GOD WILL HELP YOU

This is a Sermon by Rev. Dr. Ted Rust.
Ecclesiastes 9:10-18, Matthew 18:20, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Psalm 127:1.

He was a West Point graduate who once tried to make a living as a farmer, but **he failed**. The same man then tried to sell real estate, **but again failed.** He was so discouraged that he moved to Galena, Illinois. It was here that he went into business with his brothers, but then the Civil War broke out. **This West Point graduate became the top General in the Union Army. After the War he became the President of the United States. I have been talking about Ulysses S. Grant. He started out as a "failure," but God's plans for him were very bright. God helped him become very successful.**

Ecclesiastes 9:11-12 says:
"The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the skillful; but time and chance happen to us all. For no one can anticipate the time of disaster. Like fish taken in a cruel net, and like birds caught in a snare, so mortals like us are snared at a time of calamity, when it suddenly falls upon them."

Failure and problems are part of life no matter who we are. We must learn how to deal with failure when it threatens our family, work, or our life. **How do you deal with failure**? Are you as resilient as Ulysses S. Grant and others like him?

Today, I want to talk about how to deal with failure when it threatens us. The Holy Scriptures have some good things to say about this topic. **God cares for you so much that he want to help you deal with failure and setbacks in a healthy and dynamic way**. Jesus says in Matthew 18:20: **"For where 2 or 3 are gathered in my name, I am there among them."**
In this verse Jesus looked ahead to a new and better day when we would be present with his followers not in body, but through God's powerful Holy Spirit. In the body of believers we call the Church, the sincere agreement of 2 people in prayer is more powerful than the "superficial" agreement of thousands—because Christ's Holy Spirit is with them.

Two or more believers, filled with the Holy Spirit, will pray according to God's will, not their own, thus, their requests will be granted.

I have 3 points I would like to make today. **Point #1 is this—"Do you best and do it to the glory of God."**

Ecclesiastes 9:10 says:
"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might."

- **Are you retired**? Do you best in your work and activities. Try to make a positive difference in your family, Church, and Community. Whatever you are doing in retirement – do it with all your might. Don't be selfish, lazy, or bitter.
- **Are you a student**? Study hard every day and never cheat like others do. Get the highest grades you can – someday your next job and future pay check will depend on those grades. Give God all the glory in your studies.
- **Are you a "Care-giver?"** Do this important work with all your might. Caring for another person glorifies God. It may not mean all that much in the culture, but it means a lot to God.
- **Do you currently have a job**? If you do you are greatly blessed! Many are unemployed right now in this Country. **Many would love to have your job.** Work hard. Strive for excellence. An honest day's work for an honest wage.
- **Are you a student athlete**? God has blessed you richly. Practice hard, honor your Coach and adult leaders and strive to get better each and every day. Win the right way and glorify God.

- **Are you unemployed right now**? Don't be discouraged. Finding a job can take time for anyone. **I remember graduating from College in May and not being able to find a summer job for 2 months. It really dragged me down.** Develop a good plan to find a new job. Put forth a good effort to talk to employers and fill out many applications. Be aggressive in your job search. God has a good job in mind for you right now. God has a plan for you.
- **Are you overwhelmed** with family, money, or other problems? Do you feel like God has forgotten you? He has not. Pray. Be open to new possibilities. God will help you find a new and better life. God has good plans for you. You have much to look forward to when you trust in God's love and power.

Paul says this in 2 Corinthians 5:17-18

"If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see everything has become new. All this is from God."

One day I was visiting with a young lady who was very sad and overwhelmed with her problems. She shared some of her problems with me:

- She had 4 young children and there was not enough money.
- Her house was a mess and her stove didn't work.
- She smoked too many cigarettes but couldn't stop smoking.
- Staying home with the 4 kids caused her to over eat.
- She had just moved to this new City and hated it – she missed her home town in Indiana. **Her kids were getting bad grades.**
- She didn't really have any friends – she was very lonely.

I listened carefully and said I would be willing to help her if she wanted me to. She laughed and said she would welcome my help, but you could see in her eyes that she didn't really believe anyone could help her, including God. I told her I would return in 3 days and begin the process. **She laughed again, but God would have the last laugh.**

Three days later I showed up with another member of my church with a **new stove that our congregation purchased for her**. After installing the stove we sat down and I signed up the 3 older kids for the weekly **youth program** I was running. I told her that I was new in town too and looking to make some friends myself. Before I left **we both agreed to become friends.** I told her about another member of my church who was doing an **exercise class** in the church basement twice a week—she agreed to begin attending. She truly attended the very next session.

In only one month she had **cleaned up her house herself and started cooking healthier meals on her new stove.** The 3 older children loved our weekly youth program and had attended 4 weeks in a row. The **woman had quit smoking and had lost 15 pounds** attending the exercise class in the church basement. **She looked fabulous.** She had also **found a part time job at a Publix Supermarket** that worked fine with her schedule. She worked a few hours while the older children were at school and her husband could watch the new baby. He worked second shift. Her new job and new energy meant more money for bills and things they needed. The new job and new church she attended also meant many new friends. Her life was changing in positive ways!

Two months later **I baptized all 4 children** and the two older ones spent a week with me and 80 other youth at a Lutheran Bible Camp. The **husband joined our church softball team** and the woman began helping me in the office with bulletins and newsletters. The whole family attended worship every week and we found **volunteer tutors from the Church to help the kids change their D's to A's and B's**
Two months later the husband who hadn't attended any kind of church in 10 years was elected to our Church Council. The same woman who was so overwhelmed and sad when I first met her – now – was a new creation...everything old and bad had passed away – you could easily see that everything had become new and

exciting. God used the church to help her a little, but now as active members and volunteer workers – this woman and her family were doing much more for the Church and community. They were doing God's work.

It's amazing what God's love can do. Sometimes it takes awhile to see God's results, but in this particular family it seemed like God was helping them turn failure into success almost weekly. I will never forget witnessing the transformation.

I know what you are thinking. You are thinking that things like that don't happen to you. Well – the Bible says – things like that can happen to you! One of the reasons that things like this have not happened to you yet is because you do not believe in the love and power of God to transform lives. It's vital that you are open to the love and power of God's Holy Spirit

The day I visited this one woman I had actually visited 100 people almost like her, and had made the same offer to help **– but they were not open to God's offer of new life.** Point #1 is **"Do you best and do it to the glory of God." Point #1 is "Do you best."** (Get off the couch and off the phone and do your best. Let your light shine!

Point #2 is this: **"We need God's blessing on our work or our life goals and we need to pray for this blessing.** Point #2 is **"Pray."**

Psalm 127:1 says:
"Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain."

Do you remember the words of Peter when he was fishing in Luke 5:5? Peter said: **"Master, we have worked hard all night and haven't caught anything."** But Peter went on to say: **"But because You Lord say so, I will let down the nets." Earlier in the day the fishermen were failing, but now as they trusted in Jesus they became successful.** How different was the outcome then because the Lord abundantly blessed the efforts of the fishing disciples.

It's not hard or impossible for us to pray and yet many of us neglect this opportunity to "take it to the Lord in prayer." Step #2 in dealing with failure is to **pray for success. Pray for strength**. Pray to find a way to a better and more faithful life. Perhaps you haven't "caught a break" in a long time – but like Peter you will say to God – **"OK Lord, if you say so – I will let down the nets. I will trust your love and plan for my life God.**

Remember the words of the famous Hymn:
"Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness—
Take it to the Lord in prayer."

Influenced by parents who were strong believers in God and prayer, track star Jesse Owens lived as a courageous man of faith. During the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, Owens, one of the few African Americans on the U.S. team, received 4 gold medals. Talk about success!

He received these 4 Gold Medals in the presence of hate-filled Nazis and their leader Hitler. Owens also became friends with fellow athlete Luz Long – A German. Surrounded by Nazi propaganda, Owen's simple act of living out his faith changed Luz's life. Luz began to see things differently after meeting Owens. Long later wrote to Owens and said:
"That hour in Berlin when I first spoke to you, where you had your knee on the ground, I knew you were in prayer. That was the moment I first believed in God."

Point #1 is "Do you best and do it to the glory of God."
Point #2 is "Pray for God's blessing."
Point #3 is "Take the first step in changing your life."

In the story I told about the struggling lady with the 4 kids the first step she took was in opening the door and having a conversation with me. God took care of the rest. She worked hard but God opened all kinds of new doors and blessings for her and her family.

Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results will not change your life. If you are really serious about changing your life #1-Start doing your absolute best and do it to the glory of God, #2 Pray for God's blessing, and #3 "Take the first step in changing your life." Step one may be as simple as replacing one of your negative habits with a positive one, but pray about this.

Remember – God wants to help you when you are failing. Success in this world isn't everything. Seeking first Christ's Kingdom and his righteousness is everything.

God wants to help you move from:

- **Fear to faith,**
- **Closed mind to an open mind**
- **Despair to hope,**
- **The couch to the battle ground,**
- **Excuses to action,**
- **Sorrow to joy.**
- **Failure to success!**

God will help you. God will help you sometimes in supernatural ways that no one will believe or understand. This is the truth. True discipleship is of the greatest importance because we want to live for Jesus who redeemed up with his blood, and by his rising from the dead has opened the way for all believers to receive eternal life.

I ask you to remember something very important today as we study failure and success. Here it is. **By Christ's high standards, if you are strong in faith and rich in love and good works – you are a tremendous success!** Let us pray.

Lord, help us when we fail. Bless and guide us when we pray. Give us the faith and courage to take the first step to our new and glorious life with you Jesus—Amen.