
What's up, Traders Point? Great to see you guys. My name is Mike Breaux in case we didn't meet last week. I'm back today, kind of like a stray dog you fed one time who keeps on showing up on the porch. I'll be back next week as well. I am so honored to get to be here three weeks in a row with you guys in this summer series.

We're in this series called The Big Three and we're just talking about faith, hope, and love. Last week we talked about the faithfulness of God and how He is with us through every season of life. And His faithfulness is His gift to us. And our faith and our trust are our gifts back to Him. Next week we're going to talk about love, really excited about that.

Just help me welcome all of our campuses today. Would you do that? All of our campuses, those of you joining us online, super stoked to get to do this together this weekend.

Today I brought along my box with me. This is, as you can see, my box of failures. And I take this everywhere, it's in the bed of my truck, I just carry it with me everywhere to remind me of what a screw-up I am.

Let's just see what is in here. I've got—I haven't looked in here for a little while, but man this brings back memories right here. Nine years old, playing Little League, this is the ball that went between my legs allowing the winning run to score. I've held onto that for a lot of years.

This is, oh man, this is my third grade spelling final. This is an overdrawn notice. You know, a lot of guys keep their old ones [a golf ball], this is a quadruple bogie that I fished out of the lake last week actually. These, oh man, talk about bringing back memories, these are the shoes I was wearing when I got cut from the eighth-grade basketball team. And these [pom poms] belonged to the cheerleader who broke up with me after I got cut from the eighth-grade basketball team. Oh my goodness, this is the very first sermon I ever preached. It totally bombed. This was last week.

Wouldn't this be ridiculous, right? Yeah. But we kind of do this, don't we? We kind of carry a box like this around with us. Let's just do a little quick survey here. Please don't raise your hands until I'm completely done with this list. But I'm going to ask you to raise your hand when we're done.

If you've ever flunked a class, if you've ever bombed a test, if you ever got cut from a team, if you ever really messed up an audition, if you ever failed a job interview, if you've ever been rejected for a date, if you've ever failed in a relationship, if you've ever been fired from a job for a little mistake or a medium mishap or a huge blunder or maybe the business you started didn't go the way that you dreamed it would, maybe you had to file bankruptcy, perhaps you

got a speeding ticket, maybe you threw up on a roller coaster, maybe you shot an air ball or you struck out, or if you've ever lost your cool with your three-year-old, or forgot to pick up your kid at school one day—if you've ever experienced a moral, social, athletic, academic, relational, financial, marital, or vocational failure of any kind, just go ahead and raise your hand right now.

Wow, you bunch of losers. You know, no matter how good we all look every one of us is in the same boat. All of us have wrestled to some degree with failure. And some of us, we do keep them tucked away and we carry them with us everywhere.

The good news today is that there is a perfect God who offers hope for failures like you and me. And you need to know this, the hope that He gives is not just a wishful thinking kind of hope. I'm talking about fresh slate, clean start, second chance, rise up from the ashes kind of hope. It's why it's one of the big three.

You know there are a whole lot of things that get overrated in life. Movies get overrated, teams get overrated, restaurants get overrated, vacation destinations get overrated, new car models get overrated—there are a lot of things in life that get overrated. Hope is not one of them. Hope is not one of them.

There is nothing quite like hope. I mean, when we're trapped in a tunnel of misery, it's hope that points to the light at the end. When we're overworked and exhausted, it's hope that gives us fresh energy. When we're tempted to quit and throw in a towel, it's hope that keeps us going. When we lose our way and confusion starts to blur our destination, it's hope that dulls the panic.

When we struggle with a crippling disease or endless chemo treatments, hope is what helps us push past the pain. When we're forced to just sit back and wait, it's hope that gives us patience. When we fear the worst, it's hope that reminds us that we have a Father who is still in control of our lives.

When we have to say farewell to someone we love, hope gets us past the grief in that cemetery. When we're scared about next semester at a brand-new school, it's hope that gives us courage to walk through the door. And when we fail, when we fail, man, it's hope that picks us up.

There are a lot of things in life that get overrated. Hope is not one of them.

Now, as you might imagine, the Bible is full of hope. And it's also full of people who were failures who really needed hope. I mean, page after page of people like you and me who failed miserably. I'm talking about strong people who blew it. I'm talking about courageous people who wilted under pressure. Faithful people who were less than faithful at times. People who wrecked relationships, cheated their families, dishonored their friends, lost their leadership position and their influence. People who thought they were washed up, had gone too far this time, really done it, never going to recover from this one—people like us.

One of those people is a guy by the name of Peter. You may have heard of him before. His name was actually Simon. Jesus gave him a nickname, Peter, which is Petros, which meant “the rock” or “rocky.” Before there was a Dwayne Johnson or Sylvester Salone, there was Petros.

I saw the wrestler, Stone Cold Austin, the other day on a commercial. I hadn’t seen him in like years. You know who I’m talking about? He was really at the height of his popularity back in the 90s, this WWF wrestler.

And I remember one time, my head was shaved as it is now, and I had a little goatee going on. And I walked into a public restroom at a Cracker Barrel—I’ll never forget this. I walked past these two little boys who were at the sink washing their hands. I walked into the stall, and I heard one of them say to the other, “That was Stone Cold Austin!” And I thought, “If I rip my shirt off right now, they are going to be so disappointed.”

But Peter was this rugged and ripped, stone cold kind of tough guy. Peter was a guy with calloused hands and an outdoor face. And Jesus chose this guy to be a part of His inner circle of friends. Peter had a good heart. He was a good guy with good soil, so to speak. But he was also impulsive and loud and strong-willed and opinionated and probably the first one to stand up and state his opinion.

On one occasion Jesus asked the twelve guys, “Hey, listen, guys. People are saying all kinds of things about me. Who do you say that I am?” And Peter doesn’t do like a public opinion poll, he doesn’t conduct a focus group, he just stands right up and blurts out, “I’ll tell you who you are. You’re the Christ, You’re the promised Messiah, the long awaited One, you are the Son of the Living God that’s who You are!”

And Jesus smiled and said, “You are so blessed, Rocky. And on this rock-solid truth that you just said, I’m going to build my church.” Peter was the rock. He was strong. He was committed. He was brave. He was courageous, at least he thought he was.

Some of you know his story where Jesus and the guys just finished their last meal together. And they’re in the upper room. And then, minus Judas, they go out to a place called the Mount of Olives. And it’s there that Jesus turns to the other eleven guys and says, “You know what? This very night all of you are going to fall away on account of what is going to happen to me.”

And Peter, in his prideful self-confidence kind of thumps his chest as if not a chance and said, “Even if all of these guys fall away, I will not bail on you. These other guys might, because they’re weak, but me? Man, I’m the Rock. You even gave me that name Yourself.” And Jesus says, “Really? Here’s the truth, Rocky. This night, this very night, before the rooster crows you’re going to have a chance to stand up for Me and you’re going to lie about even knowing Me. In fact, you’re going to disown Me three times.” Peter says, “You are so wrong. There is no way. Even if I have to die with You, I will never disown You.”

I think the toughest failures to get over are the ones when we pridefully declare, "Never. Never happen to us." And that's why this is such a good reminder from 1 Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 12:

"Don't be so naïve and self-confident. You're not exempt. You could fall flat on your face as easily as anyone else...." (MSG)

That's the truth. It is just saying, "If you think you are so strong that you could never fail, you will never blow it...." You might say others might, but, "I would never break my marriage vows." "I would never make a shady business deal." "I would never disappoint my kids." "I would never lie to my parents to cover my tracks." "I would never turn my back on a friend." "I would never take a spiritual nose dive." "I would never let that thing become an addiction in my life."

It's saying, "If you think that way you are naïve in your prideful, self-confidence. You are actually in more danger than those who believe without God's help all of that actually is possible."

That's what makes the *Titanic* one of the most famous failures in history. The visionaries, the creators, the engineers of this incredible luxury liner were certain that this was one ship that would never, never sink. Its 26,000-ton hull was believed to be indestructible.

As it left port for its fateful voyage, a passenger, Mrs. Albert Caldwell, asked a deck hand, "Is this ship really unsinkable?" The crew member fired back, "Lady, God, Himself, could not sink this ship." So no one could have imagined the nightmare when on its maiden voyage this unsinkable ship plunged to the bottom of the North Atlantic at 2:20 a.m., April 15, 1912, taking over 1,500 passengers and crew to their death.

The most staggering failures in life are the ones that would never happen to us, "Not the unsinkable me." And when they do, we're left to wonder if we'll ever resurface again. And that's how we find Peter after the crucifixion of Jesus.

In John, chapter 21, we find him on a boat. Now it's not a luxury liner on the North Atlantic, just a small fishing boat on the Sea of Tiberius. And the boat, itself, is very, very stable. He was the one who was not. In fact he's drowning in a sea of shame and regret, probably playing that night over and over in his mind, asking himself, "Man, how could I have done that? How could I have done that?"

Some of you know the story. Peter makes that boastful claim about being strong and dependable, courageous and loyal, unsinkable in his devotion to Jesus. "I would die for You before I would ever disown You."

And on the night that Jesus was arrested and led away to stand trial before the High Priest, Caiaphas, Peter kind of follows from a distance, kind of laying low. He sits down around a charcoal fire to warm himself there in Caiaphas's courtyard. He's in a crowd of people.

Probably trying to stay hidden. Probably had his hood pulled up, you know?

And somebody says, "Hey, I know you. You're one of His followers." And Peter goes, "I don't know what you're talking about. I don't know the guy." And another guy says, "Yeah, I've seen you with Him. I know you're one of His followers." And he goes, "I don't know what you're talking about. I told you I don't know the guy." And then somebody else goes, "Yeah, we can tell that you're from Galilee. We can tell by the accent. You are one of His followers." And Peter begins to curse and swears, "I don't know the guy." And then a rooster crows.

In Luke's account he just poignantly adds this phrase. "Jesus turned and looked at Peter." Can you imagine that? What that scene must have been like, felt like, when they locked eyes?

Well, Peter runs away, collapses in a pile of shame, and just cries his heart out. The once proud, ultra-macho, indestructible Peter is a failure, no longer bold, no longer committed, no longer courageous. Not even remotely close to being a "I will die for you" kind of friend.

And I'm just guessing as he floats in this little fishing boat, every time he closes his eyes, he sees that moment standing around that fire looking through the smoke and locking eyes with his best friend, Jesus. He feels so worthless, feels forever trashed, can't get it out of his mind. He's thinking, "If I could only do that over," as he floats there on that water of regret. He's just about to the bottom. He's sinking fast.

Have you been there? I think every one of us have been there where we have floated in a boat called failure. In fact, some of you may have come in here today or watching today and you're there. You feel sunk. You feel deflated. You feel ashamed and embarrassed. You wonder if you'll ever resurface again.

You're probably thinking, "Man, I have ruined everything. I destroyed my relationship with my spouse." "I betrayed my best friend." "I gambled away our savings." "My addictions have cost me my career." "My kids might never speak to me again." "My folks will never trust me again."

"My ministry is just over. I have really broken God's heart. How could I ever resurface from my failure and find a new hope and purpose? Is there a way for me to rise above my embarrassment and my regret and my remorse and my guilt and my shame? Because I hear you talking about hope, but is there hope for somebody like me?"

Well, the answer is a resounding, "Yes!"

And looking at the experience of Peter I think there are at least three things that he does right. And they are the same three things that any of us need to do if we want to resurface and really thrive again. And the first one is this:

HE OWNED HIS STUFF

He just owned his stuff. No excuses, no blaming, no finger pointing—he just owned it. He admitted it. He was broken by it. Let's look at what it says in Matthew, chapter 26. It says: *"Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: 'Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.' And he went outside and wept bitterly."* (NIV)

There are a couple of things in there. First of all, he remembered the word that Jesus had spoken. He said, "You know what? Jesus was right. I was wrong. I said I would never fall. He said I would. He was right. I was wrong."

Have you all discovered the power in those three little words? I was wrong. Proverbs 28:13 reminds us:

"A man," or a woman, "who refuses to admit his," or her," mistakes can never be successful. But if he confesses and forsakes them, he gets another chance. (LB)

And that's what Peter does. He just owned it. He admitted his failure and was broken by it. I mean broken by it. The once proud rock is reduced to a pile of rubble, and he goes out and he just weeps uncontrollably.

I've learned that there is a big difference between being miserable and being broken. I was talking to a woman after church service one time who began to tell me about her 23-year-old son who was abusing drugs. And she told me about his journey and how he comes home, and he just cries. But then he continues to steal from her and lie and con and use and refused to get help. And she cried and she said, "My son is so, so broken." And I hugged her and replied, "I hope he gets there. But, honestly, right now he's not broken. He's just miserable."

You see, you can be really sorry that you got caught. You can be absolutely miserable that you're having to live with the consequences of what you did. Or you can just own your stuff and humble yourself and drop your pride and be genuinely remorseful and ask the God of grace and somebody else to help you. When you do that, that's when hope starts to rise.

See, Peter was not just miserable. He was broken. There is another thing that Peter did. It's kind of subtle. It's kind of right between the lines. But I think it is so healthy and so wise:

HE STAYED IN THE GROUP

He stayed in the group. We find him in this little fishing boat, he's not by himself. He's not alone. It says in John, chapter 21, that Thomas, and Nathanael, and James, and John, and a couple of the other disciples were there. Peter says, "You know what? I'm going fishing." And we do that, don't we? We just return to whatever we knew best before our failure. And they say, "Alright, we'll go with you."

So there are seven of these guys. They go out fishing together that night. They caught absolutely nothing, but at least they were together. Just good friends. In fact, right after Peter

admitted his failure and went out and wept bitterly about it, you know where we find him? Right back in the group. Hiding out in an upper room with the rest of the guys.

Because, you know what? Jesus was right about all of them. They all would shrink back. They all would fall away that night. And now, Peter is back on the fishing team with these guys. He knew that all of them were in the same boat, so to speak.

And you know what? We just admitted it, didn't we? That we're all in the same boat too. Gang, it's amazing how most of us are like the rest of us. That's why I love places like Traders. No perfect people allowed here. It's a wonderfully healing thing to surround yourself with good people who know they need grace too. They know they have failures too.

There is power in the group. Stay in the group. If the past 18 months have taught us anything it's that we need each other. When you stop gathering and you start isolating yourself, you can't help but drift away.

I will sometimes run into people I haven't seen in church for a while. I'm like, "Man, missed you. Where have you been?" And they'll say, "Well, you know..." They'd been going through a really hard time. I said, "So? Where have you been?" Don't ever let failure isolate you. Stay in the group.

A lot of people begin to think, "Well, after all I've done there is no way I could ever show my face around here again." No. You're wrong. Stay in the group. We're all in the same boat. "Well, I have no place in the worship service after the things that I've done." No, no, no! Stay in the group.

"Well, I'm too embarrassed, I'm too ashamed." No! Stay in the group. "Well, my friends, they won't accept me now." Well, they are not your real friends. You stay in the group. There is healing in the group.

I've never been to a redwood national forest in northern California, but I have been doing some pretty intensive research on redwood trees. Okay, I googled it. But have you ever seen these trees? I mean, they are amazing. These trees soar up to 300 feet tall. I mean, they are incredible.

Now, do you know how deep their root system goes? This shocked me—five or six feet deep. That's it. But check this out. Their roots travel outward up to 100 feet from the circumference of the tree, and they intertwine their roots with all of the other trees. Every tree is supported and sustained by the larger, wider system of intertwining roots from all of the other trees. And that's what provides stability and enables them to soar so high up into the sky.

Think there might be a lesson in there for us? Ecclesiastes 4:10 says:
"If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble." (NLT)

Stay in the group.

I love the way that The Message puts Galatians, chapter 6, 1 through 3:

“Live creatively, friends. If someone falls into sin, forgivingly restore him, saving your critical comments for yourself. You might be needing forgiveness before the day’s out. Stoop down and reach out to those who are oppressed. Share their burdens, and so complete Christ’s law. If you think you are too good for that, you are badly deceived.”

Because we all fall down. Stay in the group. There’s one more thing that Peter did right that anybody who wants to resurface and find joy and find hope and find real life must do:

HE DOVE IN AND SWAM TOWARD JESUS

He dove in and he swam toward Jesus. This might be my favorite scene in the entire Bible. So Peter is floating in this little boat with his buddies, they are about 100 yards off of the shore. It’s around sunrise and they can see this dimly lit figure standing there on the beach.

And whoever it is is building a breakfast fire. And this guy on the shore shouts out to them, “Hey, caught anything?”

Now, if you fish you know that that is the last thing that you want to be asked, especially when you haven’t caught anything. And they go, “No.” He says, “Throw your nets on the other side of the boat.” Well, they do. And the nets get so full that they begin to break. And John remembers the same thing happening three years prior. And he yells, “It’s the Lord!”

And before he can even get “Lord” out, Peter jumps overboard and starts swimming frantically toward Jesus. And jumping out of that boat, I think he was saying, “Man, I’ve thought about this long enough. I’m tired of feeling this way. I’m cold. I’m hungry. I’m miserable in my self-perceived uselessness. I’m ready to let go of my failures. I just want a second chance. I’m ready to leave my past behind and just swim to Jesus.”

I would just love to have a picture painted of Peter standing there ankle deep in water, chest heaving from that frantic swim, water dripping from his hair and his beard standing there by a new charcoal fire, looking through the smoke this time to lock eyes with forgiveness.

Let me remind you whose eyes Peter was looking into. Peter was locking eyes with the friend he betrayed just a few days earlier. He was looking into the eyes of the man whose forehead still bore the puncture marks from the crown of thorns. Peter was looking into the eyes of a man whose feet and hands still bore reminders of spikes that held Him to a Roman cross. Peter was looking into the eyes of the One who had died as a substitute for his sin and for his failure.

And on this beach, on this new day, through this new fire he was looking into the hope-filled eyes of a resurrected Jesus. And as the two of them lock eyes, Jesus asked him, "Peter, do you love Me?" Peter said, "You know I love you, Lord."

You know how many times Jesus asked him that? Do you know? Three. Like giving him the chance to make up for all three times that he said, "I don't know the guy." First time Jesus asked him, "Do you love me?" the word that is used there is the Greek word agape, which is a God-like unconditional type of love.

Peter doesn't respond back with that word. He responds back with the word phileo, which is a brotherly kind of love. I think this is kind of cool because Peter is kind of just saying, "You know what? I'm not going to make that boastful claim again, because you know what, Lord? I am not capable of that kind of love yet. But I will love you like a brother. I'll love you with all that I've got, imperfect as it might be. But, yes. You know I love you, Lord."

And Jesus smiles and says, "I'll take it. And, Peter, I want to use you to change this world. You might have flamed out and failed, but I died, and I rose so that those failures could be forgotten. And, Peter, just like I always have, I still believe in you." And with those words, Peter resurfaces, and this colossal failure became one of the greatest success stories in human history. With incredible courage and humility, he helps launch the church of Jesus Christ and spread it around the world. This guy who thought that God was through with him went on to become one of the biggest difference makers ever to walk this planet. Traders Point is here today because of men and women like him.

Check out this Scripture. It says:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you." 1 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV)

Did you catch who wrote that? This old fisherman wrote that. This old fisherman who jumped out of a boat of failure and just swam to Jesus. He looked into the eyes of forgiveness, looked into the eyes of mercy, he looked into the eyes of a God of second chances and like me and like so many of you, he looked into the eyes of hope.

Yeah, there are a lot of things in this life that are overrated. Hope is not one of them. And I just think that God may be trying to say to you today, "There is hope for everyone. You may not believe in Me, but I believe in you." He's saying, "You may have given up on Me, but I have not given up on you and I want to help you resurface and live."

I think God is saying to some of you, "By the way, throw that stupid box away. Don't let your failures define you. Let My love do that."

I want us to just bow our heads for a few moments, maybe just sit here for a little bit. Maybe this really resonates with you today. I don't know, maybe you did walk in here today with a

crushing sense of embarrassment and shame and regret and remorse. Maybe you've just never been able to let go of the past. I just pray that right here in this moment that you would lock eyes with the resurrected Jesus and hear Him say, "Listen. I'm not expecting perfection, I just want to do life with you. I'm offering forgiveness. I'm offering hope. I'm offering a fresh start if you'll just walk with Me."

I pray that in this moment you would start to feel hope rise within you. It doesn't have to be this way. I even pray that maybe some relational forgiveness could start today, because I know in a crowd this size there has got to be some tension going on in different homes and different friendships and maybe it's just time to let that go and start to make things right—as right as you can.

Maybe today is a day for humility, moving beyond miserable and moving to brokenness saying, "I need some help. I've got to own my stuff. And I just need some help."

Sometimes that's just the most effective prayer you can pray, "Help me, God." And God will direct you to people who can help you as well. But today, it starts with humility. Like Peter did, just be broken about it.

And maybe, just truthfully today, maybe you have been isolated a little bit, just drawing away from people and, you know, shame makes you do that. I get it. There is a difference between guilt and shame. Guilt, we feel guilty over something we did. We feel shame for who we are. Shame is a dangerous enemy, but grace is even more powerful.

So I pray that you just recognize that all of us are pretty much the same. And that we all have failures, and we all need grace. I pray that you would stay in the group and let people help you. That this would become a regular journey for you every weekend. That you would show up here and just be in a group.

And maybe in this moment right now you just lock eyes with hope. Jesus, thank You for giving us a living hope, not a wishful thinking kind of hope, but a living hope every day. It helps us persevere.

I pray somebody finds that hope today in You, like right now. I pray that the Holy Spirit would just fill somebody's heart with hope like: It's going to get better. It's going to be okay. Thank You for doing that, Jesus. Thank You for waiting for us to come to You and when we do, we receive forgiveness and grace and a fresh start in life and joy. Thank You. We pray all of this in Your name. Amen.