

FAILURE
IS NOT THE OPPOSITE OF
SUCCESS
IT'S PART OF SUCCESS



Failure to Success- 2nd Corinthians 1:8-10

Will God ever lead us to failure?

- Just a cursory look at scripture we would answer, “No”
 - Noah and arc
 - Abraham going to Canaan
 - Moses leading Israel out of Egypt
 - Gideon becoming a great warrior
 - David becoming king

Will God ever lead us to failure?

- In each of these what are we looking at to determine success or failure?
 - The complete outcome of all their actions
 - The totality of their lives

Will God ever lead us to failure?

- What happens when the outcome does not match our expectations?
 - We will say things like, “We must have heard wrong”, or
 - “We must have messed up somewhere”, or
 - “God did not hold up His side of the bargain”

Will God ever lead us to failure?

- Let's say you felt led by God to teach a children's Sunday School class, something simple
 - You have never felt the pulling of the Holy Spirit like that in your life
 - You have no experience working with children, but God will supply all my needs according to his abundance and not mine
 - You are the type you like kids but at a distance and older than 10

Will God ever lead us to failure?

- Now you are facing a class of 15 very active, easily distracted 5 and 6 year old children
 - You put on your best adult voice to get control and nothing different happens
 - Nothing good happened that day and you left the room feeling like a complete and total failure, yet you are sure God led you in that direction

Will God ever lead us to failure?

- So, did God lead you to failure?
 - I think the answer is yes, from our limited perspective and our definitions of what success is
 - God does not call us to our definition of success but always to obedience
 - Success to God is our obedience regardless how the event turns out

Scripture

- **2nd Corinthians 1:8-10 NIV**, 8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us

Jesus told Ananias to go to Paul and pray for him when Paul was converted

- **Acts 9:15-16 NIV**, 15 But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

Paul recounts some of his suffering

- **2nd Corinthians 11:23b-27 NIV**, 23 I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea,

Paul recounts some of his suffering

- **2nd Corinthians 11:23b-27 NIV**, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. 27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.

Paul recounts some of his suffering

- Paul and the others with him were under great pressure, **Vs. 8b**, “far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself”
 - We don’t know the exact nature of this trouble, but it was made worse by Paul’s missionary work – what God called him to do

Paul recounts some of his suffering

- They felt like this must be the end **Vs. 9**, “Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death”
 - This was something he felt inside, not something that a court of law had imposed on him from without
- They were without hope in solving this problem themselves **Vs. 8c**, “far beyond our ability to endure”
 - Whatever the problem was, it was very, very, bad

Paul recounts some of his suffering

- They would have laughed at the thought of them getting out of the problem on their own
 - Because of this problem, Paul lived with the awareness that he might die at any time
 - It looked like God had led them into complete and total failure

God does not call us to be successful as we might define it, but to be obedient

- The prophet Isaiah had the wonderful experience of witnessing the throne room of Jesus
- **Isaiah 6:8-11a NLT**, 8 Then I heard the Lord asking, “Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?” I said, “Here I am. Send me.”

God does not call us to be successful as we might define it, but to be obedient

- Can you imagine the thoughts going through Isaiah's mind hearing God's call?
 - What a privilege this work is and that is true regardless of what you are called to
 - Mark Lowery said his father told him, "If God calls you to be a ditch digger it would be a step down to become president."

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- Can you imagine the thoughts going through Isaiah's mind hearing God's call?
 - I have the privilege of leading the Nation of Israel back to worshipping their true God

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- **Isaiah 6:8-11a NLT**, 9 And he said, “Yes, go, and say to this people, ‘Listen carefully, but do not understand. Watch closely, but learn nothing.’ 10 Harden the hearts of these people. Plug their ears and shut their eyes. That way, they will not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor understand with their hearts and turn to me for healing.”

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- Isaiah was to pronounce not a turning to God, but they will turn away from God
 - They will not listen to you Isaiah
 - You will not be successful as you are defining it, but you are still to go
 - Isaiah's response in **Vs. 11a**, "Lord, how long will this go on?"

God does not call us to be successful as we might define it, but to be obedient

- Adoniram Judson waited six years for his first convert
 - Sometime after his death a government survey recorded 210,000 Christians, one out of every fifty-eight Burmans

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- William Carey after seven years of missionary labor, baptized his first convert, and two months later, he published his first Bengali New Testament
 - Over the next 28 years Carey and his helpers published 209 other languages and dialects
 - His mission could count only some 700 converts in a nation of millions, but he had laid an impressive foundation of Bible translations, education, and social reform

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- They were both considered failures by the world during their first years
- Look not for success, but obedience and let the Lord have His definition of what success will be

God does not call us to be successful as we might define it, but to be obedient

- The only way to not be successful in God's eyes:
 - To resist and continue to tell God "No"
 - Moses on backside of mountain or Gideon in the winepress
 - To refuse to allow God to be the Master of the calling
 - King Saul, Judas

God does not guarantee our acceptance, being understood, or even wanted, but the call is for you to be obedient

- **Jeremiah 7:26-28 NLT**, 26 But my people have not listened to me or even tried to hear. They have been stubborn and sinful—even worse than their ancestors.

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- **Jeremiah 7:26-28 NLT**, 27 “Tell them all this, but do not expect them to listen. Shout out your warnings, but do not expect them to respond. 28 Say to them, ‘This is the nation whose people will not obey the Lord their God and who refuse to be taught. Truth has vanished from among them; it is no longer heard on their lips.’”

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- I hope you Christian do not find yourself with the same mindset as God's people did then
- Where Isaiah was accepted as a Prophet from God Jeremiah was rejected

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- **Jeremiah 38:5-6 NLT**, 5 King Zedekiah agreed. “All right,” he said. “Do as you like. I can’t stop you.” 6 So the officials took Jeremiah from his cell and lowered him by ropes into an empty cistern in the prison yard. It belonged to Malkijah, a member of the royal family. There was no water in the cistern, but there was a thick layer of mud at the bottom, and Jeremiah sank down into it.

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- Jeremiah, Paul, and his companions were rejected because the people did not want to hear their message of truth
- The Nation of Israel liked and accepted the message of the false prophets that all was well, and God would protect them from the Babylonians

God does not guarantee our acceptance, being understood, or even wanted, but the call is for you to be obedient

- The world is full of those who will reject your Christian world view, the truth of God's Word spoken and lived out
- Their desire is to silence you and the truth you represent just like Jeremiah and Paul

God does not guarantee our acceptance, being understood, or even wanted, but the call is for you to be obedient

- We are not called to win arguments of truth but to present truth in love, not being judgmental even though you will be accused of that
- Our calling as born-again children of God is **Ephesians 4:15 NLT**, “Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.”

Now the good news. Paul tells us that there was purpose and meaning in what appeared to be failure

- **Vs. 9b**, “But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.”
 - Paul was relying on his strength of character, superb training, time spent in the presence of Jesus
 - He was relying on himself and that will take you only as far as yourself

Now the good news. Paul tells us that there was purpose and meaning in what appeared to be failure

- Much like Abraham wanting to help God out with the promised child instead of relying on God to provide the impossible
- Only in our failures will we release the hold we have on our lives and simply trust God to do though us what he has willed for us
- Once again Abraham is our example here

Now the good news. Paul tells us that there was purpose and meaning in what appeared to be failure

- **Romans 4:18-21 NIV**, 18 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” 19 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead.

Now the good news. Paul tells us that there was purpose and meaning in what appeared to be failure

- **Romans 4:18-21 NIV**, 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. 22 This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Now the good news. Paul tells us that there was purpose and meaning in what appeared to be failure

- The purpose of all of Abraham's failures was to lead him to the place where he simply trusted God to do what He said He would do in Abraham's life
- God looked at Abraham's failure as steppingstones to righteousness
- God will lead us to failure with the purpose to lead us through failure to Himself

The greatest success wrapped in failure is our Lord Jesus Christ

- When He died on the cross that appeared to be the greatest failure in the history of mankind
 - But God's plan was to use that failure to redeem sinful mankind because it took the death of a perfect man to accomplish that

The greatest success wrapped in failure is our Lord Jesus Christ

- When He died on the cross that appeared to be the greatest failure of mankind
 - Three days later this failure became the greatest success given mankind when Jesus arose from the grave and purchased forgiveness for all mankind who will receive it

The greatest success wrapped in failure is our Lord Jesus Christ

- This great work of salvation was only possible because of Jesus' obedience to the Father's will, even when it looked like failure

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