

Introduction to Collegium
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THE TEMPTATION OF SUCCESS AND THE TEMPTATION OF FAILURE

By Gene Marshall

I want to say a few words about the temptation of success and the temptation of failure.

By success I mean that you decided to pull something off and put your being up against the wall of history and demanded with all your heart, soul, and mind that history give in. On the other side of Much Hard Work, Tears and Anxieties and Ambiguous Decisions, History gave in. That is success.

You treaded on snakes and you walked on scorpions. You overcame all the powers of the enemy and came home unharmed. With the glow in your heart and a reeling in your mind, you face the temptation of success. It is a deadly temptation that can kill you dead forever in a twinkling of an eye.

Here is the scripture verse that delivers you from this temptation:

"Do not take joy in your power over evil spirits, but only in the fact that your Name is written in Heaven."

Or you might put that this way: Let your deed be. It's God's deed now. Let it be. Let it be. Take joy only in the fact that God receives you and your deed, and that God gives you the possibility of assuming responsibility for living the success you now are. You are wholly dependent upon God, precisely because you have succeeded. You have not gained one inch of independence from him. Your deeds are God's deeds that he now gives back to you for you to participate in responsibly.

The temptation of success is to think you possess one ounce of security over what you had before you succeeded.

Now the temptation of failure is to think you possess one ounce less of security before God than before you failed. God owns your failures now. Let them be. Let them be. Let them be. God gives you your failures back to participate in responsibly--possibility, possibility, possibility to assume responsibility for the failure you now are. Watch out. Watch out. Temptation is crouching at the door. You must master it.

The temptation is to give in to despair--
to despair ~~over~~ having been so weak as to fail
to despair over the consequences of having now failed
to despair over being in despair.

In despair one wishes to have succeeded, and the hard cold fact of failure builds up new longing to succeed, that the pain of despair might pass.

But the moment I even wish to take joy in having succeeded I am in despair over having failed.

Let it be. Let it be. Take no joy in the fact that you have treaded on snakes and walked on scorpions and overcome all the enemy's power and returned home unharmed.

But take joy only in the fact that God owns your deeds and he gives them back to you to participate in creatively for the future.

And watch out: for temptation is crouching at your door.