



MINISTRY OF FAILURE

Thank you Brother Dean. It certainly is a joy to come back to Hillsboro, Ohio, and to be here at Restoration Acres for this old fashioned camp meeting and to have an opportunity to preach the Word of God. I've been thinking for a long time about what to speak to you about today and I really tried to prepare myself by study and prayer and I hope that you are praying for me that I might bring the very message that God would want me to bring. I want to speak to you on the subject The Ministry of Failure.

I'd like to ask you this question: "What would you do if suddenly all of your children died in a tornado? And then on top of that, you were a farmer and all of your crops were destroyed? And then you lost all of your animals, and so your very method of making a living was gone. Then you lost your health and developed terminal cancer; and then your wife stopped loving you and said, 'Why don't you curse God and die?'" What would you do if such a thing as this happened to you? If you're like most people, I imagine that you would begin to cry and say, Oh me, oh my, why have so many terrible things happened to me? Has God forsaken me? What is wrong? Have I sinned in some way to cause these terrible calamities to come upon me? One of the fatal defects that most of us have is our confidence in ourselves to evaluate correctly everything that happens to us. But the whole point is we do NOT have that ability. We want to label everything, and no matter what the situation is, we want to say, this is bad, this is good. Consequently we lose many of the blessings that God sends our way.

Sometimes Kings can come dressed like beggars and paupers can look and smell and act like paupers, but actually be princes in disguise. Many, many times blessings come knocking at our front door dressed in the rags of a curse. We take the obvious and we say, this is bad, or this is good, and so we miss much of what God has for us because we do not have the ability to interpret and evaluate everything that happens to us in life. I have really felt impressed to share with you this week on the topic, "Strange Ministers," and I hope that I'm not one of them. I hope that you'll be able to see as we develop these messages that some of the strange ministers that God has sent to mold you and conform you to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ are not men and women at all.

We live in an instant age. We have instant coffee, and instant tea; and which one of us has not heard about the instant microwave ovens? We think, Oh how nice that would be if we could afford one of those gadgets on top of everything else. I've often thought, wouldn't that be great to put a whole meal in an oven and press a button and in a few seconds be able to take it out and sit down and eat your supper. The whole point is we have lost our ability to anticipate things. We have the attitude that we want it all right now. And we have this same attitude when we approach spiritual matters. Most of us want to be 100% spiritual right now. We want to be spiritually mature; we want to be fruit-bearing Christians immediately following our conversion. But the point is, God doesn't always work that rapidly. God works; he is constantly working in our lives and he never wastes time. We may think he is wasting time because of our instantaneous society. But God is working - in His own time, and in His own way. And he sends many wonderful ministers to help us, to mold us, to conform us into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. When some of these ministers come, we may not recognize them, and we may even rebel and

say, Why that's no minister. Because you see, some of these ministers wear no clerical garb. So as we rebel against them perhaps we need to be reminded of the thorn in the flesh that the apostle Paul received, that he mentions in II Corinthians 12, verses 7 through 9. Paul called that thorn in the flesh a messenger of satan. That means the devil delivered it. But we must not forget that the thorn in the flesh was also a gift of God's grace.

I hope you've brought your Bibles this afternoon. And if so, I would like for you to turn in your Bibles to Deuteronomy Chapter 8, and we want to read verses 1 through 6, and then verses 14 through 16: All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers.

And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.

And verses 14 through 16: Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end.

Sometimes I think that surely God has slipped a verse in the Bible while I was asleep at nighttime. Did you ever get that feeling? I don't know how many times I have read this passage of scripture down through the years but it was only recently that I saw this in it. So I concluded that God must have slipped it in there while I was asleep at night. Or else, maybe he opened my eyes so that I could see something that I'd never seen before.

Notice again this second verse: Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. I think that's one of the greatest verses in the Bible and for years and years I had really overlooked it. Deuteronomy is the book of remembrance and Moses is remembering how God dealt with his people.

We have all observed, I'm sure that there are two stages in the Christian life. The Red Sea stage and the Jordan River stage. Now Romans 15:4, and I Corinthians 10:6, remind us that everything that happened to the children of Israel happened as an example for us. That means that we can take the happenings of the life of Israel and transfer it over as a picture in the Christian life. We see how the children of Israel

crossed the Red Sea. In crossing the Red Sea they left Egypt with its bondage and slavery behind them. And so, comparing it to our Christian experience, we would say that the Red Sea experience in our life was when we accepted Jesus Christ as our own personal savior. We were buried with Christ in Christian baptism and he washed all of our sins away. So we left the bondage of Egypt, or the bondage of sin, behind us.

And then there was also the Jordan River crossing. Now some people would compare the Jordan River crossing with entrance into heaven. But I don't think of it in that way myself. I would think of it as living the Christian life, growing in Christ. Because you see, in the promised land, the land of Israel, there were giants to be feared. And there are not giants to be feared in heaven. And in the promised land there were battles to be fought and we're not going to have

any battles to fight when we get to heaven. In the promised land there were failures that the Israelites had to experience, but we're not going to have any failures when we reach heaven. So rather than comparing the promised land to heaven, I would rather compare the promised land to the fullness of the Christian life.

In Deuteronomy Chapter 6, verse 23, God tells us that he brought the people out in order that he might bring them in. God brought them out of the slavery of Egypt that he might bring them into the joys of the beautiful promised land - a land flowing with milk and honey so that there they might enjoy everything that God had prepared for them.

In the New Testament, Galatians, Chapter 4, verse 19, we find the apostle Paul speaking of his converts and how they developed in the Christian life with great difficulty. He said, My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. All of us are familiar with the first travail of birth - the pains of birth. But even the mother who endures those birth pains would tell you that those are not the greatest pains that a parent must endure in raising up a child. The greatest pains that we have to endure are the pains of growing the child up - especially during the difficult teenage years. So we think of the growth of a Christian. It is a wonderful, happy experience when one accepts Jesus and is baptized into Christ and leaves all of their sins behind them - as we think of the Red Sea crossing. It is far more difficult to grow in the Christian life and to become like Jesus and enjoy the fullness of the life which we would compare to the crossing of the Jordan River and entering the promised land.

In between the Red Sea crossing and the Jordan River crossing there lay a wilderness, and the Bible tells us here in Deuteronomy, Chapter 8, our text, that God led them through this wilderness. Now this is something that I have always overlooked down through the years in my Bible study. It was just an 11 day experience to walk from Egypt to the promised land. What was an 11 day trip turned out to be a 40 year experience of wandering. Because the Bible says that they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Don't forget that the Bible also says in Deuteronomy 8:2, our text, that God led them through the wilderness for 40 years, and it is not a contradiction. The Israelites wandered because they did not realize that God was leading them on this wandering experience. God had a purpose in mind as he led the children of Israel through those 40 years of failure and defeat and discouragement. Why did God do such a thing as this? Well you remember at Kadesh-barnea they came to the very borders of the promised land. God told them to go on in and take it; I will deliver the land to you. But the children of Israel said, "No, we'll not do that." They didn't have the faith to do it. They said, "We will send in 12 spies, and we will find out just exactly what the land is like; what lies before us; what kind of battles we are going to have to fight; what kind of enemies that we have. And then when these spies come back we will plot our course of action." And when the spies came back, what was the report? There are giants in the land. We can't do it. They didn't have the faith. They were a faithless people. So they moved from failure to failure through the wilderness. Saved, but not satisfied; free but not really enjoying the fullness of God's love.

I Corinthians 10, reminds us that there were only two of the original Israelites above the age of 21 who actually reached the promised land. Some statisticians tell us that there were as many as three million Israelites who left Egypt to make this journey to the promised land. And of those who were of age, only two of them made it - just Joshua and Caleb - because they were the only ones who brought back a good report when the spies came back with their report. Now this should surely say something to each and every one of us.

I wonder if we were to drop dead - everyone of us - this afternoon and an epitaph was put over our tombstone, what would it say? How many of our epitaphs would read like this: "He was wandering in the wilderness." I wonder how many of you know exactly what I'm talking about right now, because you are having a wilderness experience. Thank God you are not in Egypt; you're not living in your sins; you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior. You've been saved from your past sins, but you're not really enjoying the Christian life like God wants you to enjoy it. You're having a wilderness experience.

Now I used to have the idea that God just allowed these Israelites to wander around during these 40 years aimlessly, and that there was no purpose to it. What a difference it made for me when I came across this scripture and understood it more fully. God said that he led them during these 40 years. Yes, they wandered, but God was leading them in their wanderings. He had a purpose back of these 40 years of the wilderness experience. Just as God has a purpose in our own lives when he allows us to dwell in the wilderness. Now you may say, Well, the children of Israel must have known that God was leading them because there was the pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. And that's certainly true. Every night when they went to sleep they could look up in the sky and there was the pillar of fire and they could say, "Well, God is with us." And every morning when they woke up they could look up in the sky and there was the pillar of cloud and they could say, "God is with us." They knew that God was with them and they knew then, in effect, that God was leading them and yet they didn't understand as they wandered around those 40 years in the wilderness that God was leading them according to His perfect will and that He really had a plan to it all. That begins to help me and I hope that it helps you.

Now long ago, I looked back on my own life and do you know what I saw? I saw that I had been wandering in the wilderness myself for many years. There had been nothing but disappointments and failures, heartaches, trouble and distress. What I discovered in my own life as I looked back upon those years of the wilderness experience is what I'm trying to share with you this afternoon as I speak to you about the Ministry of Failure. I believe that I could not speak upon a more relevant theme than the Ministry of Failure. Have you reached the point yet in your own life that you're willing to admit, "I am a failure?" You never will really begin to enjoy the happy Christian life until you recognize the wilderness experience and the failures of your life. And until you are willing to make

an honest confession before God, "I am a failure," it's only then that you can begin to see God's purpose as it is worked out in your life.

I really enjoy reading the biographies of successful people, because every successful person that I've read about has had a wilderness experience - a time of confusion and uncertainty. I can now see through it all - how God uses a ministry of failure in our lives. I've even reached the point in my own life that I can praise God for failure. I can praise God because he has been able to take my disappointments, my failures, my uncertainties, and use those to minister to me for good.

How does God minister to us through failure?

I First of all, God uses failure to empty us of pride. I want you to note again in Deuteronomy 8:2, And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee. Why did God allow the Israelites to wander for 40 years? Why all of that wasted time? Well, because it was NOT wasted time. In God's time, he was using that experience to humble the Israelites. In Deuteronomy 8:16, God said that he used this ministry of failure to do thee good at thy latter end. Isn't that marvelous? God ministers to us through failure in order to empty us of pride, to humble us, and then to do us good before our life is finished.

You will never really learn to trust the Lord until you have to. It is man's nature, as long as he has one more trick up his sleeve to use it. As long as we have one more resource of our own - to use it. So sometimes before God can help us to trust Him, well he has to destroy our trust in ourselves.

In Exodus 19, when God was preparing to deliver his 10 commandments to his people, he was preparing them for this great experience and he told them that he was going to deliver his laws and do you remember what the Israelites said? They said, "We will do all that God says."

Weren't they filled with pride and self-sufficiency? We will do everything that God says - that's what they bragged. Moses climbed the mountain to get the commandments and before he could get back down again the Israelites had broken every one of the commandments. They were so

filled with pride and self-sufficiency that they were not able to do what they said they were going to do. Look at Moses, himself, as a good example of this.

God chose Moses to deliver the Israelites from their bondage. Now at the age of 40, Moses recognized this call of God, and he said OK God, I'm ready to lead your people out of bondage, and what did he do? He raised up his hands against the Egyptians and he murdered one of the Egyptians. He took matters into his own hands. He said, "I'm able to do it." Did you ever calculate how long it would have taken Moses to lead the children to the promised land if he had done it his way - killing the Egyptians one at a time? Well, they would have been there yet. Oh how prideful Moses was at the age of 40. And so God sent him into the desert and Moses experienced failure after failure - 40 years of failure. And after God ministered to him during 40 years of failure, then he called him again at the age of 80 and he said, "Moses, I'm ready now for you to lead my people from the land of bondage into the land of promise." And how did Moses respond? He said, "Me? Who am I? I can't do it." Moses had become the most meek and the most humble man on the face of the earth. 40 years before he said, "I can do it single-handedly." And then after 40 years of failure, he said "I can't do anything." God was able to do a wonderful work in the life of Moses once he had humbled him - once he had emptied him of all pride.

Look at Simon Peter, for another example. After Simon had been with Jesus for three and a half years, one day Jesus spoke to Simon and his other followers and disciples, and he said, "I'm going to Jerusalem; one of you is going to betray me." Well, can't you just see Simon Peter all puffed up with pride, and he says, "Well, Lord, I'm glad that you finally woke up and realize what's going on around here. Why, I could do it in these other fellows all along, Lord; and it has taken you all this time to see it. You're right. Every one of them is going to betray you, Lord. They're all going to desert you. But not me. Lord, I'm ready to go with you all the way to prison and even to death."

Oh, how discouraged Jesus must have been with Simon Peter. For three and a half years Jesus had been teaching Simon. And now he was so puffed up with pride; he felt so important that he was convinced he was a success. And the only thing that could ever convince Simon Peter was a failure. And after he denied the Lord three times and heard the cock crow, we never again read about Simon failing. Maybe he did, but the Bible doesn't say anything about it. God ministered unto Simon through failure.

God will minister to each one of us if we will allow him, through failure. And through the failures of life, God will be able to empty us of our pride, and humble us, just like he said he did for the children of Israel.

I remember one time on Monday morning a new convert came to my office. Oh, he was bubbling over with excitement. The day before he had given his heart to Jesus. He had been baptized into Christ, and as he walked in that Monday morning, all filled with enthusiasm, he said, "Preacher, I've got the feeling and I'll never lose it." I said, "Now wait a minute, Charlie. Salvation is not a matter of feeling. You have Jesus. Jesus is your salvation." He said, "No, no, I've got the feeling - I'm really saved. I'll never, ever lose this feeling." Well, I tried to point out to him that our feelings deceive us; that our feelings are not a very good guide or judge. Maybe one day we feel good, and maybe the next day we feel bad, but that doesn't change our salvation state. But I couldn't get anywhere with him. He wanted to argue and he kept telling me, "I feel great and I'm always going to feel great." Well, I didn't want to have an argument with a new convert the day after he was converted, so I said, "Well, God bless you, Charlie; God bless you, brother." So he went on his way. Well about 3 weeks later he came into my study with his chin trailing on the carpet, and I said, "Well, what's the matter with you?" He said, "I'm afraid I'm lost." Then I said, "What?" And he said, "I've lost the feeling; I don't have it anymore." Well I resisted the temptation to say, "I told you so."

Oh dear friends, God can take our failures and use them for good. That's what he did to the Israelites and that's what he will do to each one of us if we will let him. God took Moses and he

had to knock the props out from under Moses before he could use him to accomplish good. After Moses was convinced of his own inefficiency and inability, God was then able to use him to lead the people.

II There's a second way that God ministers to us through failure. **He uses failure to expose us as to what's in our own heart.** Let's read our text once again in Deuteronomy 8:2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

Yes, God can use failure in our life in order to prove what is in our heart - to test us and see whether we are genuine; to find out whether we will really keep his word. You see, the point is, I don't really know sometimes what is in my heart. Well, for example, I may get so wrapped up in preparing a sermon, and so wrapped up in getting ready for an occasion just like I have for this old fashioned camp meeting. Some days when I was working on this message, really, I got to feeling so good and so great, and I would think, well, I've got it made. I've reached the point that I've overcome all temptations. Why, just look, God, I've overcome this sin, and I've overcome that sin and have reached the point in life where I'm not even bothered with these sins anymore. Now when we get filled up with pride like that, then a failure comes along. God can use that failure to expose to us some hidden weakness that we didn't even know that we had.

I want to give you a good example of it. For some time, I've felt like I've really conquered my temper, especially when it comes to driving an automobile, and that is one of the acid tests. But I was in Nigeria, Africa, and there were 6 or 8 people who had gone with me and we were holding revival meetings. I don't know how many of you have been to Nigeria or how many may have read about it. Nigeria, Africa, has the biggest traffic jams in the whole world. They make the traffic jams on the Los Angeles freeways look like kiddy car land or something by comparison.

When you get in a traffic jam in Nigeria, you may, if you have good success, travel as much as one block in a half an hour. It may take you one hour to travel one block. Your nerves really get frayed. It was one of those days; it was boiling hot, and about 6 of the Americans who had gone with me to help in the evangelistic meetings were in the car. It was a rented automobile and we were trapped in Ibadan, Nigeria, which is the second largest city on the entire African continent, with a population of somewhere around 3 or 4 million. We were in one of those traffic jams where we had moved one block in 30 minutes. In order to move one block in 30 minutes you've got to keep one foot on the brake; the other foot on the clutch; and the moment the car moves forward one inch, you let the clutch out and quick jam on the gas and you move up one inch because if you don't then 50,000 cars behind you will blow the horn at you and you'll be in trouble. Well, we'd been fighting our way along, you know, an inch at a time, a half-inch at a time, and my nerves just shaky and all frayed. And just about then I was distracted by something and the car in front of me moved forward about one foot and I failed to move instantaneously when that car moved. Well, you know what happened - everybody started honking. The guy behind me was so agitated that he squirmed around and pulled up right beside me and he leaned his head out the window and glared at me and he said, "We're in Africa; not America. Drive like a Nigerian." And he blared his horn at me. Well, you know what happened. I was so angry; I looked at that man and I just laid on the horn. And I said "Same to you, Buster." Oh, my! Why do you suppose that the Lord couldn't have let that happen to me when I was all by myself. Why did he have to wait until six of my associates were with me? I was so humiliated, I had to spend the rest of the afternoon apologizing to my six associates. I didn't know that such was in my heart. But through that failure, God ministered to me, and he humbled me and he showed me what was in my heart.

Simon Peter said, "Lord, I'm ready to go with you all the way - to prison or even to death." And what did Jesus say to Simon? He said, "Simon, satan has deceived you. Satan has asked permission to sift you." And so failure came to Simon in order to expose his weakness. He would not have learned the lesson any other way. And every time that I begin to think that I'm OK, God reminds me of my weakness, and so failure becomes a great minister.

In Matthew 15:11, Jesus said that it is not what goes into our mouth that harms us but it's what

comes out. If we forget this, it can ruin our lives in an unguarded moment. And so I believe that it is the kindness of God and the goodness of God that allows us to fail in order to remind us of our need of him. We need to be reminded that in our flesh dwells no good thing. The only good thing about me is Jesus Christ.

III. Now there is a third way in which God uses failure to minister to us. Let's look again at Deuteronomy 8:2, And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.

Don't you see, God is telling us in this scripture that he uses failure to minister to us as to the source of our life. God said that he humbled the children of Israel by making them hungry so that he might feed them manna. Isn't that a marvelous thing? God makes us hungry; then after making us hungry he turns around and feeds us. Now the Bible tells us that if God had led the Israelites by the direct route from the land of Egypt to the land of Canaan, that it would have taken them through the land of the Philistines and they would have had to have fought and they would have lost heart, and they would have turned back to Egypt. At that particular time the promised land was not important enough for them to fight for it. I'm afraid that for many of us the real Christian life is not precious enough to fight for, at certain times. So God needs to minister to us through failure until we reach that point that the Christian life is important enough to fight for it.

Look at the children of Israel. They weren't willing to fight for it when they first left Egypt. So God immersed them in failure after failure. For 40 years they knew nothing but wandering, discouragement, and defeat. And at the end of 40 years of failure they were ready to fight at the drop of a hat. So God sometimes has to immerse us in one failure after another until we are finally so sick of failure that we are ready to fight for what we really want and that is the true Christian life.

Too many Christians are willing to compromise. They would rather live in the Egypt of sin than to really fight for the Christian life that is precious. God said, "I brought you out that I might bring you in." God actually caused the Israelites to suffer and to be hungry, so that he might comfort them and feed them. Now that's a beautiful thought to me - that the same God who makes me hungry feeds me. And the same God who allows me to suffer will do it for a purpose. He will turn around and comfort me and educate me as to the source of life. God ministers to us through failures in order to teach us the true values.

There came a time in my own life when I was so sick of failure - so hungry to know victory - that I knelt in my study one day and prayed, "God, I've wandered in the wilderness long enough; it has been one failure after another. God I can't do it, but you can." You see, I had been to school and God had educated me. It's not a very pleasant school to attend, but it is a wonderful school when we realize that God will never abandon his purpose in our lives. And God's purpose in our lives is to make us like

Jesus - to change us and conform us into the very image of the Son of God, much like a sculptor will work with a piece of rock or marble.

The story has been told about a little boy who was watching a sculptor one day as he sculpted a horse. You know how inquisitive children can be. The little child kept interrupting the artist.

Finally, the little boy said, "What are you doing?" The artist said, "I'm sculpturing a horse." So the little boy said, "How do you sculptor a horse?" The noted artist said, "Well I take this chisel and this hammer and I knock off everything that doesn't look like a horse." Well, you know what failure is? That's God knocking off everything in our life that doesn't look like Jesus. When we get so hungry and we've been educated, we say, "Lord, I'm hungry for you." You know what

happens - God will feed us. I praise God for failure. When that beggar comes knocking at your door, I hope that you'll recognize him as a king. Because failure will not be wasted if we allow God to use it in that manner.

Down South where his memory is still revered, the people talk about Henry W. Grady. When Brother Dean introduced me, he mentioned that I'd preached in East Point, Georgia, a number of years. One of the things that I remember the most about preaching in East Point, GA, was driving into Atlanta each day to call on the sick people at the hospital. Now one of the hospitals that I had to visit every day was the Henry W. Grady Memorial Hospital in downtown Atlanta. If you've ever noticed the skyline in Atlanta, then you've seen those skyscrapers and one of the skyscrapers that dots the skyline in Atlanta is the Henry W. Grady Memorial Hospital. If you're not familiar with Henry Grady, let me tell you who he was. He was one of the South's greatest philanthropists - a very wealthy man, an influential man. For years and years, he was the editor of the Atlanta Constitution and Journal. So he became one of the most influential men in the world because of his writings and editorials

There came a time in Henry Grady's life that he suffered "burn-out". He left the Atlanta Constitution and drove south to his boyhood home. His old mother greet him warmly and he began to weep and said Mama I need your help. She put her arms around her sons neck and hugged him tightly and said, "You know, I'm always here, whatever you need, I'm ready to help you." And he said, "Mama, I just need for you to treat me like I was a little boy all over again. Would you do that?" Well, you can imagine how the old mother felt. She thought surely something was wrong with the mind of her famous son. But she humored him and she said "Certainly son, I'll do anything you like and if you want me to treat you like you were my little boy all over again. I can do that easily because you are my little boy and you'll always be my little boy." He said, "Mama, I really mean it - I want us just to pretend like I'm a little boy back home again and you do everything just like you used to do it."

Well, all afternoon he kept talking that way and they sat there and began to reminisce and he kind of quieted down and his nerves calmed down. Soon it was supper time and he said, "Mama, I want you to fix my favorite meal. Now you know what that is." And she said, "How could I ever forget it? It's fried pork chops and blackeyed peas, fried okra, homemade biscuits and honey. I know what you like." Oh, his mouth began to water and she went into the kitchen and she cooked up one of those old-fashioned, Southern meals - just like she had always done when he was a little boy, growing up. They sat down to the table to eat and he said, "Now Mama, you remember you always called on me to say the prayer," and so he prayed that child's prayer: "God we thank you for this food." She was so surprised, but she didn't say anything. They sat there and ate and after supper they reminisced a little more and it was bedtime. He said, "Mama, I'm going to get ready to go to bed, but you know what to do next, don't you?" She said, "Yes." And as soon as he had his pajamas on he called down the stairs and said, "OK, Mama, I'm in bed," and so the old mother climbed the rickety stairway to her son's bedroom, and there the millionaire philanthropist, Henry W. Grady, lay in bed in his pajamas and the old mother got down the family Bible and she read to him a Bible story just as she had done all the days of his childhood when she was bringing him up. And when she finished the Bible story, Henry Grady crawled out of bed and knelt down by the bed beside his dear old mother and he prayed that child's prayer: "Now I lay me down to sleep; I pray the Lord my soul to keep; if I should die before I wake; I pray the Lord my soul to take." And after the prayer, the old mother tucked her son to bed just as she had done when he was a baby and kissed him goodnight.

This strange thing went on for about five days if you can imagine it. Then one morning Henry Grady came down for breakfast and he had his suitcase packed. There was a smile on his face. His mother looked up from where she was preparing breakfast, and said, "Well now what?" He said, "I've got to go back to Atlanta; I've got to go back to work, Mom." But I just want you to know that I'm OK. Mom, I want to thank you for what you've done for me. And she said, "Well, son, I don't know what I've done, but whatever it is, I'm glad you're OK." Now those who knew Henry Grady best say that when he returned to Atlanta he was like a changed man. He came

back a real dedicated Christian man. From then on until his dying day he never once wavered from following the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, God had used the ministry of failure in the life of Henry Grady to humble him, to prove him, to show him what was in his own heart - to educate him as to the source of his life and to bring him back to God.

Well, it was Friday night and the whole world was dark because Jesus had been nailed to the cross. It looked like utter defeat and failure. But that was Friday. Sunday was coming. Amen. Yes, it was Friday and the apostles were discouraged. Their hero was hanging upon the cross - dead. They had fled from the scene in terror. After following him for three and a half years it had all ended up in failure. But that was Friday. Sunday is coming. Amen. It was Friday; Pilate had washed his hands in the basin of water. The sky grew black. The temple veil was rent in twain. It looked like complete failure. But that was on Friday. Sunday is coming. Amen. Thank God, dear friends, that we have the Jesus of Sunday to go to with all of our failures and mistakes of the past. He will not only forgive them but he will change them and change us as God ministers through our failures for our good at the latter end. Thank you for listening. May God bless each one of you.