

Life is no cake walk. We can experience a lot of defeat and sometimes in life we experience far too many defeats. What I have come to realize in this life is failure is a part of life. Yet many times when we fail, we simply drop our heads in defeat. We give up—we stop—and when we do that—that is the point of true failure. I worked for many years at a funeral home in Columbia, TN. It was there that a man by the name of Woodrow Wilson Horton. “Uncle Woody” as he was known was a man that has worked hard his entire life. At the time I met him he had been working at the funeral home for nearly fifty years. At the young age of 13 or 14, it became his job to teach me how to properly set up a tent and make the grave ready for burial at the cemetery. Uncle Woody had a way to do everything and the ropes had to be tied in a way that you could tighten them without removing them from the stake that was driven in the ground. One day as we were making preparations and putting up the tent, I began to drive the stakes in the ground. Uncle Woody had told me in times past that it only takes five swings to drive a stake. Now being 13 or 14 years of age and knowing all there is to know about driving stakes; I immediately put the stake in the ground, tapped it a couple of times to get it started and on the first swing—BROKE THE HANDLE OUT OF THE ONLY SLEDGE HAMMER WE HAD ON THE TRUCK!

Failure was my name. Luckily no one was hurt and I learned a very valuable lesson that day. No it did not come in the way you might think, but it did come from the mouth of a man who had “broken a few handles” in his life. Uncle Woody told me that day there were two ways to fail: One was failure without trying. The failure comes because you never tried. The second was failure through effort. That failure comes as a lesson. You may have failed, but you failed trying. Often in life we get dealt cards which seem impossible to play out and one broken handle can blind us to the fact that God is always working for our good. Romans 8:28, “We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, those who are called according to His purpose.”

Yes, failure will come in life, but it never has to spell total defeat. I want to share these words with you, “It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms; the great devotion, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who, at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat.”—Theodore Roosevelt.

Yet far greater words, far greater rewards exist for those that try and fail for the Lord. Ephesians 1:18-19, “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the glorious riches of His inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power to us who believe.” May God grant all of us the courage to do great and marvelous things to further His kingdom; and when we meet failure in the road of life to remember the glorious strength we receive through Christ Jesus. Let us all have a desire to serve Him gladly each day.

In Christ,

Joe Rhodes