police weren't that interested actually and so I went down to to a place where I knew he would be and I waited for him and as he came through the door he saw my face and you should have seen the look on his face he hung his head he started trying to walk out of the door

I walked after him I looked him in the eyes I told him that we'd called the police but then I said to him you know but we've forgiven you for what you've done because we have an amazing God who forgives and shows grace to you he was blown away because he'd never experienced anything like that we prayed I didn't see him again for a few weeks I said to him actually we will welcome you back not because you deserve it but because we have an amazing God who wants to welcome you back and wants you to know him a few weeks later I was cycling through I didn't see him for a while cycling through an area of town which I never normally went into cycling through this little kind of back alley and who did I happen to see on a bench but Jim when he saw me his face was the picture of just complete shock and I went up to him I talked to him and he said to me you know I've been trying to avoid you for the last I don't know how long it was month

I've been trying to avoid you but I came to the one place in the city of half a million people where I thought you would never find me and you found me God must be really on my case we talked he seemed to really feel repentance I invited him along to come along to our church he came along to one gathering of our church and I thought it was great things seemed to go well next day I had a phone call from a friend saying I've lost \$1500 we knew it was Jim time went past I didn't see him for a while again we called the police nothing seemed to happen then one day I saw Jim again and he came back and he seemed to be really repentant he seemed to have be totally totally wanting to get on the right path again he said you know

I want to get a job I want to get accommodation and stuff and so we kind of reluctantly agreed to let him stay in our house for just two days while the process of getting a new flat was in place and I stupidly allowed him to have our key just to get his stuff just as he was moving into the his new place that evening I got a phone call from my housemate to say that his Xbox all his guitar equipment and money had been taken at that point we called the police Jim went to prison I visited him in prison every day for a week we talked about God's grace we talked about how God pursues even the people who are the furthest away and he seemed to really be captivated by the story when he came out he stayed with my parents for two days while we found him in rehab during those two days he went and took another thousand dollars from a neighbor

Jim went back to prison every month I visited him every month he said to me I'm going to go and see the prison chaplain the person who to kind of find out more about God every month I went back and he hadn't done it 18 months later I was just about giving up on him we shared the gospel with him we told him all about the way that God chases after even the most broken people can restore them he said oh that's fantastic I know I'm a sinner I know that I need God's grace and every month nothing changed after 18 months I was giving up I kind of skipped a month or two didn't see him for about three months I hadn't seen him and then I got this letter through the post and in the letter Jim said do you know what I was baptized last week I was like wow and he told me the story he said you know

[33 : 43] I'd been in I'd been put in isolation because I'd been brewing beer inside you get a picture Jim and when I was in isolation when everything else was taken away from me suddenly I got to thinking and I got to realize that all the grace that I'd been shown and all this God that you told me about he must be amazing that he could even chase after me and I remembered all the stuff that I'd done all the mess that I'd done and he said at that point I just prayed and said God please save me it happened the next day that actually the prison chaplain came around to him and said okay you're getting baptized on Sunday I hope you're ready Jim was rather surprised because he hadn't talked to the chaplain about this and so I go okay great Saturday came the chaplain came around and actually said you know

I'm sorry I made a big mistake it wasn't you who was meant to be getting baptized it was another guy but do you want to get baptized anyway and Jim said yeah and he stood in front of all his other inmates and told him the testimony told them the testimony of a God of amazing grace the thing with Jim is he's still struggling I invited him to our wedding he said he'd come he didn't turn up and that could be heartbreaking but I learnt something through Jim I thought I was pretty persistent but I learnt that God doesn't give up on people that God pursues his people even when they again and again and again and again and again mess up that's the kind of God that I think Ezra had a bit of a glimpse of that he pursues us with grace and God knows

God is not kind of blind to the depth of their depravity God's not blind to that he knows everything they've done and the thing is I think the story of Jim is the story of Israel and actually naturally it's the story of all of us we're all addicts to ourselves naturally we're addicted to our own ambitions we struggle time and time again with the same things it may be your temper it may be impatience with your kids it may be 101 things it may be pornography it may be just angry bitter thoughts whatever it is and maybe you get to a point where you think I've done it again there's no hope maybe God is like a judge kind of looking at me wanting to beat me around the head to say you did it again that's another one in my black book and you see

Ezra gets to the point of saying we are guilty we can't stand before God and that's the truth but there's a hope time's running but I just want to look at this very quickly if you look in chapter 10 verse 2 there's this amazing response from the people here it says we have been unfaithful to our God they don't deny it they don't kind of hide behind it they're not doing defensive Diana they're not doing beat yourself up Bob they're not doing try hard Tracy they're not doing minimizing Martin they're not doing any of that they admit it they come clean but then so we've been unfaithful but there's this amazing thing but in spite of this in spite of this there is still hope for Israel there is still hope for Israel and the thing is the hope is not on the performance of Israel it's not on finding their potential for Israel because they'd had thousands of years to try and they'd failed every time their hope was in the character of a God who is like a faithful husband pursuing an unfaithful lover who doesn't give up who is unfailing who doesn't cover over the sin and say oh it doesn't matter but a God who ultimately the story leads to Christ and the cross because at the cross

Ezra didn't know this Ezra was looking at the faithfulness of God over the thousands of years that he'd seen up till then but we can look back at the faithfulness of God on the cross where he takes all your junk he knows everything there's nothing no little skeleton in your closet that he doesn't know about but he took every one of them on the cross the judge who should have pronounced you guilty says you're not guilty and you can say yeah but but don't you know what I've done and he says yeah but you can't forgive me like that and he says I'm not forgiving you because of how good you are or because you've tried really hard I'm forgiving you because of my character and because of what Jesus has done he declares you not guilty he says you're free not just free to then go and re-offend as an addict who's just caught in this cycle but he says I've not just set you free to be a repeat offender but I've set you free from your addiction to self you are not a self sin addict any longer if you are a follower of Christ it's been broken you may have some of the leftover habits from your addiction from your self addiction but he says

[40 : 04] I've broken it you're free Jesus says if the son sets you free you'll be free indeed you don't have to be living in slavery to a fear of failure any longer you don't have to live in that cycle of I've done it again I've done it again you don't have to be any of my four characters so I just want to finish those four friends respond the way they do because they don't know the God of the Bible they don't know the God who is so holy that none of us could stand before him but is so gracious that he invites all of us to stand before him how do we change change happens when you see the horror of your own sin normally I'm kind of God forgive me and then I carry on but actually God wants you to get to a point if you want to change see that actually it's a relational thing see that it's hurtful it's cheating on your lover but see that that's not to cuss you that doesn't condemn you because your lover is the most incredible

God be honest with God tell him how messed up you are thank God here's the thing if you feel guilty and condemned God doesn't want to leave you like that if you've said God forgive me and then you still feel guilty you are forgiven so don't keep repenting for the same thing don't if you've said God forgive me for this then thank him that he's forgiven you no matter how you feel just thank him because he's forgiven you and your feelings will follow and the last thing take active steps to change because you don't have to change because you've got to meet up to some performance but because you see the God who is incredibly gracious who chases after you make active steps to change you feed an addiction to Christ by feeding it learn specific passages of the Bible if you struggle with particular things ask a person to be your accountability partner not just on anything but on a specific issue pray regularly

God help me to see your beauty more what I'd like you to do on your sheet on the back of where the Bible reading is you will see that there are three questions one of them how do you respond normally when you fail second one if I can find it I can't find it you can read those there what do you need to pray for here we go what should you be praying for yourself and also for watermark church remember we're a family we serve a gracious God and are there any concrete steps you need to take in the light of God's grace I'm going to give you a couple of minutes now we don't normally do this but I don't want you to just listen and run away and then you just carry on doing what we normally do I want you to stop and think now think through those three questions we're just going to give you a minute to think if you want to write down any answers just write them down it's a time for you just to come before

God I don't know where you are I don't know whether you know this God of grace but here's your chance to respond to him not that day so Thank you.

Thank you.

[45 : 15] Thank you.

The doors later on and go into our weeks, we know that we're going to fail again. Thank you. But thank you that it's your gospel that when it's applied to our hearts, it frees us to be brutally honest with ourselves and with you.

The assurance of your total forgiveness of all our faults, failings, sins through the blood of Jesus means we don't have to play defensive games any longer.

We don't have to rationalize and excuse our sins. We can say when we've told a lie instead of exaggerating it. We can admit an unforgiving spirit instead of continue to blame our parents for our emotional distress.

We can call sin exactly what it is, regardless of how ugly and shameful it may be, because we know that Jesus bore that sin in his body on the cross.

[46 : 47] Thank you for the assurance of your total forgiveness in Christ so that we have no reason to hide, no reason to live in fear any longer.

Please help us to know you and for that to shape the way we respond to our failure.