

Christian Fathers: Remember This When You Fail

An old wag once said, if a thing's worth doing, it's worth doing badly.

Fatherhood is worth doing, even when we fail. Christian fathers should approach fatherhood expecting to fail—often. Sadly, sometimes we will fail very badly.

We live in a fallen world and we ourselves are fallen. Yes, we're redeemed, but we are fallen, and sanctification is a lifelong and painful process. We still have within us the law of sin and death, and this means our best work of fatherhood will remain blighted.

Yet we're not alone in our failures. Failures are all around us, outside as well as inside the church.

Think of King David. Remember his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband, Uriah? Yet this is the man who wrote most of the prayers of the book of Psalms, and God said this about him: "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will fulfill My entire will" (Acts 13:22, MEV).

King David was a man after God's own heart.

As fathers, the best we can hope for is that, in the midst of our sin, God will add His blessing and grace and mercy to our feeble efforts and that our sons and daughters will grow up to be godly. Our hope is not in ourselves, but in the Lord who is the Maker of heaven and earth. God is our refuge, an ever-present help in time of trouble. When we are weak, He is strong and He is glorified by working through our weakness.

More specifically, concerning our sons and daughters He has

promised He will be a God to us and to our children. Listen to His promise through Silas and the Apostle Paul to the Philippian jailer:

“‘Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you and your household will be saved.’ And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his household. In that hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds. And immediately he and his entire household were baptized. Then he brought them up to his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced with his entire household believing in God” (Acts 16:31-34, MEV).

The jailer was told if he believed in the Lord Jesus he would be saved. He was also told his household would be saved.

Sure enough, he believed—and so did his household. He was baptized—and so was his household. He rejoiced greatly—and so did his household.

We must claim this same promise for ourselves and our household, our wife and sons and daughters living with us under our roof and authority. Spiritual life is the beginning and end of Christian fatherhood. Remember what God said concerning Abraham?

“I chose him, and he will instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He promised him” (Gen. 18:19, MEV).

God chose Abraham so that he would command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice. This was the path by which God blessed Abraham and his descendants.

If you’re a Christian, God has chosen you so that you will command your children and your household to keep the way of the Lord. For you, too, this is the path by which God will bless you and your descendants. This is the means by which God

will give them the covenant blessings of life in this world, and then eternally.

Claim the promises of God over your own household. Give yourself to the obedience of faith and get to work. Don't allow your sins to silence your commands to your children and your household. God has made you the father of your household and it is your responsibility to lead and discipline and teach and love them as your heavenly Father has led and disciplined and taught and loved you.

Of course you will do your work imperfectly. Of course you will see your failures. Of course you will grieve as you recognize ways you have passed your particular sins down to your sons and daughters. Of course there will be times when your beloved wife will discourage you in your godly fatherhood.

What else is new?

We have our orders and we must carry them out because doing so is life to our children and to our children's children.

So buck up. Don't be a perfectionist. God has been pleased to reserve perfection for Heaven.

God calls sinful men to be city fathers and He is the one who gives them their authority. God calls sinful men to preach to His people. He could have sent them an angel, but it was His good pleasure to send them a flesh-and-blood man with feet of clay.

God calls sinful men to be husbands, and thus it is His will that your wife be loved and led by a sinner. God calls sinful men to be fathers, and thus it is His will that your sons and daughters be disciplined and taught and loved by a sinner.

All of this is clear.

The life of faith is a life of obedience in the face of our

own failures and sin. There's no other way. {eoa}

The preceding is an excerpt from Tim Bayly's book, Daddy Tried: Overcoming the Failures of Fatherhood (Warhorn Publishing, May 16, 2016). Please visit .

Tim Bayly has been married to his wife, Mary Lee, for 40 years. They are the parents of 5 children and grandparents to 21 grandchildren. He has also spent almost as much time as a pastor, helping others grow in their walk with God. Through his own personal failures, the faithful example of his father and the firm, loving hand of his heavenly Father, he has learned a thing or two about fatherhood.