

ADVANCING DESPITE ADVERSITIES

A handbook for every champion

BY

ODIMS GREAT

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DEDICATION

To my 'Baby-Mum', Odinma G 1 (Mrs.), the greatest and most complete woman ever to have walked on planet earth. Her uncensored love, encouragement and support serves as the energy that keeps me going no matter what happens.

Also dedicated to all those who have ever faced adversity plus those going through one at the moment!

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ABOUT THE BOOK

This book is not written to give you excuses for your failings but to inspire you to go on and succeed in spite of your past failures. The past has passed. As long as that failure failed to kill you, never fail to rise again. Only trees and dead men keep lying were they were hit down. Bouncing back is the inherent ability of the living. Gain an inspiration to rise again, never an excuse to stay down. Turn your defeat into a deafening feat. Ask Churchill, the moment when enemies and failures surround you and it seems you have kissed your last hope of success goodbye; that could be your finest moment. This book is filled with such moments, moments when adversity turns advantage, advancing one to ones greatness and stardom. Moments when problems yield progress and past trials birth triumph. A man could still win a war after several losses in battles. Yes, you can still win at the end after your many temporary defeats. A man is only defeated when he quits as victory is always certain for the man who keeps fighting, relentlessly. The truth is, history have shown that great failures are often the prerequisite for great success. There is no great success in life that has never seen failure. Even Jesus had to encounter various failures and heartaches enroute becoming the name above all names. Always remember, those who chickened out in the face of adversity live to work for and serve those who advanced despite theirs.

PREFACE

Only a few are oblivion of the fact that Kenya is the hub of animal and wild life. A tourist to Kenya was once shocked to a frazzle when he saw a little boy controlling elephants. He was startled by the fact that these huge creatures could be tied down with a little rope tied to their front legs. There were neither chains nor cages. Although it was quite obvious that the elephants could break loose from their bonds at will, they didn't. While this tourist gazed in disbelief, the trainer leveled up with him. He walked up to the trainer asking how he came about such magic. "It's not a magic", began the trainer, "when they were very young, and much smaller, we used the same little rope to tie them. At that age, the rope was quite strong enough to hold them. After several fruitless efforts to break away, they gave up. As they grew up, they were conditioned to believe they can never break away. They still believe the rope can hold them. Thus, they never again try to break free again".

We may find the above story very laughable, yet many of us are like those elephants. Many today have permanently packed their bags in inaction just for a little act of opposition they once faced. Many have chickened out at the middle of the road just for a minor obstruction. No one expects a problem but it comes, often without warning. Our role and natural responsibility is to prepare always at all time. God often doesn't shed us from problem but rather gives us the grace to progress through them. Advancing through adversity may sound ridiculous, but it takes the ridiculous word of God to birth the miraculous works of God. He has already assured us that he won't allow a headache bigger than our head to worry us. God give us triumphs through trials, advancement through adversity and his crown in the cross lodge.

King Solomon once complained, "The wise dieth as the fool dieth" (Ecc12:16B). Yes as it happen eth to the sinful fool it happens to the saintly wise. Although he was right, the preacher turned out rightly wrong when he deemed it vanity and a vexation of spirit. What happens to a man is not the end of the story; neither is it as important as what he does with what happens to him. Life is full of actions and its opposite reactions. Both may have the same experience, but what he makes happen with what happened to him is what separates the wise from the foolish. A successful life, said Edison Thomas, is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration. My

Bible says and I believed it, “A righteous man may fall seven times but seven times he shall rise again”. That’s the dividing factor. The wise falleth, just like the fool, but the measure of grace and ability to bounce back is not equal in both. Problem leaves the fool bitter but the wise gets better by it.

Every man’s life history is comprised of two headings: Your challenges and how you handled them. How you handle your challenges determines what it changes you into. Challenges are chances and channels for changes-whether they are positive or negative changes depend on the individual’s approach to them. Real men neither resist changes nor are they resisted by changes. Adversity is an apparatus for advancement. As no skillful workman quarrels with his tools, only failures and indolentmen avoid or complain of adversity. Indeed, there is hardly anyone alive who has not at one point or the other stumbled into adversity. It is like an unwelcomed visitor that forces its self unto our lives. No one wants it, yet no one can merely wish it away. Yet, adversity is a two faceted visitor whose outcome of its visit depends largely on the host. James Russell Lowell captures it best when he said, “Mishaps are like knives that either serves us or cuts us, as we grasp them by the blade or the handle”. Failures and adversities are what you make of them. In the words of William Arthur Ward, “Adversity causes some men to break and others to break records”. Lord Byron in his days called adversity, the first path to truth. Writing on adversity, Horace observed that success in the affairs of life, often serves to hide one’s ability, whereas adversity frequently gives one the opportunity to discover them. The truth remains that nothing advances one like adversity. Like the water test in the days of Gideon, adversity is an acid test that separates those who only wanted to from those who are determined to succeed. Lord Chesterfield once said, “A man of sense is never discouraged by difficulties, he redoubles his industry and his diligence, he perseveres and infallibly prevails at last”. This book will blow open your mind to see how you have been sitting on a well yet wailing of thirst. If well studied and religiously followed, it will advance one from one’s pitiable state of adversity to an envious height of success.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SPIRIT OF EDISON

Many, at different times and place, fashion and style, have chronicled how the great little globe of sunshine was born out of a great fire of adversity. My mum told me this very version. It happened that one day after another day of unsuccessful experiments and attempts to invent the electric bulb, Edison started home, angrily. He asked his lab attendant to pack up and lock the lab for that day. He left. However, later that faithful day, the news began to spread all over the town that Edison's multimillion dollar laboratory was on fire. That was in December 1914. Within minutes, all his packing compounds, celluloid for records and films, electric wires and other flammable goods were in flames. The heat from the inferno was so intense that several different fire service men from eight surrounding towns were unable to put it out. Thus, 67 years old Edison lost everything in just one day! Millions of dollars were roasted. The multimillion dollar "fireproof" building was only insured for \$238,000. Yet what baffles many most about the incident is Edison's attitude towards the disaster and perceived failure. When he saw his son, 24 years old Charles Edison, crying, "Everything is gone", Edison was unfazed. He said to him, "Find your mum; bring her here immediately. She will never see anything like this as long as she lives". My God! It didn't end there. When the press asked him the next day how he felt, he said, "There is a great value in disaster. All of our mistakes are burned up. Thank God we can now start anew". Wow. Three weeks on, Edison managed to deliver the first phonograph. Life goes on, even better. Later, Edison finally found his lab attendant who had been aloof, attempting suicide. Edison inquired of him what exactly happened. The young man wept bitterly. His whole clan put together doesn't worth the laboratory. "What exactly happened?" Edison pressed on. "It was a mistake", the lad replied. "As I packed the apparatuses and equipment at the end of the day's experiment, the big red wire touched the blue one and the lab blew up. I only managed to escape." The lab attendant explained with his last ounce of courage. There was a confused silence at first. Then Edison shouted and hugged the baffled lad. "In that mistake lies the answer to our many months of experiments. In your perceived pit lies our gold mine." Excited, Edison stormed out, leaving his bewildered lab attendant even more confused. Henry Ford gave

Edison a soft loan and, few months later, the world was left in awe at the beauty of the first light bulb.

I have learnt in my course through life that there is no better tool for advancement in the things of life than God ordained adversity. Life's most essential factor, according to James Whitecomb Riley, has always been persistence- the determination never to allow one's energy and enthusiasm to be dampened by the discouragement that must inevitably come. Adversity always becomes an advantage to those who are determined to advance not just despite their adversities but through it. As Thomas Carlyle would say: "Permanence, perseverance and persistence in spite of all obstacles, discouragement and impossibilities; is what in all things distinguishes the strong soul from the weak". Abraham Maslow was on point when he mused, "If I were dropped out of a plane into the ocean and told that the nearest land is a thousand miles away, I would still swim. And I would despise the one who gave up". Successful men are not those who never failed but the ones who never failed to bounce back-by trying again. Catherine Pulsifer advised her students, "Success takes time. First develop persistence, determination and most importantly, believing in yourself to win." Edison never doubted the fact that he would win at last. He persevered. He knew that there is no worse civil war than self doubt. He, who doubts himself, says a writer, is like a man who enlists in the army of his enemy and bears arms against his own self. Alice Foote Mac Dougall (1867-1945) a US business person put it best, "It is the small doubts of timid souls that accomplish their ruin. It is the narrow vision, the fear and trembling hesitation that constitute defeat".

When the press met with Edison after showcasing ‘the little globe of sunshine’, they asked him, “Sir how did you feel when for 999 good times you failed to discover the secret to commercial electricity?” Thomas smiled. He radiated the uncommon warmth, courage and pleasant pleasure known only by brave men. He said to them, “Friends, I never failed. Not even once. I only succeeded in discovering 999 different ways by which a man could try it and would fail to generate electric light” I love that. That’s the way champions talk. Every step they take, whether seen as negative or positive by people, advance them towards their dream and aspiration. Even when they fall, they fell forwards. Then commented the correspondent to the news agency: “Whenever you light a bulb or a radio or even relax to watch a tely, first stop, for a moment and thank God that Thomas Edison never gave up”. I love it! That means, each time you fail to keep on persevering, you deny God an ounce of praise. Each time you fail to try, you make God who has promised, a fool. Jesus said in **Matthew 5:16** “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”. There is no greater irony in life than a failed Christian. Nothing hurts God more than to see us fail. Our success brings Him honour and glory.

My problem is not in your failing but that many people will fail if you fail to rise again. My arithmetical challenge is not that you gave up, but it borders on how many who will give up because you did. In my previous book, LEGACY, I chronicled several kings who failed to please God just because Jeroboam failed. II kg13:6, II kg 10:31, 13:11, 14:24 etc formed a list of different kings with exactly thesame CV with their progenitor, “...and he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, for he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat which he made Israel to sin. Never blaze such a heinous trail. Each time you want to sin or give up, stop to remember posterity. Think of the future. Every action of our lives touches some chord that will vibrate in eternity. I love this poem I learnt in R.I. Seymour’s book:

A careful man I want to be; for a little fellow follows me.

I do not dare to go astray; for fear he will go the self-same way.

I cannot once escape his eyes; whatever he sees me do he tries.

Like me-he says he is going to be; that little chap who follows me

I must remember as I go; through summer sun and winters snow

That I am building for the years to be; that little chap who follows me.

You may not know or see him; but he is there. Invisible but present! What will be the fate of that someone who will one day walk in your shoes? Friend, for his sake, not you again, for the sake of generation to come, please try again. The kid watches while the goat feeds. Jean RitcherPaul captured it better, “The words that a father speak to his children in the privacy of home are not heard by the world, but as in whispering galleries, they are clearly heard at the end and by posterity”. Don’t be a discouragement. I got this same story from the same book-Discover your True potential:

Two frogs fell into a deep, cold cream with shiny and steep sides. One quickly gave up; “It is fate, I must accept it. No help is around,” it said and drowned. The other fought on. “I will swim awhile, at least”, he cried, “It wouldn’t really help the world if one more frog was dead.” It kicked and swam and kicked, until the cream solidified. It hopped out –via butter.

Learn from that second frog. Be tenacious, persistent and determined to make it despite the opposition. Just like the frog, ask yourself, “Will this world be any better if I fail to rise again?” There are many failures in this life who gave up in the face of opposition, don’t join the number. Try and try again. Thomas Edison once said, “Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.” Learn from Abraham Lincoln: “If you try something you don’t succeed, try something harder.” Never ever give up. The cream turned butter only when the frog had kept trying. When one confidently and diligently approaches his dream and aspirations with unreserved tenacity, persistent and determination, unanticipated mighty forces will come to ones aid. You will still win if you persevere. Thomas Edison put it this way: “When a man really desires a thing so deeply that he is willing to stake his entire future on a single turn of the wheel in order to get it, he is sure to win”. Does there seem to be no way? Hear Prophet Isaiah: “I will make a way even where there seems to be no way. I will make water to flow in the desert”. Friend, there are several paved ways even in Norway. Just hang on, God will make a way. “Learn from nature. What

happens when you break a spider's web or disturb a bird's nest, or knock over an anthill, pilfer some honey from a beehive or take the wool off a sheep's back or draw a pail of milk from a cow? Simply, they start afresh and begin production all over again (R.I Seymour). Do likewise. Bill Clinton once told George Bush (Snr.) during their election campaign in 1992, "I may be fat and ugly, but if you push me down, I keep coming back. I don't give up. I keep coming back". Imbibe that spirit. Come back to the game. Be a back bouncer. At the age of 67, when most men in Africa would have retired from active service, Edison Thomas, in his quest to discover commercial electricity, lost millions of dollars to the fire that razed down his factory. The following day, he wrote his wife and colleagues, "Thank God, all of our mistakes have been destroyed. In a new factory, we can start our experiment with a dean slate." I love that. Little wonder his friend, Henry Ford, said that failure is an opportunity to start again more intelligently. Get back to the battle line. The truth is, until your victory comes the battle field remains the safest place to be. Failure, according to Les Brown, leaves one with two choices: get better or get bitter. Choose the former. Get better. In fact, what we call adversity, God calls opportunity (ask Joseph Jacob)! Allow that adversity to advance you. Disraeli once said, "There is no education like adversity". Napoleon Hill puts it best, "Every adversity, every failure, every heartache, carries with it the seed of an equal or greater benefit". Never look backwards. Relegate regrets to the background. You cannot move ahead when you are in reverse. Go forward. Be success conscious. There is no success today who had never failed before. The man you call a resounding success was only a recurring failure who kept trying. Saints they say are sinners who kept going. Ask Jesus of Judas Iscariot and Simon Peter. I love this story about Sir Edmund Hillary (1919-2008), a mountain climber and Antarctic explorer. He was the first to reach the summit of Mount Everest (8850m/29,035H), with the Nepalese Sherpa, Tenzing Norgay. Born in Auckland, New Zealand, Edmund Percial Hillary served in the Royal New Zealand Air force during World War II. He obtained his early mountaineering experience in the southern Alp of New Zealand. At 11:30am in the morning of 29th May, 1953, Sir Edmund Percial Hillary and Tenzing Norgay finally placed the British flag on top of Mount Everest which at 8,850m above sea level is the highest peak o60n earth. Hillary had been on Mount Everest in 1951 and again in 1952 but failed to reach the summit on both occasion. B.C Forbes once bragged, "Obstacles cannot crush me. Every obstacle yields to a stern resolve. He who is focused to be a star does not change

hismind.”Prior to the third attempt before a large audience, Hillary pointed to the picture of Everest and said with a loud voice: “You beat me once, you beat me twice, but, Mount Everest, you will not beat me again, because you have grown all you are going to but I am still growing!” That’s what we call mountain moving faith! My brother calls it the universal language of all champions. Hear Vince Lombardi: “It is not whether you get knocked down; it is whether you get up that count.” After all, what we call failure is not actually the falling down but the staying down. My mum often says to me, “Never lie down where the devil has hit you down. Get up and try again”. You can’t hit back at your opponent when you are still down. Bounce back. That you tried and failed doesn’t mean you will always fail when you try. Don’t be an elephant! You are now bigger, better and more experienced than you were when you first failed. Keep trying. There is surely going to be a brighter day. Stop looking at where you have been, fret not at your present pitiable state, start looking at where you can still be (MIKE MURDOCK). Tomorrow is always going to be better. Advance towards it (tomorrow) despite adversities, past and present. I love Oliver Wendell Holmes where he said, “Greatness is not in where we stand, but in what direction we are moving. We must sail, sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it –but sail we must and not drift nor lie at anchor.” Sail we must! The truth is this, as Herbert Kaufman will put it, “Failure is only postponed success as long as courage coaches ambition. The habit of persistence is a habit of victory”. Be courageous. Persist. I love how Mary Beltrone puts it: “There is a place in God’s sun for the youth, farthest down, who has the vision, the determination and the courage to reach it.”

CHAPTER 2

LIFE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

During my teen years, I bought so many motivational books. I have read the story of several great men. One major thing I learnt from them all is this: those who refused to remain failures made all the great histories in this life. I choose to call them successful failures. They failed but refused to make their place of failing their burial ground. In each of them, I saw a man or woman who advanced despite adversities. They gave life to my dad's maxim, "Adversity makes some men to break and others to break record". Each of them followed the story line of Jesus who passed through shame, failures, defeats and humiliation enroute becoming the name above every other name (Phil 2:1-9). For 27years, Nelson Mandela faced all manners of insults and painful inhuman assaults while in jail. Today, Mandela is a Nobel winning legend. He is arguable the most influential and respected African ever lived.

Many believe that Abraham Lincoln is the greatest president US of America has ever had. Yet I am still waiting to see a man or woman who failed more times than he did. Born and raised in a poor family, life gave him no choice than to enter the labour market at the early age of 7. This was in his bid to help support his starving family. Born February 12, 1809, a humane far-sighted statesman all through his life time, Lincoln would later become a legend and folk hero after his death. He was put to bed in a log cabin at South Fork of the Nolin Creek near what is now Hodgenville, Kentucky. Life gave Lincoln no chance. He seemed bound to fail right from the word go. A symbol of tenacity and die-hard spirit, Abe Lincoln lost his dear mum at the age of nine. That was October 5, 1818. She died of milk sick epidemic. It happened that cows that had eaten the wild snakeroot plant produced poisoned milk which she mistakenly drank and died. His father, Thomas Lincoln, born in Rockingham County in Virginia in 1778, had married his mum, former Nancy Hanks on June 12, 1806. Hanks Nancy lived and died an illiterate. She signed her name with an 'x'. She also had a daughter in 1807, named Sarah, Abraham Lincolns younger sister. Her second son and third child died at infancy. Abraham Lincoln's father, Thomas Lincoln, was a poor carpenter and handyman. His grand dad, a poor farmer, in 1786 was killed by a Native American 1780, while he was at work clearing land for a farm in the forest. In 1811, aged

2yearsold, the Lincolns moved from Nolin Creek to Knob Creek. At knob creek life was almost miserable for the young Abe. Life was both lonely and hard. In 1816 his dad lost both his Nolin and knob creek lands to Mill Creek farm in court. Thus, in the winter of the same year, they all moved to Ohio River, near Pigeon Creek in what is now Gentry Ville Indiana.

In 1819, a year after his mum's demise the family moved to Elizabeth town Kentucky where Thomas Lincoln married Sarah Bush Johnston, a widow with three children. Abraham Lincoln loved both his step siblings and step mother. He would later in life refer to Sarah B. Johnson as 'my angel mother'. Abe grew up a skilled axe man as clearing forest was the most important job on the frontier farms of his days. He only had a less than one year of formal education in his entire life. He proved by his life and time that what matters most in life is grace not grade. Those who acquire grade without grace often end in disgrace. The streets are full of jobless fools with files full of grades. A self thought genius, Lincoln would later give life to my dad's believe that the best grade one can ever acquire is personal upgrade. That's the true grade that thrusts you to the top. Men, who go for grades on the paper, go there to read about those who upgraded the mind. The Wright brothers only managed to complete high school, narrowly. Mark Twain did not even make it though elementary school. Charles Dickens was forced out of school in his early teens in order to feed his family. Most of the great footballers and other sports men never smelled the four walls of even a primary school. Great men, whether formally or informally, upgraded their minds and the great wealth that lies therein. They never took no for an answer nor did they give no education as an alibi for failing. Better part of my days in physics class where spent learning about Faraday and other great physicists. I was forced to memorize their laws, theories and equations. Yet I was stunned to frazzle when on reading his biography in Encarta DVD 2009 I discovered that Faraday never went to school. Famous for his work in electromagnetic induction and his laws of electrolysis, Micheal Faraday was born on the 2ndof September, 1721. His dad, an illiterate blacksmith,bore and bred him in Newington, Surrey, England. With little or no formal education, Faraday who was apprenticed to a London bookbinder read books on scientific subjects and experimented with electricity. His break came in 1512 when he attended a series of lectures by Sir Humphrey Davy, a famous British chemist. Smart Mike would later forward his lecture notes on that day to Davy, with an

additional request for employment. Faraday got the job. He began work as an assistant in Dave's chemical laboratory at the Royal institution. In 1813, aged 22, Faraday followed Dave on an extended tour of Europe. A young famous scientist was born. By 1824 he had already been elected to the royal society and later appointed the director of the laboratory of the Royal institution. He died on the 25th of Aug. 1867 at a place near Hampton Court, Surrey with many discoveries, laurels and awards to his name. Today everyone who passes through the baptismal class of sciences must be forced to learn the laws, theories and discoveries of a man who never went to school. The truth is, when grace speak, grade is relegated to the background. With no real formal education, Abigail Adams (1744 to 1818) emerged the most influential woman of her days. Born in Weymouth, Massachusetts; Abigail lived to be the wife and later mother of two different American presidents. She was the wife and first lady to John Adams, the second president of the US. In 1825, she also became the mother of the 6th American president as John Quincy Adams her son became president. Never forget too that the humble Barbara Bush Pierce was a mere dropout from Smith College, just in her sophomore year. Greatness has more to do with grace than grade. Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, described by Obama as the finest politician ever lived, is very worthy of mention. Born in 1945, Lula attained the Presidency of Brazil in 2002 and again 2006 without a formal education. Luis grew up in an extremely poor background. He was bred as one of the eight malnourished children of a peasant family in Garanhuns, Pernambuco. Lula left home for Santos in 1952 as a migrant alongside many blacks, on the back of a truck! From Port City in 1957, he moved to Sao Paulo where he worked for 10years in a screw factory. He began to cultivate leadership when he turned an active member of the union of metal workers. By 1975 he was already a president elect of the union. By the time adversities and opposition from the military government and Brazil's automobile industries led him into series of strikes between 1978 and 1979; Lula had been thrust up as a national hero. He organized, almost single handed, the workers party. He equally supervised the growth and expansion of the party into the largest and most well organized left of centre party in Brazil. His first shot at candidacy for public office ended in shame and defeat. That was in the year 1982 when he vied for the office of the governor of Sao Paulo. In 1986 he managed to win election into Brazil's parliament. He enrolled among the 20 candidates that in the November of 1989 filed out for Brazil's first direct election since 1960, for Brazil's chief executive.

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