

How To Handle Success

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Series: Life of David

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Introduction: Open your Bibles to **2 Samuel 8**. The title of our message tonight is "How to Handle Success".

This is a chapter in which everything goes right for David. I believe it is a much greater temptation when everything goes well for us than when everything goes wrong. We are humbled when we go through hard times, but in good times, we have an immense temptation to become proud, to take it easy, to rest, and to get our priorities all out of order.

For instance, when things start going well in a business, you will have the temptation to cut out many spiritual activities in order to "guide the ship" of your job or business.

If anyone had a temptation to be proud, it was David. He was a shepherd boy who became king. David came from a cave, but he now lives in a beautiful palace and is on the very edge of the greatest dynasty in the history of the world. Consider David's successes.

2 Samuel 8:1-17, "And after this it came to pass, that David smote the **Philistines**, and subdued them: and David took Methegammah [LITERALLY "THE MOTHER CITY"] out of the hand of the Philistines. 2 And he smote **Moab**, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And so the **Moabites** became David's servants, and brought gifts [TRIBUTE OR TAXES]. 3 David smote also **Hadadezer**, the son of Rehob, **king of Zobah**, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates. 4 And David took from him **a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen**: and David houghed [that is, disjointed or hamstrung] all the chariot *horses*, but reserved of them *for* an hundred chariots. 5 And when the **Syrians** of Damascus came to succour [HELP] Hadadezer king of Zobah, **David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men**. 6 Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts. And **the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went**. 7 And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. 8 And from Betah, and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass.

9¶ When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer, 10 Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him: for Hadadezer had wars with Toi. And *Joram* brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass: 11 Which also king David did dedicate unto the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he

subdued; 12 Of **Syria**, and of **Moab**, and of the children of **Ammon**, and of the **Philistines**, and of **Amalek**, and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah. 13 And **David gat him a name** when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, *being* eighteen thousand *men*. 14 And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all **Edom** put he garrisons, and **all they of Edom became David's servants**. And **the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went**.

15¶ And **David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people**. 16 And Joab the son of Zeruiah *was* over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud *was* recorder; 17 And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, *were* the priests; and Seraiah *was* the scribe; 18 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was* over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and **David's sons were chief rulers**."

In the first 12 verses of this chapter, we have the record of David's successful military campaigns against ever one of David's neighbors all around him. These verses are a summary of battles that took place over approximately 12 years. The victories described brought David to heights never before reached by anyone in Israel.

We learn about his defeat of the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Amalekites, Syrians, and King Hadadezer of Zobah. You get the idea that David's army is like a driving tidal wave destroying all that are in its path. There is a massive surge of military power. Considerable numbers of soldiers from Israel fought for David, and they had great success. But never forget, war is ugly and brutal. We do not know how many Moabite soldiers David defeated, but out of all of them, he put them into three lines. He executed the first two lines. We read in **verse 2**, "And he smote **Moab**, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive". Two out of the three lines of soldiers were executed. Perhaps the line went on for a mile. There had to have been tens of thousands of Moabite soldiers. David executed the first two lines, and made the third line his servants. Obviously most of the men that died had widows and children. War is ugly and brutal.

Or consider his defeat of King Hadadezer, king of Zobah. David first put the king to death and then captured a great spoil: a thousand chariots, 700 horsemen, and 20,000 foot soldiers. David hamstringed and would have killed all of the horses except for enough to pull 100 chariots. Hadadezer hired 22,000 mercenary soldiers from Syria, and David defeated them all.

Success is much more brutal to the depraved mind than failure.

- I. Principle No. 1: **Remember the secret to any success—If we have any success in life, the credit and the glory is due to God alone**. God tells us in **Isaiah 42:8**, "I *am* the LORD: that *is* my name: and my glory will I not give to another".

David wrote Psalm 60 during this time. Turn over there. The first ten verses describe the people in 2 Samuel 8 that David has conquered. But notice David's conclusion in **Psalm 60:11-12**, "Give us help from trouble: for vain *is* the help of man. 12 Through God we shall do valiantly: for he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies."

It is the Lord prospers and the Lord puts down. We have nothing to boast of. Anything we have, we know it came from God. He gives and takes away success. There is always a danger when we succeed in our walk with the Lord. When God allows us a victory or two, we need to beware of the snare of pride. We have the temptation to think we are greater than we actually are.

A. We find three places in this chapter that ascribe success to David personally.

1. **Verse 6**, "the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went".
2. **Verse 13**, "David gat *him* a name".
3. **Verse 14**, "the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went".

B. Other Scriptures.

1. Remember **2 Samuel 7:9**—God says to David, "And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great *men* that *are* in the earth". This promise is fulfilled in chapter 8.
2. **2 Samuel 7:10-11**, "Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, 11 And as since the time that I commanded judges *to be* over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies."
3. **Psalms 75:6-7**, "For promotion *cometh* neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. 7 But God *is* the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another."
4. "For who maketh thee to differ *from another*? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it*?" (1 **Corinthians 4:7**).
5. Who gave Job his success and who took it away? Job said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (**Job 1:21**).

II. Principle No. 2: ***We must never seek success, but simply to please the Lord.*** We see this in **1 Samuel 13:14**, "the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him *to be* captain over his people". David was successful in battle as king, because for decades he had put the Lord first in his life. David did not have **Matthew 6:33**, but I think he understood the principle, "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." For the Christian, there is no other goal than to please God! For us today, cars, houses, earthly success are not what we are striving for. We are striving for holiness. In holiness we find happiness!

Success for the Christian is simply pleasing God. Success is obedience in every endeavor. It is better to fail in this life while serving God, than to succeed in this life while serving the devil. Success comes in knowing and applying God's Word and worshipping God from the heart through His Word. Remember **Joshua 1:8**, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is

written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

- III. Principle No. 3: ***We must remember that to obey is better than sacrifice.*** Unlike Saul David obeyed the Lord when the great spoils came in. He did not trust in the riches of his conquests. David hamstringed the horses. **Verse 4**, "David houghed [disjointed, hamstrung] all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for an hundred chariots". Why did he do this? Remember **Deuteronomy 17:16**, "But he [that is, the King] shall not multiply horses to himself".

God's ultimate goal for you is not riches or worldly success. He may give you success in that way, but it is not His goal for you. His goal for you is Christlikeness. You must be careful with success and riches, because they can very easily take our heart away from God.

- IV. Principle No. 4: We own nothing. God owns everything. We are stewards. If God gives us something, it is not ours, it is to be used for God. This is why David dedicated the spoils of his success to the Lord. **Verses 10-11**, "Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him: for Hadadezer had wars with Toi. And Joram brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass: 11 Which also king David did dedicate unto the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued".

David dedicates all of the spoils to God, in Jerusalem. David publicly declares everything to be God's victory, and all the spoil is holy to God. His army has just conquered three foreign nations, yet David essentially takes no credit for them. They are the Lord's. He gives them to the Lord to use. He essentially puts his entire profit in the offering plate, keeping nothing for himself. This is what we are to do ourselves. If God gives us prosperity, it is to use for Him. David's prize, his treasure, his love, his all, his pleasure, was God and God alone. God was infinitely valuable to him. That is why we can sing:

*Take my life and let it be
Consecrated Lord to thee
Take my silver and my gold
Not a mite from thee withhold
Not a mite from thee withhold*

- V. Principle No. 5: ***Remember that "to whom much is given, much shall be required"***. Success ought not to make us proud, but instead fearful.

God gave David what He had promised—a great name and rest from all his enemies.

Application: What if God were to give you rest and prosperity in this life? What would you do with it. Many people who say they love Christ depart from Him when riches come their way. If God prospers you, you are to give in proportion to His prosperity.

1 Corinthians 16:2 gives us a principle about financial giving, but I think we can apply it to all of life, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him". Are you giving of your time, your

service, your resources, and your all to God in correlation to how He has prospered you?

- VI. Principle No. 6: ***If God is going to give you great success, He's going to have to break you first.*** Suffering always comes before and during success. God must humble the pride of man if He is going to use him.

A. **David's** record of success and suffering. Now God was lifting David to heights of success that not many men will have. We read of David's success:

1. **Verse 6**, "the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went".
2. **Verse 13**, "David gat him a name".
3. **Verse 14**, "the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went".

This is the golden age of the Kingdom of Israel. These victories that God gave David was to prepare unparalleled success to Solomon. But remember that David when through probably a decade of intense emotional and sometimes physical suffering. If God is going to use you, He's going to have to break you first. David lived in caves for ten years before he was given a palace. He had no doubt that when success came it was from the Lord.

B. **Paul** had the same testimony. Turn over to **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

If God is going to use you, He's going to have to humble you first!

If we have been given much, let us fear. And while we fear the Lord, let us serve Him with gladness. I pray that God will give each of us spiritual success like we have never had before, but I know there is a cost to it. I'm ready to for that cost.

Conclusion: May the Lord give us grace in our trials, but let us ask Him for even more grace in our successes! God gives and God takes away, blessed be the Name of the Lord!