

Dealing With Disappointment

by Jim Cymbala

Dealing with disappointment and pain in a biblical way requires trusting Jesus, letting go of hate and anger, and focusing on Him as the source of our happiness and trust.

Duration: 26:00

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:16

Topics: "Disappointment"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the experiences of the apostle Paul and how he faced abandonment and betrayal. Paul mentions two individuals, Demas and Alexander, who deserted him and caused him personal pain. Despite these hardships, Paul finds solace in the fact that the Lord stood by his side and gave him strength. The speaker encourages the audience to find comfort in knowing that even when they feel alone and abandoned, Jesus is always there to support and guide them.

Transcript

When you counsel a lot of people, you find out that a great percentage of them are living out their lives based on the rebound of some personal hurt or disappointment that happened in their life. Their personality, their peace or lack thereof, their joy or lack thereof, has its root in some scar tissue that formed because life has pain in it, rejection and hurt in a church, relatives, mother and father, whatever, abuse. And now they live in a box.

You can't get them out, it's very hard because they are living not free, not ready to do God's will. They're living with this scar tissue limiting them and they build a wall in the box and they're gonna hold everyone at a distance because I don't trust people anymore after what they did to me, after what she did, he walked out on me with those two kids, leaving them there, I don't trust. And now there's an edge or there's anger or inner bitterness, unforgiveness, it could be a lot of stuff.

And a great number of even folks who go to church, they're not really free, whom the son sets free is free indeed, they're not really free because they haven't been able to react properly to the disappointments and hurt that we all get along the way. And that's the thing about Christianity that we don't often talk about, that with all the promises that we have in the Bible, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, I will never leave you nor forsake you, I know the plans that I have for you, mixed in with all of that real, real talk, mixed in with all of that is our moments of pain, rejection, letdown, disappointment, a stab in the back, heartache, and instead of doing what we should with it, we hold it in and it affects us in a negative way. In fact, how

we deal with personal disappointment and pain, which is the name of this little message, really determines how mature or immature we are with the Lord.

People who are mature Christians know how to biblically handle these things. People who are immature and carnal and babyish, they don't know how to handle it, so that stuff scars them and then puts a stamp on them and they're nowhere near what God wanted them to be, but they justify it by, you don't know what I went through, you don't know what happened to me, easy for you, pastor, but you don't know what happened to me, he did me dirty, she did me dirty, my own family did such and such. Now, God has given us in the New Testament, the apostle Paul as an example, not only a great preacher, pastor, teacher, apostle, planting churches and all that, but as a man, as a man, his heart is revealed like no one else in the New Testament starting after the Gospels, his heart is revealed and he shares things about his life, not just about doctrine, but about stuff that went down in his life.

And this, of course, speaks against all the fake televangelist characters who smilingly tell you that if you just believe it and see it and then say it, you'll have prosperity and everything and all of that and they're false prophets and they're just making a lot of money off of people because Christianity has a lot of stuff in it and a lot of it is not pretty. How many since you've been a Christian, you've been wounded, you've been hurt? Come on, lift your hand up high, right? So, let's look at what Paul went through and this is interesting because it's his last letter, last paragraph that he's ever gonna say, more or less. Second Timothy, he's in prison in Rome and he knows he's gonna die.

He lets that be known in the letter, my time of departure has come. And he's writing to Timothy, a disciple of his, a pastor, young pastor in Ephesus that he trained and now he's talking to Timothy about his human situation. You know, there's what you preach, but then there's what you live.

There's what you do to serve, you go to shelter, but then they all have personal lives, everybody. So, notice what Paul lets on, just a couple little pictures he gives us. Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

Do your best to come to me, Timothy, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. So, here's an interesting case, Demas was a fellow minister of Paul, maybe a disciple of Paul's, converted, I should say, under Paul's ministry. Demas traveled with Paul, Demas ministered probably, shared the gospel, Demas heard Paul preach, saw what he went through, saw the miracles that God had done through the ministry of Paul.

Demas was no new guy on the block, no pagan, Demas was the man, Demas was part of the ministry team. And Paul elsewhere in this chapter says, I sent Titus over here and Crescens I sent over to here and he's giving other names, but he says, with great sadness, Demas, oh Demas, what a heartbreak. When you pour into someone, you love them, you teach them, you travel with them, you cry together, you laugh together, you break bed together, and Demas left him, abandoned him, why? Because he loved this present world and you can't serve this present world and Jesus at the same time.

The Bible says anyone who loves this world can't have the love of God in them, you can't love both. What is the world? Bible tells us it's the desires of the eye, materialism, covetousness, it's the desires of the flesh for pleasure and self-gratification in many different ways, including sexual. And number three, it's the pride of life, boasting and showing off what you own and what you've earned and trying to impress people.

That's what the world is made up of. Jesus has nothing to do with any of those three. And the Bible says that Demas, somehow the siren call of the world came to him after years of serving with Paul.

And he said to Paul, if he even said goodbye, yo, you're in prison, I can't go on. I'm not risking my life for this Jesus. He got to a place weakened spiritually and he forsook him because he loved this world.

He chose the world over Jesus. He chose his lust over Jesus. He chose the pride of life over Jesus.

And that meant deserting Paul. Don't you get it? Demas might forsake you, but Jesus will never forsake you. People might disappoint you.

Jesus will never disappoint you. People will walk out on you. Jesus will never walk out on you.

Never, impossible. Talk to him every day. Make him your best friend every day.

Pray to him, worship him, talk to him. Listen to his word. Make Jesus the number one in your life because nobody else is dependable but Jesus.

Jesus will never let you down. If you're here today and you've been deserted and abandoned and you've been hurt and somebody stuck a knife and then turned it once or twice, listen, that is part of life. It happened to Paul.

He was anointed, he was in God's will. He's this famous Christian and he had people let him down. So obviously you and I are gonna have people let us down.

It's how we handle it. Are you gonna get bitter and frustrated and go on a rant about how you can't depend on people or are you gonna keep your eyes on Jesus? I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back. Come on, how many say amen with that? We're gonna follow Jesus.

I had an interesting thing said to me eating dinner with my wife at one of the choir couple's house this week. The wife said an interesting thing. She said, we talked to couples and I'd never heard this.

And she said, you know, I tell them, remember the Bible nowhere says that your husband or your wife will make you happy. I've never heard anyone said that. Didn't even sound spiritual when I first heard it.

And then she said, no, no, no. It says if you find a wife, husband, it's a good thing. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church.

Wives, submit to your husbands. Be co-sharers of God's grace. Learn to pray together and believe God together.

But nowhere it says that my basis of happiness is in Carol. No way. And her basis of happiness would always be in me.

What happens when I go sideways? Talk to her and find out how many times I go sideways. But Jesus never goes sideways. He's the only one, listen, who will never let you down.

And we have way too much emphasis on trusting people. We should trust people and love people, but making them the source, no. That's why people, they go through a church split and they have bad, I've heard that from hundreds of you.

Somewhere, sometimes something went south and now because of the bitterness recrimination and all of that, now people in a perpetual pout for 20 years. You don't know what I saw. You can't trust anyone.

Keep your eyes on Jesus. Don't put your eyes on a pastor. Don't you put your eyes on anybody.

You keep your eyes all the time on Jesus. Can we say one more loud, amen, amen. Looking unto Jesus.

Not looking unto a man or a woman or a pastor, looking unto Jesus. The best of them let you down. The best of them, because they're made of clay.

But Jesus is the son of God. So notice Paul went through that, hurt, disappointment. So don't think it's a strange thing if it happens in your life or mine.

Look at the next one, even stronger though. Alexander the metal worker did me a great deal of harm. Wait a minute, how could you be in God's will and anointed by God and somebody does a great deal of harm to you? Why didn't God just put a shield around you so nobody could hurt you? That's the theology today.

False triumph, false victory. There's a false sense of victory. The Bible says if we suffer with him, we will reign with him.

Part of Christianity is suffering from nasty people who shun you, curse you, do whatever to you, on the job, nasty, pass you over for a promotion. It could happen in a lot of different ways. Paul, this Alexander, we're not sure who he is.

He could have been someone in Ephesus when Paul was there for three years who dropped a dime on Paul and made trouble for him. Or he could have been someone inside the church because he says Alexander and Hymenaeus, he says in one place, I've turned over to Satan because they blasphemed against God. In other words, they were part of us, but they turned and we're not sure who this man is.

But he did Paul a great deal of harm. So much so that Paul warns Timothy, be careful of this guy. This guy is bad news.

See, you're allowed to say that. There are some people have a track record of doing damage to you. Haven't some of you had people just attack you and hurt you? Social media or whatever to your relatives on the job, they're out to hurt you.

There are nasty people in the world, am I correct? Here's the key to that though, to be mature and not a baby. If you get hurt by people like Alexander the metal worker, if you try to fight back and defend yourself, it gets worse. If you internalize it and you get bitter, you can be ruined for decades.

Trust me, in my extended family and Carol's, got people who are living off the reservation because someone hurt them back in 1973 and they haven't forgotten. They got their little black book. You know, a lot of people have their little black book.

And once they write in there, your name's not coming out. And what does that do? It just brings bitterness and tension and turmoil to your own life. So notice what Paul says.

The Lord will repay him for what he has done. Either you defend yourself and fight back or let the Lord take care of you and defend you. How many would rather have the Lord defend you than us defend ourselves? I know it's hard.

It's hard to button your lip and just take one for Christ, but you have to do that. That's what Paul says. He warned about him, but no, let's get at him.

Let's pray that he falls and break a leg and whatever. No, he says that this person, the Lord will take care of what he has done. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.

I will repay. When you and I try to get back at people, I know, listen, causes tears, causes heartache, but if you just take it, but it's good for us. It makes us more like Christ.

Christ was preaching and on the edge of the crowd, they were plotting his murder. I mean, how do you preach and keep your equilibrium spiritually when people are plotting to kill you? They're not saying, I don't like the sermon. They're saying, let's do away with him.

And he never fought back at them. In fact, when he was crucified, what did he say? Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing.

So when that happens to us, we got to give it to the Lord and let the Lord repay. I was reading very quickly in my devotions this week, reading in the book of Numbers. After Moses had gone to Egypt, pulled the people out, confronted Pharaoh, risked his own life, got trapped at the Red Sea, lifted up his staff, according to the word of the Lord, marched them across, prayed for the people that they would have water, then saw manna come down, then fowl so they'd have meat to eat.

After all of that stuff, about seven, eight months after they had come out of Egypt, the Bible says a certain man, troublemaker in the Israelite camp named Korah and some others rebelled against him and his brother Aaron. And they said, yo, what makes you special, Moses and Aaron? We're all Israelites. Why are you in charge? Who puts you in charge? We're all holy.

And they were of the priestly tribe of Levi. And then they started stirring up the people so that the people started getting angry at Moses and Aaron. And all kinds of bedlam was breaking loose.

And they're saying these terrible things against Moses and Aaron. And you know what Moses said? He said nothing. The Bible says he and Aaron just fell on the ground and put their head against the dirt.

And because they didn't fight back and say, well, what's with you guys? Do you didn't go to Pharaoh? I went to Pharaoh. Think of all the things he could have said. He didn't say any of them.

He just bowed his head down. And suddenly the cloud of God's presence, which was above the tabernacle, started moving. And God defended Moses.

Either you and I are gonna defend ourselves or God's gonna defend us. Can we make a decision today? Let's, in the name of Christ, let God defend us. Come on, let's say amen.

And let it go. And don't have recrimination inside of you. I met so many ministers.

Because when you're in the ministry, it can really get nasty sometimes in churches. Politics, boards. I meet ministers every month.

They email me. I talk to them on the phone. They're wounded and they're half angry.

They're half angry when they preach because of what people have done to them. How is the Lord gonna use us if we're angry? He can't use us. And that's the epidemic in our country.

There's a new outbreak of typhus in California and LA, among all the homeless people that are living in the streets, the filth, the vermin. And now a disease which was defeated in the 19th century is now reappearing. And up in the Northwest, I read because of people not getting their kids vaccinated, there's a new epidemic of measles, which doctors are saying this shouldn't happen.

I don't wanna get into the medical part of it. All I wanna say is that's not the real epidemic in our country. I was born and raised in this country.

I'll tell you the real epidemic. Hate and anger. Hate and anger is everywhere.

You go outside that door, hate and anger. What, you disagree with my political position? You disagree with something? You're a demon. You don't deserve to talk or even live.

How dare you disagree with me? Is that not what our society is right now? Hate and anger. But I mean hate. Not little hate, big hate.

Big H. And anger. Everyone's angry about something. God is showing us that here Paul had been hurt by Alexander the metal worker, but he let it go.

He let God take it and said, God, I know the Lord will repay them. Just think of that day that's coming when all the people have done dirty things to God's precious people. They're gonna have to answer not to us.

They're gonna have to answer to God. But we're gonna leave it with God. Amen? Amen.

One last one. So Paul says as he concludes this part, says, at my first defense, that was his first trial in Rome, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them.

But the Lord stood by my side and gave me strength so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. So what Paul is saying, this is another, demons forsaken me, hurt me personally, disappointed me, broke my heart.

Number two, Alexander the metal worker, the guy's up to no good. He tried to, not tried, he did damage to me. But the Lord will take care of him.

Let's be mature. Now number three, when my first trial came, I had no lawyer, no abogado, no somebody to speak for me, and no disciples. Not one Christian stood with me.

I was all alone. But I wasn't alone because the Lord stood next to me. When everyone deserts you and you think you're all alone, please brothers and sisters, look at me.

You're not alone. Jesus is with you. He said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you.

And when you look around and you don't see a lot of folks standing with you in your hour of need, remember, that happened to the apostle Paul. He had no one and he was on trial. He needed a little support.

But two things about that, just as I close. Notice those gracious words he says. May the Lord not lay it to their charge.

In other words, those are my brothers and sisters. Why weren't they there? You know why, I know why. They were scared stiff.

Roman Empire, going after Christians. You're gonna stand with the apostle Paul who's in the slammer facing death and stand up for him. Someone might say, yo, what's your name? Why don't we put you on trial too? So nobody was with him.

But notice he understood people's weakness. Brothers and sisters, look, concentrate. One last second.

Everybody has their weaknesses. Everyone has their bad days. Not justifying it.

Just, you gotta take it into account and be merciful with people. How many have found God's been merciful with you? Come on, how many have found the mercy? Why you go, where were you? I, what are you doing? No, God never does that. Even when we slip and fall, he picks us up so gently.

So Paul, instead of going into a pity party and pulling the victim card, said I'm not a victim. I'm not a victim. No Christian's a victim.

Jesus was the victim. He died on the cross. We are more than conquerors.

How can you be a victim and more than a conqueror? Choose what you're gonna be. You wanna be a victim? Be a victim. You wanna be more than a conqueror? Then let's grow up and say, even if people fail me, even good Christians, they just, you know, nobody's what they should be.

But the Lord was with me. I wasn't alone. He gave me strength.

And when the judge talked to me, I knew exactly what to say. And I wasn't all depressed and down, like where are your friends when you need them? No, the Lord is with me. The Lord is with me.

How many believe with all your heart, the Lord will never leave us alone. He will always be there. On the job, wherever, he will never leave us.

He will never forsake us. So there will be hurts in life. There'll be demons.

There'll be Alexander the metal worker. You might get abandoned and no one will stand with you, including your own family. They won't understand what's going on.

That's true. That happens. Don't tell me that can't happen.

It can happen. But remember, even when your best friend and your best Christian buddy fails at a given moment, we're all made of clay. Jesus will stand next to us, put his arm around us.

Can you see him? The judge is there. Some people think Caesar actually might've been in one of the first trial because Paul was a very controversial figure with this new religion and his teaching. That Caesar was there and all these famous Roman lawyers and prosecutors and there's lonely Paul.

And you would say, oh, poor Paul. Don't say poor Paul because you can't see him but Jesus is standing right next to him. Like he's gonna stand next to you and me.

Gonna help us through. You know what I've learned the most? Life is hard. Over the last 10 years, I've learned life is hard.

Hard for a lot of people. I saw a woman when I came in this morning. She was sitting 815 in the last row.

Why would she be here before eight o'clock? I came down at 815. We gave donuts and coffee to some of the people. She's sitting in the back row against that wall.

And as I walked by, I looked at her and I went, hi. She hardly made eye contact. And I said, how are you? Okay.

I said, this is where you wanna sit? You came in before anybody and you sit way back there? She looked so lonely. So depressed. So sad.

I prayed for her up in my office. See, you don't know what people are going through. But we gotta trust Jesus.

We gotta depend on his promise. Let's pray together. Anybody here today is just going through a personal time of rejection, hurt.

You've just been wounded. Sometimes in the house of your own family. Just stand up.

If anybody's had somebody try to do something really ugly on them, just stand up where you are. Don't come forward. Just stand up.

If anybody here has felt alone, like people haven't stood with you when you needed them, just stand up. Thank you. Just stand up.

Just stand up. There's nothing to be embarrassed about. Lord, help my brothers and sisters.

Help my friends. You said you're the God of all comfort. Now do as you promised.

Give them comfort. Help us to grow up so that we keep our eyes on you. We don't wanna be immature babies that are just every wind of emotion, everyone doing crazy things around us and it all affects us and we go up and down like a yo-yo.

We don't want that. We wanna be able to say with Paul, nothing moves me. Nothing moves me.

He didn't say nothing hurts me. He said nothing moves me. Keep our eyes on you, Lord.

Draw us nearer and nearer to the cross, to your precious bleeding side. Father, I thank you for your word to us today. Preaching it has encouraged me to keep my eyes on you.

Jesus, be the best friend of every one of us, the friend that sticks closer than a brother, the friend that we can always depend on. A lot of us have messed our days up a little bit, Lord, by putting too much confidence in human beings, leaning on the arm of flesh, not our own but someone else's. Help us to be Jesus people.

Jesus in the morning, Jesus at noon, Jesus in the evening, Jesus at suppertime. Jesus, oh Jesus, I love you. Everybody just lift your hands up and open your mouth and just praise Jesus here.

Everyone, come on, let me hear your voices. Everyone, just praise Jesus. We're not ashamed to lift your name up, Lord.

Lift our voices up. Te amo, señor. Te amo mucho, señor.

Cristo, te amo. Te amo, señor. We love you, Jesus.

We love you, Jesus. Now let your face shine upon us the rest of the day and grant us your shalom, your peace. For we pray it in Christ's name.

And everyone said. Amen. Everybody stand, give someone a hug.

See you Tuesday, Serving Communion on Tuesday. God bless you.

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