

FAILING vs SUCCESS

By Waldo Malan



I have always been intrigued with the story of King Belshazzar and the mystic hand that appeared out of thin air and wrote a message on the banquet room wall where he was hosting a party. Let me be honest, intrigue might be a flimsy description; it is more like concerned, anxious, and terrified. The hand wrote a message to the King while his friends and him were drinking wine from the Holy instruments captured from the Israelite Temple. The message was clear and simple, "You've been weighed on the scales—and you don't measure up" (Daniel 5:27).

What concerns me most is what that heavenly hand would write on the wall of my existence while I am enjoying life. So, the concern really leads to a rather more cautious approach to life, people and situations. In any case, this story took me down a meditative path recently where I was considering the scales of "failure vs success". Firstly, when I look at my own life I think the "failures" side far outweighs the "success" side. Now, initially this made me a little depressed and feelings of discouragement and despair started welling up. It was then that two thoughts reared themselves in my mind (thank you Holy Spirit!)

The first of these was if there was a difference between how I viewed my successes, and how God viewed them. The conclusion is rather obvious – the way God views success differs from mine as much as the distance is between East and West. I would view success in terms of achievements, goals met and tasks accomplished. God views success in terms of whether I loved, had patience and listened obediently to His Spirit. Also, I reckon that while the opposites would be non-achievement in my thinking, for God there is on sin, or anti-God.

The second thought that came up was that there is a second pair of scales at play here – the scales of "failing and staying down" vs "failing and getting up". And for these scales to make any sense we have to look at it from God's perspective. We need to realize that not a single person on earth is perfect, and hence failing is simply part and parcel of existence! God also knows this, and so He makes provision for this. The way He does this is firstly through grace, thought the instruction, "If you do well [believing Me and doing what is acceptable and pleasing to Me], will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well [but ignore My instruction], sin crouches at your door; its desire is for you [to overpower you], but you must master it" (Genesis 4:7 AMP). To "master" something requires practice, meaning that we need to practice to overcome failure! In short, grace. Secondly, and adding on to this is God's faithfulness in forgiveness (1 John 1:9). So, when we fail we need to repent, get up and try again until we no longer fail in that area. I think that God considers this process and "success".

Looking at the first pair of scales in light of this, I no longer felt so depressed, but rather more encouraged, and rather a little less concerned about the mysterious wall-writing, message-leaving hand from the sky. ■