

Fail Forward

“The Lord has taken away His judgments against you; He has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you will fear disaster no more.” Zephaniah 3:15

“But I have prayed for you, that you faith may not fail....Luke 22:32a

No one likes to fail.

Failure brings to mind unnerving thoughts of defeat, loss, setback, heartache, disappointment and discouragement. Failing tempts us to think that we are a failure. The enemy of our soul, Satan, loves to beat us over our heads with the failure stick. What can be worse is when we take up the failure stick and beat up on ourselves, branding ourselves a miserable, low-life failure. I can say this because I have been all too familiar with the failure stick in the past!

Failing strikes at our feelings facing the future. Failing yesterday or today makes us feel insecure and uncertain about tomorrow. Many who fail only see a bleak future, darkened by their past failures. Having failed, they think and act like a failure, and unwittingly, set themselves up to fail again. It is hard to succeed if you or I view ourselves as a failure.

The fact is: failure happens. Failure is part of life. Everyone fails. No one makes it through life without falling on their face. Failing befalls everyone who has breath and attempts to accomplish something significant in life.

For most men and many women, fear of failure is our number one fear. Men fear failing as spiritual leaders, husbands, fathers, and providers for their family. Loss of employment can send a man into a depressing tailspin of feeling like he has failed in some way to take care of his family. Being relational and nurturing, women fear failing as wives, mothers and keepers of the nest.

Failing means that we are human. Because failing is part and parcel of life, we need to get a handle on how to manage failure in a positive way. Failure can pave the way to success when we see failure as a potential friend, not an unconquerable foe.

Flops, Failures and Fumbles

If you have failed (and you have!), you are in good company

The pages of the Bible are filled with people like you and me who failed. The Hall of Fame of Faith in Hebrews 11 is a star-studded list of successful failures, men and women and of faith who flopped, failed, and fumbled the ball along their journey with God. Read their stories. God's spiritual giants greatest successes often came on the heels of what looked like colossal failures. Moses, David, Samson, Jonan, Elijah, Paul, Peter to name a few all experienced setbacks that turned into comebacks.

Failure gave way to success because of their faith in God who worked with them and gave them power to turn failure into success. Proverbs 24: 16 declares "*For a righteous man fall seven times, and rises again, but the wicked man stumbles in time of calamity.*" What an encouraging word for you and me. No matter how many times we may stumble, as God's people, we get backup...every time....turning the tables on failure into success.

Each of us can draw up our own flops, failures and fumbles list. I encourage to do so and realize how often we mess up. Then, recognize that God doesn't hold your goof-ups against you. Aren't you glad? I know I am. The Lord who is merciful, gracious and full of lovingkindness, forgives, forgets and provides new opportunities for you and me to rise up from the ash heap of failure and be successful the next time.

- *Flops, failures and fumbles can be set-ups for success.*

Failure Is Not Fatal Nor Final

If failure were final, we would all be finished.

Thank God failure is not the end of the road. It is a bend in life's road. Success lies around the corner for people who leave failure behind in the rearview mirror, looking forward through the front windshield to what lies ahead. Failing often closes a door, while at the same, time opening a new door to success.

Failure is not fatal. Failing can stifle our spirits and trouble our souls, but seldom, if ever, does failure take anybody's life. Sadly, there are people who have taken failure so seriously that they have committed suicide. This is tragic. To be mourned at the loss of human potential. Though failure sometimes feels like death, failing is not dying. Failure is an opportunity to try again, to build upon the flops, failure and fumbles strewn along life's journey.

Failure is only final if we choose to make it final.

The Old Testament prophet Zephaniah knew failure was not final. Read the context of our flagship verse for this teaching in Zephaniah 3:14-21. Because of all the

reasons Zephaniah lists regarding how the Lord treats His people. We do not have to fear disaster anymore. Disaster includes flops, failure and fumbles.

“You will fear disaster no more.” How about you? Do you fear failing again? People who have experienced a marriage failure often fear that their next marriage will fail. Guess what? Oftentimes the second one fails like the first. Why? The marriage partners didn’t learn from their previous failed marriages. They repeated attitudes and behavior that caused the first marriage to fail.

I want to ask you again: do you fear failure? Do you worry that disaster will come knocking on your door again and you will invite it in to dinner? Don’t have dinner with disaster. Send fear of failure down the street.

- *You and I do not have to fear failure any more.*

Failure Is A Stepping Stone To Success

When we fail we can erect a tombstone or we can use failure as a stepping stone to success. If we choose to do so, you and I can suck our thumbs, throw pit-poor-me-parties and drag our failure blankets around ad nauseous. If you are doing this, I want to ask you how is that working for you? Not too well I guess. Then why not choose to dust failure off your feet and start down a new road paved with the stones of past failure? There is something wonderfully gratifying and deeply satisfying about stepping over failure to success.

Paul was Saul before he was Paul. As Saul he persecuted the church of Christ. He did some terrible things to Christians (See Stephen’s stoning in Acts 8). With deep regret, Paul speaks of his flops, failures and fumbles prior to becoming a Christian.(see I Timothy 1:12-17). He rejoices in his salvation, coming to terms with past failures by living a new life in Christ. In Philippians 3:13-14 Paul declares his priority regarding past failures and future opportunities for success.

“Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Paul did one thing: Forgetting yesterday with its failures, he chose each day to reach forward to future opportunities to glorify God through his Christian witness and ministry.

- *Failures for Paul became stepping stones to success in Christ.*

Fail Forward

I once heard John Maxwell say “If you are going to fail, fail forward.” Awesome advice. Failure attempts to stop us dead in our tracks. When we fail or fall, falling or failing forward doesn’t make sense. Failure pushes us backward. Success draws us forward. When push comes to shove with failure, you and I need to shove failure aside and push forward to a successful future.

The prophet Micah uttered some fighting words centuries ago that have stirred my soul for years. His words to rise up from falling and failure motivate me to fail forward to success, no matter how many times I fall.

“But as for me, I will watch expectantly for the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation, my God will hear me. Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy; though I fall, I will rise; though I dwell in darkness, the Lord is a light for me.” Micah 7:7-8

Take note of what Micah said.

- But as for me.....personally I will make a decision to fall/fail forward.
 - I will watch and wait expectantly for God..... I will get up because my eyes are on the Lord.
 - Do not rejoice over me enemy....Don’t party over me. This isn’t over buster.
 - Though I fall, I will rise. I may be down but not out. Watch. I will get up again!
 - Though it is dark, God is light....I will succeed in the darkness because of God.
- *Though you have failed, rise up with faith in God to FAIL FORWARD!*

Faith For Your Future

Our faith can take a hit when we fail. Failure is a test of faith to those who believe in Christ. Satan’s ultimate goal is to deceive people into not believing. The devil is after one thing: faith. Destroying faith is Satan’s supreme goal. If he can keep people from trusting God and putting their faith in Him, the evil one has us. Unbelieving and faithless, we will walk in fear of failure. That is not God’s good, acceptable and perfect will for our lives (see Romans 12:1-2).

God’s plans for you and me are for good. Jeremiah 29:11 reads *“For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare (success and prosperity), not for calamity (failure and lack), to give you a future and a hope.”* Christians have a bright future and hope when their faith is in Jesus.

Faith in the Lord overcomes failure. We are more than conquerors through Christ (see Romans 8:31-39). Christ-confidence enables and empowers us to rise above failure and reach for future success that God promises to His children. Failure would love to keep you and me stuck in the muck of a disappointing past. The Holy Spirit draws you and me out of the muck to stand on the rock solid promises of God's Word for future success.

- *Your future is forward. So fail forward with faith in Jesus Christ.*

Become a Successful Failure

Seeds for success are often embedded in failure.

I decided years ago that if I was going to fail from time to time, I was going to be a successful failure. Don't get me wrong. I am not saying I wanted to be really great as a failure. On the contrary. I desire to turn my upside down failures into right side up success. In other words, failure can contribute to success if we look at it this way.

Peter is a good example of a Christian who turned failure into success. Peter is one of my favorite "successful failures" in the Bible.

I encourage you to study Peter's life in Christ as recorded in Matthew, Mark, John, Luke, Acts, and I and II Peter. I love Peter because of two things. 1. He was a pro in committing flops, failures and fumbles. 2. He rose up from all of his mistakes to be a better man who Christ used in fantastic ways.

Peter denied that he would ever deny the Lord. But he did (Matthew 26:26-75). His failure to support the Lord devastated him. Depressed, isolated from the disciples, Peter sent many lonely moments rehearsing his failure. The resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28:1-8) and the Lord's breakfast meeting with Peter on the beach (John 21) restored Peter's relationship with the Lord. Peter's failure was forgiven and forgotten. Jesus commissioned Him to preach the Word and take care of the New Testament church.

Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and abounding with joy in his heart, built a ministry of proclaiming the name of Jesus on the ruins of denying the Lord. Peter's most heart-wrenching setback (failure) set the stage for His greatest comeback (success).

What failure haunts you? What setback holds you back from a comeback for Christ? You, and I and Peter aren't much different. God is no respecter of persons. Be encouraged. What the Lord did for Peter, He will do for the likes of you and me.

God restores failures, turning them into success.

- *Peter failed forward...and so can YOU!!!*

Twelve Steps For Failing Forward

1. Cut yourself some slack. Admit everyone fails...including you.
2. Stop beating yourself up over your failures.
3. Ask God to forgive you for failing where appropriate.
4. Forgive yourself for your failures.
5. Learn lessons from your failures.
6. Seek wisdom from others who are successful failures.
7. Focus on your successes, not your failures.
8. Rebuke Satan when he reminds you of your failings.
9. Bury your sins, mistakes and failures in the blood of Jesus Christ.
10. Surround yourself with people who are failing forward by faith.
11. Share your testimony of how God turned your failure into success.
12. Thank God everyday that you are not a failure in Christ!

Fail Forward Exercise

1. Make a list of your personal flops, failures and fumbles.
2. Identify significant sins, mistakes or failures that haunt you.
3. Write out why these failures still haunt and hurt you.
4. Surrender your failures to the Lord. Cast them upon Him. Release them.
5. What lessons have you learned from your flops, failures and fumbles?

6. Write out how you plan with God's help to turn your failure into success.

7. Write out a prayer of thanksgiving to God for giving you a chance to begin again on the road to success in Christ.

“And we know that God causes all things (including failure) to work together for good (success), to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”
Romans 8:28

Steve Roll
Restoration Ministries
srrestore.org