

Tuesday, July 31, 2018 - When People Disappoint You

It has been said that there are two reasons why people do not go to church: They do not know a Christian, or they do know a Christian. Several times through the years I have heard people say they are no longer serving God because someone in the church let them down. No one has gone through life without such experiences but our maturity as Christians is put to the test when people disappoint us.

The apostle Paul is one of the best New Testament examples of one who suffered many disappointments with people. He was terribly disappointed and discouraged by his own brethren in the flesh, that they had rejected the Messiah. You remember he said: "I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh . . ." (Rom. 9:1-3).

Paul also expressed disappointment in the motivation of some preachers. How many times have we seen preachers become, in their mind and sometimes that of the audience, more important than the message? Paul said:

"Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: the former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel." (Phil. 1:15-17)

Paul showed he had learned to cope with disappointment in people in the next verse: "What then?" he asked. "Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice." He kept his focus on God and his will in all things.

In Paul's second letter to Timothy, chapter 4:9-16, he lists those who have brought harm to him thus disappointment. But in verses 17-18, he says:

"But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!"

Our most devastating disappointments come when trusted friends, people in whom we have the most confidence, betray and abandon us. How do you cope when others you've known and trusted and loved disappoint you?

Hopefully you deal with them as Jesus dealt with the disappointment of Judas (who betrayed Him), Peter (who denied Him), and the Jews (who He was sent to save, yet they yelled CRUCIFY HIM).

He was the victor over all such disappointments because he came, lived and died with a focus on doing the Father's will (Matt. 26:42). From Him we learn how to cope when people disappoint us.