

Group Resource

Sermon Notes – Sunday, October 6, 2013

Series: Living in Godly Success!

Message: Failing Forward

Scripture: Nehemiah 4:1-23

- I. If we are going to live in Godly success, we have to learn how to deal with adversity and allow God to redeem our failures so that God gets the glory He deserves.
- II. Earlier in the “Living in Godly Success” series, we were reminded that Godly success allows us to thrive in any environment. It is easy to believe that success comes only in perfect circumstances, but, in reality, Godly success overcomes obstacles, failures, and adversity.
- III. While failures, adversities, and challenges may bring about different immediate consequences, God’s desire and ability to redeem us from each of these circumstances is equal.
 - a. In Isaiah 43:25, the Lord says, “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”
 - b. The Psalmist declares that “It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.” Psalms 119:71.
- IV. What are the benefits of failure and adversity?
 - a. ^{JAMES 1:2-4} Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.
 - b. When placed in God’s hands, trials, failures and adversities allow us to grow in perseverance so that we can be mature and complete, i.e. achieve Godly success.
 - c. Failure and adversities humble us so that we depend on God
 - d. Failure and adversities reveal areas of weakness that God needs to strengthen us in. (Eph 3:16)
- V. Some of us allow the fear of failure to keep us from becoming all that God wants us to be. However, persevering through our challenges is one of the ways that God strips away from us the things that we don’t need in our lives that hinder us from Godly success.
- VI. **1 - In the Kingdom of God, acknowledging failure or adversity is not something that we have to run from. (Nehemiah 4:10-12)**
 - a. Nehemiah had to acknowledge that the labourers were physically failing, under emotional distress and feeling overwhelmed.
 - b. Acknowledging failure or adversity is not a negative confession but a positive confession of our reliance on God’s strength and grace. In Romans 7, the Apostle Paul shared his struggle with sin in which “what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.”
 - c. James 4:6 tells us that God gives us grace through our failures and adversity “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”
- VII. **2 - God’s redeeming power is greater than our self-condemnation (Nehemiah 4:7-9)**
 - a. Nehemiah’s solution to adversity was to pray to God. The enemy’s goal is to take our failures and stop us from reaching our Godly potential. God’s goal is to redeem us, even when we have reached our lowest point.
 - b. When we realize that God can redeem our faults and still work to achieve success through our adversity, we place everything in His hands and allow Him to set our agenda and course corrections.

- c. In 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, the Apostle Paul experienced God's redeeming power while facing personal adversity.
 - i. ⁷Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

VIII. 3 - God works through our failures to lead us to kingdom success (Nehemiah 4:13-14)

- a. When God called Nehemiah to rebuild the wall in Jerusalem, God knew that Nehemiah would face opposition and that the strength of the laborers would give out. In spite of their weaknesses, God was still leading them to accomplish the goal that He had set. God calls us toward kingdom success with full knowledge of our weaknesses and shortcomings that will affect our ability to reach our purpose.
- b. The prayer of the Hebrew writer in Hebrews 13:20-21 was "Now may the God of peace... equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever."
 - i. We often quote the maxim: "Those whom God calls, he also equips," but have we ever thought about how God equips us?
 - ii. Part of our equipping for success is allowing God to get rid of the areas of our life that glorify self rather than God. One of the most effective ways that God can speak to us is through our failures which force us to rely on Him.
- c. One writer said, "Failure is merely an opportunity to start over again, wiser than before." When we give our failures to God, we allow God to give us wisdom and insight how to deal with them. When we suppress our failures, we start over again but without the benefit of Godly wisdom.
 - i. Prov. 24:16 reminds us that "though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes."
- d. When we suppress our failures and never give them over to God, we don't fail forward, we fail backwards. We fail back into self, self-pity and self-existence.

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- 1) Share an important life event that helped shape the person you are today.
- 2) As you reflect back on last weekend's sermon, what one principle or insight stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful or difficult to grasp? Were you challenged in any area of your personal walk with God?
- 3) How do you deal with failures, adversity or challenges? Have these things ever stopped you from achieving the goals that God helped you set? How does the enemy use self-condemnation and self-existence in dealing with our failures?
- 4) **Read** Romans 7:14-20 and Romans 5:20-21. What does the Apostle Paul describe as his struggle? How does God's grace minister to Paul's struggle? How does an understanding of God's grace strengthen us after our failures?
- 5) What does it mean to allow God to redeem our failures? How has God redeemed any of your past failures to equip you for Godly success?
- 6) The Hebrew writer prayed, "Now may the God of peace... equip you with everything good for doing his will." What do you personally need from God to equip you for Godly success? How can God redeem your failures, adversities and challenges? Write down your prayer to God.