

Call to Obedience #451
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Success

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We are all born with a desire to succeed, with a desire to make things happen. We observe this early in toddlers who are absolutely delighted when they can push a button and get a sound or when they can cry and get mother's attention. This desire, this quest, this driving force to succeed is necessary, for without it we would all perish. Nothing would be accomplished. Diapers would not be changed and grown men would have no incentive to work. We are born with a desire to succeed. Having said this, nothing contributes more to emotional problems than our failure to succeed. The lack of success is one of the greatest contributing factors leading to depression, frustration, unhappiness, discouragement, poverty, drug addiction, withdrawal from social engagements, the breakup of marriages and, in the worst cases, to suicide.

But now there is a great distinction to be made between the definition of success by "world standards" and by "God's standards." It is obvious to the reader of the Bible that a man can appear to be very successful in the world and yet be totally unsuccessful with the things involving eternity. Conversely a man can be very successful in the light of eternity and appear unsuccessful in the eyes of the world. Let us look at some examples:

Jesus Christ: In the eyes of many dictators and others, Jesus was weak and unsuccessful because He had the power to establish an earthly kingdom greater than the Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek and Roman kingdoms put together, but He allowed Himself to be mocked, shamefully hung on the cross, forsaken by all of His followers except a handful and died at the young age of 33. In the eyes of the world, He did not live up to His potential. He was a massive failure. Yet, since He died and rose again, He is acknowledged to have been the most influential person who ever lived on this planet.

Noah: As another example: Noah made himself a fool, spending 120 years of his life building an ocean liner 500 miles inland from any body of water that could hold it. He became the laughing stock of the world in his generation, until the people he tried to save all drowned as the cost of their

unbelief. Yes indeed, you may look like a fool in the eyes of the world, but in heaven you may be greeted as the most successful person in your day.

The Apostle Paul: Desiring to build churches to be copies of the early church of the book of Acts, Paul worked as hard as any man that ever lived on the face of the planet. These churches were to be without spots, wrinkles, blemishes or any such thing (Eph. 5:27). But, by the time he died, most of his churches were carnal (worldly). His reward for all of his efforts of loving God's people, praying for them and teaching them was that he was rejected by most. He had to say near the end of his life: *...all they which are in Asia be turned away from me...* (2 Tim. 1:15) and I have no one like-minded but Timothy (Phil. 2:20). At his final trial before martyrdom, he said: *At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge* (2 Tim. 4:16). Then he was beheaded and he looked like a failure in ministry. But time and eternity have another story to tell about him.

Are you getting the point, my dear friend? You may look like you are unsuccessful in many things in this world and therefore the devil has told you that you are good for nothing. This has sapped the strength out of your life. Beloved, *...lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet...* (Heb. 12:12-13), for if you are living in the will of God, God is pleased with you at work, at home, at church and in His kingdom. You need no one's smile but His. **Let God grade you and not man.** You cannot do better anywhere in the world than when you are abiding in Christ. If you abide in Him and He abides in you, you shall bear much fruit. Abiding in Him makes you most successful, nothing else will count in eternity.

You could be the finest musician, the most accomplished engineer or a Nobel Prize winner in physics, but unless you have done the will of God, these life achievements mean nothing in the light of eternity. Nothing! Heaven has no place for the trophies of men. Yet, most parents raise their children to fill their shelves with trophies. Jesus gave this warning to the Pharisees: *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?* (John 5:44). Seeking the honor of men will destroy your Christianity by taking your focus off of Jesus leading to unbelief when it comes to understanding the magnitude and all-sufficiency of God and His ways of doing things. You either focus on one or the other: the honor of men or the honor of God. Jesus said: *No man can serve two masters...;* and *...seek ye first the kingdom of God...* (Matt. 6:24, 33). First means first, all of the time. If you seek God's favor first, then there is no room to seek the honor of men.

Of course, it does not mean that God's people will never be honored by men. Joseph and Daniel, for example, were honored by men. Most Christians, because they live godly lives, are honored by men some of the time. They are honest, hard-working, kind, wise and blessed. But sooner or later, many men of God will come to a fork in the road where there is a point of conflict, such as when their employer asks them to do things that violate the law of God. Examples include Joseph and Daniel. When Joseph refused to give up his purity, he lost his job (Gen. 39). Daniel refused to stop praying to his God, and was condemned to death (Dan. 6).

In order to maintain fellowship with your Lord, as a child of God, you must sacrifice man's honor for God's honor. After that, you will begin to look like a loser in the world. But it is well worth it if this is what it takes to keep God in your life. Once you are a winner with God, you will continue to be a winner in everything that matters, one way or another. Remember, the Lord is your Shepherd full-time and He will meet your needs. You cannot afford to lose your Shepherd—if you lose Him, He also loses you. You cannot make it to heaven without seeking after the will and honor of God. You cannot! Stop chasing after the wrong ball. My friend, look up because you are the child of God. That is awesome.

Perhaps one of the most dynamic Christians I ever met was a ditch digger who dug trenches for pipelines in Canada. He was also one of the happiest Christians I have ever met and was on fire for God. His face always radiated with the glory of God like he already had one foot in heaven. You could tell at the first sight of him that he belonged to another world. Oh, my friend, he might be destined to be seated at the right hand of Jesus. Ditch diggers, homemakers, dishwashers and street sweepers are more likely to get that seat than the somebodies of this world. This man knew who he was and who his God was.

Do you know who you are and who your God is? Well, it is time for you to find out. You are a child of the King, an heir with Christ Jesus, a friend, a brother or sister of Christ and you will sit on the throne with Him forever. Do not make yourself look like a pitiful bum. Walk like a king, act like a king and govern like a king. You govern by prayer. God delights in you seeking His will. His delight is more than an A+ in the light of eternity, no matter whether you live in a palace or shack, whether you live on crumbs or five course meals, whether you have education or none, whether you dig ditches or are a brain

surgeon. The question is: “Are you living in the will of God?” Know who you are and know God. You are His and He is yours.

So then, what is your problem? Let your heart be filled with praise and worship Him. Do your best on your job, but do not march to the tune of the world. Remember that the Bible also calls you a stranger and a foreigner in this world for once you follow Jesus, you will no longer feel at home in this world. You will no longer be one of them. You and your family must adopt a minority mentality. But, my friend, it will be different when you get to heaven.

Be faithful and in the end, God will grant you to eat of the fruit of the tree of life; He will give you a crown of life; He will spare you from the second death which is hell; He will let you feast on the hidden manna and give you a white stone with a new name engraved on it; and He will give you authority over the nations. You will even receive white garments for clothing, He will make you a pillar in His sanctuary and He will grant you to sit beside Him in His throne (Rev. 2-3). Again let me ask you: “What is your problem? Why let your hands hang down and be feeble in your knees?” Now then, let us close with this beautiful eulogy: *Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him* (Mal. 3:16-17).

Having said all of this, I suggest that you close yourself in a prayer closet for an hour or two, go over your life with the Holy Spirit helping you, and decide whether you are successful in the eyes of God. If not, make the necessary corrections and harvest the joy of the Lord instantly. Amen and amen!

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