**WHAT IS SUCCESS (PROSPERITY) IN GOD'S EYES? 16/Nov/14**

First, what is success in man's eyes? Most people define success in terms of achieving goals, acquiring rooms full of expensive possessions, having several large bank accounts bulging with money, owning many mansions in different parts of the world, having several exotic cars in a warehouse, knowing country and world leaders, having prestige, favor, status and power. Successful people enjoy the 'good life' of financial security, emotional security, of being surrounded by other equally rich and famous friends and they spend their hours enjoying the fruits of their labors, or inheritances. Their example is copied by others and their accomplishments are documented in magazines and on television reality shows. They've got it all! Notice that most people's definition of success deals almost entirely with the 'here and now' of this life. In many of our churches today the definition of success is found in the numbers who attend each Sunday, the size and amenities of the building and property, the amount of money that comes in every meeting, and the prestige and popularity of the church in the community.

But success is measured and defined differently by God. God measures our personal success in Him through our demonstrated love, obedience and faithfulness to Him. These qualities are not seen or known by man, and even if they were, they would not be applauded and recognized by man as important. His measure of success is whether or not we are being loyal to Him in our personal relationship with Him, in spite of opposition and personal cost. Are we accomplishing His goals and purposes in our lives, or are we selfishly accomplishing our purposes and goals? Listen to God's instruction to Joshua in **Joshua 1:8** 'This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.' **True success is approval from God based on obedience to God**. This principle applies to every person in any nation - to every human being. **Acts 10:34.35** 'Then Peter opened his mouth and said, 'Of a truth I perceive that God is not respecter of persons: but in every nation he that fears Him and works righteousness, is accepted with Him.' In the New Testament, Jesus put it this way. **Matthew 6:33** 'But seek first the kingdom of God and all His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.' We are to put Jesus first in our lives and live our lives the way He wants us to. To give Him first place in our lives means to turn to Him first when we need help or are making decisions, it means to fill our thoughts and minds with His desires, to make His character our pattern for living and to serve and obey Him in everything and in every area of our lives. That is putting Jesus first in our lives! Being acceptable to God; having God view you as successful is based on receiving Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and continuing to serve Him in obedience to His Word. This is God's universal standard for all humankind. That alone is success in God's eyes. Having this world's greatest riches or being the most popular human being in the universe is meaningless in view of eternity. The question is: Are we living our lives according to His Word? If we are then we are successful in God's eyes.

To gain further and deeper insights into this subject, it would be good to know what it is God requires of us as believers. If I want to please someone I should know what it is that pleases them, right? If we know what God requires of us then that should tell us if we are successful in God's estimation of the words success and prosperity.

**Deut 10:12,13** 'And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and His statutes, which I command you this day, for your good.'

**Deut 6:5** 'And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might.'

**Matthew 22:36-40** 'Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law? Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' In the Living Bible, **verse 40** reads like this: 'All the other commandments and all the demands of the prophets stem from these two laws and are fulfilled if you obey them. Keep only these and you will find that you are obeying all the other laws.'

In other words, Jesus is saying that if we truly love God and our neighbours, we will naturally keep the commandments. So in effect, we are fulfilling the law whether we want to or not, and all because of God's grace has been extended to us through Jesus. The law focused on all we should not do and we could never hope to fulfill it, but grace focuses on what we can do in loving God and others.

The account of what we call the parable of the Good Samaritan is found in **Luke** **10:15-37** and it is an explanation of who is our neighbour. Jesus is telling us that our neighbour is anyone we see who is in need that we know about and have the ability to help. Love means taking action to meet the need.

**Ephesians 2:10** 'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.' Living Bible 'It is God Himself who has made us what we are and given us new lives from Christ Jesus; and long ages ago He planned that we should spend these lives in helping others.'

It is out of gratitude for this great and free gift of salvation that we will seek to help and serve others with kindness, goodness and charity, not seeking just to please ourselves. God's intention is that our salvation will result in works of service directed at others.

**Galatians 6:15** 'It doesn't make any difference now whether we have been circumcised or not; what counts is whether we really have been changed into new and different people.' **11Corinthians 5:17** 'When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same anymore. A new life has begun!' We have begun a new life with a new Master! What really matters to God is that we be completely changed, from the inside out. This is success in His eyes.

When King David was about to die, he gave his son Solomon the following advice. **1Kings 2:3** 'Do what the Lord your God commands and follow His teachings. Obey everything written in the law of Moses. Then you will be a success, no matter what you do or where you go.' David didn't tell his son to build a huge army to conquer his enemies and take all their possessions, he didn't instruct him to gather wealth from other lands, he never instructed him in was to make a lot of money - no, the formula for success he gave his son was to follow God and obey Him. When Solomon became king he never asked God for a lot of money or fame or prestige, he asked for wisdom and discernment so he could lead God's people effectively. God was pleased with his request and gave Solomon a wise and understanding heart, more than any man had ever had before. He also added to Solomon wealth, possessions and fame that he had not asked for. Solomon took his father's advice to heart, at least for most of his life, and wrote down this advice in **Proverbs 3:1-4.**

Biblical success in God's eyes is the transformation that takes place within our inner lives. That is God's goal for us. He also abundantly supplies and provides for our needs through the physical gifts of food, clothing, houses, health and work, and He loves to do this. So let us not be those who focus on the gifts and lose focus of the giver of these gifts. That is when we will go backwards and lose our joy, our contentment and we quench the Spirit's transforming work within us, because we are focusing on the wrong things. Maybe that is why the Lord seems to limit His gift-giving to us, so we don't stumble over the gifts and in so doing, fall away from Him.

Steps to success in God

1) Develop intimacy with Him - read His Word. Out loud. Faith comes by hearing His Word. When we seek His ways, He enlarges our ability to understand His Word.

2) Develop a rich prayer life. Set a time, start small, make a list and allow the Holy Spirit to begin to control your prayers.

3) We will begin to operate from His perspective as we begin to see things the way He does.

4) Develop patience in waiting on the Lord and it will become easier to be still and know and see that He IS God.

5) In the adversities we face we will be increasingly stable and steadfast. We will experience His peace in the midst of trials because we know Him, the Prince of Peace. We know and trust the fact that He is in control.

6) Finally, we will have a positive impact on those around us. All His benefits will be clear to those we associate with. They will observe our peace, assurance and strength during difficult times, and they will see that Jesus is a reality in our lives.

We should make **Deuteronomy 10:12,13** our prayer. Let's read it once more. As we do this we are truly successful in God's eyes. So be it, Amen.

When we stand before God it will not matter how much we possessed while on earth or what the world thought of us. How successful we were according to this worlds standards is meaningless! There should be a new T-shirt saying, 'He who dies with the most toys.....still dies!' 'What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?' In other words, what can be compared to having eternal life? We need to get our eyes off of the things of this world and evaluate our lives from an eternal perspective. Concentrate, focus on our REAL life in heaven with Jesus!

**Colossians 3:1-3**