



WEEKLY SERMON

Volume No. 2024 Issue No. 3
January 21, 2024

Sunday January 21, 2024

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Message: Christian Life

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Text: Matthew 17:14-21, Psalm 12:1, Proverbs 24:6

Branding is a marketing strategy by which products are given their distinctive identities. A brand is a collection of images and ideas that symbolize a particular product or company. Branding attempts to sell a "feeling" as much as a product. Companies spend millions of dollars on just the right symbols, slogans, color schemes, and package designs necessary for branding a product, an author, a company, or a concept.

What about a brand called YOU? What's distinctive about you? What "feeling" do you produce in others when they think of you? What does your appearance, attitude, or activity communicate to others? What makes you different from them? Jesus Christ understood the importance of branding, and He designed a particular "look" for all His disciples.

He explained it in John 13:34-35: **"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. (35) By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."**

That's a brand more powerful than any ever concocted by Madison Avenue. It's so important, that without it, nothing else rings true in our lives.

Years ago the story is told of a missionary in China who was translating the New Testament into the Chinese language. He was assisted by an eminent Chinese scholar, a Confucian who had never before been exposed to Christianity. Week after week and month after month, they sat side by side working through the text.

When the project was nearly completed, the missionary told his friend, **"You have been of great help to me. I could never have gotten along without you. Now I want to ask you a question. As we have gone together through the New Testament, hasn't the beauty of Christianity touched you? Wouldn't you like to become a Christian?"**

The Confucian replied, **"Yes, it does appeal to me. I think that it presents the most wonderful system of ethics that I have ever known. I believe that if I ever saw a Christian, I might become more interested in becoming one myself."** "But," exclaimed the missionary, **"I am a Christian!"**

"You?" the scholar replied, **"You, a Christian? I hope you will not take offense, but I must tell you that I have observed you and listened to you from the beginning. If I understand the New Testament, a Christian is one who follows Jesus. And Jesus said, 'By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another...' You cannot be a Christian, for I have listened to you as you have talked about others in an unkind way. I have observed, too, that whereas your New Testament says that God will supply all your needs, you do not trust Him. You worry about this and about that; and if your check is a day late, you become dreadfully concerned. No, you cannot be a Christian. But I think that if I ever see one, I should like to be one."**

The missionary was so rebuked, he broke down completely, sobbing out a confession asking God's forgiveness; and he asked for the scholar's forgiveness, too. He was so broken that the Confucian later remarked, "**Well, perhaps I have seen a Christian after all.**"

We Christians aren't known to the world by dressing the same, combing our hair alike, or voting identically. We are known by our simple identity of love. Recalling our Lord's words in John 13, the apostle John restated them in his first epistle, saying:

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death... (16) Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3:14, 16) John explained in verses 17-18 that he was thinking of our daily obligation to deny ourselves in order to meet each other's needs: **"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? (18) My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."**

To lay down our lives for someone doesn't always mean that we're literally going to die for them, though that's exactly what Christ did for us. But it means we die to ourselves and live to meet the needs of others in Christ's name. And in a world such as ours, with all the pressure and problems and persecution, how can we, as followers of Christ, do anything less? That's our identity. That's the core of our Christlikeness.

In *His* Amazing Grace
Pastor David Miklas

PS: Here is something to think about as you begin 2024 concerning the "Ministry of Tears."

In Psalm 56:8 the psalmist prayed, **"Put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?"** God keeps a record of every tear we shed. He knows what we face in life and documents our reactions. If you are passing through a valley, remember that Jesus was touched "with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15). As the song says, **"Tears are a language God understands."**

As iniquity abounds, the love of many will wax cold. One of the great struggles in the last days is the battle for tenderness and kindness. Within a culture made cynical by excessive sin, even God's people can become hard-hearted. The only antidote for hardness is the ministry of tears. In a day of spiritual barrenness and desolation, we can remain analytical and critical or pray like Jeremiah in Jeremiah 9:1, **"Oh that my head were waters...that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"** As someone said, **"God give us bent knees, wet eyes, and broken hearts."**

“Steps to Success out of Failure”

INTRODUCTION: As we step into this New Year of 2024 let me share an insight with you that I have found to be true in my life, and I am sure you have found in your own life. It is found in this statement.

It is in our failures that we learn life's most important lessons and grow. Failure is part of life. It is something we all have to experience from time to time. In Psalm 12:1 we read, "Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men."

Now please follow me as I read our text passage found in Matthew 17:14-21,

“And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, (15) Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. (16) And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. (17) Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. (18) And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. (19) Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? (20) And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. (21) Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”

Jesus and three of His disciples, namely Peter, James and John, have just come down from the Mount of Transfiguration. Here Jesus meets the other disciples who come to him with a deranged man, possessed with the devil they could not heal. Jesus performs on this man a miracle of healing. Having done so, the nine disciples come to Jesus and said in verse 19, literally, **"Why did we fail?"**

Our Lord answers them, **“You failed because of UNBELIEF. You failed because you didn't PRAY. You failed because you did not FAST and PRAY.”** In reality they could have healed this man but they blew it. OK, they failed this father and son in the hour of their need.

There is not a person reading this message who has not tasted one time or another some sincere failure. There were times in your life when you thought you were **DOING RIGHT**, or you **TRIED** and yet you blew it. Every one of us has tasted that bitter feeling of making an honest effort and yet we failed.

**You did not choose to fail .
You did not rebel against the will of God.
You did not go into sin.
You did what you thought was best and yet you failed.**

There are among us those who have had:

**Financial, social and educational failures, and
Family, personal and spiritual failure.**

Perhaps we must all confess that we have failed much too often in Godly living. We know what God wants yet we sin and backslide. Often in tears we look up to God and confess those sins and failures. Listen!

**I am talking to HUSBANDS and WIVES who have failed.
I am talking to DAD'S and MOM'S who have failed.
I am talking to SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS who have failed.
I am talking to WORKERS in this ministry who have failed.**

Perhaps I am talking to you who have failed in some area of your life. In Proverbs 24:16 we read, "**For the just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again ...**" Look, everybody is going to fail, yet nobody has to be a failure. Someone said, "**Failure is the ingredient from which success is made.**"

Deep within my heart I wish for you to prosper. Please attend to these "**Steps to Success out of Failure.**" Maybe, if you don't want to fail, you can turn the message inside out and get the truth, on succeeding where you have failed. However, if you want to fail, continue to do the following:

FIRST: "Don't admit you have FAILED." In our story these **NINE** disciples came to Jesus and said, "**Why could we not...**" That my friend became the first step to their **SUCCESS**. They admitted failure, they said, "**We could not...**" They accepted personal responsibility for this failure.

Nobody is going to succeed until he or she admits they have failed.

Nobody is ever going to succeed for God until they come to the realization that "**I must decrease but He must increase.**"

Nobody will come to Christ and be saved until they come and admit they are a sinner and receive Jesus as Savior.

On the other hand if you want to be a failure and stay a failure never admit you are wrong, never admit you are a sinner, never admit you have failed, just make excuses.

Blame your failures on the **JOB**.

Blame your failure on the **CHURCH** or on the **PASTOR**.

Blame your failures on the Sunday School **TEACHER** or on one of the **LEADERS** in the Children's or Teen ministry.

Blame your failures on some **CIRCUMSTANCES** in life

Be like others, and don't face the reality you have failed. After all it's not your fault. Don't take the blame yourself. These **NINE** disciples had failed. However, these **NINE** disciples wanted to succeed, so they looked into the face of reality and said, "**Lord we have failed, Why could not we?**"

These nine men were handpicked by God as Jesus disciples.

These men had cast out demons and performed miracles. They knew the power of God upon them.

Now all of a sudden they had FAILED, and they had to admit it.

Listen! You learn nothing by blaming someone else or making excuses. When you sit down and take an honest look at yourself and what contributed to your failure, then you are able to learn from the mistakes you made and hopefully not repeat them in the future.

Listen! If you want to fail, don't admit that you have failed. On the other hand, if you remember Proverbs 24:16, "**For the just man faileth seven times, and riseth up again ...**" then day after day, as you walk the path of life admit your failures, confess your sins and get up with the power and grace of God and get going again.

SECOND: "Don't seek why you failed from someone who is more successful or who has succeeded where you have failed." These **NINE** disciples failed to help this father and his deranged son in the hour of there greatest need. Yes,

They failed in **FAITH**,

They failed in **PRAYER**, and

They failed in **FASTING** and **PRAYER**.

But they admitted it. They came to the Lord and said, "**where have we gone wrong?**" Listen folks, let me tell you something, you are a fool and so am I if we don't seek the best counsel we can find from those who have succeeded where we have failed.

I have often said to folks and especially to young people, build around you a Christian cabinet of counselors.

On that cabinet should be your Pastor, your parents, someone with the gift of wisdom, a sincere friend and people who are successful in your chosen field.

When a decision has to be made or a failure has happened, go to your cabinet members and seek their council and advice. I do this often with my cabinet.

Proverbs 15:22, "**Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established.**"

Proverbs 11:14, "**Where no counsel is, the people fail: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.**"

If you want to be a failure,

Go to someone who will sympathize with you, who will believe what you believe, and already agree with you.

Go to someone who will not tell you the truth, because they want to be your friend, they don't want to hurt your feelings.

Go to someone who will tell you what you want to hear.

If you want to succeed, find one who loves you enough to counsel you for your own good, even if it hurts your feelings, pride, or ego.

These **NINE** men said we have failed, let's go to the Master and find out what the problem is. Should not we flee to the Lord's side time and time again, and seek His counsel and His wisdom in prayer and from the Word of God? Remember Proverbs 3:5-6,

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and he shall direct thy paths."

THIRD: "Don't get on your feet and press toward a goal." Another way of saying this is let your failure paralyze you from trying again. Some people become so devastated by failing that they simply refuse to try again. Rather than being paralyzed by failing, let failure motivate you. Learn from your failures so that you don't repeat the mistakes and poor choices you made that led to them.

If you have failed in an area and there is no way to recapture the opportunities where you have failed, **GET ON YOUR FEET AND FIND A NEW GOAL AND SUCCEED IN A NEW AREA OF ENDEAVOR.** Remember Proverbs 24:16, "**For the just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again...**" Don't fail at everything, because you failed at one thing.

If you failed at being a **WIFE** be a good mother.

If you have failed at being a **HUSBAND** be a good father.

If you have failed at one **JOB** work successfully at another job.

If you fail in one **MINISTRY** work successfully at another ministry.

If you have failed at one thing, of course your heart will be broken. But **GET UP AND CORRECT THE PROBLEM IF YOU CAN, AND KEEP ON GOING!** You blew it, something went wrong. I know you feel bad and perhaps you should. But don't give up. If you have failed at one area, find another area in which to succeed.

Paul counsels us in Philippians 2:13-14,

"...but this one **THING** I do, **FORGETTING** those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Paul's admonition is to **FORGET, DON'T LET THE PAST HOLD YOU BACK**. God forbid that we spend our time pondering over our past failures, and past sins, thinking of what we could have done or could have been.

As long as you have made things right with God, and with whomever you have failed, forget the past. The "**things which are behind**" must be set aside and "**the things which are before**" must take their place, always keeping your eyes upon the Lord.

FOURTH: "If you want to fail, QUIT." Now that's a good way to fail and keep on failing. **RESIGN, CHECK OUT, WASH UP, RUN, CHANGE CHURCHES, CHANGE SCHOOLS, CHANGE JOBS.**

No way could it be you, it's that TEACHER.

No way could it be you, it's that PASTOR.

No way could it be you, it's that CHURCH.

No way could it be you, it's that HUSBAND of mine.

No way could it be you, it's that WIFE of mine.

If that is your attitude, you have just earned the GOLD-STAR for being a first-class failure.

I admire these **NINE** men who failed. These disciples went to the one who would succeed. So what happened? Are you listening? These **NINE** men rose up (all but Judas) and joined hands, and after Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, they conquered a world with the Gospel.

Failure is not a disgrace unless you make it the last chapter. Think about this:

ABRAHAM FAILED, but He wasn't a failure. He was told to leave his homeland and his kindred. He didn't. He took Lot and his dad. He was told to go to Canaan. He didn't. He stopped at Haran. He failed. He lied about Sarah being his wife. But he wasn't a failure. He became a friend of God.

JACOB FAILED when he cheated his brother twice. But he wasn't a failure. He came back and became a prince with God at Jabbok.

DAVID FAILED, in his adultery with Bathesba and the murder of Uriah, but he wasn't a failure as he was ultimately called a "**man after God's own heart.**"

JONAH FAILED when he left the will of God, took off for Joppa, was cast off the ship and swallowed by the whale. He failed, but he wasn't a failure. He came back and preached a revival in Nineveh.

PETER FAILED when he denied the Lord and cursed and swore and said he didn't belong to that crowd. But he wasn't a failure. He came back in a few days and preached his great Pentecost message.

JOHN MARK FAILED in his first missionary journey, but he wasn't a failure. He came back and wrote the second book of the New Testament.

Listen! You don't have to be a failure. If you have failed at something get up and try again. I admire these **NINE** disciples because along with the others, they helped by the power and grace of God to bring their world to Jesus Christ.

David had an ABSOLOM but he didn't resign the throne.

Solomon had a REHOBAM but he didn't resign the throne.

Abraham, father of the faithful and friend of God, failed with ISHMAEL but he didn't turn back.

Just because you have failed **ONE TIME** or maybe **MANY TIMES** it doesn't mean you have to turn back. Look, if you have failed don't feel ashamed. Hear me out. Folks, we

are a family here, and families don't desert one another, because they make mistakes or because they fail. I realize you are not perfect, nor is this church a perfect church. And before you say what you are thinking, I am not perfect either. But we are a church family that needs one another. You may be thinking:

Oh, Pastor, my **SON**, my **DAUGHTER** my **MARRIAGE** is breaking my heart and I don't feel I can show my face at church anymore.

Oh, Pastor, something has happened in my life, and **I HAVE FAILED MISERABLY**.

Maybe it has happened in your life that you have failed, and if it hasn't happened there is going to come a time when there will be some failure. **LISTEN TO ME! WE LOVE YOU AND WE ARE STILL PULLING FOR YOU!** Again I say we are a church family, and as such, families do not turn their back on each other.

So what if you have failed. Do not think you have become a reproach to the church family.

So what if in all sincerity you have **TRIED and FAILED**. We have all tried and failed at something.

Our attitude should be like that found in Ephesians 4:2 "**With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love,**" Just like the little child who gets hurt and runs to mama, so when you have failed, it is time to run to the church family. Who in turn, needs to put their arm around you, and help you succeed where you have failed. The house of God ought to be a place where you can come out of the world and receive some heavenly oxygen from which you can then leave and succeed where you have failed.

Now in closing, let me leave you with these **THREE** thoughts:

NUMBER 1: There is no failure with God! God will never forsake His children no matter how much you or I fail Him. The Apostle Paul empathized, this comforting truth in Romans 8:35-39,

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (36) As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. (37) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. (38) For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, (39) Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

There will be times in your life where you will feel **HEARTBREAK** because of **FAILURE**. There are going to come times when you will get out of the will of God in some area. However, Praise God, He has not **FORSAKEN** you nor **ABANDONED** you.

To the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 13:5-6 the Lord gives to us these encouraging words, "**I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear.**"

NUMBER 2: Remember that failing is simply part of this life. Things often don't go as we planned. **THAT IS LIFE!** How we respond to failing is the key. Never forget, God is on His throne at all times and nothing happens apart from God allowing it to happen. Your first response should be prayer.

Pray for God to open your heart, give you wisdom, and show you why you failed.

Then, you need to pray for God to give you the strength to overcome your disappointment in failing, and help you to move forward.

Lastly, you need to seek the Lord to guide you so that you don't make those same poor choices again.

I pray that God will speak to your heart today through these words.

Failing is a part of life. Don't let your failures keep you from moving forward. Life goes on. Sit down and learn from your failures, and work to ensure you don't make those same mistakes again.

Let me share a secret with you today. As long as you know Jesus as your Savior you can never fail, and if you don't know Jesus as your Savior, you can never win or succeed.

NUMBER 3: When you fail it's not the end of the road. You are still a part of this church family. So in 2024 let us keep on loving each other and pulling for each other even in the midst of failures. One of these days we'll sit back with some sweet memories that a bunch of sinners deserving Hell but saved by GRACE through FAITH in the Lord Jesus Christ

**Have loved and pulled for one another, and
Have forgiven and encouraged each other.**

Through it all, let's help one another to succeed where each of us have failed. That's really what a church is all about as we in 2024 remember Proverbs, 14:16, "For the just man falleth seven times and riseth up again..."

If God has spoken to your heart after reading the sermon "**Steps to Success out of Failure**" then right now talk to God about what He has spoken to you.

Do you have the assurance that one day you will go to heaven? If you have no assurance that you know Jesus Christ, then I trust you will decide to accept Him as your personal Savior. The Bible tells us in

Acts 16:31, "...**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...**"

Romans 10:13, "**For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**"

This prayer is here for those who need to ask Jesus to be their personal Savior: "**I do want to go to Heaven. I know I am a sinner, and I do believe Jesus Christ died for me. I realize I cannot buy this great salvation, nor can I earn it. Knowing Jesus died on the cross and arose from the grave to pay my sin debt and to purchase my salvation, I do now trust Him as my Savior, and from this moment on I am completely depending on Him for my salvation.**"

If you made the decision to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, would you let me know? Please send an e-mail to, pdmikBBM@aol.com and I will send you some literature that will help you in your Christian life.

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