

The Lakeview Lamp

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” - Psalm 119:105

October 22, 2006

Successful Christianity

Matt Allen, written in 2001

Peyton Manning is the star quarterback for the Indianapolis Colts. Graduating from Tennessee three years ago, he has led the Colts to a new measure of respectability in the National Football League. I began following Manning when we would lead his Tennessee Volunteers against my beloved Arkansas Razorbacks. While leading the Volunteers, his team beat the Hogs every year they played. Despite this terrible fact, I still like him because he is a winner both off and on the field. Last Sunday, I watched him struggle in a nationally televised football game - throwing four interceptions.

Four interceptions! Most likely the game would have gone the other way had this not happened. It's obvious he fell short on doing his part in the game plan. It's only natural that a person find himself disappointed and depressed after letting his team and coaches down. Some might be tempted to give up after such a dismal performance. But this afternoon you will find Mr. Manning back out on the field - leading his team once again. A bad game, a bad decision, or a mental block will not stop him from working toward his overall goal.

Obviously, I'm not going to devote this entire article to football. As Paul Harvey would say, here's the rest of the story. Being able to pick oneself up after failure and continue on toward the goal is a mark of a successful person! After taking responsibility for his actions, a successful person will do his best to turn the negative experience into an important lesson - so not to do it again in the future. A successful person will not drag things out and wallow in self pity. He doesn't have the time to do that, because he realizes how important it is to reach his goal. This is practical information - both in the physical and spiritual realm.

Examples of people progressing toward the goal of Heaven despite setback are Paul, Peter, and John Mark. They picked themselves up and continued to work in the Lord's kingdom. Paul and Peter's stories are probably well known by our readers. What happened to John Mark?

John Mark is first mentioned in **Acts 12:12**. Here, he is at his mother's home praying with other Christians for Peter's release from prison. He is mentioned in verse 25 as he traveled with Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem. He also accompanied them on Paul's first missionary journey - traveling to Seleucia, Cyprus, Salamis, Paphos, and Perga. In **Acts 13:13** we find that John left them and returned to Jerusalem. Why? We are not told for sure. Some speculate that John Mark lost courage as they moved farther into "heathen" lands - away from any kind of Jewish influence. Others say that he went to visit his mother or to be closer to Peter, with whom it is said he was very close. Whatever the reason, it was a great disappointment to Paul, who refused to take him with Barnabas on their second missionary journey.

Acts 15:38 says, *“But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone to the work with them.”* In the next verse we find that a sharp contention came between Paul and Barnabas in this matter - so sharp that they parted ways. Who was right? Who was wrong? First, from the comments in **15:39** it becomes clear to this writer that John Mark must have tired of

the work or became scared of the dangers that lurked ahead. He was wrong for this. Paul concluded that since he departed the first time that he might be inclined to do it again. One can see his point, especially when considering **Prov 25:19** (“*Like a bad tooth and an unsteady foot is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble.*”). But one can see Barnabas’ position, arguing on behalf of John Mark. I imagine he argued that one failure was not enough to ban him from going with them again. Barnabas felt that his nephew deserved a second chance. We might conclude that John Mark was a young Christian on the first journey, had now matured, and was ready to “prove himself.”

We can only wonder about John Mark’s reaction to the disagreement between Barnabas and Paul. Did he use it as an excuse to harbor ill will toward Paul? Did he continue to wallow in self-pity? Did he make excuses for his early departure on the first journey? Did he let his spiritual failure stunt his Christian growth? I believe the answer in all of these areas is a resounding “No!” This is proven by Paul’s comments about him in **Colossians** and **1 Timothy**.

These writings tell us John Mark continued on – serving the Lord, preaching the gospel! Instead of possessing hard feelings against Paul, he worked to restore the apostle’s confidence in him. Paul speaks very highly of John Mark in **Col 4:10-11**, saying that he has “*proved to be an encouragement to me.*” In **1 Timothy 4:11** Paul said, “*Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.*” Wow! Wouldn’t it be great to have an apostle say this about you? What a compliment!

What should we take away from this? When you find yourself down spiritually – maybe you’ve just failed miserably – take responsibility for your actions, ask forgiveness, and move on! Do your best to turn the negative experience into a positive by learning from it. Lessons learned are not always pleasant! Follow Paul’s example in **Philippians 3:13-14**: “*Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*” Don’t let anything take your eyes off the goal of getting home to Heaven! Don’t stop! Don’t give up! Don’t wallow in self pity or make excuses! I believe, if handled correctly, our mistakes can serve as stepping stones to greater and far more effective service for the Lord. You and I can excel in our Christianity – despite the setbacks! While we are not perfect, we can constantly improve! We are being refined so we may bring praise and honor to Jesus (**1 Peter 1:3-7**)! Set your mind today to do your best for the Lord – no matter what! He will help you succeed!

“The Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.” – Psalm 92:15

Family News

Mary Burnett remains at home. She is still very weak.

Sharon Copeland, Virginia's granddaughter and Cindi's niece, passed away this past weekend. Services were held in TX this past week. She leaves behind a husband and three children.

Metty Fain is in Room B2, 215 Highland Circle Dr, Portland TN 37148.

Elmo Ferrell had surgery on Friday to remove a growth on his face.

Barry Fultz is scheduled to go to the Mayo Clinic on November 6th. He continues to have many very bad days.

Sandra Hunt received mixed results from the blood work: blood sugar was fine, but there are some other issues. She sees a heart doctor on Thu.

Laura Reed's birthday is on October 29th.

Ame White continues a long series of doctor visits/check ups/tests. So far it has not gone smoothly (problems with some scans).

Robert Wray is better. His eye pain is less.

New Reports: None received.

Out of town, traveling, or visiting: **Virginia Bryant** (returns from TX today); **Justin & Julia Edwards; Heyboers;**

Robert & Candy Jenkins (return late today); **Allen Malone** (in TX, returns late this week); **Cindi Malone** (returns from TX today).

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"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks" (1 Thes 5:16-18).