
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2023

Choosing Failure

Numbers 13-14

Deep Dive

Do we “choose” failure?

Or, how are we defining success?

- The fact is that we do choose failure, but an inseparable issue is our definition of success. The Israelites chose failure because (1) they did not trust God; instead they sought accommodation for their fears; (2) they placed their personal concerns for sufficiency and safety above the purposes of God. They failed to understand that their success was not measured by how *safe* they were (“We will all die!”) but by how *surrendered* they were to the purposes of God.

- Invariably, we define and measure success and failure by humanistic standards— whether those are personal preferences and accommodations (e.g. safety, personal likes/dislikes, personal comfort) or societal and cultural expectations (e.g. career, career advancement, home ownership, etc.)
- The problem is, as Jesus pointed out, these things have no relationship whatsoever to the kingdom of God and its values; thus, it is possible to be a preeminent achiever in these areas and be an absolute failure in the eyes of God.

“For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Matthew 6.32-33

- Joseph was an unparalleled success story. Yet he never identified himself with his success; he saw his life solely in light of God's larger "beyond-his-own-life" purposes.

But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Genesis 50.19-20

- Joseph saw himself merely as a temporary resident in Egypt. Position, power, marriage and family— none of these things bonded him to Egypt. His heart was wed to the promise that God had made to his forefathers and Joseph never lost sight of that prevailing calling.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” And Joseph made the Israelites swear an oath and said, “God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place.”

Genesis 50.24-25

- Understand this: God is not acting merely in response to your immediate needs; He is pursuing **His** plan according to His covenant promises and purposes—
 - ➡ in your **life**,
 - ➡ as part of this **generation**,
 - ➡ within the scope of **human history**,
 - ➡ according to His **eternal purposes**.

*But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever,
the purposes of His heart through all generations.*

Psalm 33.11

Understanding the purposes of God

- Joseph understood better the work of God than do many Christians: “the saving of many lives.” This is the work which the Godhead has been engaged in since before the creation of the world (Revelation 13.8; Ephesians 1.4-6), the work which the Father sent the Son to accomplish (John 3.16; 5.36; 6.38-39), and the work which the Son has appointed us to complete (Matthew 28.19-20).

- God's ultimate plan is the salvation of people from every tribe, language, and nation. This is the inheritance that He has for His Son and for us as co-heirs with Christ. What are you choosing as your inheritance? The inheritance of your children?
- Every prayer God has answered and every promise He has made, is intended to ⁽¹⁾ show the integrity of His faithfulness, ⁽²⁾ strengthen our faith to trust Him for the unknown, ⁽³⁾ enable us to embrace His impossible purposes for us.

*Now to Him
who is able to do
immeasurably
more
than all we ask
or imagine,
according to
His power
that is at work
within us.*

Ephesians 3.20

- The purposes of God in relation to our lives can be understood by the designation: **GC³** –
 - **Great Calling:** Genesis 1.28; Malachi 2.25
 - ➡ Faithful marriages which raise up the next generation set apart for God
 - **Great Commandment:** Matthew 22.38-39; John 13.33-34
 - ➡ A life defined by an absolute “love-devotion” to God and others
 - **Great Commission:** Matthew 20.19-20
 - ➡ Obedience to make obedient disciples of all nations

- While we readily affirm these as Biblical injunctions, we diminish their absolute nature and the applicability of them to our own lives. A true disciple of Jesus is measured by his obedience to all that Jesus has commanded; there are no superseding factors.

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.”

Luke 14.26

Failure or Success?

- Do I understand the purposes of God?
- Do I know the role that He has assigned to me in His purposes?
- Am I growing in obedience to all of Christ's commands, love for all people, dependency on the grace and strength of God to enable me beyond my own limitations?
- Am I seeking to know the next step in His will for me or simply settling into what is appealing or comfortable for me?

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.

Acts 20.24