

God's Grace of Disappointment: Why Would He Ever Allow This?

¹⁴ Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed! ¹⁵ Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, "A son is born to you," making him very glad. ¹⁶ Let that man be like the cities that the Lord overthrew without pity; let him hear a cry in the morning and an alarm at noon, ¹⁷ because he did not kill me in the womb; so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb forever great. ¹⁸ Why did I come out from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame?

Jeremiah 20:14-18

1. Introduction: What is Disappointment?

a. Jeremy Pierre: "Life is one long, steady disappointment. This dawns on most people by their 30's. Childhood is all potentiality. The teenage years are all angst—but even angst betrays some hope, since it is only quiet outrage that things could be better. A person can still carry into his 20's the illusion that the world will soon blossom. Not until his 30's does a person realize that much of what's coming won't be better than what has come. The 40's, 50's, and on often only reinforce Alexander Pope's infamous beatitude, 'Blessed is the man who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.' To live is to be disappointed."

b. It is not a sin to be disappointed, but it certainly can be a temptation to sin if we demand our own ways rather than submitting in faith to God's plans.

c. Disappointment hurts. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick" (Proverbs 13:12).

d. Disappointment is the feeling of loss or failure because our plans, hopes, expectations, or desires have not been met, and in some cases, are continuously frustrated.

e. Question: What kinds of things disappoint you?

f. Could it be that Jesus has perfect and gracious reasons for allowing our disappointments?

2. Ruth and Naomi – Tragedy after Tragedy.

3. Out-of-focus Asaph missing what is truly good (Psalm 73-83).

What caused his disappointments? What was God graciously doing through it? What jolted him back into a godly viewpoint? What was the new grace perspective?

Psalm 73 – A Psalm of Asaph. ¹ Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.

² But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. ³ For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ⁴ For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek.

⁵ They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind. ⁶ Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment. ⁷ Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies. ⁸ They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression. ⁹ They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth. ¹⁰ Therefore His people turn back to them, and find no fault in them. ¹¹ And they say, "How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?" ¹² Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches.

¹³ All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. ¹⁴ For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning. ¹⁵ If I had said, “I will speak thus,” I would have betrayed the generation of Your children. ¹⁶ But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task,

¹⁷ until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end. ¹⁸ Truly You set them in slippery places; You make them fall to ruin. ¹⁹ How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors! ²⁰ Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when You rouse yourself, You despise them as phantoms. ²¹ When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, ²² I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward You.

²³ Nevertheless, I am continually with You; You hold my right hand. ²⁴ You guide me with Your counsel, and afterward You will receive me to glory. ²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides You. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. ²⁷ For behold, those who are far from You shall perish; You put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to You. ²⁸ But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works.

4. The Apostle Paul and the painful thorn (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

What caused his disappointments? What was God graciously doing through it? What jolted him back into a godly viewpoint? What was the new grace perspective?

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 – ⁷ So to keep me from becoming *conceited* because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming *conceited*. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

5. What? Even Jesus was disappointed?

6. Concluding Thoughts on God’s Grace of Disappointments.

- Corrie Ten Boom: “If you look at the world, you’ll be distressed. If you look within, you’ll be depressed. If you look at God, you’ll be at rest.”
- John Piper: “When Christ died he purchased for you the *Yes* to all God’s promises (2 Cor. 1:20), and that includes the promise to use His sovereign power to govern all the inexplicable, maddening detours and delays of your life for wise and loving purposes. He is doing a thousand things for you and for His glory in your disappointed plans.”
 - a. We cannot eliminate disappointment this side of heaven.
 - b. Although we don’t like to be disappointed, disappointments do serve a divine purpose.
 - c. During our disappointments, we learn to rely on Jesus.
 - d. It can feel as if our disappointments are lasting forever, but our time on Earth is a small fraction of eternity.
 - e. Disappointment can strengthen our walk of faith in Jesus.
 - f. Disappointment helps us to submit to God’s sovereignty.
 - g. Our disappointments teach us to pray. Pastor Steve Fuller: “When you are feeling hopeless, don’t wallow in self-pity, or try to change your own heart, or settle for Netflix. Turn to Christ in faith.”