

The Silver Lining of Failure

Dark Clouds, Silver Linings-part 7

Psalm 103

November 16, 2014

DAY 1: The sting of failure

1. Before we look at failure, let's review two important pillars from our Dark Clouds, Silver Linings series.

a. **The Ecclesiastes Experience**--Only God can meet our deepest needs. Nothing else we try will do. A deep sense of loneliness, emptiness or discouragement are dashboard lights, telling us our heart is trusting something other than drawing close to Christ and reflecting Him to others.

b. **The Job Experience**--Fear, anger and depression are also dashboard lights but point us to something different--a deep-seated commitment to SELF, to get the "life" we think we need and deserve without having to depend on God. This is the taproot of every sin.

2. In The Screwtape Letters, C.S. Lewis wrote, "Satan's strategy is to get Christians to become preoccupied with their failures. From then on, the battle is won."

3. When you think about "failure," what things, people, and events come to mind?

4. When you think about failure what stirs in you? Have you felt the sting of failure? How so?

5. Where does the sting of failure come from? Why do you think some of our failures are, "No big deal," while other failures seem like, "My life is over!"?

6. What we have deemed "success" and "failure" have a lot to do with our experience of failure, and how deeply the sting of failure digs in us!

7. Failure exposes what is really central in our hearts.

Psalms 103:1 Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

² Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits--

7. What is central in the heart of the Psalmist? List a handful of words that indicate what is central to him!

8. How would you compare what he says in verses 1 and 2 with what you'd say?

DAY 2: Failure exposes our *real* purposes.

Psalm 103:3 ... who forgives all your sins ...,

1. "I know God forgives me. I just can't seem to forgive myself." What is exposed by that statement?

a. What is exposed about what I think of God?

b. What is exposed about what I think of sin?

c. What is exposed about my pride?

2. We often mistake "wounded pride" for "failure." What bothers us more is not our sin against God, but the fact that WE failed, or looked bad to others or ourselves. Which of the thoughts in this point resonate with you the most? Why?

3. Think of a time when you had "wounded pride." As you think back on that situation, what do you wish you had known then that you know now? What would have helped you NOT wallow in failure?

4. When we really value our "success" more than we value walking with God, our failure hits us much harder, WITHOUT the blessing of tasting forgiveness!

5. Look back at Psalm 103:3. Which of those words strikes you the most? Why?

6. Is there sin you need to confess to God?

7. Do you need to value God's forgiveness of you more than you value your "success" or "failure?" How does the idea of celebrating God's forgiveness sound to you?

DAY 3: Failure exposes us to delights of which we had not dreamed!

*Psalm 103:4 ... who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,
5 who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

1. When we sin against God, we don't JUST get back to "forgiven" status. These two verses follow right on the heels of God forgiving *all our sins!*

2. Pick two things God does for us in Psalm 103:4-5 that mean the most to you. Jot them on the lines below. Then jot down your thoughts as to why they are important to you.

a. _____

b. _____

3. What resonates with me is that God "crowns me with love." I don't know about you, but there is no line of people waiting to crown me with anything!

4. Can you picture standing in front of God and Him placing a crown on *your* head? Do you recognize a longing in your soul for someone to have that kind of love for you?

5. I also like the last phrase in today's verses, "... *your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*"

6. When failure strikes, we are great at wallowing in our failure.

a. What do you think God really thinks about our wallowing?

b. How is wallowing a slap in God's face?

c. The phrase, "your youth is renewed like the eagle," is the antidote to wallowing. What would it mean for you to live this way? What would be different in your attitude?

DAY 4: Failure exposes God's lingering mercies.

1. God already knows we will fail Him, others, and ourselves, but He desires us to WALK as children in whom He DELIGHTS!!!

2. For each of the verses below, jot down words or phrases that characterize "the atmosphere" in which He would like us to live. Instead of a head bowed with failure, or a droopy demeanor, feeling despondent, or cynicism about ourselves, what pictures come to mind instead?

Psalm 103:9 He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever;

Psalm 103:10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

Psalm 103:11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;

Psalm 103:12... as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Psalm 103:13 As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;

3. What words, phrases, or "pictures" strike you the most from these verses?

4. One of the silver linings of failure is that we are "driven" (often from despondency) to find our purpose more about reflecting something of God's great love and gifts to us (as in these verses) than we are about our "success" or "failure."

DAY 5: Failure exposes our pride.

1. We were made to live with eternity in mind. God has put a sense of destiny in the heart of every person. At the same time, we all experience the "failure" of our pride. **THIS IS ONE OF THE SILVER LININGS OF FAILURE!!!**

2. In the next few verses, underline how this world reminds us that "pride" is a cruel task master.

Psalm 103:14 ... for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.

¹⁵ *As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field;*

¹⁶ *the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.*

3. In contrast to what the world "tells" us about ourselves, God tells us something different!

Underline what strikes you in these verses.

¹⁷ *But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children--*

¹⁸ *with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.*

4. To those who humble their pride to walk in His covenant and His precepts, He gives us "ginormous" blessings!!!

Failure exposes the folly of temporal living.

Psalm 103:19 The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.

²⁰ *Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.*

²¹ *Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.*

²² *Praise the LORD, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the LORD, O my soul.*

5. The psalmist ends with a litany of praise! What is he saying about God in Psalm 103:19?

6. What is the significance of these three things? Especially in light of our own failures, what effects should we see in our lives/attitudes when we consider the facts that (1) God has a kingdom, (2) Rules "over all," and (3) Is established on His throne?

7. Look back through your notes from this week. What has stood out to you about:

a. Failure? _____

b. Your old attitude toward failure? _____

c. God's attitude toward your failure? _____