

## FACING FAILURE

***This I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every Morning; great is your faithfulness.*** (Lamentations 3:21-23 NIV)

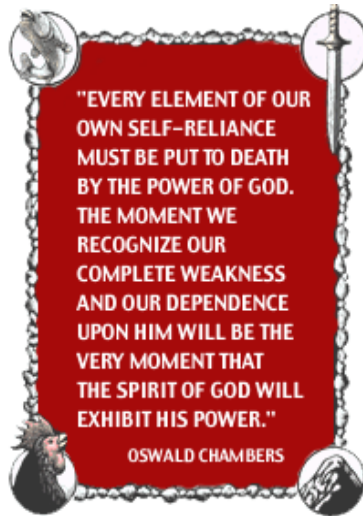
There is a strong desire in us to succeed! To win! To excel! To be successful! Yet often we feel like a failure. Feelings of failure can terrify us and take our hope away.

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. A sense of inadequacy follows and we find ourselves filled with painful shame, fear, and embarrassment.

One example of this type of failure is recorded in the book of Matthew. The night before Jesus died, he shared the Passover meal with his friends, including one of his closest companions, Peter. Then the group headed over to the Mount of Olives. ***On the way Jesus told them, "Tonight all of you will desert me. For the Scriptures say, 'God will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' Peter declared, "Even if everyone else deserts you, I will never desert you."*** (Matthew 26:31, 33 NLT) Peter's expectation of himself was that he would stay at Jesus' side regardless of the actions of anyone else. However, on that very night, Peter denied three times that he was with Jesus or even knew him. To emphasize his denial he even swore at the bystanders. Peter left that scene weeping bitter tears of failure.

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. That's a sure recipe for failure. If we are trying to do our best on our own without clinging to God for help and power, we will fail, because we are going about the task in a way that is truly inadequate. God has wonderful plans for our lives and has the power to help us 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?"

Jesus had great plans for the apostle Peter. Even though Peter failed Jesus at a critical moment, Jesus specially sought him out after His resurrection for healing and restoration. Peter went on to be one of the strongest witnesses for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If we are willing to submit to the plans God has for us He will lead us in the way He has prepared for us to go. ***But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.*** (2 Corinthians 2:14-15 NIV)



The second kind of failure we face is the failure that comes from sin. 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, self-centeredness instead of caring, hatred 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 7:21-24a NIV)

God invites us to leave our sin and failure at the cross of Jesus. God forgives us when we confess our failures, repent, and turn away from our wrong attitudes and behaviour. God gives us power to let go of grievances against others. God pours out grace so we can live in healing rather than continuing to walk in the painful embarrassment or humiliation of failure. God gives us power to say "NO" to the demands of our addictive voices. As we turn away from failure caused by our own sinful independence and self-centered ways, we daily become more like the person God created us to be. That's the satisfying experience of true success our hearts actually seek. ***The power of the Holy Spirit has made me free from the power of sin and death. This power is mine because I belong to Christ Jesus.*** (Romans 8:2 NIV)

### Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. In what ways do I fail God, myself, and others?
2. What options do I have for finding God's help as I face my failure?