

Disappointments & Blessings

2 Samuel 17:24-29

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 1-5-2013

Introduction

A pastor recently shared a story about a Christian couple in Colorado that had found a log house up in the mountains. And it seemed perfectly suited for the kind of ministry that they wanted to be involved in. The price was right, and they asked God to bless them with this house. But one thing after another went wrong. Even their mortgage, which they were already qualified for, ended up being withdrawn for no reason that they could discern. And as time went on, the deal completely fell through. Now, they were disappointed and they wondered why God hadn't answered their prayer, but they left it in His hands. And that winter there was an avalanche on the mountain that destroyed the house. Ah! Now they could understand why God was stopping them at every point on the sale of that house. After the avalanche, the disappointment actually seemed like a blessing. But it sure didn't at the time.

And as you think about this past year, some of you may have had disappointments that are far, far worse than what that couple experienced. Certainly David's disappointments could have been crushingly disappointing. But the interesting thing is that when you read the Psalms that he wrote during this period (and we may look at one of them next week) you will discover that even the most crushing of his disappointments were turned by God into blessings. Now, I will have to admit that not all of these things are explicitly mentioned as blessings in disguise. But in Psalm 36 David rejoices in the incredible provisions of God as he is leaving everything behind. In that Psalm he says that he is abundantly satisfied with God's fullness and able to drink from the river of God's pleasures. That is remarkable! During the events of chapters 17 and 18 he was able to drink from the river of God's pleasures. There was something supernatural that sustained him. And I want to dig into that something today.

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I. Disappointments galore (vv. 23-26)

A. David in exile (v. 24a)

But first of all, I want to look at each disappointment and blessing and make application. And I should hasten to say that there were a lot more disappointments than are mentioned here. One of the disappointments was actually a misinterpretation of the facts –thinking that Mephibosheth had betrayed him, when he had not. But we will just focus on the disappointments listed in this passage. And in verses 23-26, you will see that he had disappointments galore.

First of all, he was in exile with nothing to his name. He had to leave in such a hurry that he couldn't bring anything with him. Verse 24 says, "Then David went to Mahanaim..." That was 23 miles east of the Jordan River. This was a fortified Levitical city that Ishbosheth had earlier retreated to and from which he had formed rump government. But now the tables have turned and it is David who is in exile. We will be seeing in a bit that it was an incredible blessing for these clergy to take him in and support him. But when you have lost everything, it is tempting to only see what was lost and to miss out on the blessing.

I remember that when Jim Bakker got out of prison he talked about the blessings of his prison term. He was the former head of PTL Ministries, a multimillion-dollar TV ministry that he lost amid a sex and money scandal. And he ended up being in prison for five years. He was a crook. And initially, all he could see was what had been lost. But God used that prison sentence to change his heart, change his theology, and to sanctify him. When he got out he immediately began preaching against the Gospel of money that had so gripped his soul before. And he publically confessed, "I was teaching the opposite of what Jesus had said." He said, "If you fall in love with the things of this world, you will be disappointed." In fact, God wants you to be disappointed. But that disappointment and that exile of pastor Bakker into prison was what drove him into the blessing of the Lord.

B. Absalom (v. 24b)

The second disappointment for David was his son, Absalom. That's pretty obvious. Verse 24 continues: "And Absalom crossed over the Jordan..." He was chasing David, hoping to kill his own father. What a louse of a son! What ingratitude! David had invested so much into his son that Absalom was a major disappointment. He broke David's heart. But as you read through the Psalms you see that David allowed this disappointment

to renew his own repentance, to realize that there but for the grace of God go I, and to press much, much more deeply into the presence of the Lord. This huge betrayal led David to write (by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) a minimum of 17 Psalms, and many people believe that it was a lot more Psalms than that. But even if we restrict ourselves to these 17 Psalms, we realize that God used his pain to minister to the hurts, anguish, and disappointments of countless people down through history. So there was blessing that flowed from David into the lives of others as a result of this disappointment.

But there was blessing in David's life as well. David had made an idol out of Absalom, and had pampered him, and had failed to give Absalom the tough love that he needed. We will be seeing that David doesn't totally learn this lesson till the end of chapter 18. But you know what God does with idols, right? He destroys them. And sometimes our disappointments are intended to make us much more God-focused. If you have learned (like David did) to press into the heart of God, you can handle disappointments more easily, but if you do not know Jesus and the power of His resurrection, then you won't know the fellowship of His sufferings either. Or another way to say it is that you won't know His fellowship through your own disappointments. And the result can make you bitter just like it made Amasa, Joab, Jithra, and Zeruah extremely bitter people. Those are usually the only two ways that disappointments lead; they either make you better or they make you bitter.

C. David's army (v. 24c)

The third disappointment was that David's army sided with Absalom. It's crazy. David had never done anything but good for that army. Unlike Saul, he was not a centralist. We've already seen that David believed in very limited government and maximum liberties for the citizens. But he was certainly a hero within the army. Yet verse 24 continues: "...he and all the men of Israel with him." For some reason these soldiers are willing to go along with the flow and be used by Absalom to fight against David. That would have been a huge disappointment to David. If your heart is set on popularity, this could destroy you. But if your heart (like David's) is set on God, it will wean you away from peer pressure, from the fear of man, and from the idolatry of public opinion, and from the desire to be liked.

But what if you were one of those soldiers? By the end of chapter 19 you would likely be disappointed in *yourself* for having gone along with the majority. What a mistake. You would be kicking yourself. Some people just

drift with the current and don't ever make unpopular stands that will hurt. They become a disappointment to themselves simply because they have not made decisions. Instead, they have let others make the decisions for them.

Ronald Reagan recounted the time when he stopped being passive in decision making. When he was a young boy, his aunt had taken him to a shoemaker to get a custom made pair of shoes. The cobbler had asked the young Reagan, "Do you want square toe or round toe?" Reagan hemmed and hawed and just wasn't sure. So the cobbler said, "Come back in a day or two and let me know what you want." Well, he didn't come back in a couple days. A few days later the cobbler saw Reagan on the street and asked if he had made a decision yet. Reagan wasn't sure, and the cobbler, who was fed up with Reagan's indecisiveness, said that he would make the decision for him and Ronny (as he was called) could pick up the shoes the next day. Well, when he got the shoes, he was shocked to see that one shoe had a square toe and the other shoe had a round toe. Reagan recounts, "Looking at those shoes every day taught me a lesson. If you do not make your own decision, somebody else will make them for you."¹

And that's probably what happened to most of these soldiers. It was uncomfortable making a decision between Absalom or David, so they didn't make a decision, which meant that they made a default decision for Absalom. Perhaps the officers went along because they didn't want to disappoint their commanding officers who didn't want to disappoint Absalom. But you will be a failure if your goal is to avoid disappointment. Disappointments are part and parcel of life. If you are godly, you are going to have disappointments and you are going to be a disappointment to others. That's just the way it is. There is no getting around it. Fear of disappointment must not keep us from making godly decisions.

D. Joab's cousin is fighting on the wrong side (v. 25)

The fourth disappointment was Amasa. Amasa was Joab's cousin and David's nephew by his adopted sister, Abigail. You would think that family would be a bit more tightly knit than this. But just like in the War Between the States, families are sometimes hugely divided, and family members can be huge disappointments.

¹ This story (which I have not been able to verify) is cited with various embellishments by several authors. See John C. Maxwell, *The 360-Degree Leader*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), p. 270. See also Haddon Robinson, *Decision Making* by the Book. Contributed by Rowe C. Watson, Douglasville, GA; also see Lowell D. Streiker, *Encyclopedia of Humor* (Hendriksen Publishers), p. 307; see Archie B. Lawson, *View From the Cockpit: Looking Up* (Xulon Press, 2004).

But if you look at this from Amasa's perspective, he had his own disappointments that drove him. Up until this time he had been bypassed by his uncle David. And the question is, "Why?" Some think that it was because he was an illegitimate son of David's step-sister Abigail. I'm inclined to think that it was because of Amasa's own ungodly attitudes over being an illegitimate son and his reactions to others. We can't know for sure, but let's read the whole verse to see what we do know.

2Sam. 17:25 And Absalom made Amasa captain of the army instead of Joab. This Amasa *was* the son of a man whose name *was* Jithra, an Israelite, who had gone in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruah, Joab's mother.

Back in chapter 10 we examined this verse in depth and saw that Amasa's relationship to David is very complicated. Amasa's mother was Abigail, the daughter of Nahash, king of Ammon. When David's dad escaped to Ammon, he became friends with the family of the king of Ammon, and when the king of Ammon died, Jesse adopted Abigail and her son Amasa when he married the widow of King Nahash. It's very complicated, and I won't repeat all that we talked about in that chapter. But let me quickly highlight the relevant points. It appears that Amasa's mother was an Ammonite, who had converted and become a Jew. And this verse says that his father was an Israelite. But that's not the whole story. He didn't used to be an Israelite. 1 Chronicles 2:17 gives us another bit of information about Jithra. He was originally called Jether and was an Ishmaelite at that time. Later he fully converted and became an Israelite, but Amasa's dad's original background was Ishmaelite. But it gets even more complicated. The text does not say that Jithra married Abigail, though the NIV and the ESV paraphrase it that way. It literally says that he went into her. It very deliberately does not speak about marriage.

Putting two and two together scholars believe that David's step-sister, Abigail, had either been raped by this Ishmaelite when she was in Ammon or had engaged in consensual fornication. But in any case, Amasa was an illegitimate child. And if you know anything about the culture back then, this gave him a black eye. Nowadays it is so common that people don't even think about it, but it would have been a tough experience for Abigail, Jether, and for Amasa. It may account for some of the bitterness and negative attitudes within the family.

Now, it may be reading too much between the lines, but the fact that 1 Chronicles says that he was an Ishmaelite with a different name and this chapter says that he is now an Israelite, shows to me that God used this traumatic disappointment to lead Jether to conversion. And when he became

a new man he took on a new name. And sometimes God does bring gold out of the dung of our disappointments. And by the way, this is not an interpretation I have come up with. This was the ancient interpretation of the Jewish commentaries. And I believe it is the only way to reconcile this verse with 1 Chronicles 2 and a couple of other passages. But again, it illustrates how we can either respond to disappointments for the good or for the bad. Amasa does not respond for the good. He responded to disappointments by becoming a disappointment himself.

E. Jithra (v. 25)

I've already dealt with Jithra to some degree. But I do want to highlight the fact that Jithra was different than Amasa on one count. He did not allow his negative past to drive his future. And we should not allow our own disappointing sins (or the sins of our parents) to drive us the rest of our life. *David* did not. David could have been so humiliated by being found out in his sins that he could have responded either by protecting himself, minimizing, blameshifting, committing suicide, leaving, or going on the attack and becoming a tyrant. But thankfully he did not do that. Instead, he fully confesses his sins, makes restitution where that is possible, finds cleansing, and moves on with life. And there are hints that Jithra did exactly that. He converted, changed his name, and took responsibility for his sins.

And I love the image in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, that came after Peter has just slain the evil wolf general Maugrim.² Aslan tells him that he has blood on his sword. Peter looks down and sees that it is indeed true. So he immediately bends down and wipes the blood and wolf-hair off on the grass, after which Aslan takes the sword, dubs him Sir Peter Wolf's-Bane, and says, "And whatever happens, never forget to wipe your sword." Sometimes in life we find ourselves in skirmishes, and if we have been wronged, it is easy to hold onto the wolf's blood of hurting memories and to allow that resentment – that's wolf's blood, to cling to us. But such resentment rusts us, pollutes us, and dulls our blades. We must wipe it off, and move on in life. But the same is true when we are the one who is in the wrong. Failing to confess our sins and seek reconciliation is to leave the wolf's blood and filthy hair on our blade, and we come out the worse for it. Move on with life like Jithra did with his own disappointment.

² C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (Harper Collins, 1975), pp. 131-133.

F. Zeruah (v. 25)

Zeruah was the next disappointment for David. And we know that she was a disappointment because (without exception) every time he mentions her name it is in connection with a rebuke of her two sons, “These men, the sons of Zeruah, are too harsh for me”; “What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruah?”; etc. We’ve already done a study of her in the past, and we saw that she seems to be characterized as a hard-to-get-along-with woman. The implication of David’s words are that Joab and Abishai held grudges just like she held grudges; they were adversarial and hard to get along with just like she was. They were quick to squash differences of viewpoint just like she was. They were harsh and angry just like she was. They were ready to whack a person’s head off just like she was. You get the impression that David didn’t relish family reunions with his sister (or as some commentators think, his step-sister). And yet, despite the difficulties, David recognized the value of her sons. And he used them.

G. Joab (v. 25)

Now it is true that later David tries to get rid of Joab, but it was only because Joab had committed murder. It wasn’t because he was hard to get along with. Even before the murder, David valued Joab even though he didn’t value Joab’s attitudes. He recognized that only God can change a heart. And almost every commentary will say that David would not have survived without Joab. Even the people who have become our worst disappointments can be valued if we will look at life in terms of what God is doing instead of solely looking at life in terms of what makes me feel good. Sometimes the people God brings into our lives for our good do not make us *feel* good. And that’s OK – so long as we don’t get bitter or have resentment. And David had a remarkable ability to forgive and to put up with incredibly rough characters. When we get to David’s band of heroes, you will be shocked at who he was willing to hang out with. But, I think he is a model for us in connection with the people that he valued, just as Jesus is a model for us when He became a friend of sinners, and took into his circle the two sons of thunder and Simon the zealot.

Here’s the point: if curmudgeons make you angry, don’t just look at what is wrong in them. Sure there is plenty wrong in that curmudgeon’s life, and God can deal with him. But ask yourself why they are able to get on your nerves. Maybe God is doing something in you through that curmudgeon. It is likely that that curmudgeon is God’s gift for your sanctification.

H. The speed with which Absalom attacked (v. 26)

The last disappointment is given in verse 26:

2Sam. 17:26 So Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead.

The Israelite armies had crossed the Jordan River and had caught up with David in a remarkably short period of time. Hushai had sought to slow Absalom down, and he had succeeded in slowing him down by a few hours – enough time for David to get to Mahanaim. But it would have been nice to have weeks of time for more troops to defect to David. But God actually gets greater glory by the way it happened. When David wins against tremendous odds, God gets far more glory than if things had turned out as David had hoped.

So hopefully you can see how there were blessings hidden even in the disappointments. You may not be able to find the hidden blessings in the disappointments of this past year, but by faith you can know they are there. Romans 8:28 guarantees that they are there. By faith you can put off negative feelings and start thanking God that even those disappointments are working together for your good. This is exactly what David did in Psalms 36, 37, 55, 61, 63 and other Psalms. Let me read you the first eight verses of Psalm 37, and perhaps you can make these verses your response to the disappointments of the past year. On the day of this flight from Absalom, David said,

Psa. 37:1 Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.

Psa. 37:2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, And wither as the green herb.

Psa. 37:3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.

Psa. 37:4 Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

Psa. 37:5 Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring *it* to pass.

Psa. 37:6 He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday.

Psa. 37:7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

Psa. 37:8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret—*it* only *causes* harm.

That's David's first bit of advice on how to handle disappointments – put off the negative responses that our flesh so easily gives.

II. Blessings galore (vv. 27-29)

A. *He had escaped (vv. 24a,27a)*

But if that is as far as you go, you are not yet miraculously entering into the joy of the Lord like David did in Psalm 26. In addition to putting off the negative emotions of bitterness, anger, fretting, envy, disappointment, and frustration, we need to put on the positive graces of joy, peace, love, forgiveness, patience, and other positive virtues that flow supernaturally from the Holy Spirit. David counted his blessings on this flight.

He had after all escaped. Verse 27 says, “Now it happened, when David had come to Mahanaim...” Ahithophel’s plan was to capture David before he could cross the Jordon River. But God had frustrated Ahithophel’s plans, and he had managed to escape. And while escaping David praises God saying,

Psa. 27:1 The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD *is* the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?

He was counting his blessings.

B. *Mahanaim, the Levitical city (v. 27a)*

I’ve already mentioned that Mahanaim was a Levitical city. It was one of the cities where the clergy resided. And these clergy welcomed David with open arms. They took a risk in doing so. You will remember from chapter 16 that Absalom fully intended to completely destroy any city that harbored David. But this was a time when the church interposed itself against an ungodly civil government, and provided safety and harbor for those seeking to escape from its tyranny.

And there have been many times in history when the church has engaged in civil disobedience and done the right thing by protecting the innocent. But it doesn’t even have to be civil disobedience. Pat, Kit, Gary, and I were talking last week about how we could do more than what we are doing. We do have volunteers at the Crisis Pregnancy Center, we picket the abortion clinic, and we support prolife ministries. But we were talking about how we could be a refuge for babies condemned to die. One of the things we could do is to help support the birth of a baby, and perhaps even help with the process of adoption. Another way we could do this is to be a shepherding home to a young mother whose boyfriend or parents are trying to pressure her into aborting. There may come a time when we will have multiple

chances of being a city of Mahanaim for those who are being pursued. But what a blessing this was to David in the midst of his discouragements.

C. Shobi from Rabbah (v. 27b)

The next blessing was Shobi.

2Sam. 17:27 Now it happened, when David had come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the people of Ammon...

He was a foreigner. In fact, we already saw in 2 Samuel 10 that Shobi's brother was Hanun, who was the wicked king of Ammon who had insulted David's ambassadors, and had fought against David. But Hanun's sister Abigail and her brother Shobi had embraced the God of Israel and had become David's allies. Actually, David's dad had adopted at least Shobi's sister into his family. David didn't hold it against Shobi that he was a foreigner or that his brother had declared himself an enemy. He was not prejudiced by his Ammonite background. For David it was an issue of whether you were for God or were against God. He was willing to embrace all those whom Christ embraced. That was the dividing line, not culture or skin color. David was way too big-hearted to do that. In fact, when you look at the people who loved David and whom David loved, you find the Pelethites and the Cherethites, who were Philistines. Well, actually, they had converted and become Israelites. But that was their background, and they were his body guard. Ittai the Gittite had recently converted to God and had defected to David from the Philistine city of Gath. Other names of people who were close to David were Uriah the Hittite (at least he was previously a friend of David's), Zelek the Ammonite, Rimmon, Reehab, and Baanah, the Caananites. Yes, David saw these people as blessings. Some were full converts and had become Israelites, and others were God-fearers who worshipped Yahweh, but who had not yet gone through the full process of becoming Israelites, which would have required circumcision. But David valued them and he loved them, and they valued and loved David. So Shobi the son of an Ammonite brings a mess of food and supplies to his friend.

D. Machir from Lo Debar (v. 27c)

The fourth blessing was Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo Debar. He had previously been a supporter of Saul and had protected Saul's grandson, Mephibosheth. So way back in chapter 9 we already saw that this man, Machir, was a very generous and kindhearted person. He got no benefit from protecting and supporting the cripple, Mephibosheth. In fact, from a human viewpoint, there was danger in doing so. He stuck his neck out.

When David welcomed Mephibosheth to his table in chapter 9, Mephibosheth had been hiding out with this man in Lo Debar. This man had taken compassion upon a homeless cripple and had supported him just out of the goodness of his heart.

And when he saw the incredible way that David had blessed Mephibosheth, he immediately recognized a kindred spirit in David. And he reciprocated when David was in need. And bringing this support to David would have been just as risky and self-sacrificing as what he had done for Mephibosheth many years before. But for men like Machir, it is not an issue of risk or reward that drives them, but an issue of love and doing the right thing.

D.A. Carson tells of a time when he was hugely impacted by a friend to be much more selfless than he was. They were both involved in ministry, and he and his friend were going to the beach for some much-needed peace and quiet. They were worn out. But when they got to the beach, they found a horde of high school kids celebrating their graduation with lots of beer, loud music, and (to put it politely) with ungodly displays of affection. D.A. Carson writes,

Deeply disappointed that my evening's relaxation was being shattered by a raucous party, I was getting ready to cover my disappointment by moral outrage. I turned to Ken to unload the venom but stopped as I saw him staring at the scene with a faraway look in his eyes. And then he said, rather softly, 'High school kids—what a mission field!'³

He was so focused on the good God who daily loads us with benefits and who gives us the blessings of ministry, that this wasn't a disappointment. The same thing that was a disappointment for Carson was seen by his friend as a blessing to be seized.

E. Barzillai from Rogelim (v. 27d)

The third blessing was Barzillai. In chapter 19 we find out that he was 80 years old and feeling ready to die. But despite his age, he travelled 32 miles to bring David these supplies and food. 32 miles! And he did it in amazing time. Now, it's only 23 miles as the crow flies from Rogelim to Mahanaim, but the road goes 12 miles east before it goes south, and so it is almost certain that he traveled 32 miles. He must have travelled a good chunk of the previous day, all night, and most of this day, and ridden fairly hard to get to Mahanaim in time. And to me this speaks not only of

³ D. A. Carson, *When Jesus Confronts the World*, (Baker Book House), p. 110.

sacrifices of money, but also sacrifices of time, effort, loss of sleep, the dangers of traveling at night, and the discomfort that he had to endure. What an incredible blessing to have friends like that. And we will see in chapter 19 that David did not take that blessing for granted. We have some Barzillai-type men and women in this congregation who have tremendous servant's hearts. They are part of the load of blessings that God has loaded you with.

F. Sleep (v. 28a with Psalm 3:5; 4:8)

Verse 28 speaks of the beds that they brought for David and his men. If you have lost much sleep, like David did the night before, you know that this was fantastic. It appears that David has not slept for a day, a night, and most of another day. And both Psalms 3 and 4 speak of David having such trust in God's sovereignty, that he was able to sleep soundly that night before the battle. But I'm sure it helped that he was sleeping in a bed, rather than on the rocks.

G. Hygiene (v. 28b)

We won't spend lots of time on each of these points, but the ability to clean up with these water basins was an incredible blessing. I have been on missions trips where I have not been able to bathe for days, and the courtesy of warm water and a small basin to sponge bath in was an incredible blessing.

My point in bringing these things up is that we shouldn't forget to thank God for showers, clean water, toothbrushes, socks, underwear, and so many other blessings. David is absolutely right when he says that God daily loads us with benefits. Have you ever counted up the hundreds of benefits that you experience every single day, and yet, that most people take for granted? If you take enough time, you will literally find hundreds of blessings that you experience every day that most people in poor countries do not have. And yet, what do we focus on? We tend to focus on the few disappointments.

H. Staple food (v. 28c)

Anyway, they brought David's growing army some food staples.
Verse 28:

2Sam. 17:28 brought beds and basins, earthen vessels and wheat, barley and flour, parched *grain* and beans, lentils and parched *seeds*,

I. Treats, meat, and cheese (v. 29a-b)

But in addition to those necessities, were treats and luxuries. Verse 29:

2Sam. 17:29 honey and curds, sheep and cheese of the herd, for David and the people who *were* with him to eat...

They could have survived quite well without those things, but this shows thoughtfulness. And it also shows that God blesses us in so many ways that are above and beyond our basic survival needs. Paul says that we should be able to be content with food and clothing, but we have way more than that, don't we?

J. People who cared (v. 29c)

And we shouldn't forget to mention how the people that cared were also a gift from God's hand. I am so thankful for the friends that God has given to me in this church. Verse 29 ends with the observation,

2Sam. 17:29 ... For they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness."

They were thinking of the needs of others ahead of their own safety. Keep in mind the context: the enemy troops are nearby. And this is no secret friendship. These men were publically identifying with David and supporting him. And their action could get them into huge trouble. If David were to lose the battle, they would be history. But they were the type of people who did not allow inconvenience or danger to dictate their relationships. There were plenty in Israel who went with the flow because it was easier to do so, but this chapter shows some who did the right thing and stuck by their friend no matter what. And the different racial background of some of these friends made me think of the risks of relationships in the 1936 Olympics. In the book, *The Complete Book of the Olympics*, by David Wallechinsky and Jamie Loucky, David wrote:

The 1936 Olympics are best remembered for Hitler's failed attempt to use them to prove his theories of Aryan racial superiority. As it turned out, the most popular hero of the Games, even among the German people, was the African-American sprinter and long jumper Jesse Owens, who won four gold medals. During the long jump competition, Owen's German 'rival,' Luz Long, publicly befriended him in front of the Nazis." (p. 16)

In fact, elsewhere I read that right in front of Hitler Luz shook Jesse Owen's hand and congratulated him for winning. In fact! He congratulated him in a way that was an honor to compete against him. It was a deliberate statement in the face of Nazi racism. And it was a huge risk to do so. Luz

died on the front lines of the war. But there were other Germans who did just like Lutz did – even in the face of dangerous pressure. On pages 49-50, this book says,

Nazi propaganda had portrayed Negroes as inferior, taunting the United States for relying on “black auxiliaries.” Evidently, though, the message had little effect on the German masses, who considered Owens the hero of Berlin. Everywhere he went around town he was mobbed by fans seeking his autograph or photograph. They even shoved autograph books through his bedroom window in the Olympic Village while he tried to sleep.

In a British competition put on by a newspaper for the best definition of a friend, one of the entries for a friend was, “... the one who comes in when the whole world has gone out.” It’s this kind of friendship that I cherish about this church. I count you all as one of the blessings that God has loaded upon me. Thank you.

K. God’s sustaining grace (Psalms 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 26, 27?, 36, 37, 39, 41, 55, 61, 63, 70, 141, 143 +)

But of course, the greatest friend that David had was God himself. And when you read the Psalms that David wrote during this period, you realize that David considered God’s grace to be more important than his kingdom, his life, or anything else that he possessed. And since I hope to preach on one or two of those Psalms, I won’t emphasize this more than to say that even if you can’t think of any other blessings than the blessing of salvation and of God’s sustaining grace, you are blessed indeed.

Conclusion – Drop your disappointments daily at the cross and daily pick up his load of blessings (Psalm 36; Phil. 4:6-8)

And so, as we begin this New Year, I think it is appropriate to be reminded from both this passage and the Psalms that form the background to it, that it is critically important that we be a thankful people and not a grumbling people. While the Scripture does not call us to ignore the disappointments, let’s focus on the blessings.

Robert Cleaver Chapman was an English pastor in a Strict and Particular Baptist congregation in the early 1800’s, and later became the pastor of a Plymouth Brethren congregation. Charles Spurgeon called him, “the saintliest man I ever knew.” And though he was from a theological tradition that wasn’t the greatest (we are much closer to Spurgeon than we would be to Chapman), reading about him has made me realize that he was far closer to God and far godlier than I am. And so I value him as a model. He was very self-sacrificing just like these friends of David were. He was an

encourager. His love was so deep that to this day they speak of him as “the apostle of love.” He was patient under God’s providences. But what blew many people away was how joyful and cheerful he was even under the most trying of circumstances.

One day he told a friend, “I’m burdened this morning!” Well, the friend was puzzled for two reasons. First, it didn’t seem characteristic of him to be sad, and secondly, his face looked anything but burdened. And he asked, “Are you really burdened, Mr. Chapman?” And his response is classic Chapman: “Yes, but it’s such a wonderful burden; it’s an overabundance of blessings for which I cannot find enough time or words to express my gratitude!” Seeing the puzzled look on his friend’s face, Chapman added with a smile, “I am referring to Psalm 68:19, which fully describes my condition. In that verse the Father in heaven reminds us that He ‘daily loads us with benefits.’” The load of God’s blessings was almost too much for him to bear. He felt like he was bursting with joy. And yet, when you understand the difficult circumstances that he was in, such joy does not make sense – unless of course you have experienced the supernatural joy of the Holy Spirit that no man can create. Then it makes perfect sense.

So here is the question this morning: “Do you see yourself loaded with benefits or loaded with disappointments?” I in no way want you to be in denial about the reality of your disappointments. They are real. And it is foolish to ignore them. But in the Psalms David took his disappointments to the God who cares and was able to drop them at his feet. Too many times we take our burdens to the Lord and we take them right back with us. We never drop them. Psalm 36 is an exercise in dropping the burden of disappointments at the feet of the cross (that’s verses 1-4) and picking up the burden of blessing from the throne of Christ (that’s verses 5-12). It’s a remarkable exchange – an exchange we should be engaging in every day. Let me read that Psalm to you:

Psa. 36:1 An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked:
There is no fear of God before his eyes.

Psa. 36:2 For he flatters himself in his own eyes, when he finds out his iniquity *and* when he hates.

Psa. 36:3 The words of his mouth *are* wickedness and deceit; He has ceased to be wise *and* to do good.

Psa. 36:4 He devises wickedness on his bed; he sets himself in a way *that is* not good; he does not abhor evil.

This is no Pollyanna Christianity that only sees good in the world. No. This is a realistic Christianity that is able to describe evil as being exceedingly evil, and to fight tooth and nail against that evil. And yet, David does not allow the evil to make him sour. Every day he takes his pains and disappointments to Christ, thanks Christ for being willing to bear those pains on his behalf (which for David was still future), he drops off his load of disappointments, and picks up a new load (which I will now read). He goes on to say in the next verses,

Psa. 36:5 Your mercy, O LORD, *is* in the heavens; Your faithfulness *reaches* to the clouds.

Psa. 36:6 Your righteousness *is* like the great mountains; Your judgments *are* a great deep; O LORD, You preserve man and beast.

Psa. 36:7 How precious *is* Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.

Psa. 36:8 They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.

Psa. 36:9 For with You *is* the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.

Psa. 36:10 Oh, continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You, And Your righteousness to the upright in heart.

And then he takes a quick backward glance at the disappointments and says,

Psa. 36:11 Let not the foot of pride come against me, And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away.

But notice this statement of faith:

Psa. 36:12 There the workers of iniquity have fallen; They have been cast down and are not able to rise.

What a wonderful perspective. It's not denial, but it is a positive perspective on life that gave David daily joy. Philippians 4 does exactly the same thing. In verse 4 it calls us to rejoice in the Lord always, "and again I will say, rejoice." And it tells us exactly how to do that. It's exactly the same two steps that enabled David to drink on that day from the River of God's Pleasures.

First, Philippians 4:6-7 tell us what to do with our disappointments. It doesn't tell us to be in denial. Instead it says,

Phil. 4:6 Be anxious for nothing [that's David's "fret not" of Psalm 37, right? "Be anxious for nothing"], but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

Phil. 4:7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

It says that if we leave our requests and disappointments at God's feet in faith and with thanksgiving (those two are critical conditions) that God's supernatural peace will guard our hearts. David experienced that. That's why

both Psalms 3 and 4 say that David was able to sleep the whole night before that great battle of chapter 18. He was able to sleep and not fret because God's supernatural peace guarded his heart.

Have you learned how to drop your burdens, or do you take them to the Lord and take them right back again? If you can feel the weight of your disappointments, pains, hurts, and frustrations this morning, I would urge you to ask God to give you the ability to dump them daily at the cross. Now, initially it might mean dumping them hundreds of times a day until it becomes a habit to not pick them up again. So Philippians 4 says that the first step is to drop your disappointments at the feet of Jesus in faith and with thanksgiving (that's means no grumbling). And the next verse says that this then frees us up to focus on God's blessings. It says,

Phil. 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

Satan will try to get you to do the exact opposite. Satan will try to get you to meditate on whatever things are not true, whatever things you don't have, whatever irritates, whatever is disappointing, whatever is missing, etc., etc. But if you want David's peace, joy, and drinking from the river of God's delights, you will need to learn to handle your disappointments and blessings just as he did. Drop the disappointments at the feet of Jesus in faith and with thanksgiving that He can handle them quite well, and having confidence in His power to answer (that's faith), you will be freed up to start focusing on the blessings of the Lord as pastor Chapman was in the habit of doing. May this be true of each of us in this coming year. Amen.

Charge: Children of God, I charge you to drop your disappointments at the feet of Jesus every day and pick up the replacement load of benefits. Resist the temptation to haul your disappointments back with you. Amen.

Disappointments & Blessings **2 Samuel 17:24-29**

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 1-5-2013

Introduction

- I. Disappointments galore (vv. 23-26)
 - A. David in exile (v. 24a)
 - B. Absalom (v. 24b)
 - C. David's army (v. 24c)
 - D. Joab's cousin is fighting on the wrong side (v. 25)
 - E. Jithra (v. 25)
 - F. Zeruah (v. 25)
 - G. Joab (v. 25)
 - H. The speed with which Absalom attacked (v. 26)

- II. Blessings galore (vv. 27-29)
 - A. He had escaped (vv. 24a,27a)
 - B. Mahanaim, the Levitical city (v. 27a)
 - C. Shobi from Rabbah (v. 27b)
 - D. Machir from Lo Debar (v. 27c)
 - E. Barzillai from Rogelim (v. 27d)
 - F. Sleep (v. 28a with Psalm 3:5; 4:8)
 - G. Hygiene (v. 28b)
 - H. Staple food (v. 28c)
 - I. Treats, meat, and cheese (v. 29a-b)
 - J. People who cared (v. 29c)
 - K. God's sustaining grace (Psalms 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 26, 27?, 36, 37, 39, 41, 55, 61, 63, 70, 141, 143 +)

Conclusion – Drop your disappointments daily at the cross and daily pick up his load of blessings (Psalm 36; Phil. 4:6-8)