

“The Successful Failure!”

1 Kings 8:17-19

Intro. – One of the highest goals in King David’s life was to build a house to God. David had ruled wisely, fought valiantly, and sung songs that live yet today. But, it was the building of the Temple that would be the culmination of his accomplishments. This would be the ultimate of his success. To put it in modern terms, this would be the capstone of his LEGACY. David, however, was not permitted to do it. Others would complete the task he longed to finish. David went to his grave thinking of himself in a large measure to be a failure.

Each of us can relate to this disappointed king. We know what it is like to miss the accomplishments of our dreams, don’t we? We know what it is to fail in our heart’s desire. There’s not a few of us that wonder when the blundering failures in our lives will cease.

Moses certainly thought this way. For 40 years he led Israel out of bondage to bring them to the Promised Land. The burdens, heartaches, and disappointments this man endured are not fully comprehended except by God. He did much in leading the people; however, he failed to succeed. As he looked at the land of his hopes there came the command, “...rise up into the mountain and die.” Israel did enter this land, but not with Moses.

With these 2 Bible examples and our own lives in mind, are our lives really failures? God has a different view/reckoning. God looks at something more probing and revealing than outward appearances. How do we know this for sure? Our text says, “...you did well to have this in your heart.” From this we learn that God has a different standard for measuring success. It will be wise and helpful to learn better of this standard.

Purpose: to better understand the standard by which God measures success

I GOD MEASURES BY OUR LONGINGS

- it is most significant to note that God measures success not by our achievements, but, by what we long or intently desire to achieve... i.e. He measures us not by what’s in hand, but what’s in our heart
- Illus. – “Open the Eyes of My Heart Lord!” and like songs express this important principle

A. God Measures Us Now

1. Presently, God is surveying our hearts’ intent... He knows what we desire, think and want...
 - Psalm 139 “O Lord, You have searched me and know me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O Lord, You know it all...”
2. He measures us not by our actual triumphs, but by our longings/heart’s desires...

B. God’s Ways Differ from Man’s

1. Success is measured purely by outward appearance from man’s perspective...
2. Before any man, woman or young person is *counted as successful* they must first do what? Bring home the bacon.
 - Illus. – newspaper office with sign: “57 Rules to Becoming a Success -- #1 Deliver the Goods; #2 Forget the other 56.”
3. To do one’s heart’s desire doesn’t seem to count in almost anything today – sports... business... school etc., all that seems to matter is “the bottom line” = money.
4. But God looks at things differently – He looks inwardly, at the heart
 - 1 Samuel 16:6-7 “Then it came about when they entered, that he looked at Eliab and thought, ‘Surely the Lord’s anointed is before Him.’ But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’”

II WOLRDLY PRIORITIES WILL BE REVERSED

A. The First Will be Last

1. Matthew 20:16 “Thus the last shall be first, and the first last.”
2. Many who loom large/important/powerful here and now will by and by look most insignificant!

3. Know this will be the case because God looks not outwardly (achievements)... inwardly (heart)...
4. Illus. – Sir Launfal (a knight) in search of the Holy Grail, magnificently decked out in horse, armor, gold etc. Met a beggar... flipped a gold coin at him in disgust. Beggar refused. Yrs later same knight (older, wiser, worn, tried) saw same beggar. All knight had to give was a piece of crust. Beggar gratefully accepted. Why? “Good given without love is far less than crust given by the heart/hand of brothers.”

B. The Last Will be First

1. Illus. – Wilbur Fields – not impressive in appearance... but a Saint of God with a heart of gold...
2. Think of the saints of God who have desired to serve, even trained and prepared to do so, but didn't have the chance to fully serve...
3. The day will come when they will be credited with great accomplishments... They will ask, “When did we achieve these victories for you, Lord?” God will say, “These are the things for which you longed.”

Remember – *It is well that such was in your heart to do!*

III THE TEST OF OUR HEARTS

- danger in sermon is as follows: may give those who are idle/uninvolved a feeling of ease/justification
- like congratulating one's self for the big things you'd do if only you had the opportunities/talents...
- but what of opportunities that ARE available? Easy to make excuses when ought making opportunities.
- Illus. – little man was saying to a larger man – “If I was as big as you I'd go to the woods, find the largest bear, wrestle him to the ground and let him know who was boss.” His big friend responded, “You know there are plenty of smaller bears in the woods don't you?”

A. What Are You Doing With Present Opportunities?

1. David did more than simply say *he wished he could build a Temple*:
 - a. went as far as he could making easy for those who would build the Temple...
 - b. point: he did the hidden/obscure/behind-the-scenes work
 - c. note: David was not asking for honor – asking for the privilege to help...
2. Why is poor widow the greater giver in Mark 12:41-44 “*And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the multitude were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. And calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, ‘Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.’*”
 - a. not because she lamented over how little she could give
 - b. not because she told family/friends how much she'd give IF only...
 - c. although her hand was almost empty, her heart overflowed

B. Application We Must Make

1. Beware of deadening your conscience with mere talk of what you would do *if only*...
2. Opportunities abound around you right here and right now for growth, worship and service...
3. Real question is = What is your heart's intent?!

IV THE RESULT OF THIS MEASUREMENT

- there is a great consolation in this in which we ought to rejoice:

A. All are on Absolutely Equal Ground

1. God only requires of us in direct proportion to how He has equipped us...
2. Know this is the case as revealed to us in the parable of the talents... much is required of those to whom much has been given

B. Victory Possible for *Failures*

1. Is it possible to be victorious? Dare we dream and even hope?
2. Can victory be ours even though we have all failed, and I mean failed... all have sinned!
3. Can we grasp this principle this morning? Can we respond to being saved by His Grace?!

Conclusion: Have you failed at anything lately? Are you a failure? How many came this morning thinking you have little if anything to give but broken and lost opportunities? Has anyone come this morning grieving that you can do so little when you long to do so much for the Lord? Remember this, it is not the outward success that is crowned; it is not the gifts of our hands that are reckoned. The real test is the test of the heart.

Therefore, any venture we make for Christ's sake cannot fail. If we win our goal, we are a victor. If we fall short of our goal, in God's sight we can still be the victor.

Illus. – a little girl wanted to buy her ailing mother a special gift. She thought the only possession enable her to do so was a china doll. On her way to sell the doll, she tripped and broke it. She came home defeated (no special gift) with only the fragments of a broken doll and a broken heart. But the sick mother in finding out what had taken place took her little girl into her arms and said, “Honey, your failure has brought richer joy than had you succeeded.”

Now how does that make any sense? God alone can explain it: *You did well to have this in your heart!* What is your heart's intent?!