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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1748 ~ Paul in Corinth.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

How important to you is success in life? The world values success as fame, fortune and many possessions and friends. Things like being a good family person are considered less important. If you fail completely in one or two areas of your life, do you consider yourself a failure? Because being a failure isn't something most people want to think about, let's look at what God considers to be human failure.

Failure in God's eyes is living differently to the way He created you to live. God gave you the gift of life and made you to have a close relationship with Him. Your greatest failure is to reject God's invitation to let Him cleanse you through Jesus Christ His Son and empower you through His very own Spirit to believe God is good and trustworthy to have full control of every area of your life.

The best example of people rejecting God's full control over them is Adam and Eve, the first man and woman God made and who were without sin. They stepped aside from fully believing God could be trusted with their lives in the Garden of Eden. Once Adam and Eve rejected God's complete control over their lives, the human race from then on had to learn to live with failure, separation from God, death and personal weaknesses.

The key to building character isn't how little or big you fail, but how you respond to failure. Do we blame someone else or some contributing factor for our situation rather than seeing that we may have contributed to the problem? Can we admit our mistakes and seek forgiveness from God and others for our actions too? Certainly it's a very serious mistake to ignore or reject God's rule over our life. This kind of failure will bring about many tragic, deeply emotional consequences. Jonah is a good example of rejecting God's call on His life. He decided to run from God, famously ending up in the belly of a huge fish until he repented. When Jonah surrendered his will over to God and confessed his foolish actions, God kindly restored Jonah and sent him off on his mission once again. With wonderful results!

Failures can take on a life of their own because the brain remembers incomplete tasks or failures longer than success or a well-completed activity. When a project or a thought is completed, the brain places it in a special memory. The brain no longer gives the project priority or active working status, and bits and pieces of the achieved result begin to decay over time. But failure has no closure. The brain continues to spin and relive the memory, trying to come up with ways to fix the mess so it can move the memory from active to inactive status.

Another kind of failure comes when a person is so wrapped in themselves and their own interests that they don't realise that they have failed something really important. When Jesus was on trial for his life, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, the governor of Galilee. Herod Antipas was well known throughout the Roman Empire for his great love of pleasure.

When Jesus was brought before him, he wanted Jesus to perform like a circus clown.

Herod asked Jesus many questions but Jesus never answered any of them. Why? Jesus had told Pilate that He was the Son of God but never said a word to Herod. Herod never realised that he had the future King of Kings and the Lord of Lords standing before him and he didn't take Jesus' trial very seriously. When pleasure took a higher place than truth, then Jesus was silent.

A sense of failure may wrongfully result from a lack of approval by other people. Scripture reminds us to define success in terms of faithfulness to God. God will reward your faithfulness even if you are considered a failure in the eyes of the world. In Colossians, Chapter 3, it says: "Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ."

Even though the Apostle Paul faithfully preached Christ in front of the important people of Athens, as well as in the market place and in the synagogue, his mission failed in this city; he didn't get enough new believers to start a new church there. So he moved on to the city of Corinth.

Paul left Athens and moved southwest to the wealthy trading centre of Corinth, situated on the Mediterranean Sea. In Paul's day, Corinth was a Roman colony, with Romans, Greeks and Jews living there trying to make their fortunes. This roving population created moral conditions that were regarded as deeply shameful, even by pagan standards. It's no wonder that the church Paul established there was plagued with many problems.

When Paul arrived in Corinth, he knew no one. However in Acts, Chapter 18, he soon met a Jew named Aquila and his wife Priscilla. They'd recently moved there from Rome. When the Christian Gospel had first been preached in Rome, the Jews living there had raised such a riot in opposition to the Gospel that the emperor of Rome at that time, Claudius, expelled the Jews from Rome. And Aquila and Priscilla had been forced to move.

Aquila was a tentmaker as was Paul, so they worked together. Wherever Paul went, he earned his own living by making tents, and at that time, even highly educated Jews earned their living by some manual trade. Jewish teachers didn't demand payment for their teaching, but worked for a living in some other job.

As in other cities, Paul preached in the Jewish synagogue in Corinth. He proclaimed the Gospel to both the Jews and God-fearing Greeks worshipping there. When Timothy and Silas arrived in Corinth, they brought Paul good news about the recently started church in Thessalonica. The people there had remained firm in their new faith. After receiving this good news, Paul wrote his first letter to the church of the Thessalonians. Silas and Timothy also brought a gift for Paul from the recently established church at Philippi.

But in time and as it had happened in other cities, some of the Jews in Corinth began to strongly oppose Paul. As a sign of protest, Paul shook out the folds of his clothes to be rid of any dust or dirt from the synagogue. It was a sign of extreme displeasure. Paul had preached the Gospel to them and they'd rejected it, bringing the judgment of God on them. Paul turned again to preaching to the Gentiles.

A God-fearing Greek man by the name of Justus, lived next door to the synagogue and had let Paul preach in his house. This was a great encouragement to Paul. A further encouragement was the conversion of the ruler of the synagogue, Crispus, and his household. Now growing numbers of the Corinthians heard Paul preach the Gospel and believed in Jesus.

However, the synagogue appointed a new chief ruler and he desired to make trouble for Paul. This started to make Paul weary and downhearted, so he thought of leaving Corinth. But the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision by night, assuring Paul of his protection while staying in Corinth. Paul was to continue speaking because God had chosen many people in this city to believe in Jesus. God was promising Paul God's type of success.

True success in God's eyes is to know God and to live under the control and direction of God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is received by one having faith in Jesus as their holy substitute to make them right with God and confessing all known sins. This is success because only through faith will anyone find salvation and eternal life. In John, Chapter 17, it says: "This is the way to have eternal life – to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth."

Studying the Bible reveals God's will for your life, which is the most successful path you can take. In Psalm 25, it says: "Show me the right path, O Lord; point out the road for me to follow. Lead me by your truth and teach me."

Serving and helping others brings success, for in serving others you find true joy. In Matthew, Chapter 20, it says: "Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant."

Success is being productive; producing results that matter to God. The Lord Jesus said in John, Chapter 15: "When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father." In Proverbs, Chapter 16, it says: "Commit your actions to the Lord and your plans will succeed." Committing all you do to God is success. Put God first in your life, for only then can you fully understand what is really important in life.

Having thought about this, there must be some ways we can prevent failure. Having courage, experience and perseverance helps prevent failure, especially if you know that God approves of the task that you are doing. Good advice from wise advisors also guards against failure. Proverbs has much to say about this.

If a person lives a successful life by this world's standards, God says that person would have failed if he had done it all apart from God. In Matthew, Chapter 16, the Lord Jesus said: "What do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?" Life apart from God now, means life apart from Him for eternity. Don't fail by neglecting or ignoring God today or in the future.

When we do fail in some area of life, how do we get past the failure and turn it into a success for the Lord? Our failures don't surprise God. God gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the debt for our failures and for our selfishly motivated good deeds. Jesus brings us back into full fellowship with God, His Father. In 1st John, Chapter 2, it says: "My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sin."

The wonder of the Gospel is that our failures reveal God's greatest success. He is well able to work our failures into His plans. When we do fail, we must get up again and not be afraid of failing in the future. Not many people fail as devastatingly as the chief disciple Peter did the night he denied ever knowing the Lord Jesus. And to make it worse, he'd been the one who had boasted not long beforehand that he would never deny the Lord. Before Jesus ascended back to heaven, He restored Peter to a trusted position of caring for the people who would trust in the Lord. Never give up on your relationship with God, as He promises you complete victory through eternal life.

Many times when a crisis hits or when tragedy strikes, we don't want to face it. We ask God for an escape from our problems. But often the will of God is for us to learn to trust Him by going through them. Romans, Chapter 8, Verses 35 to 37 says, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

Although we don't like to admit it, failures can be most helpful. They can teach us important lessons about what to avoid in the future and how to respond without bitterness, self-pity and blame. God doesn't reject you in your weakness but rather, embraces you so that you can receive strength to be all He intends you to be. When failure drives you into more fervent and ongoing prayer to depend on Jesus, then your failure is truly a success.

If you seek to obey God in these matters, then expect opposition, obstacles and difficulties. But like Paul, also expect that God will see you through as a victorious conqueror in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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