
Words of Truth

If You Must Learn From Failure, Let It Be The Failures Of Others

By: Brian A. Yeager

Some people seem bent on learning the “hard way”. By the “hard way”, I am talking about utter failure and the fallout that comes from reaping what you have sown (Job 4:8). Israel was often, as a nation, instructed the hard way. The Lord said: *“For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. Is Israel a servant? is he a homeborn slave? why is he spoiled? The young lions roared upon him, and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant. Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken the crown of thy head. Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way? And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river? Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts”* (Jeremiah 2:13-19).

For those of us who have spent countless hours studying through the Old Testament, we should know that Israel was very stupid, very often. They would “soon forget” their erring ways and the hard lessons they learned from those erring ways (Psalms 106:3-43). Their erring ways and the hard lessons they were taught as a result most often got them nowhere. So, one cannot unequivocally declare that experience is the best teacher and that people will learn from their mistakes. The fact is, people rarely learn from their mistakes.

For anyone to learn anything they have to desire to learn something. The difference between a wise man and a scorner comes down to one’s willingness to learn (Proverbs 9:6-9). Foolish people don’t want to learn anything from anyone, even their own erring ways (Proverbs 15:5, Proverbs 18:2, Proverbs 23:9, Proverbs 24:7, etc.). Which are you? Are you a foolish person or a person wise enough to seek to learn? If you are the one seeking to learn, understand that failures are best learned from when they belong to someone else.

God’s Way Of Learning From Failure

The Lord doesn’t want you to fail; EVER (Romans 6:1-2, Galatians 5:7-8, II Timothy 2:19, Hebrews 12:15, and II John 1:6-9)! He has given us instructions to prevent us from

failing (Psalms 119:97-105, II Timothy 3:14-17, and II Peter 1:3-11). Therefore, you cannot conclude that it is God's will that you fail in some way just so you can learn from your mistakes. If you are of the mindset that sin can be good if a person learns from it, you have concluded something God has not said. When a person is sinning, they are not in some kind of learning period. Our Lord is not looking down from Heaven and thinking that an erring person is just "in the process of learning their lesson". God says sinners are children of the Devil (I John 3:8-10). God hates that person (Psalms 5:4-5, Proverbs 6:16-19, and Hebrews 1:8-9).

If you must learn from failure, let it be the failures of others. Such failures and the consequences thereafter are good sources of wisdom. Even naive people can learn this way (Proverbs 19:25). The Lord said: *"When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge"* (Proverbs 21:11). When people witnessed the death's of Ananias and Sapphira because of their dishonesty, they learned from it (Acts 5:1-11). Such punishments from God were intended to punish sinners and also to teach those observing such things (Deuteronomy 13:1-11 and I Timothy 5:20).

Why is it good to study the Law of Moses and things recorded during that time period? It is not that we are under that Law, for it is passed (Romans 7:1-6, Ephesians 2:11-17, Colossians 2:12-17, and Hebrews 9:15-10:22). Here is the answer: *"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"* (I Corinthians 10:1-12).

Conclusion

If you are of the mindset that sin can be good if a person learns from it, consider the following point. What if a person is erring, you are waiting for them (or you yourself) to learn from that error and death occurs or the Lord comes? What then? If a person enters into Judgment with any transgression not corrected, that person is eternally lost (Romans 6:23, I Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19-21, Revelation 21:8, etc.). If you are in error or know of someone who is, don't wait to deal with the matter (Psalms 119:59-60; cf. James 4:13-17).