

HOUR OF POWER OF 07.02.2010

OPENING SENTENCE - RHS

RHS: This is the day that God has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

PROGRAM OPENING/TRUMPET FANFARE/V.O.

VO: Today on the Hour of Power: Ken Cooper worked for a Christian college but lived a secret life as a bank robber before God completely transformed his life after reading, in prison, a daily devotional written by Dr. Schuller. Today on the Hour of Power, this former inmate meets Dr. Schuller for the very first time.

KEN: Schuller, who was there for me in prison when I need a possibility thinker.

VO: Also today, the incomparable Mr. Piano, Roger Williams.

(PIANO MUSIC PLAYING)

VO: Then Dr. Robert Schuller welcomes back John Maxwell with an all new message of hope for everyone.

JM: I think some of us, the reason we love New Year's so much is because it kind of gives us a fresh start and it gives us kind of a clean sheet of paper. We can kind of say okay, that was last year and those were those failures, but this year I'm going to try to do better.

VO: Join us today for the best hour on television, the Hour of Power from the Crystal Cathedral.

HYMN - "Joyful, Joyful.."

Joyful, joyful, we adore You, God of glory, Lord of love; Hearts unfold like flowers before You, opening to the sun above. Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; Drive the dark of doubt away; Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day. Amen! Amen! Amen!

GOOD MORNING/INVOCATION - RHS

RHS: Welcome to an hour where you are going to reach out to God even if you don't know it and where God is reaching out to you even though you may not recognize Him. An idea comes to the mind, a mood, a feeling, an emotion, a concept, an awareness of a presence of personalities around you that are believers. Yes, turn around, shake hands with somebody and give them the blessing; God loves you and so do I.

So God, it's going to happen again. It happens every Sunday. Something happens when we're here; a feeling, a thought, an emotion, a connection, an experience. But its You coming to us. Help us to recognize that it is God at work in us, giving us the joy. Hallelujah, amen.

HYMN - "I to the Hills will Lift My Eyes"

I to the hills will lift my eyes; from where shall come my aid?

My help is from the Lord alone, Who heaven and earth has made.

He will not let my foot be moved; my Guardian never sleeps; With watchful and unslumbering care His own He safely keeps.

My faithful Keeper is the Lord, my Shelter and my Shade; 'Neath sun or moon, by day or night, I will not be afraid.

From evil He will keep me safe; for me He will provide; My going out, my coming in, forever He will guide.

SCRIPTURE – Sel. Verses from Ephesians 2 & 3 - RHS

RHS: You may be seated. Always we come together most of us are believers and Christians and we like, above all, to hear a word from God and that we receive from the Holy Bible. Listen to this scripture:

God who is rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us and made us alive in Christ, for by grace you have been saved through faith. Comment: many people say we're saved by faith. We're not saved by faith. We are saved by grace through faith and that not of ourselves. It is the gift of God. For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works. For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ from whom the whole family on heaven and earth is named. I pray that He will grant to you according to the riches of His glory. That He will give to you to be strengthened with His might through His spirit. That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend what is the width and the length and the breadth and the height to know the love of Christ which passes all human knowledge until you are filled with the fullness of God. Wow, till you are filled with the fullness of God. You are; that's why unexpected positive thoughts and emotions and feelings come over you unexpected like the sudden break of a sunbeam through dark clouds. Wow. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that you ask or think, according to the power of God that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

ANTHEM - "My Jesus, I Love Thee"

My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine. For Thee all the follies of sin I resign. My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou. If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I love Thee because Thou has first loved me, and purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree. I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow. If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now. If ever, if ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I'll love Thee in life, I will love Thee in death, and praise Thee as long as Thou lendest me breath; And say when my passing brings peace on my brow; If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

In mansions of glory and endless delight, I'll ever adore Thee in heaven so bright; I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow; If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now. Amen, Amen!

SHEILA SCHULLER COLEMAN – THANK YOU

SSC: Glorious music!

INTERVIEW – KEN COOPER

SSC: SHEILA SCHULLER COLEMAN KC: KEN COOPER

RHS: ROBERT H. SCHULLER

SSC: Now it's my honor to interview an amazing guest; his name is Ken Cooper. And Ken lived a very normal life. He might have been the man next door

with a wife and children and he was the publicity director for a Christian college and what nobody knew was he was living this whole secret life as a serial bank robber. He would actually carry a gun and would take women as hostages and would rob these banks and nobody knew. They thought he was a Christian man, they thought he was a Christian father and husband and then he was caught and I'm going to let Ken continue to tell the story, but his book is, Held Hostage: A Serial Bank Robber's Road To Redemption. An amazing book. Please welcome Ken Cooper. Ken? So Ken I've given them.. I gave you the set up so they know you are a bank robber now, which is..

KC: I'm so embarrassed.

SSC: ..unbelievable, and it sounds like this very glamorous almost life but as you've said crime does not pay because on that one fateful day your last attempt to rob a bank, tell them what happened.

KC: I was leaving Carolwood Exchange Bank in North Tampa, it was the last of all the banks that I had robbed and as usual I had taken a hostage. I regret that. Even when I hear myself say it, it just hurts. And I think of the victims and I think of all the people I've hurt and crime definitely doesn't pay, not for anyone. I couldn't even spend the money.

SSC: Right, that's what you said.

KC: You know if you have a lot of cash there's no way to spend it. It was really insanity. It was an addiction that drove me so that when this really deep craving for the adrenaline rush, the superman mode, when that would overtake me then I would go out, I would plan very carefully, make sure I knew everything that I needed to know in order to pull it off, but still very often take a toy gun. Because the greater the risk, the greater the absurdity, the greater the stage and the greater the rush and so it was crazy, but thank God, He rescued me.

SSC: But that last time, that last bank attempt, you were nearly killed.

KC: Yes the bullet from the gun from the trained shooter. I saw that he was a trained person the way he was standing holding the gun but I was so deceived by Satan by that time that I thought I was invincible so I had my nine millimeter in one hand and the bag of money in the other and as I was leaving I thought he would just kind of melt and I would rush on past him to the getaway car, but he shot me through the outer glass and the bullet just missed my heart. Later on I had it extracted; I had a friendly reminder for several years.

SSC: Yes I'm sure you did. And then you ended up in jail.

KC: Yes.

SSC: And there you were, at that point a non-Christian.

KC: Yes.

SSC: But that's where you received, and you got to know Jesus. It was, as I put it, in the depths of hell is where you met Jesus. How ironic is that? God says that in the scripture. Nothing, nothing can separate us from the love of Jesus Christ. So tell us how you met Jesus.

KC: Not only that, it was on what some people call the devil's day. It was October 31st..

SSC: Oh wow, right.

KC: ..when the Lord Jesus Christ, as I asked Him to wash me in His blood, I had made fun of the blood of Christ from when I was thirteen years of age and saw my father cry out at a mourners bench at a little church, asking God to wash him in Jesus' blood. The blood sacrifice made no sense to me, but finally, obviously I was humbled and I cried out and a peace came over me that I can't describe but was very real.

SSC: Now here you are a real Christian.

KC: Yes.

SSC: But you are in the lion's den, they called it, with these.. and it was in horrific, horrific circumstances and then you thought when they transferred you to the Rock, from jail to prison, you thought oh my goodness maybe now it will get better but it was even worse at the Rock.

KC: Yes. I don't know if you can, as you're seeing me, if you can understand the terror that I had put people through, I was now facing. And I stood at the gate to this place called the Rock at Raeford Florida, a place where fifty men were murdered that year. One convict would murder another. Continual brutality of all sorts, I won't describe it.

SSC: Right.

KC: It's beyond description. The depth, the darkness to which people can go.

SSC: And I'm reading this book and it's like reading a novel, it was just gripping. And I had no idea. All of a sudden I'm reading and I would like to pick up and read this page for everybody:

"A smile inched across my lips as I peered down at the shoebox in my right hand. It was smaller than my father's lunch bucket. That shoe box contained all my possessions after forty-six years of living. I stared at the contents: my bible, a daily devotional book by Robert Schuller," by Robert Schuller? I had no idea that dad was in here and it was just so heart warming and my eyes filled with tears to think that our ministry would have reached out to you there, not knowing. We just planted those seeds, we just sowed those seeds and God made sure that it made its way to you. "A few scraps of paper, a pencil without an eraser" and that was it. And the fact of all those things you would choose dad's book.

KC: This was my best friend in prison.

SSC: That's what you write.

KC: I was standing at the gate and I had this book in my hands and the evil eyes that were looking down at me at that horrible place, the flesh merchants, as they were called, they would buy and sell a man in the forty steps it would take to get from the gate to the cell block. And I hate to say it, but I was bought by somebody in my walk.

SSC: Yes but you.

KC: Reliving that is just..

SSC: It's hard, it's hard..

KC: ..incredible.

SSC: ..but you were saying that there was a point where you were almost going crazy because of the depression and you had nobody to talk to and you turned this book over, because dad's picture, you could see it once upon a time, wasn't it on the back? And you said according to the story you said you talked to him. You talked to him; you called him Schuller and he became your friend there in prison.

KC: May I talk to Dr. Schuller?

SSC: Please, I would love it.

KC: Dr. Schuller, I dreamed of this moment that I would meet you, that I would be able to somehow express my great love for you and my appreciation. I just really can't do it but now this is Schuller. See this is Schuller here and you're Dr. Schuller.

RHS: What happened to this book?

KC: Well..

RHS: Oh!

KC: ..he did some hard time in prison, I think is part of what happened, but Schuller was right there with me and on May the 17th of this year when I was brand new at the Rock and this horrible depression where for a week I didn't eat, I

didn't take a shower, I smelled like the people that repulsed me and I picked up this book at first and I said 'Schuller you've never been in any trouble in your life, you know you don't know anything about lock up. What can you say for me?' So I put it back down. And then the depression got worse and I picked it back up and I said, 'okay Schuller, I'll give you another chance.' So I opened it up to May the 17th and I laughed when I saw what it was. I don't know, now this is many years ago you wrote this book. But on May the 17th it says: "God's Prosperity" and I said wow of all things! But then it says "Light is sown for the Godly and joy for the good" and you said why don't you form your own "Why Not Club?"

RHS: Yes.

KC: So I did, I appointed myself president of my own why not club and when I read the scripture it said "return to the stronghold you prisoners of hope and I will return to you double."

SSC: Wow.

KC: And I claimed it. And I said thank you, Schuller, I'm a prisoner of hope. And that's why I wear this orange outfit and if I may, I'd like to give you a book and I'd like to read this dedication to you. "To Dr. Schuller, in this book you will meet my best friend, Schuller who was there for me in prison when I needed a possibility thinker. You will relate to his daily power thoughts. You wrote them, you should relate."

RHS: This is your book?

KC: Yes sir.

RHS: Thank you.

KC: Thank you, sir, I'm so honored.

PIANO SOLO – ROGER WILLIAMS – "Somewhere in Time/The Rose"

RHS THANK YOU TO ROGER WILLIAMS

RHS: Thank you. And Roger celebrated his 85th birthday. Happy birthday, Roger!

MESSAGE/PRAYER – JOHN MAXWELL

"Learning to Fail Forward"

JM: Good morning. I'm so excited about being here today in the Crystal Cathedral with you and I'm going to talk to you about failure. But before I do I want you to see the Jumbotron as it will be the introduction to my message.

(VIDEO ROLL IN)

VO: Dismissed from drama school with a note that read "wasting her time, she's too shy to put her best foot forward." Turned down by the Decca Recording company who said "we don't like their sound and guitar music is on the way out." A failed soldier, farmer and real estate agent. At 38 years old, he went to work for his father as a handyman. Cut from the high school basketball team, he went home, locked himself in his room and cried. A teacher told him he was too stupid to learn anything and he should go into a field where he might succeed by virtue of his pleasant personality. Fired from a newspaper because he lacked imagination and had no original ideas. His fiancé died, he failed in business twice, he had a nervous breakdown and he was defeated in eight elections. If you've never failed, you've never lived.

(END OF VIDEO ROLL IN)

There are three facts I want to share with you this morning about failure. Are you ready? Are you ready to learn something? Are you ready to take notes? Look at your neighbor and say “you’re going to learn something.” Go ahead and tell them that. In fact look right back at them and say “it’s about time.” I’ve been waiting a long time for this. Three facts about failure: Number one - everyone fails. I think the video just did a justice job on the fact that no matter how successful a person may look on the outside, every one of us fail. In fact since you’re already talking to your neighbor I want you to look at your neighbor and say this to them: “You’re going to mess up.” Would you tell them that right now? Now hold on, hold on, hold on some of you seem to be enjoying saying that a little too much. That person who just said you’re going to mess up, look back at them and say “I already have. I’m sitting beside you.” You see we all fail. Every one of us fail. And I love the statement that says that if you don’t succeed you’re running about average. And I can tell you right now that all of us have experienced failures within our life.

And in the bible one of the things I love about God’s word is it never tries to hide the failures, the shortcomings, the mistakes of the people that we look to as heroes. Abraham, who was called a friend of God, he lied. Jacob, who was a prince of God, was deceitful. Moses, who literally spoke to God face to face, committed murder. David, who was a man after God’s own heart, committed adultery and murder. Peter, who was literally given the keys to heaven, denied Christ. Paul, who basically was the catalyst for the early church, murdered. You see the men and the women that we look up to in the word of God, all of them had blatant failures in their lives. Why? Because all of us fail. All have sinned and all have come short of God’s glory. We all fail.

The second thing I want you to know about failure is this: no one enjoys failure. I’ve never met one person who has come into my life and said John the thing that really motivates me in life, the thing that I thrive on more than anything else is failure. I get so excited when I mess up. I get absolutely turned on when I.. The other day, probably the highlight of my week, I lost my job. Awesome! Awesome! It’s just humongous what’s happened to me. I just broke a relationship. Life is good. I’ve never known anybody to get excited about failure, not known anybody that likes failure. What do we do? We hide it. We deny it. We fear it. We ignore it. We hate it. We run from it. We do a lot of things with failure but no one really likes it. In fact it’s been said if at first you don’t succeed, destroy all the evidence.

When I was a young leader, one of my first leadership conventions that I was privileged to be asked to speak at was a two and a half day convention of which I was going to be the last speaker on the last slot of the last day. And for the two days that all of the speakers, they spoke about success, about doing well and about their achievements. And to be honest with you by the end of the second day, as a kind of a young leader who was doing a lot more mess ups than anything else, I was becoming quite discouraged because as they would talk about how good they were and what they had achieved and the mountains they had climbed, I kept thinking I’m not that good yet, and I haven’t succeeded that well. And I sensed that was not only within my spirit, I sensed that was within the spirit of the entire crowd attending the conference. And when it came time for me to speak I decided I didn’t want to teach the lesson that I was going to teach. In fact there was a lunch break before I was to speak that afternoon and so I kind of hid away and I asked myself what am I going to speak on? Certainly they don’t need to hear one more lesson on success. And all of the sudden I had one of these eureka moments

and I got out my legal pad and I realized what I was going to teach on. And at the very top of my legal pad I wrote the words “Flops, Failures and Fumbles.” And when I got up to speak that day I looked at the rest of the congregation and I said “for two days we’ve heard about success and how to be good and how to achieve and then we’ve got that down. And I want to talk to you about failures. I want to talk to you about when we don’t succeed and what happens when we don’t reach that goal that we wanted to.” And I said “I want to talk out of my life” and I took that flops, failures and fumbles message and I began to talk to them about all the dumb things that I had done in my life. And I can tell you the list was long. It was five pages of legal pad. When I finished, you should have felt the encouragement in that room because everybody said look what he’s done and look how many times he’s failed and all of a sudden there was a spirit of encouragement came out of the failure, basically saying if God can bless him with all the dumb things he’s done, certainly God can bless me too. In fact after that lesson they stood in lines. That’s when they had those wall and stack duplicators with those cassette tapes. They stood in line for two hours to get that tape before they went home. One guy wrote me a letter and said I went from Ohio to Kansas and I listened to that tape seven times and I just laughed at all the dumb things that you had done in your ministry. I thought why he listened to it seven times, I’m not sure? Did he assume that if he kept listening I would get better? I have no clue.

But here’s what I know: everybody fails. Nobody, nobody likes failure but the part that I want to dwell on in today’s lesson is this third point: not everyone responds to failure the same way. And this is the key; we all fail. None of us like it but people do not respond to failure the same. Again biblically Job responded much differently to his problems than his friends did. Joshua and Caleb, when the spies were sent out in the Promised Land, they came back with a total different report than the other ten. David and Saul, first two kings of Israel, both of them failed and yet David was a man after God’s heart and kept getting back up and Saul just stayed down after he failed. Even in the last days of Jesus’, Peter and Judas, two of His disciples, both did terrible things to Him. And yet one commits suicide and the other comes back and literally becomes the spokesman for the early church. You see not everyone responds to failure the same way. And it’s that response to failure, your response, my response; it’s that response to failure that determines how successful we become. It’s not the failure.

Several years ago I wrote a book called Failing Forward. And it was a book to teach you how to fail successfully. And in that book Failing Forward that I wrote, I talk about the thesis which is the difference between average people and achieving people. There’s a difference between people that are average and people that achieve and here’s the difference. The difference is in their perception of failure and their response to failure. Average people see failure differently than achieving people do. And average people respond to failure differently than achieving people do. Average people when they fail, they fail backward. Achieving people when they fail, fail forward. They fail but when they fail they advance; they fail forward. They’re like my friend who said one time in college “John I’m never down.” I said “What do you mean you’re never down?” He said “I’m either up or getting up.” They know how to fail forward.

Now what’s the difference? What’s the difference between a person who fails backward and a person that fails forward? How does that happen? Let me give you three quick thoughts on those who fail backward. People that fail backward. People that take these failures and turn them into sometimes major losses in their lives, number one: that failure keeps them from trying again. In other words when

they fail, they really fail not because they fail but they really fail because they allow that failure to cause them to back up and say a phrase that all of us have said, "I'll never do that again." Or as Mark Twain said, "if a cat sits on a hot stove" he said "that cat won't sit on a hot stove again." He said "that cat won't sit on a cold stove either." That cat just don't like stoves. We've all had experiences where we've failed and we backed up from it and we said my goodness I'm never going to do that again. Oh, learned my lesson. Not going to touch that! Wow, see you later!

Twenty-five years ago, very close to the Crystal Cathedral, was the 1984 Olympics and Mary Lou Retton became kind of the darling of gymnastics. And in an interview asking her about her achievements and about her medals, she said something very significant. She said "people like to talk about the medals, they like to talk about the success," but she said "trust me; my success comes from the fact that I have learned to get through my problems. I have learned to bounce back after set back." Mary Lou Retton was just telling us that if you're going to fail forward, you have to get back up and people who fail forward, they back up and they allow their failures to overwhelm them and allow them to overcome them. And we fall backwards, secondly, when we become negative about life. Failure has a way of tainting our attitude and coloring our perspective until after a while we begin just to be negative about life and assume that everything is wrong and everybody is trying to hurt us and we go through this dark type of living not because that's the way life is but that's the way we see it is because we chose that because we failed.

We're kind of like the grandpa who visited the grandchildren in the afternoon. After lunch, he went to bed and he was tired and he fell asleep, took a nap. One of the grandchildren came in the room saw grandpa asleep. He had a handle bar mustache, thought he'd have some fun. Went into the kitchen, got some Limburger cheese, snuck back in, Grandpa is still taking his nap. Put some Limburger cheese in grandpa's mustache, slipped out of the room. Grandpa woke up a little bit later and he said this bedroom stinks. Got up out of the bedroom, went in the kitchen, sat down, was going to have some cookies with grandma and the kids and smelled around the kitchen and he said well you know the kitchen stinks too. He said I'm going to go outside and get me a breath of fresh air. He went outside, took a deep breath; well he said the whole world stinks. Now the whole world didn't stink; grandpa had some Limburger cheese in his mustache.

And I know people; they've got negative attitudes in their life and wherever they go, no matter where they go, they can't be happy. They go no matter what job they have, no matter what place they go to, no matter who they marry, doesn't really matter. I love the statement that says no matter where you are, there you are. So many times we fail backward when those failures begin to get the best of us until we pretty well become negative about life itself. One of the great things about the Crystal Cathedral over the years, it's lifted up possibility thinking, faith, hope; the things that allow the spirit to soar.

Thirdly, we fail backwards when we make excuses and blame others. When we begin to look at our failures and put the blame on someone else or something else, we begin to fail in a negative way and we begin to fail backward. Ben Franklin said one time he that is good at making excuses is seldom good at anything else. Boy, that's true.

Many of you in this congregation, probably in the TV audience, are old enough to remember when Monday night football was really great. I mean when Monday night football was the thing you did on Monday night because it was the only football in town and that's way back when Howard Cosell and Don Meredith

were in the booth. Howard Cosell would just wax eloquent and Don Meredith kind of the cowboy, just kind of sit there, listen to him for a while and when the game was over but the game was still going on, remember Don Meredith would lay back and sing “turn out the lights the party’s over.” One day, Howard was just making all kind of excuses for a player that wasn’t.. he was dropping passes and messing up on the field and he just kept making excuses for him. And finally Don Meredith looked at him and said “Howard, if if’s and but’s were candies and nuts, we’d all have a merry Christmas.”

When we begin to blame others. When we begin to look around and blame others for our issues and our problems, we’re failing backward. But here’s the good news. As those fail backward and allow their failures to overcome them, there are those who fail forward and they rise above their failures and they advance even as they are falling. And this is the difference: when we fail forward, number one: we learn from our failure because when you and I fail we have two responses. We either learn from that failure and get better because of it or we panic and we leave that failure. And in leaving that failure we never learn and so we commit the same failure over and over and over and over again. I think some of us, the reason we love New Years so much is because it kind of gives us a fresh start and it gives us a kind of a clean sheet of paper and we can kind of say okay that was last year and those were those failures but this year I’m going to try to do better. But we fail forward. When we take those failures, whatever they are and we sit back and we let them teach us something, we learn from them.

Years ago, I picked up and have passed on to many, as I’m passing on to you now, the five rules of life.

Rule number one is you will learn lessons.

Rule number two: there are no mistakes, just lessons.

Rule number three: a lesson is repeated until it is learned.

Rule number four: if you don’t learn the easy lessons, they get harder.

And rule number five: you’ll know you’ve learned a lesson when your actions change. That’s so true about failure. The question is not have we failed, the question is not are we going to fail. Of course we have, of course we will. That isn’t even the issue. That should not even be brought up in discussion about failure. There is only one question and that question is not have we failed but the question is how have we responded to that failure. Since we have failed, what have done and if we fail forward, I promise you one of the things that will happen to us is we will learn from that failure. Until we can say, until we can say sometimes I win and sometimes I learn. We fail forward when we learn from our failure. Secondly, we fail forward when we discover our true selves. Sometimes the only way we can ever discover who we really are or who we could be or what our gifts are is through failure itself.

When Nathaniel Hawthorne lost his job, he went home to his wife and began moaning the fact that he’d lost his job. And she smiled and she said “Now you have time to write that book you always wanted to.” And so he wrote Scarlet Letter. Whistler flunked out at WestPoint, failed as an engineer but he found out that he was a pretty good painter. You see through our failures, many times we discover ourselves. We go down to dead ends and we say oops this is not who I am. This is not my giftedness. This is not my calling.

When I graduated from college, I had a counseling degree and I began counseling. I was a terrible counselor. Now I know you think I’m being modest and a little self-effacing but trust me on this; I was a terrible counselor. Let me put it this way if I had problems I would not go to myself. Just terrible. And people would come to see me because I was a counselor and they’d come and they’d sit down and

they'd begin to pour out their problems and there are many reasons I was a terrible counselor. One is I didn't want to listen to all the problems. And secondly is I wanted to help them quickly. I wanted quick fixes for these people and so they'd start telling me their problems and I'd kind of listen and within five minutes I'd figured it out. I'm on my legal pad already giving them an assignment. You know, point one, point two, point three and so I let them go on and on and on until they feel a little bit better and I'd say okay I've got some suggestions for you. And I tear off that sheet with all my suggestions and I'd hand it to them and say be healed. Well they weren't healed, they weren't helped. They walked out of there kind of wondering what happened. Next, next, next and it was terrible. For three years it was terrible. I was counseling and I wasn't helping anybody, I wasn't helping myself. I'd go home, I'd be worn out. Didn't like my job, thought I'd kind of leave the ministry. Somebody come and say they had a real problem, you know, I'm going to jump off the bridge. I'd say I've got a car, let me help you, let me help you. There'd be times when I was feeling so low after hearing them I'd say can I jump with you? We'll hold hands. After three years of miserable counseling, making myself miserable, making everybody else miserable, one day I stood up in front of my congregation and I said "I have come to the conclusion that counseling is not my gift and I just want you to know I'm counseling nobody in the church again." They stood up and gave me a standing ovation. Oh they looked at each other and says God has answered our prayer! God has answered our prayer.

You see we fail forward. We fail forward when we discover our true selves. And finally we fail forward when we come to a deep faith in God. Almost all of us in this auditorium, almost all of you watching television, you have come to God through pain, regret, failure, disappointments. That's what gives us the wake up call. That's what happened to the prodigal son when he came back to the father. That's what happened to the lady who had that incurable disease who said I've got to press through the crowd and see Jesus. What brought them to the Father? What brought them to God? Their hurts, their questions, their failures, their disappointments until one day they realized the only person they could truly turn to was God.

And so I close with some encouraging words to you. By the way, they're not my words; they're the words of God. I just want you to know that there are some things that do not fail. We fail, we disappoint others, we're disappointed in others, people fail us but there are some things that never fail. First of all God's word. God's word never fails us. Not one of all the good promises of the Lord your God that He has given to you has failed. God's love and compassion they never fail us. It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed because His compassions fail not. I love this phrase, "His compassions are new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness." So when I fail, so when I fail, God's not tired because His compassions are new every morning. So when I wake up and I'm tired of the old life and I think God's probably tired of the old life and He's tired of the failures, God says I'm not tired. For you John, I woke up with a whole set of new compassion for you.

The promises of eternal life never fail. I give them eternal life, Jesus said, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. You are safe in God. God's love never fails. Paul said prophecies, tongues, knowledge that will all pass away but there are three that remain: hope, faith and love, but the greatest of these is love. And my friends, I've got good news for you today. God never fails. Be strong and of good courage. Fear not for the Lord thy God He will not fail thee nor will He forsake thee.

Right before World War II, Japan attacked China and went into an area of China where Gladys Alword had worked many years as a missionary. She had a little orphanage of a hundred children. Immediately she had to gather up the hundred children and flee for safety and after a few days of them trying to avoid the Japanese they finally found a little bit of a mountain retreat where they could spend the night. And it was beginning to wear on Gladys, the missionary, and she was quite discouraged. The next morning she looked at the orphans and she let her doubts kind of arise and said I'm not sure we can get to safety and I'm not sure we can get through this mountain pass. I'm going to do my best, but I'm not sure. And a little girl that was thirteen says Mrs. Alword, Moses led the children of Israel through the Red Sea so you can lead us through the mountains. She smiled and she said honey, thank you for that word of encouragement but you have to understand I'm not Moses. The little girl said I know that, but God is still God. Blessings.