

Facing Failure

This I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3)

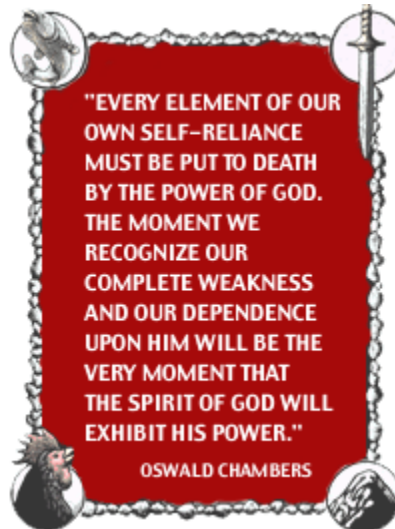
There is a strong desire in us to succeed! To win! To excel! To be successful! Yet often we feel like a failure. Feelings of failure can terrify us and take our hope away.

There are two kinds of failure we walk with each day. The first is the failure that comes from human limitation. We set our goals too high. We compete. We compare ourselves with others. Often we end up feeling disappointed in ourselves because we can't measure up to our own expectations or the expectations of others. We feel inadequate. Inadequacy is a very uncomfortable feeling. In fact, sometimes it's not just uncomfortable, it's very painful and it can be very embarrassing. God invites us to live as the person He has created us to be. His expectation of us is that we will use what we have been given and do our best. At the same time, God created us to live in relationship with Him, operating in obedience to His will, in the power of His Spirit. When we try to be someone else or live according to someone else's standards we are not following God's plan for our life. If we are trying to do our best on our own without clinging to God's help and power, we fail because we are going about the task in a way that truly is inadequate. God has wonderful plans for our lives and the power to help us to attain satisfying and meaningful goals. We must be willing to ask, "Lord, what will You have me to do in Your strength and in Your power?"

But God 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. (2 Corinthians 12)

The second kind of failure we face is the failure that comes from sin. We fail to measure up to the deep-

down goodness of our lives. We settle for less than we could be. We wallow in resentments. We hold grudges. We cling to unhealthy ways of living. We live according to our own plan instead of God's plan. We often embrace violence instead of peace, selfishness instead of love, despair instead of hope. Sin walks through our lives like an accepted guest. This is the failure we must find the courage to confront. In the Bible, Paul describes his battle with this kind of failure:



When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! (Romans 7)

We do wrong and respond wrongly. God invites us to leave our sin at the cross of Jesus. God forgives us when we confess our failures, ask for forgiveness, and turn away from the wrong attitudes and behaviours. God promises to set us on a new and living way. God gives us power to let go of grievances against others and to leave them in His hands. God pours out grace so we can live in healing rather than continuing to cope with woundedness. God gives us power to make choices to say "NO" to the demands of our addictive voices. God has power so we can choose peace instead of violence in word or action when we are wronged, unselfish generosity in the face of greed, and hope in a place of challenge. We must turn away from our own sinful independence and self-centered ways of reacting. We can choose to trust God's power and healing to build a new way of success and satisfaction in our life.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. How do I fail God, myself, and others?
2. What options do I have for finding God's help as I face my failure?
3. How am I growing in experiencing God's forgiveness and power made perfect in my weakness?