

John Mark: Down . . . But Not Out

Portraits of Biblical Failures – Part I

Selected Scripture

Introduction

When God decided to give mankind the record of scripture, He accomplished it by giving a record of people's lives. It seems that God most often, robes heavenly truth in human flesh; that is, His truth flows through the lives of the people He records for us in His word.

Warren Wiersbe, in one of his books, quotes James Martino by saying these words, "To study the lives, to meditate on the sorrows, to commune with the thoughts of holy men and women, is a sacred discipline which deserves to rank as supremely important in true worship."

Now Ted Turner once said, "All Christians are losers."

This comment is not really surprising from him, but he probably meant that all of the Christians he had come in contact with had failed. Perhaps this rattled him badly.

Does it rattle you that Christians are not fail-proof?

One of the most surprising things about the biblical record of people is that God has chosen to record their failures with sometimes more detail than their successes.

God could have left only the flawless record of Abraham, who was the friend of God. Why did He include the record of Abraham's difficulty with being honest? Abraham lied and had a problem telling the truth – and his son Isaac after him.

Why not just leave the record that David was, in a sense, the apple of God's eye? In all of the things that he accomplished, why did God give all the details of the adultery and the murder he committed, as well as the record that he was probably one of the poorest fathers in the Old Testament accounts?

Why did God include Jonah chapter 4? Why not end with Jonah chapter 3, which is the record of Jonah's evangelistic enterprise and the entire nation that came to God? Why include this chapter that

alone, tells us that Jonah was a man who was bitterly angry with God and who was, in a sense, pouting over the will of God?

Why does God choose to tell all? I think we will discover the answer to this in our next few discussions as we look at the failures that God has painted in full biblical color.

Our first portrait is a portrait of John Mark, the man who gave the Christian world the very first biography of Jesus Christ. He was, however, a man who did not begin well.

John Mark became a source of dissension in the early church. In fact, he was the creator of a feud that broke up the first mission team that was sent from the church in Antioch. His name would be linked, probably for years, with lost opportunity. He was known as the young man who could have . . . but did not. He was written off by Paul as a man with no future in the ministry.

John Mark – The Early Years

Let us put together some of the pieces of John Mark's life. His name was John Mark – John was his Hebrew name, and Mark, or Marcus, was his Roman name.

His home and relatives

According to Acts chapter 12, we discover that John Mark's home was a haven for the early disciples. It was a place where church meetings took place.

Many, in fact, believe that John Mark's father was the Roman owner of the Garden of Gethsemane and that their home was where the last supper took place. We are not sure of this.

We are sure that John Mark's home was the center of early church activity. He was surrounded by the faith of God's people. In fact, it was in his home that a very famous prayer meeting took place.

Look at Acts 12:10-12. Many early church people were praying in John Mark's home for the release of Peter from prison.

When they [Peter and an angel] had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

This is, of course, a story in of itself, but undoubtedly John Mark grew up in the kind of home where the trust was in Christ.

Perhaps John Mark's home was wealthy, with a Roman father who owned property. However, it was a home that was devout; a home that would be the center of church activity.

I see young John Mark sitting there listening to the apostles as they talk. He is seeing the fire in their eyes as they discuss how they will fulfill the great commission to go into all the world. There is John Mark sitting on the edge of his seat.

John Mark also had the benefit of the fact that his uncle was Barnabas. Barnabas was one of the most influential men in the early church. He preceded Paul in his influence. Sometimes the relationship between John Mark and Barnabas is translated as cousin, but I agree with other commentators who translate it as uncle.

John Mark was a man who had everything going for him, in terms of ministry. He had a godly relative like Barnabas and was surrounded by people who had dedicated their home and lives to Jesus Christ. If the award had been given, he would have won, "The young man most likely to succeed in ministry."

His opportunity and apostasy

A great opportunity to serve the Lord then comes to John Mark. Look at Acts 13:2-5.

While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John [Mark] as their helper.

The word "helper," could be translated "attendant". This does not mean that John Mark spoke to the young people or even helped in their public ministry; it means that he helped Barnabas and Saul personally. He was the dishwasher and the cook, he kept the bedrolls in tact, he took care of things so that Saul, later Paul, and Barnabas would be able to be involved in the ministry. John Mark was their servant; their helper.

What an opportunity, even as a helper, to be on the cutting edge of what God was doing in the world. John Mark was with the very first missionary team. Imagine traveling with Paul and Barnabas!

However, something happened along the way on this missionary journey. Look at Acts 13:13.

Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John left them and returned to Jerusalem.

Now the original word for "left," could be translated "to desert"; that is, "to leave in the lurch". This word has very strong negative overtones. In fact, it is the same word that is used when Paul leaves Barnabas and they go their separate ways. This has a negative connotation that there were problems. John Mark left Paul and Barnabas; he deserted them.

Now the question is, "Why?" Your guess is as good as mine. The twenty commentators I read did not agree. However, of all of the reasons they gave, let me suggest three that I believe are the most realistic.

- One suggestion that I think is the least realistic of the three, is sickness.

We know that John Mark came from a pampered lifestyle; came, in fact, from a home that had servants. You may remember that it was a servant who went to answer the door during the prayer meeting for Peter. Because of this, some believe that John Mark had never really faced the hardships or the rigors of life. He is now on this missionary endeavor and it is not what it was cracked up to be. Perhaps, he even got sick. We do not know.

- A second and better suggestion is jealousy.

We have to track through a few verses to understand this suggestion. As we look at verses, there is a subtle change in leadership that may have made John Mark jealous.

Turn to Acts 11:30 and notice the order of the words, which is significant in the New Testament. We read,

... Barnabas and Saul ...

In other words, Barnabas, John Mark's uncle, being the leader, is listed first.

Look at Acts 12:25, where we read again, in the same order,

... Barnabas and Saul ...

Read Acts 13:1 and notice the order – particularly who heads the list and who is last on the list.

Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon . . . and Lucius . . . and Manaen . . . and Saul.

Then, we read in Acts 13:7-9, an incident that I believe, propelled Paul into leadership.

... This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

But Elymas the magician . . . was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him,

From this point on, Saul will be known as Paul. Notice Paul's words as he speaks in Acts 13:10-12.

and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?"

"Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see

the sun for a time." And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand.

Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.

Now note the very next verse. Who is listed and in what order in Acts 13:13?

Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John [Mark] left them and returned to Jerusalem.

Paul and who? "His companions".

The New Testament writers always listed people in order of importance. This was just cultural in that day. In fact, in the full list of the disciples, Peter is always first and Judas Iscariot is always last. So this is perhaps, indicative of what had happened in this team. Perhaps John Mark had become jealous; perhaps he was miffed.

- A third suggestion, beyond the possibilities of sickness and jealousy, is one that may be even more realistic, and that is, the problem of expectations.

I have heard, from my own missionary parents and others, that one of the primary reasons those involved as missionaries and in vocational service leave the work, especially when they leave soon after entering, is that it does not meet the expectations they had of what it would be.

Our church will soon send two short-term missionary teams overseas to France and Africa. I know that those who are going have expectations – and I am one of them, especially since I have never been out of this country.

I was talking to someone about France, saying, "This is really going to be interesting, going to the coast of Toulon and flying into Paris – the romance capital of the world. That's why I'm taking my wife with me – we're going to have a great time."

He replied, "Listen, it's not what you think it is."

I said, "France is the home of the perfume. You've seen all the commercials."

He laughed and said, "They don't even wear deodorant there."

We are going to get to France in the middle of their hottest season and they do not have air

conditioning in the missionary's homes or in the Serviceman's Center. It is going to be 95 degrees. Does anyone want to cancel?

There is a team going to Togo, West Africa. When I think of this, I think of getting a picture taken with some half naked native, "This is me, the missionary." Maybe the team can buy little knick-knacks at the trading post made out of ivory or something. Although I have heard that it is winter in Togo, that just means it is 95 degrees in the shade! They do not have air conditioning either.

For someone who has committed their life and is on the field, I am certain it is a different picture than what they thought it would be. In fact, most missionary organizations require their candidates to go to the field for a while before ending up there full time.

Perhaps I have had an advantage, growing up in a missionary home, in terms of ministry and expectations because my own father must have said a million times, although I never knew what he meant until five years ago, "The ministry is ninety-nine percent perspiration and one percent inspiration."

Perhaps John Mark did not know this. Perhaps he was the flaming crusader; the young man who had been caught by the contagion of the energy of these men. So, he said, "Hey, let me go. Let me help you. I'll go. I'll wash dishes. I'll keep the bed rolls. This will be exciting."

However, it does not work out the way John Mark expects.

Now read Acts 15:36.

After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are."

"Let's go back and get a report."

Continue to Acts 15:37,

Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also.

"Let's take my nephew along."

Note Acts 15:38.

But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

Paul, in this verse, uses a different original word that is much stronger. When Paul says that John Mark "deserted" them, he uses the word from which we get our word "apostasy". In other words, Paul is saying that John Mark apostasied; he turned his back on the work of God. For Paul, the flaming crusader, this was the worst thing someone could do.

"Absolutely not! He will not go with us again."

Because of Paul's attitude toward John Mark, who had quit, there was no second chance for him.

Look at Acts 15:39-40a.

And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took [John] Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and left . . .

A division; a split; a quarrel occurred and John Mark was right in the middle of it.

Now from this point on, Barnabas sails into obscurity. We hear very little about him. In fact, we hear very little about John Mark. One mistake; one let down; one desertion and as far as Paul is concerned, for life, there is no more John Mark.

I was reading, this past week, an interesting account of a young man that I felt very sorry for. His name is Matthieu Boya, from Benin, West Africa. He was practicing, according to the press report, his golf swing in a pasture adjacent to the Benin Air Force Base, and with one shot, destroyed the entire Air Force.

Matthieu was teeing off in an adjacent field. He hit a ball and it sliced. He plays golf a lot like I do! The ball curved upward and hit a bird in flight. The stunned bird dropped onto the windshield of a fighter plane taxiing for takeoff. The startled pilot lost control of the plane and plowed into four shiny mirage jets parked on the runway. All five planes, making up the entire Benin Air Force, were destroyed.

The authorities caught Matthieu and jailed him for hooliganism. They are refusing to give him a trial. In fact, they want him to pay the country back, because they do not have any money in their treasury. The cost is forty million dollars. Matthieu makes 275 dollars a year. It will take 145,000 years for him to pay it back. One swing was all it took!

Perhaps you have made one mistake that has had lasting limitations in your life. Maybe something has

happened and you are still feeling the pain; there is still a cloud.

Imagine John Mark thinking, “One missionary trip; one desertion, and I’m through?”

Paul says, “Yes.”

Barnabas says, “No.”

John Mark – The Hidden Years

Now that we have been introduced to John Mark, we have to play detective to discover what happened in the hidden years. There are two basic sources that tell us what happened: God’s word and history.

Biblical clues

Let us begin by looking at the clues in God’s word. Turn to Philemon 1:23-24. Paul writes,

*Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you,
as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke,
my fellow workers.*

Keep these names in mind – we will see them again.

Now look at Colossians 4:8-10. This lets us know it is talking about the same Mark. Paul writes,

For I have sent him [Tychicus] to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts;

and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here.

Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas’s cousin [or nephew] Mark (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him);

It has been eighteen years since Paul checked John Mark off. Now Paul is saying, “John Mark is coming to you. I want you to open your arms and receive him because he is one of my fellow workers.”

Something had to have happen. We are getting close to what occurred.

Turn to II Timothy 4:9-11. Paul writes to Timothy,

Make every effort to come to me soon;

for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.

The word “useful,” in verse 11, is the word that the Greeks used for a vessel that was fulfilling its purpose; that is, the vessel worked. Paul is saying, “John Mark works. Bring him with you because he fulfills a purpose now.”

John Mark is fulfilling a purpose that perhaps, Paul wondered if he would ever fulfill. I am sure John Mark wondered if he would ever have another chance to fulfill the purpose.

How and when did this change take place? John Mark was a young man who was washed up – he had deserted; he had, as it were, apostasied. Now he is involved in ministry and even Paul says, “He’s useful to me.”

J. C. Penny, the famous store magnate, was seriously depressed as a young man. He was the son of a Baptist minister and a believer. However, he had strayed from his moorings and had ended up with guilt, anxiety, and depression. As a result, he was confined to a mental institution.

One morning, upon hearing a commotion in the hospital, he put on his bathrobe and trudged down the hallway. He entered the chapel and heard the voices of people singing about trust in Jesus Christ.

The biographers record that it all came rushing back to him, along with the fact that his problem was related to his disobedience to God. They also record that – then and there – J. C. Penny returned to Jesus Christ and gave Him the rightful place in his life.

J. C. Penny was an individual who was washed up, but we know him for the well-known store by his name. He lived until he was 95 years of age, giving millions of his dollars to causes that honored the name of Jesus Christ.

The question is, “Who sang in Mark’s life? Where did the music come from that brought him back?”

Turn to I Peter 5:10-13 and let us find the answer to this question. Peter writes,

And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you

to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!

She [the church] who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark.

“My son” is a designation of discipleship, in the same way that Paul would refer to Timothy as his son. Evidently Peter took John Mark under his wing, as it were, and mentored him; disciplined him.

John Mark now surfaces as a helper to Peter.

Historical clues

We also learn of John Mark’s life from history. In the writings of Papias, a man who lived just 60 or 70 years after the death of Jesus Christ, we learn that Mark became Peter’s companion and wrote accurately all that Peter remembered of the things said or done by the Lord. Mark followed Peter, who was giving him teaching.

Who would be better than Peter to teach Mark? Who understood the shame of denial better than Peter? Who experienced the regret of abandoning Jesus Christ more than Peter? Who heard the rebuke from others who had remained faithful other than Peter? Who felt the joy of forgiveness, having been brought back into a relationship and fellowship with Jesus Christ, more than Peter? Who knew the struggle of having to prove himself to people who had said, “You are finished; you will never make it for God,” better than Peter? Was there anyone better than Peter to put his arm around John Mark and say, “I know what it’s like, but if you’ll repent and follow Christ, I know God can use you.”?

Evidently, this is what happened.

John Mark – The Fruitful Years

Now let us put together a few more pieces of John Mark’s life. There are three illustrations of endurance that we discover in this man’s life that turn his hidden years into, what we would now consider to be, his fruitful years.

1. The first illustration of John Mark’s endurance that led to fruitfulness is that he wrote the gospel attributed to his name – the Gospel of Mark.

Now this is *very* significant in light of the events that were going on when he wrote the Gospel of Mark. John Mark was writing during the time of Nero’s persecution; the time when Nero was turning his hatred toward Christians. Nero, a lunatic tyrant, was ravaging the church – and it was during *this* time that John Mark remained faithful to God.

We discover from history that Nero was heavily taxing Christians. He would openly condemn the wealthy in court and then, after sending them to jail, he would confiscate their wealth. Nero was, in fact, such a maniac that he would release these people from prison, bring them to large feasts, and suggest that they publicly commit suicide.

History reveals, as well, that Nero wanted to build another Rome to his glory. He did not like the shabby buildings and wanted to build with stone and marble. However, he had a problem – he had to get rid of the old Rome. So, as a matter of fact, a fire broke out in 64 AD. It began among the cluttered shops near the arena and when the winds picked it up, it went on for an entire week unchecked. Rumors, of course, flew that the fire had been officially started.

A historian of that day, Suetonius, writes these words, “Nero set fire to the city so openly that several former city leaders did not even venture to stop Nero’s servants, although they caught them on their estates with fire brands in hand.”

Nero was going to burn Rome to the ground and rebuild it to his glory, but the word got out. He was caught and needed a scapegoat. Even the secular historians of that day admitted that his scapegoat was the early Christian church. This began the Neronian persecution.

Nero publicly persecuted the Christians. He would dress believers in the skins of freshly slain wild animals and would then, throw the them into an arena with wild dogs. He would also crucify them. One of the most heinous things that Nero would do was cover the believers’ bodies in tar, tie them to a stake, impale them in his gardens and at night, light their bodies so that the fire from their burning bodies would light his garden parties.

If there was ever a time to run and hide and conceal the faith, it was during this time. This was the time that John Mark wrote.

Who did John Mark write the Gospel of Mark to? To believers living in Rome. Mark is the gospel that encouraged the Christians in Rome to stand fast.

It is only Mark, in fact, that lets us in on the fact that Jesus Christ, in the wilderness, was with the wild beasts. Why? Because Mark knew the believers would identify with this.

It is Mark who pictures Jesus, in a vivid way, as misrepresented and accused. Why? Because he knew believers were facing the same thing in Rome.

It is Mark who paints, with vivid colors, the fact that Jesus Christ was betrayed by those who supposedly loved Him. The Christians in Rome were being turned in; were being betrayed by those who were supposed to be standing by them.

John Mark writes his fiery little gospel and presents Christ as a man of action, a man of power, a man who overcame the grave. It was alive.

2. The second illustration that reveals John Mark's endurance that led to fruitfulness is that he founded the church at Alexandria.

At some point, John Mark's travels took him to Egypt. There, in the metropolis of Alexandria, he founded a church.

We depend on Jerome and other early church fathers, who write, "Mark went into Egypt and, being the first preacher of Christ at Alexandria, he established a church."

Eusebius writes, "Mark became the first bishop of the church in Alexandria and also founded the school in Alexandria."

What does this tell us? It tells us that Mark, who at one time, did not like the ministry for whatever reason, is now pioneering in uncharted waters. This is a different John Mark.

3. The third illustration is that John Mark died as a martyr rather than recant.

The early church fathers give us, through the history of the early church, the fact that John Mark was dragged through the streets of Alexandria, when he was a man in his late ninety's. As a result of this, he died.

We do not know what happened in his early life to make him quit, but John Mark was now, faithful and enduring to the end.

Application

Let me apply this study in four different ways to us today. We have viewed the life of John Mark, who was once a quitter and a deserter, but became a pioneer and a martyr. I will pull the first principle from the failure of John Mark.

1. Number one, throwing in the towel; quitting *always* affects more people than just yourself.

When John Mark deserted, it impacted the early church. It undoubtedly discouraged other young people, especially those who were following him. They probably said, "He was our example." It caused a rift between two godly men, who became embroiled in a hot debate.

This was a black moment in the history of the church in Antioch. His desertion did not affect just him and neither does ours. Whenever we are unfaithful to God; whenever we sin against God, we sin against each other and we affect each other's lives, as well. We never fail in a vacuum.

Let me hasten to give the second principle.

2. Number two, failing in ministry never erases the possibility of future potential.

Failing in whatever ministry God has given us to do – if it is simply the ministry of remaining faithful to His name and living for Him – never erases the possibility of future potential. People may check us off, but God never does.

People checked John Mark off, saying, "Did you hear about John Mark? Tsk. Tsk. Tsk. What a disaster." God, however, had plans for him.

3. Number three, when someone fails, the solution usually involves someone else.

With Paul, there were scars that had to be healed. He and John Mark were at fists, in a sense, and there had to be a time when they were reconciled. We do not know when it happened, but we know it did at some point. Paul then, spoke with words of respect, "John Mark,"

- . . . *my fellow worker. (Philemon 1:24);*
- . . . *is useful to me for service. (II Timothy 4:11);*
- . . . *welcome him); (Colossians 4:10).*

What if Paul had never said these words? John Mark's own ministry would have been severely handicapped because Paul was the leader. So guess what Paul had to do. He had to retract his words; he had to eat his words. I am sorry to say this because we rarely think of Paul as having to do something to correct a problem. However, Paul had to say, "John Mark, I was wrong. I had you figured all wrong. I thought you were a disaster waiting to happen and I didn't want to take you again on this second missionary journey. But I want you to know, I was wrong. Will you forgive me?"

The solution usually involves someone else too. For John Mark, it was Peter. With compassion and the attitude of mentoring, Peter pulled John Mark in, and said, "You stay with me and be my helper. You work with me. God has a future for you."

Have you ever had anyone say this to you? Have you ever said this to anyone? These are words that desperately need to be said.

Evidently these words were said to John Mark as he became the son in the faith of Peter.

4. Number four, learning from failure will always produce greater endurance and greater sensitivity toward others who have failed.

Perhaps you have heard the story of a fellow by the name of Butch. Edward was his first name, but he went by the nickname of Butch. He was an ace naval aviator of World War II. In fact, he was the first naval aviator to receive the Medal of Honor from the President of the United States. A year after receiving the Medal of Honor, he was shot down in aerial combat. However, his hometown of Chicago would not forget their favorite son. They renamed their airport after Edward "Butch" O'Hare.

The story of O'Hare's life goes way back before him. It goes back to the 1920's in roaring Chicago. These were the days when the time and the turf belonged to a man by the name of Al Capone. He ruled Chicago. One of his associates was named "Artful Eddie" by his comrades because he was this fast man's lawyer. In fact, this crooked lawyer got Al Capone off the hook and kept him out of prison many times.

One time, Al Capone came to Artful Eddie and told him of a possibility of making some money. Together, they formed a syndicate in dog racing that made for both of them, hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Then, one day, Artful Eddie went to the authorities and told them that he was going to squeal on the mob. The authorities were skeptical. Why would this wealthy man squeal on Al Capone? Why would he tell? So, at first, they were at arms length. He convinced them by telling them, "The only reason I'm doing this is because something has happened in the life of my wife and I. We've had a son born into our home. I want to clear the family name of the stain created by the mob."

Artful Eddie squealed and the mob remembered. Two shotgun blasts later, Artful Eddie was dead.

However, his plan worked. Artful Eddie's son was accepted in the United States Naval Academy and went on to win a Medal of Honor from the President of the United States. Edward "Butch" O'Hare was a son who was given a second chance because his father died for him.

I like to think of God in terms of a God of second chances. He is a God who was gracious enough to send His Son so that you and I could have a chance to live and, not only that, but to minister. In that ministry, we will fall and we will get up, and we will fall and we will get up, and we will fall and we will get up. In fact, until we die, we are going to fall and we are going to get up, and we are going to fall and we are going to get up. Because God is infinite, He allows us, not just one more chance, but by His grace, all the chances we will ever ask of Him and ever need. So, like John Mark, we will get up and ask God for forgiveness and the courage to endure.

All of us who have failed and have gotten up, and have failed and have gotten up know that there will come a day when we will stand before our Father and will hear words that will probably surprise most, if not all, of us,

. . . *"Well done, thou good and faithful servant. . ."* (Matthew 25:21 KJV)

The question is, "Have we gotten up? Are we enduring by the grace of Christ?"

Perhaps you have identified with John Mark. Maybe you have been in the hidden years. By God's grace, you can turn these into the fruitful years.