

FAILURE

is not final

Greg Albrecht

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we might receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. —Hebrews 4:16

Charles Staples Lewis, one of the most influential Christian authors of the 20th century believed our “time of need”—our failure—was one of the best places to meet and come to know God. Speaking of Christ-centered life, he once said, “One falls forward toward success.”

When we fall/fail we can be overwhelmed by our inability to obey God and admit defeat. Or we can choose to reach out for the hand of Jesus who will rescue us from the sea of failure by the incoming tide of God's grace. ***We can fall forward toward God, and the wide-open embrace of Jesus.***

Failures and setbacks are part of growth in all aspects of life, yet sadly much contemporary educational and childhood development strives to shield young people from failure, assuming defeats and setbacks will negatively impact their future. But failure is real. Failure is part of life.

There is no benefit to be gained, in fact there is much

harm that is now happening from denying that failure happens, pretending it doesn't exist and trying to erase it altogether. Education and spiritual life are themselves both works in progress and progress happens on the back of failure. Education is a constant time of wounding, when reality collides with self-interest. The denial of reality undermines future growth.

Christless religion, of any stripe or color or configuration, essentially says that humans who wish to be in God's good books and please him must earn God's favor. *Christless religion tells us we must do something we are incapable of—is it any wonder people are filled with shame and guilt?*

All human perception of God is governed and determined by what humans have been taught and indoctrinated to think of God and in particular, how we imagine God responds to human failure. ***One of the foundational principles of following Christ, a basic tenet of spiritual health and well-being, is based on what one believes God thinks about us when we fail.***

How God deals with and responds to human imperfection and failure is of monumental importance—God's willingness to forgive our failures and flaws cannot be overstated.

Christless religion insists that God is consumed with wrath, always on the edge of blowing up, always impatiently waiting to punish and finally, burn those



who fail in hell for all eternity. People who believe in such a god (and that kind of a god is a small “g” god) are indoctrinated and infected with shame and guilt. God is not like that AT ALL—here’s the bottom line about our inevitable failures:

NEVER FINAL OR FATAL

Failure as a Christ-follower is never final nor fatal for God will always rescue and restore us as we request forgiveness from him. Our failures are not more powerful than God. Our failure to obey laws—even God’s laws—does not spiritually emasculate God. God is bigger and more important and superior to all law, even his own. The shame and guilt of our failure to measure up is erased by God’s love—the greatest power in the universe.

If it is true, as Christless religion proposes, that God can’t wait to pounce on us and rain down fiery condemnation on us—if God is always waiting around the next corner of life, anticipating the opportunity to jump out with his righteous club and beat the you-know-what out of us—we are all lost, we are all dead ducks.

Christless religion loves to rain down condemnation on those it deceives and ensnares, imprisoning them in shame and guilt, by preaching law and regulations and commandments but minimizing, neglecting and even ignoring the truly important and central issues of Jesus, of his gospel, of mercy and grace.

The GOOD NEWS is that God doesn’t give up on us. He believes in you and me. God’s love for you is not predicated on how

many spiritual successes you achieve or how many sins you overcome. God does not insist on us achieving a magic number of virtuous deeds before he unleashes his mercy and grace. As my now deceased friend, seminary professor and best-selling author Lewis Smedes once said, *“I do not believe that any of us is good enough to buy a seat in heaven with the small coins of our virtue.”*

NO FAILURE IN CHRIST

Not only is God’s love for you and me not a direct consequence of our spiritual successes, on the flip side of that coin God doesn’t take away his mercy and grace when we reach a certain number of sins, and then disqualify us at that point from his mercy and grace.

Brennan Manning once said, *“To continue to eye God primarily in terms of laws, obligations and town ordinances represents a retreat to pre-Christian levels of thought and a rejection of Jesus Christ and the total sufficiency of his redeeming work.”*

The law demonstrates our failures and shortcomings—the law defines us as failures.

The law takes no prisoners—it decisively condemns us. But **the gospel** is the good news of our salvation, rescue and redemption in Christ.

The law is based on shame and guilt—**the gospel** of Jesus Christ is rest in Christ, the comfort, healing and acceptance of Jesus, the Good and Beloved Physician.

The law says we must pay our debt. **The gospel** says Jesus Christ has pardoned our debt.

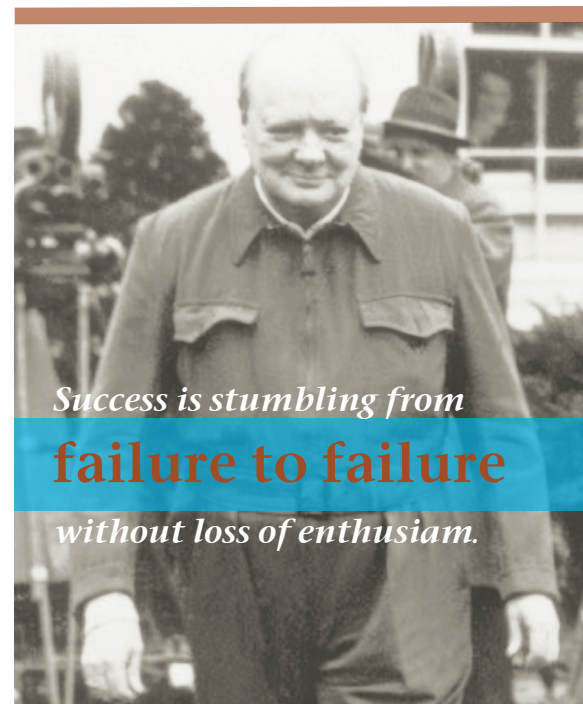
The law exposes our spiritual

nakedness and imperfections—**the gospel** says Jesus Christ is our righteousness.

The law is all about humans getting what they deserve. **The gospel** of Jesus Christ is the declaration of grace and mercy—mercy whereby we do not receive what we deserve and grace wherein we receive what we can never deserve.

When we stumble and fall, when we allow our focus to drift from him, Jesus is there, extending his hands pierced on the cross, showing us that the law has already been upheld and fulfilled. He extends his hands and reminds us, as he said on the Cross, *“It is finished. I have done all that needs to be done—if you embrace me and follow me all that ever needs to be done has been done for you.”* □

Greg Albrecht is President of CWR/PTM.



Success is stumbling from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.

Churchill