



# Links Players

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## The Hidden Blessings of Failure

*“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” Peter said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.” Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me. (Luke 22:31–34)*

Going into the final round of the 1974 U.S. Open at Winged Foot, a young Tom Watson, trying to win his first major, was leading Hale Irwin and Arnold Palmer by one shot.

In the final round, Watson shot 79 and finished five shots behind the winner, Hale Irwin. For Watson, it was a major collapse. He had spit the bit on the most public of stages.

The following year, Watson would win his first major at the Open Championship, and he would go on to win seven more majors. Tom Watson became a great clutch golfer, as demonstrated by his pressure-packed wins against Jack Nicklaus in the 1977 Open Championship at Turnberry and the 1982 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach.

Watson credited his failure at Winged Foot in 1974 with helping turn him into the clutch player he became.

When Jesus told Peter that Satan had demanded permission to sift him like wheat, it likely provoked a vivid, violent image in Peter’s mind. Sifting wheat was a two-step process. First was the beating of the bundle of wheat with a stick to break the outer shell (chaff) off the kernel. Then came the violent shaking to separate the chaff, straw, and dust from the kernels of wheat.

Jesus was telling Peter that Satan was going to beat up on him and violently shake him—so much so that Jesus would pray that Peter would survive it without losing his faith.

Peter bristled at the suggestion he would fail Jesus, and he boldly declared he was willing to endure imprisonment and even death with Jesus. Few statements demonstrate so clearly both Peter’s fleshly confidence and how little he knew about himself. It would take the failure that followed to teach Peter the truth about himself.

Of course, we all know what happened shortly thereafter: Peter denied Jesus three times, and upon hearing the rooster crow, he went away and wept bitterly.

But Peter learned from his failure.

When Jesus appeared to the disciples on the beach after His resurrection, He took Peter aside and asked him three times if he loved Him. Unlike his previous declaration of loyalty, Peter just said, “you know all things” and “you know that I love you.” By this response, Peter demonstrated his confidence was no longer in his flesh but in Jesus.

Failure is a demanding teacher. But as uncomfortable and humiliating as failure can be, it is often the necessary medicine for our most deeply rooted maladies.

**Prayer: Lord, thank you for making my failures an opportunity for me to become conformed to your image. Amen.**

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