

Maintaining Success

Success. All of us want success. Is there anyone of us do not want success? You purposefully want to be a failure. No, I don't think so. All of us want success.

But what is success. Some think that becoming wealthy is being successful. That when we are rich that we are successful. However if we have all the money in the world and no health to enjoy it will we be successful? But even when we have wealth and health and yet no peace of mind are we successful? What then is success?

In chapter 1 of Joshua, we saw what success is and how we can attain success. God had called Joshua to lead the people into the Promised Land. He had then told Joshua to be bold and courageous. If Joshua would just trust and obey God he would experience success. Success is therefore about taking the Promised Land. It is about attaining such a pure relationship with God that we will have perfect peace and joy. The world and what it has to offer is nothing compared to the success we can attain.

In a way all of us has attained a certain level of this success. When we come to Christ we have a sense of peace and joy that we have never experienced before. But we have not attained total peace and joy. So we continue to press forward to take this Promised Land. All of us are then at different levels of this success.

Whilst it is important for us to attain true success, it is equally important that we know how to maintain success. Attaining success is one thing - maintaining it is quite another. In fact it is easier to achieve success than to maintain it.

In chapter 1, Joshua learnt what it takes to attain success. As we come to the close of the book, Joshua, now old in age, after successfully leading the people to take the Promised Land, in his farewell speech to the people firstly reminded the people how success was attained and what they must do to maintain success.

Today, let us remind ourselves how we have obtained success. How we have come to experience our first taste of success. Also, let us see what we must do to maintain success. What we ought to do to ensure that we continue to experience peace and joy.

Firstly, let us always remind ourselves that our success is a result of a grace of God. In verse 3, "You yourselves have seen everything the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake; it was the LORD your God who fought for you." As it was God who had given Joshua and the Israelites success, it is God who has blessed us with success. It is Jesus who has reconciled us with God. It is through Jesus that we have peace with God. It is through Jesus that we have peace of mind and joy. It is not through any of our effort. This is also true with

our secular success - be it good marks in our studies - be it promotion at our workplace. It is God who has given us success. So; the first thing to do to maintain success is to know that our success is a result of God's grace.

When we attain success, we will face the direct confrontation of our enemies. There is nothing that the enemy wants to do more than to discredit a successful servant of the Lord. So, when we attain success the temptation of pride will come to us.

We have heard of the fall of various Christian leaders. All of them fell when they were successful - not when they were trying to attain success. Once I asked one of these Christian leaders who had fallen. I asked why he did what he did. He told me that when he was leading a large church of a few thousand people - when everything was going his way - he had the feeling that he was invincible - that nothing he did would ever be wrong. How wrong he was. Pride comes before a fall. And this was exactly what happened to him.

So, to maintain success always know that our success is a result of God's grace - there is nothing to be proud of - but all to be thankful to God for. So, always maintain humility. Always be thankful to God. Give Him praise for all things. Always share your testimony of God's blessings.

Secondly, to maintain success know that you are a wheat among weeds. Joshua reminded the Israelites that there was still a lot of other tribes living among them in the Promised Land. These are like weeds that will choke up the good wheat. God will hand them over to the Israelites but they have to be extra careful how they deal with them - they are to have nothing to do with them - verse 7. By this is meant that they are not to be influenced in whatever way by the other tribes. The Israelites are to be courageous and follow strictly the law of Moses - verse 6.

We too, like the Israelites are like wheat among weeds. We are surrounded by people who have yet to come to Jesus - they hold values contrary to the Christian value. Lifestyles that are opposed to the Christian lifestyle. We are not to associate with them. We are not to be influenced by them.

It is sometimes very trying to be different from everyone else who surround us. When we are in NS and surrounded by a platoon of men who are not Christians - who would go out together drinking - who would go out womanizing - and you are the only Christian - what would you do when they pressurize you to join them? It is in moments such as this that you have to be bold and courageous - that you have to believe in God and His Word - that you have to hold on to what you believe in. Perhaps you are in school. All your friends give all sorts of reasons to avoid having to go to the swimming pool. You know that it is wrong. You choose to be honest. But you get ridiculed. Perhaps all your friends smoke and you are the only odd one out. You get pressurized. What would you do? To

maintain success you must know that you are wheat among weeds. You cannot associate with them.

Joshua mentioned specifically that the Israelites were not to intermarry with people of the other nations. In the same way we as Christians should never marry a person who is not a Christian. In marriage, the mutual sharing of values is important. What values would a person who is not a Christian hold? Their values would under normal circumstances be different from the Christian value. As such, the chance of being influenced to values that are highly non-Christian in a marriage to non-Christians would be very high. After all, it is not only the non-Christian spouse that would hold such views but those who are non-Christians who would surround us. We would find ourselves standing uniquely alone trying to hold to values contradictory to what they hold. What is our chance of spiritual survival then? Backsliding is therefore very common for Christians who marry non-Christians. In some cases, the person may not backslide but would find the married life difficult. Betsy came to see her pastor crying. She said that she is sick of Tom whom she married just a year earlier. He is not a Christian. Betsy said that Tom would often return home drunk. She has also become intolerant of his foul language. She asked her pastor what she could do about it. The pastor said that he had advised her not to marry him but she had refused to listen. He continued by saying that she would just have to suffer the consequences and hope that he would come to Jesus. But Betsy has certainly lost the peace and joy which she once enjoyed.

Do not think there is such a thing as evangelistic dating as well. That you will try to get the other person converted - what if he or she refuses - you are just going to end up hurt.

This is the same as having close friendship with non Christians as well. If you are the only Christian among a group of friends, watch out. There is no such thing as a Christian Rambo. We cannot hope to evangelize an entire group of non Christians alone. Numbers count in a war. And you are in a war. You will be out-numbered - they will influence you rather than you them. If you want to evangelize a group do it as a CG. Do it as a ministry. Don't do it alone.

So, if you want to maintain success do not associate closely with non Christians - don't marry one - don't mix with an entire group of them - that is not to say that you are not to be their friends - I am talking about close association.

Joshua also told the Israelites that they are not to consider the gods the other nations worship. To consider is to do anything in regards to. This includes showing respect to. Though we are to show respect to people of other faith we are not to respect the gods that they serve. If we are the only Christian in a family of non believers we are to be even more careful.

On special occasions such as weddings we may be pressurized to follow some customs. Some of them have religious connotations that are opposed to our Christian stand. Would we have anything to do with these practices? What would we do?

Gods sometimes need not be tied in with the common major religions that we know of. Anything which we worship would be god. Some people worship their careers. Some money. This could be what some non-Christians go after. They could surround us on a daily basis. Do we fall in line with them? Flow along with them? Or would we stand up for God. To maintain success would certainly demand that we stand up for God and never consider any other gods.

Joshua and the Israelites enjoyed success as long as they were following God. As long as they trusted and obeyed the Lord. The same would be true for us. As long as we trust and obey the Lord, we would continue to enjoy success.

But it is all too easy for us to lean on our own understanding. We use the methods we have been taught. We use our logical thinking. We trust ourselves, others and the systems of this world more than we trust God. When we do that, we would be considering other gods. The ways of God at times may be totally against our logical thinking. That is what makes a miracle a miracle. If we expect things to flow with the norm, there can never be any miracle. However, as long as we place our faith in God, trust and obey Him, we will see the waters of the Jordan part, we will see the walls of Jericho fall and we will see the sun stand still. Yes, the only way of maintaining success is to acknowledge God as God. It is to trust Him completely. It is to obey Him absolutely. Today, will we make a commitment to trust and obey Him?