

Failure is A Teacher

By Bro Willy Nakar

Joshua was a person who was destined from the very beginning to a life of fame, fortune and greatness. He had an anointing to carry out a great work for God. Even during the time of Moses, he participated in the liberation of the Israelites.

This was a guy to whom God promised, "I will deliver to you every place where you set foot. Your domain is to be all the land of the Hittites, from the desert and from the Lebanon east to the great river Euphrates, and west to the great sea. No one can withstand you while you live. I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be firm and steadfast so you may give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers I would give them...I command you: be firm and steadfast! Do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord, your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:3-6, 9).

There was no way anyone could say that he was going to fail at all. In fact, when he mounted the siege of Jericho, the Lord gave him the victory in such a spectacular way that other kingdoms and rulers couldn't have imagined.

You know the story...

Now, Jericho was in a state of siege because of the presence of the Israelites so that no one left or entered and to Joshua, the Lord said, "I have delivered Jericho and its king into your power. Have all the soldiers circle the city marching once around it. Do this for six days.... On the seventh day, march around the city seven times and have the priests blow the horns. When they give a long blast on the ram's horns and you hear that signal, all the people shall shout aloud, the wall of the city will collapse and they will be able to make a frontal attack." (Joshua 6:1-5)

God Himself gave Joshua words of assurance and he was fearless in marching according to the instructions of the Lord. They made the frontal attack and, true to His words, Jericho's walls fell down.

But the next chapter of the book tells a different story. Fresh from their victory at Jericho, Joshua and the Israelites confidently marched against Ai. It was a place so insignificant that those who reconnoitered advised Joshua, *"Do not send all the people up. If only about two to three thousand go up, they can overcome Ai. The enemy there are few; you need not call for an effort from all the people" (Joshua 7:3).*

Unknown to them was that one of their soldiers had disobeyed the Lord's instructions not to take anything for themselves at Jericho. Achan, son of Carmi of the tribe of Judah took goods that were under the ban. This caused the anger of the Lord to flare up against the Israelites. So that day, the people of Ai inflicted a crushing defeat on the Israelites and 36 of them died.

Joshua and his men were disappointed, frustrated, and their confidence melted. They were failures.

But when they discovered the violation of the ban, the Israelites acted immediately to correct the wrong. After Achan confessed his sin, Joshua sent messengers to retrieve the stolen articles. Then the whole community stoned Achan to death. It was only then that the anger of the Lord relented (*Joshua 7:26*) and He gave Joshua new instructions. The Israelite soldiers attacked Ai and, no doubt, they were victorious as God promised.

There are lessons we can learn from Joshua's initial defeat at Ai.

1. He turned to God for direction.

When God said that they would take possession of all the land and it didn't happen, they sought His guidance. When they did, God revealed to them what the problem was and what He wanted them to do. They obeyed and they won. They lost the first time, but failure became their teacher.

2. He and his people immediately confessed their sins even before they realized what Achan had done.

Applying this in our own lives, we can draw the lesson that when we fail, we should refocus on God, deal with the problem and then move on. We need to ask ourselves, "What does God want me to do?" Often, He wants the cycle of sin, repentance, and forgiveness to strengthen us, even if He had allowed failure to happen. He doesn't want us to fail but He does want us to gain knowledge and wisdom from the failure. And these lessons that we learn should equip us to handle the similar situations in a more victorious way the second time around.

We must also have the faith that God is eager to give us the forgiveness and mercy we need to be restored and strengthened in order to win the battle the next time around.

3. Joshua wasn't afraid of losing again.

We must be forewarned about the fear of failure. If we know that God wants us to be victorious in a certain undertaking that He wants us to do, the only way to lose is when we give up. But, of course, we need to find out exactly what God wants us to do.

4. He learned from his mistakes.

Sirach 32:20 says, "Go not on a way that is set with snares, and let not the same thing trip you twice." The snares are there to make us trip and fall. That's why the Lord warns us not to walk there. For example, if you know that the shortcut to a place that you want to go to is a minefield, you will choose the longer route, right?

If ever you do make the mistake of taking the wrong path, you won't pass that way again. In other words, you won't make the same mistake that you committed earlier. *Sirach 32:20* is a fair warning and, if we are mindful of developments in our lives, we won't keep on offending the Lord in the same thing. The idea is to learn from that lesson and move on victoriously.

Sometimes, we may have the impression that because Jesus never sinned, He must have come from a line of perfect people. On the contrary, His genealogy in *Matthew 1:1-17* reveals 46 people who varied considerably in personality, spirituality and experience. A number of them were heroes of faith, like Abraham, Isaac, Ruth and David. Others were ordinary, like Hezron, Aram, Nashon and Achim. But some had shady reputations like the harlots Rahab and Tamar. Others were downright evil, like Manasseh and Abijah.

But human failure or sin does not limit God's work in history. Jesus' ancestors — who were far from perfect — didn't hinder His greatness. God works through prominent as well as ordinary people. That's our great consolation.

The bottom line is, God wants to use you, He doesn't care where you came from or what you've done. What's important is that He has called you by name. *Romans 8:28* tells us how God will use our failures.

We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His decree.

All of us have been called and chosen. When our failures become a teacher to us, then we can bring them to Jesus Christ and ask Him to work everything unto good. And so, if God is for us, who can be against us?

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