

MARK JENKINS MINISTRIES

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When Success Looks Like Failure

Dear Friend,

Over the past few weeks the Lord has been teaching me about true success in the kingdom of God verses the “perceived” success of the natural world. I strongly encourage you to listen to my most recent LiveStream messages on this subject. You can find them in the [media section](#) of our website. What the Lord has been showing me has been life changing for me and I believe the same will be true for you.

All too often we as Christians make the mistake of looking to this natural world to determine if we are a success or failure instead of looking to God and His Word. We use the world’s parameters for measuring success and consequently when our results don’t resemble what this world esteems to be success we accept satan’s declaration that we have failed, are failures, and will always be failures.

The enemy will never applaud our spiritual successes and will always make our efforts to follow God look like failure, especially in the eyes of those whom we love but who are not walking the same walk as ours. A great example of what I am referring to can be found in Jesus’ death on the cross. To those onlookers that day, Jesus’ death looked like a complete failure. But, what appeared to be failure to the natural observer was actually success.

What a lesson this should be to each and every believer in Christ. God is not the least bit phased by the impressions or the thoughts of man when it comes to their ideas of our success or failure. When all those people standing and watching the crucifixion concluded in their minds what a complete failure and fraud this man Jesus must have been; God was not moved by their conclusions.

In other words, God wasn’t taking an opinion poll from the onlookers to determine that Jesus was a success or a failure. The truth is that no matter how much of a failure those events looked in the natural, what was accomplished that day on Golgotha was nothing but success.

Thank God, Jesus was willing to surrender Himself to His abusers and commence on what would appear to be an impossible journey that would take Him to the depths of hell before being crowned with glory. But, even Jesus struggled when faced with this situation. (Luke 22:42)

“Saying, ‘Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.’ ”

As God’s children, we too must be willing to give Him the opportunity to work through us in these impossible situations so that He ultimately gets all the glory. Our challenge comes when He directs us to do things as part of His Master Plan that defy human reasoning, as was the case with Jesus. Often, His plans make us look like we don’t know what we are doing because they don’t rely on human reasoning or human ability, but only on our obedience. God seems to love to walk us directly into the face of insurmountable odds and direct us to do things that make no sense to the natural mind. He does this, it seems, to insure that everyone involved knows who is responsible for the victory.

It also seems that He has no problem with us looking to the rest of the world like we have no idea what we are doing. Our reputation in the eyes of the world means nothing to Him, as we saw with Jesus on the cross. I have felt at times as though my willingness to look like a complete fool for Christ has given Him the greatest pleasure of all. It’s when I’m concerned about saving face or not looking like a complete idiot for following Jesus that I feel I tie His hands the most. Why? Because my eyes are on me and not Him. Our lives are really to be all about Him and not about ourselves.

We should strive to live life, not to appease the world around us, but to be pleasing to our Lord Jesus. This will mean that we are going to look to the world like we don’t have good sense; our elevator doesn’t go to the top floor or we are one brick shy of a full load. But, that’s okay because that puts us in good company with our Lord, whose own brothers thought He was crazy. (John 7:5)

“For neither did His brethren believe in Him.”

(Mark 3:21)

“And when His friends (kinsmen) (His earthly family) heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself.”

For them to say that Jesus was “**beside Himself**” was the same as saying they thought He was crazy. Why did they think this? Because Jesus fulfilled the

desires of His heavenly Father instead of living according to the dictates of this natural world. When we make the decision to follow Jesus no matter the cost we should expect God to ask us to do things that others might question or even doubt our sanity. We should expect to face the same kind of resistance that He faced. Here's an example, from an Old Testament event illustrating how God marches us right into an impossible situation surrounded by doubters mocking us.

As a result of one man's willingness to do what made no sense to the natural mind, God was able to use this Old Testament event to foreshadow Satan's future defeat. The event I am referring to is one that most of us have heard since we were children. It is David's defeat of Goliath. As we look at this event try to set aside all of your previous ideas about what took place here and read it as though you have never heard it before.

There's a lot of background that I encourage you to study on your own leading up to David's slaying of Goliath. You can find all of this in the book of 1 Samuel. I will attempt to briefly set the stage for the big event. 1 Samuel chapter 17 begins by describing how the armies of Israel faced the insurmountable army of the Philistines. Each army was positioned on opposing mountaintops with a valley in between. (1 Samuel 17:3) A giant of the army of the Philistines named Goliath marched out daily for 40 days and taunted the armies of Israel to send out their best man to fight him and the loser would be the slave to the winner.

Goliath was a giant of a man and the epitome of a warrior. When he marched out before Israel, fear shook every soldier, including Saul himself. (1 Samuel 17:11)

“When Saul and all of Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.”

I don't think I ever truly appreciated the predicament in which Israel found themselves. They were faced with impossible circumstances and no desirable solutions. It looked like Israel would be enslaved to the Philistines from now on. What a great type and shadow this is of mankind's dilemma. In this case, Saul represents the first Adam who fell and was gripped with fear as a slave to sin and death. Goliath represents the devil. David represents our Lord and Savior Jesus who was willing to do the unimaginable in order to free us from slavery.

Mankind's savior was not going to look like the first Adam, regal and stately, pictured here as Saul. No, mankind's savior would not look like any kind of a savior to the natural onlookers, which is why Israel failed to see Jesus as their Messiah. They weren't looking for their Messiah to be born in a manger.

Here comes David. A young shepherd boy who was called by his father to take provisions to his brothers. He arrived on the scene just as Goliath was making his daily taunting of Israel. That sounds like the devil. David hears the ranting of this bloodthirsty warrior and responds like no other man in Israel. This depicts the way Jesus came on the scene in this world and responded to the taunting of satan. (1 Samuel 17:26)

“David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, ‘What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God.’ ”

Finally, an Israelite who knows who he is and whose confidence is in the living God. But, to the natural observer, he doesn't look like the person they were expecting to be their savior. He is only a boy who will be facing a mighty warrior. His own brother looked at him with disgust. Does this sound familiar? Remember how Jesus' brothers responded to Him. (1 Samuel 17:28)

“And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men: and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, ‘Why camest thou down hither? And with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou might see the battle.’ ”

David's brother Eliab is boiling with anger at him and tries to put David in his place. Whenever you sound as David sounded and speak confidently about who you are in Christ as a son of the living God you can take it to the bank **the enemy will use the people closest to you to try and shut your mouth.** David was not prideful or “naughty” he was confident in his God (to keep the covenant). We should be so confident in our identity as sons of God.

Saul heard of David's words and called him in to his court. First, Saul tried his best to talk David out of his stand of faith by pointing out all the natural facts that seemed to assure David's ultimate failure, i.e. his age and the fact that Goliath was a seasoned warrior. David recounted the supernatural events that God used to prepare him for this battle; the slaying of the lion and the bear.

Saul then tried to give David his armor, but David refused. The world may try to convince us that faith in God's word is not enough. There may even be those in the church that the enemy uses to try and get us to depend on the things of this

natural world to resolve our impossible situations. We must be confident, as David was confident, that God's word is more than enough to put us over.

David headed to the battle holding nothing but a sling in his hand. He stopped on the way and selected five smooth stones from a brook. Imagine the thoughts you would have to combat in your own mind as you approached this confrontation with nothing more than five stones and a sling. There was absolutely nothing in the natural that looked like David would walk away victorious.

Face to face, against insurmountable odds, David stood before a giant who had every confidence in the world that he would be the victor. I have to imagine that as Satan watched Jesus hanged on a cross he too had every confidence in the world that he was going to be victorious.

Goliath looked at David and taunted him making fun of his youth and the fact that David lacked the natural armor necessary to fight such a battle. Mocking David, Goliath declared that he was not a dog, pointing out that David's weapons were better suited for chasing off a predator from his flock than defeating a mighty warrior. **But, David did not let that stop him.** He paid no attention to Goliath's fear inspiring comments. Instead, David spoke words of faith.

(1 Samuel 17:45)

“Then said David to the Philistine, ‘Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou has defied. (46) This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. (47) And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands.’ ”

Listen to the confidence in the words of David. **Not self-confidence**, rather confidence in His God. This is the way God expects us to sound, but be prepared because people will mistake this confidence for pride, as David's brother did, and attempt to shut you down. The key is to know that you know who you are in Christ and pay no attention to the “Eliabs” that the devil brings your way.

Finally, David runs to the battle and launches one of those five stones at Goliath. Quite to Goliath's surprise, I'm sure, the stone sinks deep into his head and he

falls face down to the earth, representing that satan would bow to our Lord Jesus Christ. What a picture this paints.

Then comes the most perfect type and shadow of all. (1 Samuel 17:50-51)

“So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David. (51) Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.”

David took Goliath’s own sword and cut his head off. It’s what Jesus did to the devil. The writer of Hebrews said it this way, (Hebrews 2:14)

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”

Jesus used satan’s own sword – death - and cut satan’s head off. Praise God! What looked like utter defeat was actually the greatest victory of all times.

This is God’s way. He loves to defy natural human reasoning and show Himself strong on our behalf, if we will only give Him a chance. Don’t be afraid to go against the tide of human reasoning. Don’t look to man or things of this natural world when faced with situations that only God can resolve. Take courage in God and His word and know who you are as a child of the living God. He will not fail you so long as you refuse to turn loose of His word. So long as you stand firm on God’s Word, your success is sure.

~ Jesus Loves You!

Mark Jenkins