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*I remember in the seventies as a student paying a visit to speakers' corner in Hyde Park one Sunday afternoon. As you know, you get all sorts of eccentrics on their plinths letting off steam about this and that. My attention was caught by one guy pacing up and down holding up a huge placard on which was written: **'things are getting worse'***

But for the believing Christian our failures won't be the defining feature of our lives. They can be watershed moments which restore our focus on a higher power.

Last Sunday I mentioned how easy it was to slip into the habit of unguarded talk. But even if this is our '*Achilles heel*' it's not the end of the world. With the help of God we can change and adopt a better outlook on life and a healthier attitude towards people.

Isaiah and Peter acknowledge areas of failure in their lives. They don't seem content with the way they are but the Lord looks beyond their failings and sees untapped goodness in their hearts which he will draw out.

With the call of Isaiah and Peter, it's good to know that God in choosing people for his mission takes us as he finds us. Sure, He wants us to be aware of our shortcomings but not bogged down by them. He can even help us use them to our advantage.

Isaiah, in the first reading, is painfully aware that he is a man of unclean lips. Could that mean that he swore a lot or used bad language or told vulgar jokes. Whatever it was, He feels quiet put out about it. But then having acknowledged his wretched state, the angel of the Lord comes and purifies his lips and he's back on track again, ready for mission.

St Peter, in the Gospel, also acknowledges failure, even as a fisherman, when he says: 'we fished hard all night long and caught nothing'. But in deference to Jesus and against his own better judgement, he is willing to give it another go. He hasn't long to wait for an answer. He's completely overwhelmed by the enormous catch of fish. Aware of his own unworthiness, he falls on his knees before Jesus and begs him to leave. Peter feels unworthy to be in the Lord's company. But Jesus tells him not to be afraid - a great mission lies ahead for him. From catching fish he will soon be netting souls for God's Kingdom.

Our Lord is saying the same to us as he said to Peter. Don't be downhearted by your personal sins and limitations. Does this mean that we go soft on sin - of course not. Repentance is a lifelong task.

Being aware of our own failures will keep us from standing in judgement over others. On the contrary, if we've battled with a particular sin, then we're best placed to help others going through a similar ordeal. The best people to help alcoholics, for instance, are alcoholics themselves who have grappled with the addiction? The Devil does His best to undermine our faith in Christ's saving power and have us wallow in self-loathing.

Peter said to Jesus: 'depart from me I am a sinful man'. Far from it, Jesus does the opposite and asks Peter to be part of his inner circle and mission team. His failures didn't put the Lord off. Ours won't either if, like Peter, we're honest with ourselves.