85362 - Motives for success and overcoming failure

the question

What are the motives that some people have for overcoming failure?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The name of failure is enough to put us off it and strive for success, regardless of the material gains that a man may attain as the result of his success, because failure is a word that implies shortcomings and loss, and success is a word that implies perfection and praise.

Failure and success are two sides of the same coin, although they may seem to contradict one another at first glance. But in fact they are interconnected if you think about it, based on experience and real life.

Success is the path in this life which Allaah wants to be the aim of every believer. He has created the universe and subjugated it to meet this aim. He, may He be glorified, has enjoined man to believe, and has asked him to adhere to full submission to Him, as he cannot be anything but a slave to Allaah, and He has made that the purpose of creation, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And I (Allaah) created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me (Alone)”

[al-Dhaariyaat 51:56]

And He has promised that the one who dies following this path will be the successful one, and others will be losers:

“And whoever is removed away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, he indeed is successful”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:185]

So success is the story of life, the purpose for which Allaah has created this universe. He only sent the Messengers and revealed the Books to call people to attain true success before Allaah. He has decreed certain matters in order to motivate us to attain success in this world and in the Hereafter, as follows:

-He decreed eternal and everlasting delight for those who pass the test of faith and full submission, and adhere to that path and die following it:

“Then as for him who will be given his Record in his right hand will say: ‘Here! read my Record!

20. ‘Surely, I did believe that I shall meet my Account!’

21. So he shall be in a life, well-pleasing.

22. In a lofty Paradise,

23. The fruits in bunches whereof will be low and near at hand.

24. Eat and drink at ease for that which you have sent on before you in days past!”

[al-Haaqqah 69:19-24]

-The Qur’aan depicts the state of those who refused to follow the path of success and insisted on following the path of evil and failure, and described their situation on the Day when results will be shown, and it will be known who succeeded and who failed:

“But as for him who will be given his Record in his left hand, will say: ‘I wish that I had not been given my Record!

26. ‘And that I had never known how my Account is!

27. ‘Would that it had been my end (death)!

28. ‘My wealth has not availed me;

29. ‘My power (and arguments to defend myself) have gone from me!’”

[al-Haaqqah 69:25-29]

-Allaah, may He be glorified and exalted, decreed a good life in this world for the one who follows the path of success, He said (interpretation of the meaning):

“Whoever works righteousness — whether male or female — while he (or she) is a true believer (of Islamic Monotheism) verily, to him We will give a good life (in this world with respect, contentment and lawful provision), and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do (i.e. Paradise in the Hereafter)”

[al-Nahl 16:97]

Ibn Katheer (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

This is a promise from Allaah to the one who does righteous deeds, that Allaah will give him a good life in this world, and a good life includes all kinds of comfort and delight. It was narrated from Ibn ‘Abbaas and others that they interpreted it as meaning a goodly halaal provision, and it was narrated from ‘Ali ibn Abi Taalib (may Allaah be pleased with him) that he interpreted it as meaning contentment. ‘Ali ibn Abi Talhah said, narrating from Ibn ‘Abbaas, that it means happiness. The correct view is that a good life includes all of these things. Tafseer al-Qur’aan il-‘Azeem (4/601).

This is the way according to which the Muslim should live throughout his life. The one who starts out on the basis of this understanding will inevitably be led to success and achievement in all his affairs, both religious and worldly, because the believer knows that he is required to establish truth and justice in this world, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Indeed We have sent Our Messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance (justice) that mankind may keep up justice”

[al-Hadeed 57:25]

An individual’s success is part of the success of the ummah in achieving justice and fairness.

And the believer also hears the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) who said: “Allaah loves, when one of you does a thing, that he should do it well.” Narrated by Abu Ya’la (7/349) and classed as hasan by al-Albaani on the basis of corroborating evidence in al-Silsilah al-Saheehah (1113). Doing things well is one of the pillars of success.

These motives are all things that prepare the believer to attain the highest degrees of success. He always strives to develop his talents and learn useful skills, and to develop himself on the educational, moral, social and economic levels. He knows that the successful, striving believer is better than the one who is idle and lazy, who earns nothing from his laziness but loss in both worldly and religious terms.

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allaah than the weak believer, although both are good. Strive to do that which will benefit you and seek the help of Allaah, and do not feel helpless. If anything befalls you, do not say ‘If only I had done (such and such), the such and such would have happened,’ rather say: ‘Allaah has decreed and what He wills He does,’ for ‘if only’ opens the door to the work of the shaytaan.” Narrated by Muslim (2664).

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: This hadeeth includes several important principles of faith, including the following:

That a person’s happiness lies in his seeking that which will benefit him in this life and in the Hereafter, and this striving means expending effort and doing one’s utmost. Because a man’s striving and action can only be with the help of Allaah and by His will and support, He commanded him to seek His help, so that he will be acting in accordance with the meaning of the verse (interpretation of the meaning): “You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything)” [al-Faatihah 1:5]. His striving for that which will benefit him is an act of

worship to Allaah, which cannot be done except with His help, so He commanded him to worship Him and seek His help.

Then he said: “and do not feel helpless”, because feeling helpless is contrary to striving for that which will benefit him, and it is contrary to seeking the help of Allaah. The one who strives for that which will benefit him and seeks the help of Allaah is the opposite of the one who feels helpless, so this is telling him, before what has been decreed happens, of that which is one of the greatest means of attaining it, which is striving for it whilst seeking the help of the One in Whose hand is control of all things, from Whom they come and to Whom they will return. If he does not attain what was not decreed for him, then he may feel either of two things: helplessness, which opens the door to the work of the shaytaan, so his sense of helplessness leads him to say “if only”, but there is nothing good in saying “if only” in this case, rather that opens the door to blame, panic, discontentment, regret and grief, all of which are the work of the shaytaan, so the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade us to open the door to his works in this manner, and told us to adopt the second option, which is looking at the divine decree and bearing it in mind, for if it was decreed for him it would never have missed him and no one could have prevented him from attaining it. Hence he said: “If anything befalls you, do not say ‘If only I had done (such and such), the such and such would have happened,’ rather say: ‘Allaah has decreed and what He wills He does,’” and he taught him that which will benefit him in either case, whether he gets what he wanted or not. Hence this hadeeth is one which a person can never do without.

Shifa’ al-‘Aleel (37-38).

With this thinking one can overcome every obstacle and every failure, and there is nothing that he cannot achieve; there will be no limit to his hopes and no end to his ambition and resolve.

Rather he will realize that failure is a sign of someone who is striving, because the one who strives is the one who may fail, but the one who does nothing and is lazy will neither fail nor succeed. Effort must inevitably lead to success one day, even if it is a long way off. So he should take failure as a step towards success, learning from it the causes of shortcomings, and trying to overcome them and set them straight, so that he becomes stronger than he was before, until he attains the

success for which he is striving.

The door of repentance which Allaah, may He be exalted, has opened to those who make mistakes and fail is another incentive to overcome failures and attain success, especially if the one who falls short learns from his experience. One of the salaf said: A sin that generates humility and regret is better than an act of obedience that generates self-admiration and arrogance.

Finally, with all these motives for attaining success and overcoming failure, there remains no excuse for being inactive or lazy. The way is easy and all it requires of you is some determination, will power and wisdom.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “All of my ummah will enter Paradise except those who refuse.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (7280).

See also the answer to question no. 22704.

And Allaah knows best.