SUCCESS AND FAILURE

PART 1 – PRINCIPLES AND PRECEPTS

**DATE: 9/11/16 pm**

**TEXT: Proverbs**

**INTRODUCTION**

The book of Proverbs is a very practical book

It encompasses so many different topics and issues

In this series of studies, we will focus on the issues of Success and Failure

-- How do we reach our Goals?

-- What do we need to do to Achieve and Succeed?

-- On the other hand, what are the Elements of Failure?

-- What are the mistakes that lead to our Failures?

Solomon gives us some general, basic principles that apply to all of us

These principles will help us spiritually, physically, emotionally, and financially

They affect our lives at home, work, school, and church

And the sooner in our life we can learn these lessons

The greater will be our chance of avoiding costly mistakes

If you are a young person, you need to listen carefully

The reason this study is important is because we live in a goal-oriented society

You will find that goals were important to those whom the Lord used

-- The goal of Moses was to lead Israel out of Egypt

-- Caleb wanted a mountain and waited over 40 years to get it, but he got it

-- Even our Lord said, ***“My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me”***

Jesus’ goal was to do the will of the Father and He did

**Ill.** In the Book *Alice in Wonderland,* (Written by Lewis Carroll) at one point Alice says to the Cheshire Cat, *“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here.” “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,”* said the Cat. *“I don't much care where,”* said Alice. *“Then it doesn't matter which way you go,”* said the Cat.

As with Alice, so it is with so many folks today

Without objectives, we will have nowhere to go, and we'll just keep wandering and floating aimlessly,

Basically being controlled by our circumstances like a fallen leaf floating down a mountain stream

Beloved, God doesn't want us to float through life doing nothing

God has given to us all certain abilities that we can use for His glory

This applies to everyone, including those suffering a physical handicap, poverty, or old age

As Christians, we should all have some spiritual goals

Those goals may be in areas of witnessing, giving, praying, studying God's Word, church attendance, or encouraging others

Why are they important?

The answer is they give us a target to strive for or to push ourselves

Spiritual goals help us to keep our focus on spiritual matters and the Lord whom we are serving

They help us to use our time wisely and keep our priorities straight

Spiritual goals will help you to not get distracted or discouraged

One of the reasons God used Paul, was because he had spiritual goals in his life

Does this verse sound familiar?

[**Philippians 3:14**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Php+3%3A14) **- “*I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”***

Without a target to aim at, you will miss it every time

The book of Proverbs offers us a treasure chest of wisdom

On how to successfully Achieve our Goals, and also …

The Causes of Failure in many areas of our lives

We will be looking at 3 areas in these messages

**1.** The Principle and Precepts that will allow us to reach our Goals

**2.** The Results of Having Good Goals

**3.** The Elements & Consequences of Bad Goals

So, let’s pray and then look at …

**“The Principles and Precepts for Reaching our Goals”**

**~~~Prayer~~~**

First, let’s look at …

**I. THE “PREPARATION”**

Preparation will help us reach our Goals

What does it mean to **Prepare**

It means *to make something or someone ready, provide somebody or something with the necessary equipment for an activity*

First, things have to be done in …

**A. The Proper Order – 24:27**

***“Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house”***

Solomon offers instructions about completing Priorities in a Proper Order

Here the farmer is to do his planning and prepare his fields first, before he builds his house - Why?

The opportunities to plant and grow the crops are limited, but the construction of the home has fewer limitations

Once the crops are in, you can begin the house

Solomon is revealing the importance of the wise use of our time

Some things can be done at a later time, but other matters cannot be delayed

Planning and Preparation will help you to decide what your Priorities should be in order to achieve your goals

The Necessities must be met first before Conveniences are added

The Jewish tent would have to do until the home could be built later in time

There is another principle seen in this verse

The word *“****build”*** here means to *establish*

The idea is before you establish a home or family,

Make sure you are economically prepared to take on the task of caring for a wife and kids

This does not mean you have to have loads of money

It does mean that you should be able to care for the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter

If you cannot care for yourself, how will you care for a wife and children?

Proper Priorities are an important part of Preparation

The 2nd thing we need is a …

**B. Teachable Attitude – 6:6-8 …**

***“Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:” “Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,” “Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest”***

Another insight we find about Preparation is the importance of having a spirit of humility and being teachable

Solomon tells the lazy man to get an education from Professor Ant

Preparation involves educating yourself, either by research, getting counsel, or going to school

If you have a teachable spirit, you can learn something and better prepare yourself

If you think you know it all, you are going to run into problems

Let me say here that your teachers don't have to have a degree to be wise

Some of the wisest folks I have met are people who work hard and have, or are getting the job done, just like the ant

Your parents or grandparents may not have a degree, yet, they tend to have a lot of wisdom

Experience from the School of Hard Knocks is a great teacher

If you can get an education or training, however, get it!

Go to school if you can, or take correspondence courses

Knowledge and hard work are a great combination!

The ant provides her meat in the summer, Preparing for the future

There are a number of important elements in these verses about the ant

We are focusing on the Preparation of the ant

We will address other elements of this verse later

The lazy person is to consider the wisdom of this insect

Some are so lazy they won't even do that

The ant, without anyone telling him what to do, prepares for the winter (future) by gathering food in the summer

**Ill.** According to a Purdue University entomologist by the name of John Silling, the ant is an exemplary worker. *“Basically the ant's entire life, which can range up to seven years, is spent working,”* says Silling. *“They gather food, bring it back to the nest, and use it for day-to-day meals as well as to store for the winter.”*

In addition, the amazing insects can be adept horticulturalists, states the professor. Some species *“gather bits of grass or leaves, and take them back to their nest. On this organic matter, which is used much like fertilizer, they place tiny mushroom spores and grow them for food.”* Ants are also like the dairy farmer. *“Some ants get the majority of their food by ‘milking’ aphids or plant lice which are often known as ‘ant cows,’”* says the scientist. *“The ants sometimes herd the aphids down into the ant nests at night when it starts to get cool. Then when it gets warm again, they herd them back up to the plants.”*

Solomon said that the ant provides her meat in the summer

The word ***“provideth”*** is an interesting word

It means *to be fixed or stable, steadfast, to prepare, to be ready, to be settled*

When you think about it, Preparation requires all of these elements

This is the key Purpose of being Prepared

Let me ask, Are you preparing for the future?

Are you prepared for the Second Coming of Christ?

Are you looking for His return?

Are you saved?

[**Matthew 24:44**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+24%3A44) **- “*Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh”***

Are you prepared for death when it comes your way?

Do you know the Lord as your Saviour?

**II Corinthians 6:2 – “*(For He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)***

Are you Prepared?

Being Prepared …

**C. Guards Us - 12:11; 28:19**

***“He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding”***

***“He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough”***

Preparation Guards against Hungry and Heartache

The goal here is Preparing or tilling the land

Without Preparation, without the tilling, there will be no crops and the ultimate goal of caring for the family

We are reminded that Preparation is hard work

And not Chasing after or following others with empty or false hope

Most people who offer this false / vain hope only want what they can get out of you

Diligent work, not get-rich-quick schemes, (vain / empty) is the key to achieving an income

I don’t know how many people I’ve meet in life that had these grand ideas of making lots of money without working hard – not going to happen

Proper preparation involves not being distracted by worthless, empty fantasies or pursuits that waste time and money

The *Get-rich-quick* schemes like lotteries, and multi-level marketing

They distract people from real productive work or sift scarce funds that are needed else where

These schemes only lead to heartache when they don’t come to fruition

Hopes are dashed and people are confused when it doesn’t work out as expected or told it would

The people that do these kind of things lack wisdom, understanding, and godly sense

The elusiveness of these worthless fantasies is seen in the word ***“followeth”***

It means to *run after or chase*

Vain pursuits are difficult to attain when a person does not prepare himself by planning and then working his plan

People that chase after vanities, in most cases, never catch their empty dream or goals

The proverbial carrot

Preparation Guards us

Preparation requires …

**D. Commitment - 21:5**

***“The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want”***

In it for the long run

The very thought life of those who are diligent (i.e., the

disciplined, faithful, and hardworking) leads to prosperity

The contrast is again with one whose illusion is of getting rich quick

The diligent man works long and faithfully and is rewarded with prosperity

The get-rich fellow winds up being impoverished (want)

The moral of the story is that hard work, dependability, and diligence are profitable

The Preparations of those who are diligent lead to Prosperity / ***“plenteousness”***

The word ***“diligent”*** here literally means *to be sharp*

This word describes someone who is ready, or effective like a sharpened knife, and acts decisively

When you make your Preparations, then put them into action if you want to achieve your goal

**Ill.** In the film *Chariots of Fire,* young Harold Abrahams, a champion sprinter, had just suffered his first-ever defeat. After the race he sat alone, pouting in the bleachers. When his girlfriend tried to encourage him, he bellowed, *“If I can't win, I won't run.”* To which she wisely replied, *“If you don't run, you can't win.”* Abrahams went on to win the 1924 Olympic Gold Medal in the hundred-meter run.

Plan your work, and work your Plan

Beloved, be Committed

Do the best you can / You will be amazed at what you can achieve

Preparation involves Commitment

Preparation gives …

**E. Confidence – 14:8**

***“The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit”***

Prudent men endeavor to understand the issues of life

They try to understand their own path in life

By contrast, fools demonstrate their foolishness by

lack of integrity

Wise men endeavor to understand problems

Fools are devious / deceitful

Those who are wise and prudent know where they are heading

They analyze a situation and think matters through

Their plans give them direction and confidence

The truly wise man relies upon the Lord for his direction

God is the source of his confidence and calm

**Proverbs 3:6 *– “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths”***

Being fixed on a goal or purpose helps us to be steadfast and not to quit in the preparation process

The importance of being ready or prepared is a motivation to finish our preparation

When we are prepared, it gives us stability or confidence to do the task at hand

Preparation helps settle us emotionally

For example, doing a special or preaching is much easier when you are properly prepared than when you are not

As a preacher, when you have studied and dug out wonderful truths from God's Word, it gives confidence and enthusiasm when you preach

You can't wait to share what you have found in the Word of God

Paul stressed the importance of this

**II Timothy 2:15 – *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth”***

**THE “PREPARATION”**

**II. THE “POSSIBILITIES” – 6:6-8**

***“Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:” “Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,” “Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest”***

Back to the ant, but this time looking at …

… Not wasting our opportunities

Another insight we find from these verses about the ant is the fact that the ant does not waste their opportunities

They gather food in the summer before the winter arrives

The truth we are stressing here is the importance of taking advantage of our opportunities if we want to achieve or reach our goals

Time changes the conditions and circumstances of our life

What may be possible today, may not be possible tomorrow

Our health or finances can change in a moment

You could die, you don't know

What might be accomplished today, may not be possible tomorrow

Don't waste your opportunities / don’t procrastinate

Be like the ant and work hard on reaching your goals now while you can

God said this is a wise thing to do

Serve God now while you can

**Ill.** The following story is true and is about a missed opportunity. Two friends, the one Art, the other Walt took a ride one day way out in the countryside. They drove off the main road and drove through groves of trees to a large uninhabited expanse of land.

A few horses were grazing, and a couple of old shacks where there.

The friend, Walt, stopped the car, got out, and started to describe with great vividness the wonderful things he was going to build on the land. He wanted his friend Art to buy some of the land surrounding his project to get in on the ground floor. But Art thought to himself, *“Who in the world is going to drive twenty-five miles for his crazy project? The logistics of the venture were staggering”* So Walt explained to his friend Art, *“I’ll handle the main project myself, but it will take all my money. The land bordering it, however, where we're standing now, will in just a couple of years be jammed with hotels and restaurants and convention halls to accommodate the people who will come to spend their entire vacation here at the park.”* He continued, *“I want you to have the first chance at this surrounding acreage, because in the next five years it will increase in value several hundred times.”* Art said, *“What could I say? I knew he was wrong. I knew that Walt had let this dream get the best of his common sense, so I mumbled something about money being tight and promised that I would look into the whole thing a little later on.” “Later on will be too late,”* Walt cautioned Art as they walked back to the car. *“You'd better move on it right now.”* And so Art Linkletter turned down the opportunity of a life time to buy up all the land that surrounded what has become Disneyland. His friend, Walt Disney tried to talk him into it, but Art thought he was crazy. A great opportunity slipped through his fingers.

Don't wait until later, what you can do now

Let me ask,

Are you wasting opportunities in your life?

Has God given you the ability to do something for Him,

But you are letting it waste away because of doubt in yourself or in God?

Is there someone you need to speak to about the Lord, but you have put it off?

Beloved, don't waste your opportunities!

Do what the Lord wants you to do NOW!

**THE “PREPARATION”**

**THE “POSSIBILITIES”**

We continue to look at some Principles and Precepts from the Book of Proverbs that will help us reach our Goals

The third is …

**III. THE “PLODDING”**

To Plod means to work slowly, but steadily

Slow but steady, gets the job done

Hard work will get you to where you want to be

**Matthew 25:14-30 …**

Hard work will lead to …

**A. Authority – 12:24**

Earlier we saw that ***“The ‘thoughts’ of the diligent tend only to plenteousness;”***

Now we see ***“The ‘hand’ of the diligent ‘shall bear rule’: but the slothful shall be under tribute”***

Solomon states that the diligent person will rise to the top, while the lazy person will stay at the bottom

Many people want the promotion or authority at their work place

It usually means a pay increase and the assumption that they can work less, but the opposite is true

If you want to better yourself, then work hard, work smart

Again the word ***“diligent”*** means *sharp, to cut, or figuratively to be decisive*

The decisive, hard-working person will rise to the top just like cream, while those who are lazy will become the servants of others

Decisiveness is a leadership trait

It is a trait of someone who is willing to take responsibility for his actions

On the other hand, a slothful person tends to be indecisive

He may work today or he may not

Lazy people tend to avoid responsibility because it means more work for them

Those who are lazy tend to get into financial bondage

They almost become slaves to their lenders

Poem: *I've gone for a drink and sharpened my pencils,*

*Searched through my desk for forgotten utensils.*

*I reset my watch, I adjusted my chair,*

*I've loosened my tie and straightened my hair.*

*I filled my pen and tested the blotter*

*And gone for another drink of water*

*Adjusted the calendar, and I've raised the blind*

*And I've sorted erasers of all different kinds.*

*Now down to work I can finally sit,*

*Oops, too late, it's time to quit.*

We need to be on guard for laziness and procrastination

Hard work will lead to …

**B. Abundance – 21:5**

Again ***“The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want”***

Solomon states that the plans (thoughts) of those who are diligent lead to prosperity and abundance - Why?

Diligent, Decisive, hard-working people tend to be goal-oriented people

They have objectives / a place they want to get to

Folks like this have discipline and character, 2 traits that are not in abundance today

They have a desire to accomplish something or reach a goal

They understand that achievement is not easy, but is a result of hard work and careful planning

Their careful planning and implementation of their plans enable them to work with excellence

Diligent people don't want to waste their time or waste-away their lives

**Ill.** Green Bay Packer Football coach, Vince Lombardi said, *“The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will.”* Los Angeles Dodger baseball manager, Tommy Lasorda said, *“The difference between the impossible and the possible lies in a man's determination.”*

We are to stick with the job until it is finished

Solomon states that the person who is hasty ends up in poverty

The idea behind the word ***“hasty”*** is *being cornered or pressured into quick action,* which in turn, usually causes blunders in judgment or actions

Someone put it this way, *Haste makes waste*

Some folks are in such a hurry to get things done that they either do a shabby job, (and it shows) …

Or they do it wrong, and have to do it all over again

Hasty work or short-cuts tend to be riddled with sloppiness, dirt, inaccuracies, mistakes, and future problems that are costly

The damages or repairs from these mistakes can break your piggy bank

They can also cause the person who made them to lose employment

Hasty actions tend to lead to poverty, and a loss of blessings

[**Proverbs 20:21**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Pr+20%3A21) **- “*An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed”***

[**Proverbs 28:20**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Pr+28%3A20) **– “*A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent”***

Those who are hasty to be rich will end up in some sort of trouble

[**Proverbs 13:4**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Pr+13%3A4) **– “*The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat”***

The lazy person dreams of prosperity and abundance, but that's it

He does little to achieve his dreams and ends up with nothing

All those dreams are useless without any effort to reach those dreams

The diligent, however, will prosper, be blessed and abundantly satisfied

This is the idea of the word ***“fat”***

In their quest to reach their goals, they will mature and grow in discipline and character

That in itself is a great treasure

The accomplishments of the diligent give them great satisfaction, fulfillment, and build confidence

Getting something for nothing, or dreaming about what you want without working for it will leave you empty

There are many Christians today that dream of a closer walk with God, yet it doesn’t happen

They continue to kinda just float around - Why?

These folks do not make the effort to spiritually grow and exercise themselves in spiritual habits

[**I Timothy 4:7, 8**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Ti+4%3A7-8) **-*“But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness” “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come”***

**I Peter 2:2 – “*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby:”***

If you want to grow in Christ, take time each day to pray, study the Word of God,

Each week to attend church faithfully, give to the Lord your offerings, and tell others about Jesus Christ

Living for Christ is hard work

It demands that we keep our body, desires, and emotions in check and surrender our will to the Lord

That's not easy to do, but the Holy Spirit enables us to do this if we will yield to Him

Paul spoke about this matter

**I Corinthians 9:27 – “*But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway”***

**Ephesians 5:18 – “*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;”***

**Ill.** An irate brother dropped by the preacher's study one morning. He had a long list of grievances. Obviously unhappy to the point of misery, the disgruntled fellow finally blurted out, *“Preacher, I'm quittin'! I won't be at church any more!”* The wise preacher didn't argue. He expressed his concern over the brother's decision. *“I am truly sorry you feel that way,”* he said. *“I wonder if you would do me a big favor on your way home? Sister Brown has been ill for sometime and needs help with the cost of her medicine. Brother and sister Ray handed me this fifty-dollar bill at worship and asked me to get it to sister Brown. Do you mind stopping by on your way home and giving it to her?”* The brother agreed and left. The next Lord's day he was in his regular place at worship. *“But I understood you to say you were quitting,”* said the preacher. *“What happened?” “Preacher,”* said the subdued brother, *“when I gave that fifty dollars to sister Brown, she wanted to hug me! The joy and gratitude that I saw in her eyes made me wish I had been the one who gave her that money. That made me realize how good the couple must have felt who did give the gift to her. I've had my eyes opened. You don't need to worry! From now on I'll be in church!”*

We make our own choices …

-- You choose to serve God or waste your life

-- You choose to be selfish or concerned about others

-- You choose to grow in the Lord or float

-- You choose to forgive or get bitter and offended over petty matters

Be Diligent in walking with God and remember that the soul of the diligent shall prosper or be made fat

Hard work leads to …

**C. Additional Blessings – 13:11**

***“Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase”***

This verse reconfirms the problems of gaining wealth quickly by fraud or get-rich-quick schemes

This is the meaning behind the word ***“vanity”***

This word means *vapor*

It figuratively refers to that which is fleeting or amounts to nothing

It refers to gaining something without working for it or gaining it quickly

This type of gain will be diminished - Why?

People that gain without working for the gain,

…can’t appreciate the hard work that goes into someone earning that money

Easy come …Easy Go

They are lacking the character that would come from working hard

When you prosper by hard work, you understand the true value of money, the difficulty in attaining it, and are more cautious on how you spend it

When people gain something for nothing, they tend to just blow and go

They blow or waste their money on silly things or destructive activities because they lack the wisdom on how to use it

We have heard the stories of those who have won millions in lotteries or by gambling, only to be financially devastated a year or two later after they have squandered their wealth on further gambling, drugs, prostitutes, alcohol, etc.

How about the Sports and Hollywood crowd?

They simply lacked wisdom in handling their funds and discernment in detecting fraudulent investments or schemes

On the other hand, the person who works hard and sacrifices will prosper over time

The phrase ***“gathereth by labor”*** literally means …

… *with the hand or handful after handful*

The character and discipline that are gained by daily hard work are treasures in themselves which help a man to succeed at anything he might do

Hard work can lead to authority, abundance, and additional blessings

Lastly, we see that hard work Leads to …

**D. Advancement – 22:29**

***“Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men”***

Diligence is hard and persistent effort

The Diligent person is not lazy or negligent

He is a hard worker that is prompt and skilled

He will stand out to those in authority (Kings)

The quality of a person's work, not his flattery, will ultimately determine how his career progresses

Therefore, a person should seek to improve his or her skills

***“Mean”*** men here are the lower class of men that make up much of a society

Hard work, however, can take a man from the lower …

… classes to stand out before authority or someone high ranking

What if he were just a baker? No problem!

If he were diligent, it would not be long before he could possibly have contracts to feed the king, his court, and maybe his army!

Let me close with this illustration

**Ill.** Many years ago in England there was a small boy who talked with a lisp. While growing up, he was never a scholar. When war came along, the army rejected him because “we need *men”* they said*.* He once rose to address the House of Commons, and they all walked out. He often spoke to empty chairs and echoes. One day he became the Prime Minister of Great Britain, and led his country to victory in a worldwide conflict. That man was Sir Winston Churchill, whose iron will to persevere rallied all of his countrymen to defend their nation against Nazi Germany and defeat them. Churchill was diligent in his business and eventually stood before kings. God used him at a crucial time in world history!

**CONCLUSION**

**THE “PREPARATION”**

**THE “POSSIBILITIES”**

**THE “PLODDING”**

Principles and Precepts that will help us

Success and not Fail