A close up of a logo

Description automatically generated

**Part 5**

**How to Break Out of a Rut (Cont’d)**

**James 2:17**

What’s up Calvary fam? I want to welcome each of you to part 5 of our series “Redefined: The true definition of success.” A great big welcome to those of you joining us online!

Please grab your Bible or Calvary App and let’s go back to…

**James 2:17 "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."**

We know God wants “success” for us. The tension resides in the fact that we don’t always define success the same way He does.

How do you define success?

How you define it matters.

Let’s be honest, everyone wants success! I’ll bet you’ve never awakened in the morning to a thought like: “I sure hope I fail today [in my marriage, relationships, business, ministry, finances].”

You might think success is measured by how you look, by what you have, or by who you know.

What if God doesn’t connect success to any of that at all? What if His definition of success is determined by who you are? What if it’s about things like faithfulness… obedience… serving… loving… giving… believing… attitude… action?

Truly successful people are people of action. It's very important that you learn to become a person of action.

Our theme verse, **James 2:17**, says, **"Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."** Notice the word "action". Part of life means not just believing, but also doing. It means working out what’s already been worked in. It means moving to the next dimension of grace – from saving grace to empowering grace. It means more than hearing…but also doing! Unfortunately, there are very few doers in life. The fact is, we tend to settle into ruts.

Maybe you’ve heard this saying, “A rut is simply a grave with both ends kicked out.” Good news! Jesus offers you resurrection power—power to get you out of a rut and power to lift you out of a grave.

How do you get started on the road to success There are many different things that motivate us, but there are three common ones Pastor Ben Talked about these three things last week – pain, pressure, and perspective.

* **Pain.** It isn’t when we see the light, but it's when we feel the heat that we get moving. In the story of the prodigal son, he had to hit bottom. When he did “he came to himself.” We rarely change until we get desperate. **Proverbs 20:30** says, **"Sometimes it takes a painful experience to make us change our ways."**  Pain motivates.
* **Pressure.** Pressure motivates us to get out of a rut. You go to the doctor and he says, "Lose 50 pounds and quit smoking or you're going to die!" Your boss says, "Improve your performance or you're fired!" Your teacher says, "Get an A on this test or you fail the class!" That's pressure. Pain and pressure are tremendous motivators…while they last.
* **Perspective.** Paul, on the Damascus road, got a flash of insight, an inspiration, a new vision. **Acts 9:3-6, "Suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice `Who are you Lord?' Paul asked. `I am Jesus now get up and go into the city and you'll be told what you must do.'"** That may not be dramatic for you, but most of us change when we get an "Ah-ha!" moment! "That's it! That's my problem! That's why I haven't been making it in life!" Every week I have people tell me, "Last week after hearing the gospel or during a Gospel Circle I caught a vision of how God sees me and what He wants me to do. I'm so excited about changing! Now what do I do?"

Let’s talk about it. I want to address your question, NOW WHAT DO I DO? HOW TO I BREAK OUT OF A RUT according to Scripture. I’m facing pain or pressure or have a new perspective. How do I get moving? Six things to get you moving. Very practical stuff…but powerful stuff! We covered the first two last week.

1. **Assume responsibility for your own life.**

There are three kinds of people in life. There are accusers, there are excusers, and there are choosers.

**Proverbs 28:13 "A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful, but if he confesses and forsakes them, he gets another chance."** Stop blaming others, stop making excuses, when you’ve made a mistake in your life -- when you've been in a rut -- admit it. If I admit the areas I'm wrong in I get another chance. But if I fail to admit the areas that I'm weak in I’ll never be successful.

The first step in breaking out of a rut is to assume responsibility for my own life. Don't blame someone else. Who are you blaming for your unhappiness, a husband, a wife... a boss... a parent… a pastor? If you want to break out of a rut, assume responsibility for your own life.

1. **Believe you can change.**

Stop saying "I can't" and start saying "I can". That takes a radical reprogramming of your mind. **Romans 12:2 "Let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of mind."**  Success starts in your mind -- how you see God and how you see yourself.

And that’s why I preach the gospel! Faith comes by hearing it over and over again. Keep on hearing it! It’s building your faith. It’s changing what you believe.

**Mark 9:23 "Everything is possible to him who believes."**

What would you like to change about your life? Whatever it is, first, you've got to accept responsibility for it. Then, second, you've got to believe it can be changed. If you don't think it can be changed…forget it!

1. **Clarify what you really want.**

You write down specifically how and what you want to change. I hope that you have noticed that Pastor Ben has highlighted vision 2020 for the entire month of January (InReach, Outreach, + Special Projects). Clarity brings breakthrough, if you go to Calvary App, you’ll notice that all of the things listed are happening. That's how you break out of a rut. You've got to write it down. A famous psychologist said he had discovered through many years of practice that the most helpful thing he could do in helping people find happiness is to help them establish personal goals. There are less than 5% of Americans that actually have their goals written down. Yet that same 5% are the top achievers in the nation. Clarify what you really want.

James 1:8 says, "A double minded man is unstable in all he does." He's saying that the problem is, a lot of people can't make up their minds. They don't know what they want. They can't decide what they want in life. I meet a lot of people in life who are half in and half out. They can't decide whether they're going to stay with it or whether they're going to get out of it. They can't get out of it and they can't get on with it. And they're miserable. Why? "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." If you really want to break out of that rut, clarify what you really want. And then commit yourself to it and start saying, "Lord, thank you for being enough for me. Change me." Not, "Lord, change my wife/husband/kids" but me. The only way we ever change other people is by changing ourselves. When I change and I start responding in a new way, not in the typical, predictable, habitual patterns, then all of a sudden, my wife/husband/kids has to change because I don't relate in the same way anymore. If there's a negative behavior going on in my life the first thing I need to ask is "How am I reinforcing it?" Nobody continues in a negative pattern without a payoff. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." Clarify exactly what you want in your life. Clarity is necessary in order to avoid distraction. If you aren’t clear about what you’re pursuing, you’ll get distracted by anything shiny that comes along. Distractions make you vulnerable to lose sight of what is valuable. Example:  If you aren’t clear on what you want your marriage to look like, when times get tough, you can get distracted by another relationship that looks appealing. And you’ll trade what’s RIGHT FOR YOU for what is RIGHT NEXT TO YOU. But Clarity is the preventive medicine for distraction. If I’m clear about what I want, I won’t end up chasing what I don’t want.

1. **Don't wait for ideal circumstances.**

A lot of people are saying, "I'm going to change but the time isn't right yet. I'm waiting for... (you fill in the blank)" and they have their excuse. Don't wait for ideal circumstances. **Ecclesiastes 11:4** says, **"If you wait until the wind and the weather are just right, you will never plant anything and never harvest anything."** The farmer doesn't say, "It isn’t perfect crop conditions; therefore, I'm going to wait." If he's always looking at the clouds, always checking the weather, always wondering, “Is it time to plant? Is it time to harvest?” he's never going to get anything done! Givers don’t wait until their bank accounts are overflowing to give… give now!! If you are waiting for a perfect time to give you will never happen. We don’t harvest because instead of sowing now by faith we live in fear waiting for a perfect time to sow.

Don't wait for ideal circumstances. The Living Bible says, "If you wait for perfect conditions, you'll never get anything done" Some married couples need to apply that to their love life. They're only romantic if… they’ve got a nine-course dinner and candlelight before they get in the mood. Life goes on! Whatever you're going to do, you've got to do it in less than perfect circumstances most of the time. Why don't you settle down and spend more time with your husband/wife? "I'm going to once things settle down." It's never going to settle down! Why don't you spend more time with your kids? "I plan to once our schedule gets a little less hectic!" It ain't going to get less hectic. It's only going to get busier. If you're going to do it, don't wait for perfect circumstances. They won't come.

Perfectionism does a couple of things to us.

* It produces procrastination. "It's not the right time"
* It paralyzes potential. "If I can't do it perfectly then I'm not going to do it!"

If you want to get out of a rut, assume responsibility for your own life, believe it can change, clarify what you want, and then don't wait for ideal circumstances.

1. **Eliminate unnecessary weight**

One thing that makes getting out of a rut so difficult is any unnecessary weight that we carry. Think of it from a physical perspective.  Doctors are quick to tell you that one of the best things you can do for your health is to lose weight. Obesity is an epidemic that negatively impacts so many different aspects of our lives. Unnecessary weight causes your organs to work much harder than they are supposed to. Unnecessary weight causes pain and discomfort on your joints.  So, when you shed that weight, immediately you start feeling better.

You start becoming more mobile. You can do things that you couldn’t do before. Well, it’s the same way in every aspect of life. When you are willing to shed unnecessary weight, you can do things you couldn’t do before.

What does unnecessary weight look like?

Relationships that always drain you but never add value.

Spending money on stuff that you don’t need that stresses your budget. Wasting time on activities that don’t get you any closer to fulfilling your purpose. All these are examples of unnecessary weight that keeps you in bondage instead of living free. Now, this doesn’t mean that you have to unfriend everybody in your life, but it does mean you need to evaluate the relationships that you invest in your day to day living.  It probably won’t destroy you to have lunch with Joe once every couple of months, but spending emotional bandwidth on people that aren’t moving you forward limits your opportunities to truly value the people that God has given you that really are meaningful and instrumental in your growth.

It doesn’t mean you can’t buy a new outfit from time to time, but it means managing your money so that you are lying in bed awake at night trying to figure out how to pay bills because of the reckless spending you had the day your direct deposit hit. It doesn’t mean you can’t spend time doing fun stuff that you love doing, it just means that every night can’t be spent playing cards with the guys while your wife and kids are at home together.

Are y’all getting this? It’s a matter of choice.

We talked last week about the difference between Accusers, Excusers, and Choosers. Well Choosers make decisions that don’t add unnecessary weight to their well-being! Listen, a couple of pieces of pizza won’t make you fat.  But eating junk every meal will increase your waistline faster than you can imagine!   What’s my point?  Make good choices and get rid of what is weighing you down!

Oh, and it’s not just the bad stuff.

Religious activity can weigh you down as well!

There’s no freedom in living by the law. It increases the weight that you carry.  Jesus said this in Matthew 11:30 “For My yoke is easy and my burden is LIGHT”

If your walk is always heavy and weighed down, then chances are you are living under the wrong covenant!

Jesus said the New Covenant life is EASY and the load is LIGHT! Do you want to know why unnecessary weight is so bad for you? Because it changes your posture.

Think about it.  If you are carrying a heavy load, your head drops down. When your head is down, all you can see is everything that is right in front of you.

Your perspective is limited to what is right there.

But I love what David penned in Psalm 121 “I will lift mine eyes unto the hills from which cometh my help, my help comes from the Lord!” The reason Jesus doesn’t want you carrying unnecessary weight is so you can walk upright and keep looking to Him! In order to get out of the rut and get back on the road to success, it is VITAL that we ELIMINATE UNNECESSARY WEIGHT!

Assume responsibility for your own life, “Believe I can change,” Clarify what you really want; Don't wait for perfect circumstances because they're never coming, eliminate unnecessary weight to do what you need to do to make the changes in your career, your life, your family, whatever. Here’s the last one…

1. **Fire away**

In other words, do it now! Husband: "I'm aiming to change!" Wife: "It's time to pull the trigger!" People are always aiming to, "One of these days I'm aiming to make a difference in my life." Great. Pull the trigger! Fire away! Three words that can change your life -- Do it now!

**Proverbs 27:1**says, **"Never boast about tomorrow. You don't know what will happen between now and then."**  I shouldn't presume on the future. I'm not even guaranteed the next hour, much less the next 24 hours. So, whatever I'm going to do, I'd better do it now. I can't boast about tomorrow. None of us are guaranteed tomorrow. One of these days is really none of these days. It's just not going to happen. When you say, "one of these days" you're really saying "none of these days".

The greatest tragedy in life is to waste your life. "One of these days..." "Someday, I'm going to make something of myself." Everybody's got great dreams, but dreamers are a dime a dozen. It's the person of action. Faith without action is worthless. You've got to get it in gear. Get moving.

What does it take to get me moving? Pain? Pressure? Guilt? Fear? Are you saying, "Lord, I'm not going to make it. The resources are gone."? Successful people are people of action because they have a mission that motivates. They've got an overarching purpose to their life.

Are you blaming anybody for your unhappiness? It's pretty easy to do. What excuses are you giving for not growing up? Have you learned to accept responsibility for yourself and say, "Regardless of what my wife/husband/parents/kids do I'm going to live for the Lord. I'm going to make my life count."?

For just a moment close your eyes.

How about believe? Have you been telling yourself, "I'll never change! That's just the way I am! I can't change! That's just me!" That's a great excuse! Begin letting God transform your mind on the inside. It’ll work its way out.

How about clarifying what you want. Do you have a prayer list? One that says, "God, these are the changes I'd like You to make in my life..."

Have you been waiting for perfect conditions to start a new habit, to begin that new career, to become a Christian? "When the time is right!" Don't wait!

All of us need to eliminate unnecessary weight.

What do you need to start doing today? What do you need to start doing this afternoon? "Lord, I need to start... complementing my wife more ... spending more time with my kids because they're not always going to be kids ... I need to read my Bible every day ... I need to get started on that dream I've had for five years but I've been afraid to get my feet wet and I've held back, I've never gone for it ... " I need to start growth track…become a part of this church…give…serve.

The worst mistake I can make in life is to delay receiving the life of Christ. 2 Corinthians 6:2 "Today is the day to be saved!" not tomorrow. Some of you have been thinking about it for weeks, months, maybe even years. Today is your day! Today, when I receive his life by faith, I also receive the power to get out of a rut, I receive His power to make all those other changes that I need to make. If he starts it…he’ll help you complete it.

**Today’s Confession: Jesus offers me resurrection power—power to get me out of a rut and power to lift me out of a grave.**