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**Part 2**

**A New Definition of Success**

**Jeremiah 29:11**

Last week we began a new series called "Redefined: The true definition of success.” Everybody’s interested in success. But what is it? How do you know if you’re a success or not? What does it mean?

I've never met anybody who wanted to be a failure in life. I’ll bet you’ve never awakened in the morning to a thought like: “I sure hope I fail today…in my marriage…in my business…in my ministry…in my finances.”

Believe it or not, God designed you for success. He made you to be a winner. This is true for every person, regardless of what’s happened in the past. God’s never destined anybody to live a mediocre life.

**Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”**

This verse says that God knows His thoughts toward you, and His desire is to give you an expected end. That end is promised in God’s Word.

You can walk in victory like Moses. He was 120 years old, and his eyesight was clear, and he was as strong as ever (Deut. 34:7). He actually climbed a mountain the day he went home to be with the Lord. These things are in the Word, and God’s no respecter of persons. What we have today, as new covenant believers, is superior to what Moses had in the old covenant. We can be guaranteed success. Now, I’m not saying success can always be achieved without a fight or without effort, but we were destined for great things.

God created every one of us to be something special, but I also feel that we live in a culture that’s totally misrepresented true success. As a matter of fact, I looked up the meaning of the word. The Dictionary defines success as “The achievement of something desired, planned, or attempted.” That’s a pretty broad definition. I mean, some people are aiming at nothing and hitting it every time. The second definition I found is “The gaining of fame or prosperity.” I hate that definition. That isn’t a godly definition of success at all. Lots of people have fame and prosperity, but they don’t have true success.

In my opinion, success needs to be redefined.

Success isn’t just doing something big…something glitzy…something loud. In fact, not everybody’s called to do something big. I try to get this across to our team all the time. We have hundreds and hundreds of Dream Teamers here at Calvary, and multiple locations, serving and giving, and if it wasn’t for every one of them, we couldn’t do what we’re called to do. They may never be the one in front of the camera, but they’re still a big part of what we’re doing. Their jobs may not seem as significant as others, but they’re being faithful in what God’s called them to do. That’s success!

God isn’t so interested in your being the star of the show as much as He is that you do your best with the part He’s given you.

Those who are faithful in a few things will also be faithful in much.

**Matthew 25:23** says, **“The master said, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’”**

If we’re good stewards of what God gives us, He’ll increase us and give us more. The way that success has been presented isn’t a godly concept at all. I want to encourage anyone who feels like they haven’t done much: God’s got something more for you, and you can succeed. I taught you last week that true success is faithfulness. Your faithfulness will be rewarded. And for those of you who think you’re awesome, I hope I can help you recognize that success isn’t based on all of the temporary things that’ll pass away. God judges things differently than we do. Last week I said it like this… Heaven’s perspective is drastically different from earth’s point of view.

So, how does God define success? What does it mean to be a success in His eyes?

First, I want to tell you what it isn't and give you three false measurements of success:

**Success isn’t measured by how you look.** Our society is image conscious. That’s the all-important thing -- style. For many people they don't care about whether they're genuinely a success or not, they just want to appear successful. That's the goal. Drive the right car, wear the right clothes, have the right accessories, have the right amount of likes and followers -- if I look successful on Instagram, who cares what my life is like! It may be a big mess. Have you noticed when you go into a store, there are two shirts exactly the same, one of them has a little logo on it, and it's twice as much? People will buy that one! They're buying status, an image, a symbol of success. We buy things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we don't even like! It's not how you look. **1 Samuel 16:7** says, **“For man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”** Many people look amazing on the outside, but in their hearts, they’re miserable—they don’t have joy or peace and certainly don’t have true success. Understand this: There’s nothing in this world that will minister to you or satisfy you more than knowing that you’re in the direct center of God’s will and you’re faithful to His will.

**Success isn’t measured by what you have.** A lot of people confuse wealth with success. You can be wealthy and be a failure at life. You may have got your wealth simply by inheriting it, not because you were wise in business. I meet people all the time making more and more money and enjoying life less and less. The two don't go hand in hand. But some of you are saying, "If I just had a million dollars I'd never work another day in my life." And that's exactly why God hasn't given it to you. Because you wouldn't work another day in your life and God doesn't want you to sit and quit and vegetate. That's not His goal for your life. **Matthew 16:26** says, **"What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul."** Jesus said in **Luke 12:15**, **"One’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."** Your net worth isn’t the same thing as your self-worth.

**Success isn’t measured by who you know.** Name dropping. You don't have to know the key men if you know the man who holds the keys. **Ecclesiastes 10:6** says, **"Fools are often put in high positions."** Just because they're well known doesn't mean they're successful. Popularity fades very quickly. When I was in school, I was the student body president and I was big man on campus. I remember going back to my campus a couple years later…and nobody knew me. Talk about a deflator.

True success is determined by who you are in Christ. Your new identity. Your character. Things like faithfulness… obedience… serving… loving… giving… believing… attitude.

Today I want you to begin looking at the seven attitudes of achievement from the life of Paul using the word SUCCESS. We’ll look at a few this week and few more next week. I also want to continue talking about the areas of commitment that God’s calling us, as a church, to in 2020. Few people accomplished as much in life as Paul. I think if he'd had a jet plane and an iPhone, he'd have conquered the world single handedly. It's amazing. He spread Christianity all over the Roman Empire. He was extremely successful. Six times in scripture we're commanded to follow Paul's example.

Today I want us to get **a Biblical definition of success** from the life of Paul.

**S - Sense of Direction**

True success starts with a sense of direction. You've got to have a purpose. If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably end up somewhere else. Paul had a crystal-clear purpose. **Romans 15:20 says, "It has always been my ambition to preach the good news where Christ was not known so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation."**Paul was an entrepreneur. He was a pioneer. He was an apostle. He didn't want to take an established church, he wanted to plant new churches. Personally, I have planted a church and I have taken an established church. One of the things about starting your own church, I know that I caused every problem. I can handle that. I didn't inherit anybody else's problems; they're all mine! I also know from taking an established church, I inherit someone else’s problems, debts, decisions, commitments, and obligations. Paul wanted to go where nobody else had gone before and that was his ambition. It was crystal clear; he knew exactly what he wanted.

One day Jesus came to a blind man and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" The blind man had to stop and think about it. If Jesus asked you, "What do you want Me to do for you?" what would you say? Have you noticed how many people in life have absolutely no goals? They're aimless, drifting around. They have absolutely no idea what they really want in life. No sense of direction and no real purpose. You've got to have a goal if you're going to truly be successful.

If you go into an airport and say, "I want to buy a ticket." "Ok, to where?" "I don't know." It helps to have a sense of destination. Direction. Where am I headed? What are my goals? What do I want to accomplish in life?

When you look at the life of Jesus, His very first recorded words when He was twelve years old in the Temple, *"I must be about My Father's business."* Pretty clear vision. At the end of His life, He says, *"It’s finished!"* Like bookends! What a statement. *"I've got to be about my father's business."* -- age 12. End of His life -- *"It’s finished."* That's a sense of direction. That's true success.

**Philippians 3:14** Paul says, **"I run straight toward the goal in order to win the prize."** Notice that Paul says, “I run in order to win.” He didn't say, “I'm a good loser.” He said, “I run to win! I want to win! I want to make the most of my life. I don't want to settle for second or third best. I don’t want to limit God. I don't want to be a mediocre person. I run to win!” It's important that Paul not only knew what he wanted out of life; he knew why he wanted it. He said there's a prize! When you figure out the "Why?" God will show you the "How?" The "Why" increased motivation. What do I want out of life? That's fine. But the next step is, why do I want it?

**U - Understanding**

**2 Thessalonians 3:5** says, **"May the Lord lead you into a greater understanding of God's love and the endurance that is given by Christ."** Notice "understanding" and "endurance". Those two words go together in life. When you understand the problem, you can endure it. The problems you have a hard time being patient with are the ones when you're wondering, "Why’s this happening?" and you can't figure it out. You need understanding.

Where do you get understanding?

Paul answers this so clearly in **Ephesians 1:13-14**: **“In Him you also *trusted,* after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, whois the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”**

Notice two things which are emphasized here which are always found together in Scripture -- the Word, and the Spirit. Both are absolutely essential. There’s no understanding without both of these.

It’s always a mistake to emphasize one of these to the exclusion of the other. There are groups today who are doing this: Some say, "No, we don't need the Word. All we need is the Spirit. All we need is simply to trust the feelings we have. The Spirit is dwelling in us and he’ll lead us." But whenever a group does that, it invariably results in impractical ideas, in mysticism, in fanaticism, and in individualism -- everybody going his own way and doing his own thing. Utter confusion results if you set aside the Word and try to follow only the Spirit.

On the other hand, there groups today who try to follow the Word alone. They’re orthodox to the core, but there’s no life. They’re sterile and dull. This is what results when you try to adhere to the Word without the Spirit. It results in a kind of clenched-teeth piety in which you resolve that you’re going to "do your duty" as Christians, but there’s no motivation, no satisfaction, no love, no warmth, no joy, no life. But in Scripture you always find the two together. The Word is interpreted by the Spirit, and the Word becomes fresh and vital as you look to the Holy Spirit to make Jesus Christ step out of the pages and stand in you in living flesh. You feel the heartbeat of the human Lord who lived here on earth now living in and through you. It’s the job of the Spirit to do that, and you never should come to the Bible without asking him to take these words, give understanding, and make them come alive.

Many people never grow in understanding. They don't have twenty years of experience; they've got one year of experience repeated twenty times. They're never learning anything from life.

If you're going to be a success you need a sense of purpose and a sense of direction. You need understanding.

**C - Commitment**

In the book *Passion for Excellence*: "The drive you need to rise from mediocrity to excellence requires commitment." **Acts 20:24** says, **"However I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace."** He's talking about commitment. Have you noticed that many people are allergic to making commitments? "I don't want to be committed to anything! I don't want to join anything! I don't want to get married! I don't want to be tied down to one job. I don’t want to serve. I don’t want to give." They compare -- Life is a buffet and if you commit yourself up front -- taking all the salad food up front -- then you get down to the good courses and you might miss out on something because your plate's too full. That's what they say. The tragedy is to get to the end of the line and have an empty plate because you've never committed yourself to anything.

Jesus said, "Count the cost!" He said you've got to be willing to pay the price. Truly successful people are willing to do things that other people are unwilling to do -- the unpleasant things, the uncomfortable things, the inconvenient things. Be careful saying you want what some successful person has. You don’t know what they were willing to do to get what they have.

What are you committed to? Everything worthwhile requires commitment.

I’m going to pause here. We’ll pick up next week.

Calvary, God’s given us a sense of purpose and a sense of direction and it’s going to take commitment.

**Today’s Confession: I am successful because of who I am in Christ. My new identity empowers me to be faithful and obedient to the calling God has placed on my life to serve, give, love, and be committed to His Church.**