

I Will not Fail This Way! Judges 16:28-31

Can you guess the man of many failures that I'm about to describe?

He declared for bankruptcy in 1831 after a failed business venture. He did not get elected in 1832 after running in the state representative election. His wife, whom he loved so dearly, died in 1835. After suffering a nervous breakdown in 1836, he was bedridden for a period of time. He ran as a Representative for Congress in 1838 and 1843 but was defeated both times. He ran for Senate in 1855 and 1858 but had to suffer through yet another consecutive bout of defeat. In 1856, he ran as the running mate to the presidential candidate; he, along with the candidate, was again, defeated. Most people would have cut their losses and quit at this point, but this man entered the Presidential Elections of 1860. He was eventually elected as the 16th President of the United States and led the Union to defeat the Confederacy during the Civil War. Declaring that a divided house cannot stand on its own, he prevented the secession of the Confederate states from the Union while freeing the slaves through the Emancipation Proclamation. Today, he is recognized as one of the greatest Presidents in US history.

His name is Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865). He suffered through countless failures, setbacks, and defeats-yet, he refused to give up and continued towards his goals, and he eventually succeeded in life.

Everyone fails at one point in their life and no one succeeds in life without failing once. Failure, regardless of form, is a fate that we, fragile humans, must endure. No one is free from failure, but the most important thing is to end our life with success.

Samson, who appears in today's bible scripture, was the most capable man among the judges of Israel. "Judges" refers to the people who ruled and governed the people of Israel before the advent of the kings of Israel -they were the commander in chief of Israel, as well as their supreme justices. Samson, from birth, was distinguished from others by being a Nazirite. Nazirites were people who were blessed with special grace from God; as a result, they had to make special holy offerings to God throughout their lives. Samson also possessed supernatural powers which made the Philistines and everyone around Israel afraid of him.

The mightily capable Samson, however, sunk to unprecedented depths. The enticement of Delilah, a Philistine harlot, spelled Samson's eventual doom. Samson became a prisoner to the Philistines, who took both of Samson's eyes out to blind him. They bounded and imprisoned him, and forced him to grind stones.

Today's bible scripture illustrates how Samson closes out the last chapter of his life as a prisoner.

This morning, I would like to share with you valuable lessons from Samson's failures and the reasons for his failure as we face hard times amid the coronavirus pandemic and economic crisis. As well as how he changed his defeat into success.

1. Samson possessed all the necessary potential to succeed in his life.

Let's think about this. As a Nazirite, he was born into nobility, with prophecies of angels blessing his birth. He was a handsome man with an enormous amount of strength. He was so strong that he ripped apart and killed lions like one would a young goat in Judges 14: 6. Once, he killed 300 foxes immediately in Judges 15: 4. That's not all, when the Philistines invaded and bounded him with strong rope, he broke from the rope bind and killed 1000 Philistines with a fresh jawbone of a donkey in Judges 15: 9-16. The Philistines tried to bound Samson with seven fresh, undried thongs and he broke from that bind with ease, as if breaking yarn that touched fire in Judges 16: 4-9. Samson was indeed blessed with special blessings and by the grace of God he had the potential to succeed in his life. Yet, he could not capitalize and maximize his potential; rather, he fell in the pit of failure.

Sometimes we do not know of the vast potential that we possess. God gives everyone the potential to succeed. No one is outside of God's blessings or grace. People fail because they do not utilize their potential correctly; rather, they expend their potential in the wrong places. Look at Samson! He had superhuman strength; yet, he failed miserably. He wasted the potential that God gave him. So, why did Samson fail?

2. Samson failed because of his carnal desire.

The ultimate reason for Samson's failure is a woman named Delilah. She was a special agent hired by the Philistine government. She was a harlot whose mission was to entice Samson to find out the source of Samson's superhuman strength. The name "Delilah" means "to be tranquilized." She probably possessed the drop-dead looks that tranquilized all men. The problem was that Samson's interests did not stop at Delilah. He fell in love with two other Philistine women before he fell for Delilah. Samson also had an Israeli wife. The important fact is that Judges chapters 14 through 16 illustrate and focus on the fact that Samson chased many women.

What does this tell us? As a Judge, Samson was a leader who needed to focus on the national affairs of Israel. He needed to concentrate on protecting the borders of Israel and govern his people through benevolence. Yet, his state of mind, as a leader, was corrupted, as he spent his days satisfying his carnal desires. Samson failed because of women. The first two Philistine harlots didn't do much damage; however, he completely lost his head over Delilah. He truly met his match!

What did Apostle Paul teach us? In Galatians 6: 8, did he not state, "**The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.**" Did he not state, in Romans 8: 13, "**for if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**" Apostle Paul states again in Romans 8: 6-7, "**The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.**"

We need to know the reason for our failure in order to prevent future mishaps. Carnal living will lead to sure failure, but we will not fail if we live in God's spirit! Just as the proverb, "**the taste of sin is sweet, yet its fruit is bitter**" denotes, Samson did not

tend to the affairs of the state; instead, he followed his carnal desires. The sweet taste of sin was brief and fleeting; yet, the price of sin was steep and exacting. But it is too early to classify Samson's life as a total failure at this point. In his final moment, he accomplishes a great deed to overturn the wrong course that his life had taken.

3. Nevertheless, Samson redeemed his past sins by finding and returning to God.

Samson, battered and abused, withstood great humiliations in front of Dagon, the Philistine god. The chosen Nazirite of Jehovah was kneeling in front of a pagan god! There is no greater humiliation and disgrace.

When Samson was at this pit, and could not go any lower, he sought out our God. Let's take a look at verse 28 of today's bible passage. "Then Samson called to the Lord, saying, "O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once. O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!"

Samson finally gained **consciousness** at that moment. He had been blinded by carnal desire and forgot about God; but when he was about to drown in the swamp of failure, he found God again. He had determination to not let his life end on such a low note. With every last bit of strength he could gain, he turned to God.

God answered Samson when he cried out to God in the midst of his sweat, tears, and blood. He gave Samson strength! He allowed Samson to collapse the two middle-supporting pillars of the temple! In verse 30, it states, "**So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.**" Samson did not die as a failure; rather, he was victorious in the end. He died a valiant and glorious death! He protected his people from the Philistines in the end. He was victorious and accomplished the task of saving his people.

No matter how sinful and defeated we are, God will forgive us and help us if we return to Him. When we call to God with the determination that we will not let our lives end as failures, God will unfailingly answer our call.

We cannot let our only life end in failure. We have to make it succeed, no matter what it takes. When we return to God, we can turn our failure into success because God helps us. God teaches us the method and secret of true success.

True success means understanding that Jesus is our Great Savior. There is no greater success in our life. True success is discovering that we are sinners, and embracing Jesus Christ in order to ask for His forgiveness and live the rest of our life in obedience to His will and wishes.

Dear God's people! Have you experienced bitter failure? Do you despair that you are at a dead end?

Return to God! Call to God! God will help us! The same God who helped Samson when he called to Him will help us today.

There is no failure in Jesus Christ. True faith will lead us to beautiful and true success. We cannot fail this way! Return to Jesus. He will take responsibility for us all.

Amen.

Let us pray!

Loving God, we also have failed at one point in our lives, but we thank you for giving us your strength and power to overcome our failure and discouragement. Help us to not become prideful or boastful about ourselves like Samson who depended on himself in his early life. Instead may our gaze transfix only on God. May we fix our hope and perspective on God and rely solely on God like Samson who depended on only God in his ending life so that we may live our lives with the joy and peace that You give us amid the coronavirus pandemic and economic crisis. Even though we may fail, may we look toward the hope and true success that You give us in any circumstance. Keep us joyful and peaceful with You.

We pray in Jesus name!