


13. BE CAREFUL NOT TO FALL



*Do not underestimate the power of
small temptations & trials, you may
be dragged away by their power.*

#NCSAMENTALHEALTHDEVOTIONS

BE CAREFUL NOT TO FALL

Jude 1:24: "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

The road of life is long and treacherous. Matthew 7:14 makes it clear that it is very difficult to live life upon this earth. It says: *"But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."*

While conducting an afternoon church service at Heidelberg Central Church one afternoon, I was walking to the stage very confidently because by now I had comfortably mastered the skill of walking on high heels. Then, all of a sudden I hit a speed bump and I tumbled over to the floor, sideways. I got up, dusted myself off and went on with the programme. I was okay, but my ego was a bit bruised.

1 Corinthians 10:12 tells us: *"But let he who thinks he is standing be careful and take heed lest he falls."* One of the things that often beset God's people during trial and doubt, are questions regarding God and spiritual matters. We are more prone during times of distress to fall to temptations which we would normally not yield to in times of peace. We need to take heed that lest we think we are standing on God's truth during trials and tribulations, that we may not fall to temptation.

During COVID-19 and as the end of the world approaches, let us make sure that we do not become overly confident as Christians standing on the Word of God (or thinking we stand on the Word of God) and then end up falling down to temptation.

**DURING TIMES OF DISTRESS YOU MAY
BE PRONE TO FALL FOR TEMPTATIONS
WHICH YOU WOULD NOT YIELD TO IN
TIMES OF PEACE.**

If there is one thing in life I have learnt about falling, is that you cannot catch yourself when you fall. Have you ever played the trust game? This is where you stand in front of somebody and you fall backwards without looking to see if the other person will catch you, or not catch you. Playing this game with some of my friends when I was younger, I realised that I have to have someone else catching me. I cannot catch myself. I can try to stop myself from falling, but very often that not, by trying to stop myself from falling, I actually end up getting hurt more. In our lives, we fall emotionally. We fall cognitively. We even fall behaviourally and more often than not, we call upon people, friends and family to help us when we fall, because they are accessible and they can be seen.

The other option of who we can call upon when we are falling, besides trying to save ourselves, is to call upon God. The Bible tells us that we should call upon God in our times of distress. When we stumble, when we fall, when we go through trials and tribulations, He should be the One that we call upon, not other people. The Bible says we should trust God more than we trust others.

In order for us to stop falling, we need to understand how falling happens. What is the process or what are the steps of falling? Now you might ask me: "Are there steps in falling? Is there a process of falling?" "Yes, there is."

Let me illustrate. When I was about eight years old, my family stayed in Windhoek, Namibia. I recall a particularly rainy day when we went to town for some business and to buy groceries. Walking across the road, my dad walked ahead of us, then my mum and I then followed. I do not recall where my brother was or whether he was with us. Hurryingly to cross the road through the rain and trying to get to the other side without getting wet, my mum started to run.

**IF THERE IS ONE THING IN LIFE I
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As she ran, she started slipping because the road around her was very wet. Immediately, as she started to slip, she gave a cry for help. In her attempt to stabilise herself and in our attempts to get to her quickly enough to grab her, she slipped even more and ended up falling flat on her back on the tar, sopping wet.

Spiritual falling has very much the same implications and steps. We see the danger ahead of us. We see the wet road. Sometimes this danger, this wet road, is unavoidable. Sometimes it is avoidable and sometimes it even is self-inflicted because we like playing with water or as we usually say, like playing with fire. Irrespective of where the danger comes from, whether we could have avoided it or not avoided it, or whether it is self-inflicted or not; we see the danger ahead of us. What we as Christians should do when we see this danger, is to turn around. But we don't. We confidently boast that it is not a lot of water and it is easy to navigate because it is only a small danger.

The problem is that sometimes temptations and danger appear very small and insignificant on the surface, but at the bottom of it all, the danger is much bigger. Think of icebergs. If you look at pictures of icebergs, you will notice that it is usually only a small piece of the iceberg that sticks up and is visible to the people on top of the water.

But underneath it is quite large. When we face temptations and difficulties in our lives, oftentimes we assume that we can get through it safely on our own. Because it seems so small and insignificant, we do not want to bother God with our problems. There is a story of amateur fishermen in Massachusetts, which demonstrates temptation and the power of temptation very well.

**SOMETIMES TEMPTATIONS AND
DANGER APPEAR VERY SMALL AND
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BUT AT THE BOTTOM OF IT ALL,
THE DANGER IS MUCH BIGGER.**

In 1999, for the first time in 47 years, only 30 miles off Cape Cod, Bluefin Tuna were biting again. People were called to come and fish and hand them in for a reward. You did not have to be a professional to catch Bluefin Tuna. All you needed was a sharp hook and some bait. The reward from some Japanese buyers was about fifty thousand dollars for a large Bluefin Tuna. The result of this advertisement going out and asking people to bring in the tuna, was that many untrained fishermen went out to catch these fish. Many thought the tuna can't be that hard to catch. You catch a few and you bring them back. It could mean quite a bit of money for you. The coast guard warned the people not to go out because they did not understand the nature of this fish, nor the nature of the ocean. Despite the warning, many fishermen went out in their small boats. They did not realise the problem was not with catching the fish. The problem came after they caught them. The fish was not just a normal small little tuna the way that we know it. Bluefin Tuna are quite large. On September 23, the Christie M, a 19-foot boat, capsized while having a battle with a tuna. On the same day, the 27-foot boat called the Basic Instinct, suffered the same plight, while another, the Official Business which was larger, a 28-footer, was swamped when it hooked a 600 pound tuna.

The tuna pulled the boat under the water and drowned it completely. Clearly, the fishermen underestimated the power of the tuna while trying to catch it.

In our lives, small indiscretions might appear worth the risk. Only afterwards, after we are hooked, we realise the strength of temptation. We must not underestimate the power of what seems small. Small temptations and trials we think we can manage on our own, might drag us away with their power once we are hooked.

**YOU MAY THINK YOU CAN
MANAGE SMALL TEMPTATIONS AND
TRIALS ON YOUR OWN, ONLY TO
BE DRAGGED AWAY BY THEIR
POWER ONCE YOU ARE HOOKED.**

One might say something like, I walked away with a chocolate because the cashier was on her phone, and besides, it was only R6.00, something small. Or, my wife did not give me enough attention, so I started talking to this lady on Instagram or on Facebook or somewhere. Or, the government is corrupt in any case, so I can hold back a bit of my taxes. Or, I had a bad day at work that's why I do not treat you well right now. Just give me some time, I am not in a good space. Or, I was out with my friends and I just took one small drink – I am not going to become an alcoholic. We allow the small things we think we can navigate, into our lives. We see the danger, we see the water, we see the wetness in the road and we know there is a possibility that we might slip, but we still go ahead. We still play with sin. We walk into the water in our own strength, often the water we have thrown out in front of ourselves.

Whenever you think a temptation or trial is small, you should remember that it was something small, like Eve eating a fruit, which caused so much devastation in this world. When you see the danger, no matter how small it is, no matter how trivial it might seem, walk away! If God is tucking at the sleeve of your mind and at your heart, telling you that this is not the way, do not walk in it ... give heed.

Sometimes we walk into unavoidable trouble, not self-inflicted trouble, onto slippery grounds. God promises that He understands when we find ourselves in situations we did not cause ourselves. When we pray and we call upon Him, He will come to our rescue speedily, because we are in a situation we could not avoid. When it is unavoidable, the advice the Bible gives us, is to take God's hand, the way my mum should have taken my dad's hand, and hold on to it more tightly just in case we might slip.

**REMEMBER THAT IT WAS A SMALL
TEMPTATION, LIKE EVE EATING A
FRUIT, WHICH CAUSED SO MUCH
DEVASTATION IN THIS WORLD.**

We haven't slipped yet, there is just water lying ahead, but we need to hold His hand as we walk on the road that is wet. I hope by the time you see the water puddles of life in front of you, you are already holding God's hand. I hope that you did not arrive at that spot empty-handed, that you now have to go searching for God. But if you are empty-handed, call upon Him right away, saying: "Lord, maybe I haven't hold your hand up until this point, but now I want You to come and hold my hand as I go through the waters of life."

In Psalms 16:8 David says: *"I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With Him at my right hand, I will not be shaken"* (NIV). Have God at your side always. If He has not been at your side, call Him now to stand beside you and to hold your hand like Isaiah 41:13 says: *"For I am the Lord your God who will take hold of your right hand and says to you, 'do not fear, I will help you.'"*

The problem of life is not that God has not been walking with us. The problem is that we are still very self-sufficient. We say some obstacles are small obstacles and we do not want to bother God with it. We think we can do this alone, forgetting that it is the little foxes that spoil the field. Forgetting that it is the little decisions and actions in our lives that make up our character in the end. Forgetting that it is the seemingly small tuna (that is not so small after all), that drags us down.

As we walk through the trials of life and we begin to slip, we might not even hold God's hand. We might try and walk through the water on our own and we might start slipping. We might start tumbling.

**I HOPE BY THE TIME YOU SEE THE
TROUBLES OF LIFE IN FRONT OF YOU,
THAT YOU ARE ALREADY HOLDING
GOD'S HAND. I HOPE THAT YOU DO
NOT ARRIVE AT THESE DIFFICULT
MOMENTS IN LIFE EMPTY-HAND .**

At this point, it is not too late to call on God. When my mum started slipping on the road, even though she did not take my dad's hand, she gave a cry for help because she realised she was in danger.

The Bible tells us in Psalms 121:3: *"He will not let your foot slip; He who watches over you will not slumber"* (NIV). The reason why we fall, is because we become so self-sufficient. We need to learn to trust God. If we haven't invited Him in we can still call on Him, even until the moment we are slipping, and say: "Lord, help me, I am falling." God never says no. God always says **yes** when we call upon Him in time of need, even if we got ourselves into the water. He will not let us slip. He will catch us.

But it is our own choice. We might refuse to call on His name even while slipping. Even though we know we are going to hit our heads against the pavement. Even though we know we are going to bleed, we might still refuse to call upon Him and we might end up falling. Even then, when we have fallen, we can still call upon God to help us to get back up. As we read in Jude 1:24: "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the throne of God."

Don't be discouraged when you fall. Proverbs 24:16 says: "A righteous man falls seven times, but he gets up." Satan is going to try at every corner to get us to let go of the hand of God. He might do it there in the beginning when we see the rain, or he might do it while we are slipping, or he might do it when we have already fallen. He wants to discourage us. He wants to tell us not to trust God and call upon the name of God for help.

**DON'T BE DISCOURAGED WHEN
YOU FALL. PROVERBS 24:16 SAYS:
"A RIGHTEOUS MAN FALLS SEVEN
TIMES, BUT HE GETS UP."**

The Bible tells us it is not about the falling, it is not about the slipping, it is not about the rain or the trials that we have to go through, but it is about us asking God to walk through all of this with us. It will make life so much easier. If we have not called upon God up until this point, He says: "I am a merciful God. I do not want you to go through this alone. Help Me to help you to get back up again." The important part is that we get back up if we've messed up. If we did not go to God yet, let us call on Him now to walk with us, to hold our hand, to help us to get up and to help us continue walking through the trials that may still come.

You cannot stop yourself from falling, but God says: "I can and I will stop you from falling if you give Me permission." And, if you have fallen and God has helped you back up because you called on His name, God says continue now and give Me permission to help you so that you do not slip and fall in the future.

When personal trainers get new clients to train in the gym, there will be a definite need for the trainer at some point of the programme to physically help the clients by touching them in order to demonstrate which muscles need to be engaged, or how to move their arms or legs during a specific exercise. However, the trainers will inform the client of their need to demonstrate by touching them, and ask permission to do so. Only if the client agrees, the trainer will proceed. God is our trainer in life. He wants to show us how to walk and navigate the difficulties of life. He wants to help us. When the weights of life become too heavy, He spots us and He can stop the weights from falling onto us. He wants to show us how to do it by moving our legs and our arms, but He will not do it unless we give Him permission.

**IT IS NOT ABOUT WHETHER YOU
FALL, OR SLIP, OR ABOUT THE TRIALS
THAT YOU HAVE TO GO THROUGH, BUT
IT IS ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT YOU
ASKED GOD TO WALK THROUGH IT ALL
WITH YOU.**

I do not know about you, but when the COVID-19 pandemic is over and when the world has finally come to an end, I would like to be able to say that I allowed God to help me through the trials of life. I would like to be able to say to God: "Thank You for blessing me. Thank You for shaping me, for chastising me, for teaching me, for punishing me, for allowing me to be a vessel through which You could touch lives around the world. Thank You for walking with me, for keeping my feet from slipping, for keeping my eyes from wandering, for keeping me from collapsing and when I did collapse, for helping me to get up again." But remember, God can only do these things for us and work in us and through us if we give Him permission to do so. We need to go to the Lord daily and say: "Lord, please enter into my life. Hold my hand. Help me so that I do not slip, so that I do not fall, and when I let go of your hand and I do fall Lord, please help me back up."

You should not be discouraged when you fall. When you ride a horse and the horse throws you off, you need to learn how to get back on the horse. Professional riders do not stop riding. They get back on the horse. Deuteronomy 32:10 encourages us where God says: "He found them wandering through the desert, a desolate wind-swept wilderness. He protected them and cared for them, as He would protect Himself." God says He can protect you from yourself, He can keep you from falling. Another encouragement is found in Deuteronomy 32:11: "Like an eagle teaching its young to fly, catching them safely on its spreading wings, the Lord kept Israel from falling."

God, with His constant love, will support us when we are falling. In Psalms 94:18 David says that God's constant love will uphold us. "I said, 'I am falling'; but your constant love, O Lord, held me up." Or in the NIV: "When I said, 'My foot is slipping', your unfailing love, Lord, supported me."

**YOU SHOULD NOT BE DISCOURAGED
WHEN YOU FALL. WHEN A HORSE
THROWS YOU OFF, YOU GET BACK ON
THE HORSE.**

We need to learn to keep a focused eye on God's love, not God's punishment. We often stay down because we focus on how disappointed God would be, or on His punishment for sin. But God says the reason we can keep going is because we focus on His love. His Love is what will keep us going. There is a song that we used to sing when we were young: *"Love lifted me, love lifted me; when nothing else could help, love lifted me."* It is God's love that will keep us from falling. Let us bask ourselves in God's love.

Job 4:4 says: *"Thy words have upheld me when I was falling, and Thou hast strengthened my feeble knees."* We need to learn to bask in God's Word, to learn in His Word how much He loves us.

To realise He is not a God who just casts us off because of some indiscretions we have struggled with. God loves us, no matter where we are. The Bible tells us while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). Even though we haven't changed yet, even though we are falling daily, He already gave His life for us. If we can focus on that Love who gave His life, we will be sure-footed.

Perhaps it is your desire today to be sure-footed like David and Habakkuk and not to disappoint God anymore. David writes in Psalms 18:33: "He makes me sure-footed as a deer; the Lord keeps me safe on the mountain." Habakkuk says the same in Habakkuk 3:19: "The Sovereign Lord gives me strength. He makes me sure-footed as a deer and keeps me safe upon the mountains." I want to be like those deer.

**WE NEED TO LEARN TO KEEP A
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GOD MAY BE WHEN WE SIN, OR
ON HIS PUNISHMENT FOR SIN.**

I never understood these verses until I visited Israel a few years ago. While we were visiting Engedi with its mountains and water and beautiful nature, I came across an amazing phenomenon amongst the mountain goats. They climbed the most vertical rock faces that I've ever seen. You cannot imagine how they could do it and that they do it so gracefully, without tumbling to their death. It almost seemed like magic. It seemed impossible that they could do that. I even saw a few of them climbing a massively tall palm tree in order to eat the dates that were at the top of the tree.

When David and Habakkuk wrote about the deer, they lived in those areas and they saw those goats, those deer, those bucks climbing the mountains.

Not mountains the way we know it, but steep, treacherous mountains and they did it with such ease. I am sure that was how David wanted his feet to be for the Lord. He said: "Lord, yes I know You've kept me from falling, yes I know You sustained me, and You helped me up again, but Lord, help me to be worthy of the calling. Make my feet steady so that I can walk the path that is ahead of me."

If you feel like myself and like David, you may want to pray: "Lord, I haven't held your hand. Lord I haven't called upon You when I slipped. Lord, I struggled to get back up when I have fallen down. Lord, help me now, help me to get up, help me to be sure-footed like the deer." If you have grown tired of falling; if your wounds just keep opening up by the repeated falling, over and over again, perhaps it is time for you to start walking this life with God. Perhaps it is time for you to ask Him to hold your hand, to keep you from slipping, to keep you from falling, to keep you from temptations you can avoid and from the ones you cannot avoid as well as from the ones you created yourself.

**PERHAPS IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO
ASK GOD TO HOLD YOUR HAND, TO
KEEP YOU FROM SLIPPING OR
FALLING, TO KEEP YOU FROM
TEMPTATIONS.**

God calls upon you to give Him permission so that He can give you the strength to have the sure-footed faith of the goats and the deer to walk on the mountains.

God gives us a beautiful promise through the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 40:29. *"I give strength to the weary and I increase the power of the weak."* My prayer is that we will go to God and ask Him to hold our hands, giving Him permission to give us strength, to uphold us and to keep our feet from slipping.

**ISAIAH 40:29. "I GIVE STRENGTH
TO THE WEARY AND I INCREASE
THE POWER OF THE WEAK."**

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