

Who's Afraid of...Past Mistakes!

Isaiah 43:15-21

June 9, 2019

In another life I played golf. I grew up with parents who played the game. I played on my college golf team. We played tournaments and I actually sank a 25 foot putt in our own tournament to win the tournament for our college. I didn't know I needed to sink it before hand or I would have missed it by a mile.

In 1984, my dad won in a golf tournament the opportunity to play in the Disney Pro-am Golf Tournament. He also received from a friend tickets to the '84 Baseball World Series in Detroit. It so happened the two events were occurring during the same time frame. He gave me a choice of which I would like to take and enjoy. I chose the week long, free access to the Disney park and a week of free golf with golf pros.

Although it was 35 years ago, I can still see the scene of the opening day, the first hole of the tournament. That day I was assigned to play with the pro, Joey Sindelar.

The first tee box looked out to a long straight away par 4. My name was announced to the gallery as I stepped up on the tee box and teed my ball. I stepped back to look at the long, wide open fairway. The only hazard was off to the left...a water hazard...a pond.

Jack Nicklaus, a famous pro golfer once commented, "Golf is 80% mental, 10% ability and 10% luck." My mental focused on the water hole. My ability shanked my t-shot and my luck saw my ball land in the water! I was so embarrassed, mad and felt like walking off the t-box and forfeit my playing in the rest of the tournament.

I remember Joey Sindelar walked up to me and put his arm on my shoulder and told me not to worry, he had my back on this hole. It was a best ball format so he took over with his monster drive. He displayed to me what makes a great athlete stand out over others...they can forget their last mistake and go ahead and keep playing.

The next hole I made a natural birdie and with my handicap of one stroke a hole it gave our team an eagle...a 3 on a par 5! I was flying as high as an eagle. Our team went on to place in the final top 5 for the tournament.

I could have given up on myself after that first hole t-shot. I didn't. I listened to the pro and I put it behind me and played on with a sense of confidence and enjoyment.

I wish I could say that I have done that with every shank shot in my life. I wish I could say that I have seen such a regrouping in life after I have watched a part of my life go into a hazard. Shanks and hazards in life hurt. We regret them. We get defeated and embarrassed by them. We can feel like giving up on life because of them. Fear grips us and we are not sure what to do.

We come today to ask, "Who's afraid of past mistakes?"

When we look down the fairways of life there are three popular hazards that many of us have watched ourselves fall into. We have made mistakes and we are now living with and regretting past mistakes in: Relationships...Finances/Career choice...Health or Lifestyle choices.

A marriage...long friendship or family relationship goes south. We buy what we cannot afford. We live beyond our budget and soon the credit cards are maxed out and the bill collectors are hounding our door.

Our health becomes a hazard due to poor diet or other lifestyle choices we made over the years.

Past mistakes! Relational, financial, lifestyle and even spiritual have happened.

How do you handle them when life shanks and you find yourself drowning in a water hazard of life?

We need to allow God to walk over to us, put His arm around us and say, "I got this one." He is the One, and the only One, who can help us to overcome the past mistake and walk on down the course of life with confidence, hope and victory.

He comes to us in His word and reminds us to confess the past mistake and not continue to repress it. (Psalm 51)

He doesn't want us to dwell on it to where it keeps us from moving forward. He instructs us to let go of the past mistake and press forward to the new goal that He has set before us.

(Philippians 3:13-14)

He reminds us that a past mistake is not to define us. Our value, our definition in life is found in Christ.

Peter, a follower of Jesus experienced this when he shanked not once, not twice but three times his commitment to Jesus into the water hazard of denial! He denied three times that he had anything to do with Jesus. (Luke 22:54-62) After the third time, Jesus looked over at Peter. That would be the last look till Peter saw Jesus looking down at him from the cross. Peter could have easily quit. He could have pulled a Judas and committed suicide.

Peter didn't quit. He regretted his mistake. He grieved the decision he made that night. Especially, when he had earlier promised Jesus that he would never deny his commitment to him. Peter went to the cross. After the resurrection, he went back to where he first met Jesus, while fishing.

After Jesus' resurrection He had breakfast with Peter and the other followers on the beach. He asked Peter not once, not twice but three times, **"Do you love me?"** This time Peter didn't deny his love for Jesus. Jesus challenged him to go and build his kingdom. Peter did! (John 21:15-19)

In our bible reading we find the prophet Isaiah, reminding the people of God, who were between a rock and a hard place in life, to experience a **New Exodus**. He retold the water hazard that God took Moses and the people through in their exodus from Egyptian slavery. Listen to his words to the people going through a past mistake and his direction for them:

"Forget about what's happened; don't keep going over old history.

Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand-new.

It's bursting out! Don't you see it?"

There it is! I'm making a road through the desert."

---Isaiah 43:18-19 Message bible

God calls us to be alert! To be in the present.
Don't be mulling over or always living in your past mistake.
Put it behind you and keep going to a new hope.

God wants to burst out in each of us a new beginning.
It is not a mirage...something too good to be true...it is real...His love is real.

The love of Jesus, a new hope love, is not a mirage...it's reality.

Many of us have gone through the dry desert life of a past mistake. We have walked through the badlands, the consequences of past mistakes.

We don't have to stay there. We don't have to allow others to keep reminding us of that mistake and try to keep throwing us back into the hazard. God calls us to look at the stream, the living water, He is supplying in the desert of our lives.

He is wanting to lead us into a new exodus! Be alert! Be present!

We don't have to allow our past mistakes to keep us in a dry spiritual place. There is a huge difference between BEING a mistake and MAKING a mistake. He comes to us with life-giving water. He provides holy hydration to our dry and parched spirits. He promises that anyone who is in Christ all the old past mistakes are gone and all life becomes new. (II Corinthians 5:17)

He is wanting to do a new thing in and through us.

He did it with Peter. We call this day, Pentecost Sunday. On this day the Holy Spirit was given to Peter and the other followers of Jesus. Many doubted it! Peter confirmed it was the Holy Spirit beginning a new thing...the new Church! Peter was called to be the leader of this new thing that God was doing. He was called to lead the people to build the kingdom of God.

The denier who hit his shot in life in the hazard of denial was now leading others in the way of a new exodus...Jesus' forgiveness of sin and newness of life...a restored life.

Jesus proclaimed that He had come to set the captives free.
(Luke 4:18)

What past mistake has held you captive? Perhaps it has kept you captive for decades.

What is keeping you from letting it go and letting Jesus lead you on into a new life?

Confess it! Jesus forgives and he sets us free from our past mistakes.

Pray that God will give you an alert spirit to what He is wanting to do in and through you through the power of His Holy Spirit.
Allow Him to come and make a stream through your dry heart.
Be refreshed!
Hear him ask, "Do you love me?"
Accept the fact that your past mistake is the past and answer him with an alert, "Yes!"

Don't let your past mistakes, your horrible choices in life, take you out of the game. God can make all things good to those who love him and trust Him. (Romans 8:28)

Christ's Holy Spirit is bursting out!
Be alert to His presence in your life.
He is wanting to do something brand new in you.