

When we don't find the perfection in our working Christianity for which we long, what must we be especially careful to avoid? Of course, it's especially that the evil one may use our discouragement to get us to give up our pursuit of the Lord, or at least to keep our eyes off the Lord and on ourselves.

Beyond these, we may be turned into liars and hypocrites, living in pretense. Unwilling to admit our failures and disappointments, we may become spiritual phonies, laying claim to more than we possess. Preachers, Bible teachers, and writers are especially prone to this. We may simply accept such truths as right without ever being taught them by the Spirit, or we may have been Spirit-taught but somewhere along the line stopped responding to His inworking. In either case, we may truly believe that it is God's truth and does really work, but just not satisfactorily for us.

We forget that discouragement over our failure is best calculated by God to drive us to Himself. We forget it is there we may learn to lean on Him like the cripples we are. We forget that only there we may learn that we are without spiritual life or hope of it in our independent selves. We forget that our need drives us to depend on the life of Christ within.

Let's thank the Lord for our neediness. Rejecting any pretense of attainment, let's run rejoicing into His arms of love. Even as we seek to teach others, let's be willing to acknowledge publicly that we, too, are just children sitting at the feet of the Master to be taught of Him.

### Required Surgery

Our sin qualifies us for the grace of God in the same way that a tumor qualifies us for the surgeon's knife. In no way does the admission of the existence of the tumor intimate that its presence is approved. To the contrary, the appeal to the surgeon's knife is an admission of the unacceptability of its presence as a threatening and dangerous foreign body. So also our appeal to the grace of God to attack and destroy the sin in our lives acknowledges the unacceptability of sin to us.

Sometimes the tumor must become obvious or even life threatening before the victim can recognize it and turn to the surgeon for help. Likewise, God sometimes needs to allow the severity of the sin to become clearly destructive before we will turn to Him, our only source of help. We best value the grace of God in the light of the horrible nature of our sin.

### Lack of Trust

Why can't we simply trust God in all things? No matter how far along we get, as long as we are still in the body, we will find ourselves responding more or less frequently to trials, troubles, and trauma by mistrusting God, even accusing Him in the deep recesses of our hearts of doing us wrong.

We are afraid. We hurt. We get angry. We can't see the hand of a loving God permitting a particular circumstance for our

eternal benefit. So we respond with mistrust that is at its heart calling the God of Romans 8:28 a liar.

At such times, God help us to turn quickly to Him where we will see that it is not He, but we who lie. We have sided with the father of lies against the Father of love. Oh, let us quickly forsake that ground. To say it is treacherous is to vastly understate the truth.

### Reducing Formula

What is the secret to decreasing the awful extent of our failure? Our problem is the flesh, the old man, ourselves independent from God. These independent selves not only sin and fail, but they pretend both to want spiritual victory and to be able to find their own way to it.

The fact is contrary. While our selves, independent from God, are trying desperately to find what we can do, God has already done all that needs to be done. Jesus did it on the cross. The victory is won.

Still, the flesh insists on trying to win by its own efforts the victory already won for us and given us as the free gift of God's grace. It tries to convince us that our union with Christ is insufficient. It seeks to persuade us to try to fight it with its own tools rather than accept its defeat at the cross as sufficient for us.

### Not Trying, But Trusting

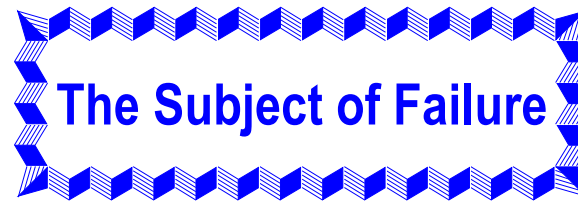
Our victory, then, is not by trying but by trusting. It is by resting in Him and in His victory already won.

But that isn't our reaction. In fact, we find it not only incredible that victory is in rest, we find it repugnant. Instead, our first response to each new challenge is to try harder!

As we've already observed, our first response in every circumstance needs to be just to stop, back away from the problem, look to Him, recall our position in Him, relinquish everything into His care, and rest in His victory.

Isaiah 30:7 (KJV) says, "Their strength is to sit still." Isaiah 26:3 says the Lord "will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on [Him]." Only in this atmosphere of quiet rest, peace, and trust in the Lord can the Spirit of God produce the fruit and the victory which is distinctively His in our lives.

Oh, how well do I know how hard it is to believe it and simply to yield to Him in rest as our hope. But there is no other way, my friend.



By: Pastor Ronald Marr

*"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our LORD!"*

Romans 7:18-19, 24-25

To speak of the victorious, exchanged life as though it were without pain, frustration, and failure is sheer folly. For that perfect state, we must wait for heaven.

The more we long to please the Lord, the more dissatisfied we may tend to be. This may stop us from resting content in Him. Neglecting to adequately recognize and deal with this reality may have helped bring into disrepute much that has gone under the heading of the deeper Christian life to the extent that the teaching has generally fallen into disfavor in the church.

### Made for Perfection

How are we to handle disappointment at our failure to experience all God has for us? First, we need to be prepared with the recognition that God created us for perfection. He has recreated us also for perfection by the new birth. Perfection will be ours someday. Then alone will we live without disappointment.

As still sinning people in a sinning world, we can be happily content with the Lord Himself and with what He is preparing for us. This is entirely different, however, than pretending to be satisfied with our still sinning selves in a sinning world.

So, how do we handle the disappointment? Simply by running into the arms of Jesus. Or to phrase it another way, to live contentedly complete in Him who is in us our all-sufficient Savior. Remember the failure is not in Him but in us. He is no disappointment. He is, instead, our only hope. There is no alternative to Him.

We're back to chapter one. Only in our failure and disappointment does our hope lie. So it ever shall be until we finally look upon Him as we never have been able to look before. Then, seeing Him fully as He really, perfectly is, we shall be changed into the likeness of His perfection.

*Transformed Living Messages by Pastor Marr*  
ChristLife  
PO Box 1033, Niagara Falls, NY 14304  
Ph: (716) 622-7320  
E-mail: [Christlife@Christ-like.net](mailto:Christlife@Christ-like.net)  
Visit us at [www.Christ-like.net](http://www.Christ-like.net)

# THE SUBJECT OF FAILURE

To recognize this reality is not to lower God's standard one bit. Let us elevate His perfect standard and with it the recognition that it is only He who can achieve it to any degree at all, even in us. The extent of His achievement in us will correspond to our willingness to let Him empty us of ourselves to fill us with Him.

## Less than Satisfactory

At times we suffer from extreme discontentment in spite of improvements in our responsiveness to the Lord and His call on our lives. Because we were made for perfection and nothing less will fully satisfy, and perhaps because of our faulty expectations, we become discouraged with ourselves. We may still be actually expecting ourselves to perform up to our godly desires, forgetting that here we never shall fully do so. We may have forgotten that if any good is found in us at all, it is only Christ and His life in us.

We have our eyes on ourselves rather than on Him who alone is perfect. We must learn to be satisfied with His perfection. We can be gratefully confident and content in Him that He has accepted us in the beloved. He has placed His perfection to our account so we need not live under His condemnation. Since we are not under His condemnation, then we needn't be under that of our consciences either.

This is no invitation to a careless response to our sinful failure. It is to elevate His grace, and His complete and adequate provision for all our need. It is to reaffirm our utter and absolute dependence on Him alone.

## Why Our Disappointment?

We may be failing to put our self-pleasing to death on the cross, which results in our spirits being grieved, as is His Spirit. There is no short-cut. We must agree with Him and let Him apply the cross to our self-pleasing.

Possibly we aren't living in His peace. We are distraught due to discontent with what He permits in our lives. So we are responding negatively to things and people. Perhaps we are permitting ourselves to be hurried and harried, always having to do something.

We may be looking for feelings the Lord doesn't choose to give us just now. We need to be content with what He does give.

We may be living under entirely unnecessary condemnation. During my Bible school days, I recall getting up morning after morning with a guilty feeling. Finally I told the Lord that if He didn't show me where I was grieving Him, I would have to assume I wasn't living in any specific, unrepented sin. The

guilty feelings left and did not to return.

If the evil one can keep our eyes off the Lord and on our supposed successes or failures, if he can get us living under false condemnation, if he can deprive us of our joy and peace, if he can get us running around hurried and harried, if he can get us discontented, upset with God at our lack of good feelings or at our circumstances, if he can cause us to live in unnecessary discouragement, he will have accomplished a great deal to destroy our growth in the Lord and His love. Beware of the danger that he will use it to finally cause us to stop seeking the Lord in love. God forbid!

## Handling Discouragement

To know spiritual truths with our minds is one thing. It is quite another to submit ourselves repeatedly to Him to reproduce those truths in us by His life.

So what can we do when we suffer from failure and disappointment? First, remember that our satisfaction must always be in Him, never in ourselves or our supposed achievements. We find nothing in our independent selves but failure and disappointment.

Second, recognize that God is working all things together for our good. Recognize that He is even using our failure and disappointment to drive us repeatedly to Him. So what seems to be the greatest failure and disappointment may be turned by the grace of God into one of the greatest steps forward. You will have many opportunities to thank God for having allowed you to fall flat on your face so you recognize your folly and hopelessness and cast yourself on Him as your only hope.

Twice in consecutive meetings, I sharply reprimanded someone. After the first incident I apologized. After the second I wrote two letters. One was another apology sent by itself to the individual so there could be no doubt that the apology was clear, complete, and without excuse. The second was given to everyone in the group, repeating the apology and explaining the concerns of my heart before God. Not only did the Lord do me good in humbling me and showing me once more my wicked heart and need of Him, He worked to answer prayers that had been lifted to Him for years.

Third, know that God is always accomplishing His eternal purpose of conforming us to His own image. We don't need to feel it is true, but we must know it is so because He declared it. At times of greatest distress at our supposed failure, if we could see as He sees, we would often see great progress being made.

Fourth, reject despondency as self-pity, another form of self-centeredness. Don't be tricked into believing that groveling in your failure is evidence of humility, spirituality, or even sincerity.

Fifth, recognize how good and right it is to be disappointed in our independent selves so that we may run more quickly to Him, lean on Him harder, look to Him the more intently, and better appreciate Him in us, us in Him.

Sixth, let it make us hungrier for heaven where we shall see Him as

He is and be like Him. There we will bask in the light of His infinite perfection, and share in it forever.

## Rejoice Anyway

*"Rejoice in the LORD always. Again I will say, rejoice! Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*  
Philippians 4:4, 6-7

Be grateful to God rather than complaining and dissatisfied. Rest in Jesus. Be content in Him and His righteousness placed to your account. Be grateful for the changes He has made and is making, and that He hasn't left us to our own devices.

Humbly accept your imperfections and limitations as permitted by God. In other words be content even to be left grieving over our sin because God has permitted it. Be grateful He loves you enough to cause you to grieve over your sin and sinfulness rather than leaving you content with it. This will leave you with a kind of joyful sadness that is humility, meekness, and brokenness of heart.

In all things bow to Him. Bow in worship that He loves you at all in your sinful state rather than complaining at His leaving you imperfect. Be glad for His perfection that is already yours as His gift in principle, and that someday will be fully yours in actuality.

We can rejoice in Christ Jesus in spite of our failure and sin. He is our victory. We are under His shed blood, dwelling in Him and His righteousness. He alone practically changes defeat into victory, death into life. As we look to Him from ourselves, rejoicing in Him, giving thanks to Him, and committing ourselves to Him, He does His transforming work of conforming us to His image. To worry over our failure is actually to remain centered on ourselves rather than on Him. You already know what failure this secures.

Simply tell Him, "Lord, you can never expect anything better from me. Only from you." Leave it there in His tender care, not casually, carelessly, unconcernedly, or irresponsibly, but in simple abandonment of yourself to Him as your only hope.

## Living in Victory?

The only living in victory there is for us is living in Him. He is our victory. At best we'll fail and fall short of perfection. Let's not pretend we live in a constant state of victory or pseudo-perfection. We never shall in this life.

Run often to Him. Rest as fully as possible in Him. Be content in Him. Live in Him and His perfection. He is our victory!

## Extra Precautions