

SUCCEEDING IN LIFE SERIES

**HAVING A GOOD SELF-IMAGE**

This morning we are going to look at the self-image of a person. The word *image* speaks about the imagination that is inside you. For some time as a Christian I always thought that the more you devalue yourself, the more you claim you are the dust, you are nothing, the more closer you can be with God. The Holy Spirit began to show me that, that is only half the story. To see all our sins on the cross is only half the story. The other half of the story is to see that we are the righteousness of Jesus. What happen is that many people have only half the story. They only have half of what God intends for them to see themselves to be. I don't know why but probably it has to do with human nature. Many who come to God wants to see themselves as dust and as worthless value. Contrary to what we think the bible does not say that. Jesus did say that you could do nothing without Him. But on the other side of the coin, He also said that if you abide in Him and He abide in you, that you will bear much fruit. We can do much with Him. So always tradition has made us devalue ourselves. And I believe that is of the devil. If the devil could have us to see ourselves as worthless, before long you will behave as a worthless being. If the devil could have us see that we have completely no value in life, then we will follow accordingly. We become what we see.

In 2 Cor.5: 21 it says that he became sin so that we might become the righteousness of God. That is the other half of the coin. Could you imagine yourself as the righteousness of God? The book of Romans tells us we receive the gift of righteousness. And we are talking about the image that God has of us, that we must see ourselves as the righteousness of God. Let me show from the bible that God wants you to have a good image of yourself. It has nothing to do with being self-centered. Being self-centered is a different thing from being seeing yourself as God

sees you. All the time we always have three ways of seeing ourselves. You either see yourself to be what other people see you. Usually a child growing up experiences that. When as a child, they do not receive approval from the parents they began to see themselves as valueless. And they feel disappointed. So a child growing up needs a lot of image forming in their life. I call children wet cement. When the child grows up the cement will dry up and the impression you made in life will remain there and it will affect their whole life. It takes the Blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse all over again the things that have been impressed on us. As we grow up the images that we received sometimes speaks to us. You noticed sometimes parents put a wrong image in the child. They call their children "stupid" or "good for nothing" etc. And the child begins to respond to that image. And after some time the child begin to be what they say the child is. And then they blame the child and say I don't know why you are good for nothing. But it is the parents that formed the image in the child.

And the most important thing in our life is to see ourselves as God sees us. You can see yourself as other see you. You can see yourself as you see yourself. And because of original sin we always devalue ourselves. We always see ourselves to be below the dust. It is sin nature involved. But what God wants us to see is to see us as he sees us. That is the right value of ourselves. It is what I call a false form of humility. It is not being humble if you keep on saying I am a sinner, I am good for nothing, and I am worthless. It is not being humble at all. You are destroying what God wants to do in your life by destroying the image in you. And because of this fact, the image in your life will affect the image outside. Sometime people have the impression that we Christian are different from the world. And so we can do what we want. We wouldn't care what the world think. That is one side of the coin. But on the other side is your testimony. Don't pull it to the extreme so that you behave in such a way that the testimony is a bad reflection of Jesus Christ. What the bible is talking about is that you are not influenced by the world, you are not affected by what the world say but yet at the same time your testimony should be spotless before the world. It does not mean that you have no reputation with the world. It does not mean that as far as the world is concerned you are a useless junk.

Paul mentioned that one of the qualifications of leadership is reputation. First Timothy 3: 7 *Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside.* Do you know that refers to non-Christians? He must have a good testimony among

non-Christians. Good reputation, *lest he falls into reproach and the snare of the devil*. Do you know a lot of Christians has a bad reputation outside? And they try to have a good reputation within the church. That is inconsistent. We have to be outside what we are inside. We have to be inside what we are outside. We have to be sincere, true to ourselves. So definitely it is God's will for us to have a testimony outside. To have an image and that image is the image of Christ. We must have an image as far as we relate to the world outside. Which is why when we do business with the world, when we relate to the world, we have to bring forth that this is God's work. It is high quality work. And the world began to learn a little bit of that by what they called quality control. What does it reflect on. It reflects on the person who made it. Whether you are concerned for the profit or for the artistic aspect, success in life involves the image that we present onto people. As we keep presenting the right image, there will be people who will begin to respond.

For example today in the world there are certain images that have been formed. Long ago when the Japanese first came out with their goods. Some of the western film will show for example a cowboy film. And in the midst of the cowboy film somebody would pull out a gun and they go bang, bang. And the gun doesn't work. He looks at it and say, "It is a Japanese gun." It is a way of saying that it is low class. Today it is a different story. It is not just producing the goods. It is the image that the goods carry that is important too. So your image is important when you relate to the world. Don't say I am a Christian businessman I don't care what the world thinks. But Jesus is concerned about what your reflection is in the world. Whether you are giving a poor or good example of Jesus Christ comes from your reputation. One of the qualifications of the deacons in Acts chapter 6 is the same thing, that they must have a good testimony.

So to have a good testimony we must place a value on our own life. And we all have value. You can think in terms of value by what have been paid for your life. For example, if we ask of this chair. Then we compare in monetary terms. We say it is worth \$38.00 each. Then you say that is more valuable than the chairs downstairs which is worth \$10.00 each. So we say that these chairs have more value than the other chairs. How do we measure value? By the medium of exchange you measure value.

Your body, your spirit, your soul, has been purchased with the Blood of Jesus Christ. What value is the Blood of Jesus Christ? Think about the value that God has invested in your life. God invested in your life through the Blood of Jesus Christ. 1Cor.7: 23. *Do not become slaves of men. Brethren let each one remain with God in that calling in which he was called. You were bought with a price.* God has placed a value on your life. If you see yourself of no value, you will definitely behave as such. We all Christians need to pick up the fact that we have to see ourselves as people of value. We have to walk that way, talk that way, and behave that way. We have an image for God that we carry. Every one of us must have an image. For example when people interview you for a job, do you know what people are looking for? The image that you reflect. They judge you by how you carry yourself. That is why when people go for interview they dress their best. None of you will put on your worst shirt, worst slippers, smelly pants etc. The problem is people lived their life for interview. They didn't live their life for everyday. So the very next day after getting employed they become their true selves. The image that they carry is a temporary one. I am talking about a permanent image that you see yourself and carry yourself as you are. By seeing the way a person does things and seeing the way a person behaves, you could actually tell in five years time whether that person would succeed. For example, 300 people graduate from the university. By watching their lives and the way they do things. Even when none of them has any assets, none of them has anything that can be considered a big success in the world; they only have themselves. By analyzing all three hundred and the image that each one carries, you could roughly see which one would fail and which one would succeed, even when nothing has been done yet.

The difference why people succeed is because they carry a certain value in themselves and it comes out as an image. For example, a lady who sees herself and compares herself with others and say I am nothing I am not the most beautiful girl in the world; I am of no value and always dresses shabbily will follow what she believes. And after sometime she has no proposal. She says I don't know why I don't have any proposal. And nobody seems to like me. Basically because she never like herself. She never treats herself of value. So nobody comes along and says you have value. People pick up what you also say about yourself. I want you to know that the quality that we are looking for is something that people in the ministry also look for. The image that they carry causes them to bubble up or to continue as they are. Every one of you carries an image. Right inside of your heart every one has an image of another person that you know. Every one of the people whom you know

has a classification in your mind. What kind of person they are. There is an image that is formed in you.

People who made image their lifestyle will become successful. They are as they are whether they get up in the morning or they sleep at night. They have an image about them. They carry the image about. It is not a false artificial one. It is a real one. That is why I say you have to value yourself inside before you can change your image outside. Then you won't be frustrated. You won't be like carrying a banner that is too heavy for you to carry. I am talking about changing your image inside and carrying it outside too. What is inside will always affect the outside. *When you think of James. What do you think? When you think of John.* Now there is an image that you formed about each other. What a person is imparting through their lives, through the way they dress, there is a certain image that a person carries. And people tend to treat you the way you carry yourself. People tend to treat you as your image is. For example if I come to church every Sunday in a sarong and preach, you know what kind of people I will attract. I will attract sarongs. You sow sarong you reap sarong. What you do will affect the life of people. How you treat others will affect the life of people.

The image that you carry all the time has to be alive. It is important that the image you carry reflect the way God wants you to put it forward. People look at image and life. What people want to know is, is it real? When it is real, that's when it changes life. The same way God wants you to have a good testimony outside. In talking about image we have to talk about failures. Do you know some people cannot take even one failure? It is because the image in them is poor. They have a poor value of themselves. When failure comes you will find it hard to face your loved ones or those you know. Failure is basically the sense of losing your image. Why are people who failed afraid to face others? Because they are afraid that now their image have gone down. So when you failed you must realize it does not make you a failure. It is a true failure only when you have not learnt something out of it and you have not come out of it to improve it.

Basically everything about this life we do by trying. Why is it that when some taste opposition or seemingly failure that they give up. The basic problem is image. If you know that what you have inside has value and you have a right image of

yourself, which is the image as God sees it (which is always an image of success), whatever happens, you will press on and go on and say I can do better than that. There is something in you that says I can do better than that. And I am going to do better than that. Life is filled with attempts and sometimes failed attempts. But the difference lies in whether your image is correct. Every time you see or you experience what you call seemingly failure, you will see where you went wrong. Learn something out of that and take that as a stepping-stone to do better the next time. You won't throw up your hands and say I can never succeed in this. I am just not good at this.

I am going to show you some bible people that have good image and bad image and how it affected their life. The person that I am going to show you first of all who have poor self image inside them and it bothered him all his life. Because somehow in himself he never sees himself the way God sees him. In 1 Samuel 9 we see Saul before he became king. From his example we can see that before a person reached his status in life, you can actually see how a person will behave when he gets there. If you begin to have the quality and an image of a corporate Chief Executive Officer, there is something in you that keeps on putting you in the right position. To you everything will find its right place in life. Everything will find its right place of specific gravity. You can shake the thing up side down but the object will find its right position of specific gravity in the water. It depends on the content not just the outside circumstances.

Now the problem with Saul before he became king he always had an image problem. When Samuel the prophet came and told him that he was chosen to be king, Saul immediately said in verse 21 *am I not a Benjamite of the smallest of the tribes of Israel and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin. Why then do you speak to me like this?* So Saul had a poor image. He said I am nothing. My tribe is the smallest, in fact it is the worst, my family is the worst. If you think carefully that is not true. Not many families own donkeys. His family was probably an average family. There are many other families who don't own donkeys. He was the son of Kish. Don't blame your circumstances. It is in you the image that counts. You cannot be lower than what you think you are. You have value. Saul the son of Kish said my family is the least. Do you know he was telling a lie? He may not be aware but he had a poor self-opinion of himself. And that was inside him. It looks like humility. I don't know what kind of traditional Christianity that says he was being

very humble. My definition of humility is this. Being humble is being what God says you are. Not being what God says you are not. So if God says that you're His righteousness and you say I am still full of sin and worthlessness, you are not saying the truth of what God has done in your life. It looks like humility but it is not humility. It is a poor self-image.

And it was so rooted in him that when the inauguration came in the next chapter. All the tribes of Israel were gathered together. And Saul who has a poor self image. When he saw all the tribes and one by one being isolated to present to the king whom God has chosen. In chapter 10 it tells that they were looking for him but they couldn't find him. The tribe of Benjamin was chosen in verse 20. *Then out of Benjamin they chose the family of Matri. And the family of Matri they chose Saul the son of Kish. But when they sought him, he could not be found.* Where was their king? Their king was not around. Their king had a poor self-image. He didn't walk like a king. He didn't talk like a king. He behaved like a coward. And then somebody looks around and saw him hiding. Remember he was one of the tallest fellows there. In verse 22 they say there he was hidden among the equipment. Why did he hide? Because he was having a poor self image. He said I am the least. And he behaved like he was. Do you know people with a poor self-image will try to depend on what people say about them? People who have a poor self-image cannot take persecution or difficulty in life. When life is difficult every one runs you down. The world hates a loser. The world loves winners.

There was one of our famous badminton player. He is saying every time I loose they put it in the headline. Every body criticized him. The world criticize them says why you fail this. What happened here? And he was being disappointed. But that is the way the world behaves. If you have a poor self image, you are affected by what people say. If you have an image and you know where you are going in life, whatever people say will not make any difference.

So here was Saul. He was chosen to be king but there was in image in him that made him not to behave like a king. He always had the image of the rejected tribe, the least of the tribe and the least of the family. As a result of that he always depended on what people say. To function he needs people to say nice things about him. If you are the type of person who needs people to say nice things about you,

you have a problem. You will never be able to go through difficulty. You will never be able to stand alone in life. We all in the body of Christ must have the ability to stand alone and yet the ability to reach out our hand to fellowship with another. We love one another and we draw encouragement and nurture from one another. But yet at the same time our source and our life is from Him and not from each other. That is the strength that God wants in the body of Christ. We should be so strong that when you are sent alone in a town where all are unbelievers, you could still stand. Yet you love the body of Christ. And you draw nurture and nourishment for the body of Christ. That is strength. The test of your true strength is when you are standing alone.

Jesus went to the cross. The test of the cross in your life and in Jesus' life was being able to stand alone with the call of God on His life and with the image of what God wants Him to do. Jesus didn't collapse when His disciples deserted Him. He was not bothered when all the people around Him turn Him to be a criminal. What would you do for example if you are arrested and they tried to frame charges on you? And some of your best friends say I did not know you are this kind of person. What will you do? If you have a proper self-image you will know that God vindicates the just. You will rely on God.

When people work with me in the ministry, I can tell by the way a person work whether he is going to succeed or fail by the way he does his work and the image he carries. And that is why we have this kind of teaching. It is to teach us those things that produce fruits of failure, remove them so that you could start planting seeds of success and be a success. It is not too late. One wonderful thing is you still can change. We may have been sowing seeds of failure all the time but we can change.

Can you see king Saul? He was a failure from the start. He never had a proper image of what a king should be. A king should walk boldly to lead his people. He depended on other people. In chapter 13 when there was a war to fight, there was his unlawful sacrifice. Verse 8 – 9 *they were going to battle and he waited seven days according to the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal and the people were scattered from him. So Saul said bring a burnt offering and peace offering to me and he*

*offered the burnt offering. Samuel came and said why did you do that? He did something wrong. That was for a priest to do, not for king's job. And this is Saul's reason in verse 11. When I saw the people were scattered from me and you did not come, I made the supplication.* Do you know his reason for offering the sacrifice? The people were deserting him. He cannot stand to stand alone. He should have the ability to say offering of sacrifice is the ministry of a priest not a king. Even if the whole army desert him, if he had the right self image, he will say if all forsake me God is with me because I am doing the right thing. Remember having a poor self-image he depended on what people think of him. He cannot stand to be alone. So he walked into the office of a priest and as a result he lost his whole kingdom. The roots of failure were already sown in his life.

I Samuel 15 shows his personality. God told Saul to slay the Amalekites. And he did not slay them fully. He kept the king alive and the best of the cattle. So Samuel said obedience is better than sacrifice. Then this was the prophecy of Samuel in verse 26. I will not return with you for you have rejected the word of the Lord. And the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel. As Samuel was going away, Saul seized the robe and tore it. Samuel turned around and said the Lord has torn your kingdom and given it to your neighbor. Verse 30 *I have sinned please honor me before my elders and my people.* You know what he was looking for? Acceptance and honor from people. He was thinking about what other people think of him. But he himself never corrected what he himself thought of himself. Inside him was still the image: I am the least, I am the least. And he sowed the seed of failure in his life. See before he was king he had that problem.

Now look at David as an example of one with good image. Some people said when you talk about image, you are talking about the outward thing. Let me tell you what is inward will affect the outward. And what is outward is the reflection of the inward. The two are one. In 1 Samuel 16 you will notice that even God told Samuel in verse 7 *do not look at his appearance and at the height of his stature because I refused him. For the Lord does not see as man see. For man look at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart.* So when David came let me tell you his outward image and appearance was very kingly. He had a right heart. A right heart will produce the right walk. When David came in verse 12, now he was ruddy with bright eyes and good looking. You know he took care of himself even though he was a shepherd with all the sheep. Do you know when you look into somebody eyes you could tell

whether he has a poor image or good image. You could tell failure in person's eyes. You could tell whether there is rejection in the person's eyes. This guy came with his eyes shining and sparkling. He had a right image of himself. He did not drag himself in smelling of dung. It says he looked handsome. Look at the image he projected. That was a king in embryo stage. You have an embryo of success in you by the image that is in you. So we began to see something that David took care. He took care of his image.

Now in 1 Samuel 17 David was not influenced by what people thought of him because he had a right image of himself that he has built. Chapter 17 when he was facing Goliath Saul looked at him and said you cannot fight Goliath. But David answered in chapter 17 and said in verse 34 *David said your servant used to keep his father's sheep. When a lion or bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it and delivered it from its mouth and struck it and killed it.* When Saul said you couldn't do it he said that he could and to prove that, he said when a lion came and took one of his sheep, he grabbed the lion's beard, opened the mouth and took the lamb out and killed the lion. He had the right image in him. When he faced Goliath, Goliath called him all kind of names. He was not bothered. Before he became king you could see the demonstration of a king. Before you become an evangelist you can see the demonstration of an evangelist. Before you are a successful businessman you can see whether a person will succeed or not. You have the image that comes forth from your inside.

When David began to have a place in the army of Saul, 1 Samuel 18:5 says *David went out wherever Saul went and he behaved wisely.* He was taking care of his image. *Behaved wisely* means he watch what he is doing. He watched his testimony among Saul's people. So how can people say that there is no such thing as image? He took care of his testimony because this is the army that he is going to lead next time. Do you know all of them were impressed with David? He made an impression in their life. Make an impression on the people you meet. Don't do it artificially but let it come from the inside. You must change the way you talk. Change the way you dress. Get rid of that floppy, lazy image. Get rid of the couldn't-care-less attitude. Sow the right images and people will take you for what you are.

