

Turning Point – To Success from Failure Part 2

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Introduction

This morning, we continue from last week's message. We learned about 2 positives and 1 opposing factor in the journey to success.

In this message, we will briefly explore the last 2 positives and remaining opposing factors and at the end of it all, I will share with you, my success formula.

Like last week, let's keep in mind that God alone – who is unchanging – has the right to determine success. We touched base on God being sovereign, using different rulers and criteria, and a troubling mentality of comparison.

Appropriate Action

When we hear the word 'action,' we usually think of 'doing.' And there are many theories about action. Standing out for though, are two things: (1) timing and (2) faithfulness.

The first 8 verses of Ecclesiastes 3 is devoted to timing, standing out for me, is verse 1, 'There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:' and from here the next 7 verses unfold.

Solomon is speaking of both time and season which both go ahead of and with the decision to take appropriate action. Here is the thing, 'appropriate' relates to 'suitable' and 'compatible.' Working backward, if action is not suitable or compatible, then your action is inappropriate and the results of your action will be less than ideal. This is what Solomon is describing in Ecclesiastes 3.

Mark 4:26-29 is a fine example of appropriateness; i.e. 'suitable' and 'compatible' working hand in hand toward the desired outcome, 'He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.'" In this parable, the season, timing, the order in

which things are done, where and how they are done and finally, a good measure of patience are critical to success.

Martin Luther said, 'I have so much to do today that I shall spend the first 3 hours in prayer.' Appropriate action is borne in the purposes and plans of God which will always be according to His timing and season.

Faithfulness speaks of a firm commitment, genuineness, loyalty, and pushing through to the end. Unfaithful action is not only a waste of time but a blot on a person's integrity and character. Let's put things another way and ask ourselves what the probability of success is if the person taking action is unfaithful?

Faithfulness is important. Charles Spurgeon started his ministry by passing out tracts and teaching a Sunday school class as a teenager. He was eventually invited to obscure places in the countryside to preach, and after that became known as one of the greatest preachers in England. He said, 'I am perfectly sure, that if I had not been willing to preach to those small gatherings of people in obscure country places, I should never have had the privilege of preaching to thousands of men and women in large buildings all over the land.'

If you want to ponder more deeply over faithfulness, study 1 Thessalonians 5:24 'The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it' and 2 Timothy 2:13, 'if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself.' Your and my faithfulness is borne in Him who called us to be faithful.

Persevere

At face value, there appears to be a fine line between 'endure' and 'persevere.' Endurance speaks to your stamina and persistence. To persevere means to keep on moving forward towards a purpose (with its goals) and to overcome setbacks, hurdles, and disappointments, many of which would not have been known upfront.

To persevere speaks to your inner strength and growth. Immediately coming to mind is how God, through His Word and the working of the Holy Spirit can build you up, if you submit to Him. In a Christian context, perseverance is evidence of the genuineness of faith and spiritual maturity.

The Bible is full of examples of perseverance; Job, David, Jeremiah, Paul, Jacob, and others.

As believers, we must persevere. We must be steadfast and immovable. Paul in 2 Timothy 4:7 wrote, 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.' And as we mentioned last week, Paul went through a lot he was arrested jailed, stoned, beaten, shipwrecked, had to flee for his life, and was eventually decapitated. That's perseverance.

Another dimension of perseverance is that of steadfastness. It means that we stand firm in the faith, we are determined and we will not be moved. We are devoted, faithful, true, and loyal. Paul wrote about this in 1 Corinthians 15:58, 'Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.'

As we devotedly persevere, we are sustained by the intimacy of our fellowship with God.

Overcome Resistance

Luke 17:1a reads, 'Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come,..."'

When we ponder over the biblical concept of 'resistance' we grasp something of 'the battle is real.' The enemy is throwing doubt, disbelief, denial, rejection, worldly attractions, indecision, and much more at us. And the enemy will not hesitate to use evil suggestions, bad examples, superficial (and sometimes plausible) arguments, restraints, and much more as his weapons.

The plus side of overcoming resistance is that it increases your strength. This is why some athletes do resistance training. But at the same time, it is pointless for an athlete to take on resistance so great that he/she has no chance of success or growth.

As Christians, we know that we will encounter resistance strong enough to defeat us if we rely on our power to overcome it. We have got to live this life in the love of God, in the power of God, and to the purposes of God. Jesus is the one who defeated Satan and we are in Christ.

Practically, In Christ, we have 4 sources of resistance to the enemy.

- The first is our strength in God, which is far greater than merely our strength. Coming to mind is Isaiah 40:29-31, 'He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but

those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.’

- Secondly, use sound judgment and discernment. It is written in 1 John 4:1-3, ‘Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.’
- In the third instance, submit to God, resist the devil and the devil will flee (James 4:7). As strong as the devil is, God will not permit the devil to overcome those who continue to resist him. The devil cannot force your will. The devil will flee from the name of Jesus and His conquering blood. But ... resisting the devil follows submitting to God. Faith, humility, prayer, and Godly wisdom are the weapons we use to resist the devil as we earnestly stand under the protection and in His purposes.
- Lastly, be sustained by the intimacy of your fellowship with God. He is victorious and an ever present help to overcome resistance.

Conclusion

Let me bring everything together.

In the first part of the message, we spoke about the sovereignty of God and that he alone has the right to determine success. Romans 11:36 sums it up, ‘For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.’

We then set beacons to caution against failure and finally, we discussed planning, attitude, and distractions. This week we have discussed action, perseverance, and resistance.

Before I give you the formula, understand the following:

1. Each absent positive or a partial positive is effectually opposing forces to a certain degree.

2. Each negative completely dealt with falls away. Those that remain are still opposing you.
3. Every positive and negative can be present or absent to varying degrees.
4. The formula is not complete, but enough to get you headed in the correct direction.

The formula is:

Plan + Attitude + Action + Perseverance

Distraction + Resistance

Use this formula and grow it as the Lord prompts you. Do it all to the glory of God.

Amen.

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