

Why Men Fail Us

#0732

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—October 17, 1959

This morning, as we turn to the Word, I would like to study a very practical subject, and that is why does God allow men to fail us? Were you ever disappointed in human beings?

I got a letter not long ago from someone a thousand miles away explaining the great disappointment they were going through because somebody that they had counted on and had had confidence in was doing things that they couldn't understand. They were wondering what it all meant.

I suppose there's hardly anyone here this morning, but what has gone through an experience of that kind. If you haven't, you will.

There are three reasons that I would like to bring you this morning why God allows that to happen to you and me, why He lets people that we have confidence in fail us, why He allows men to disappoint us. There's a reason, a good reason. In fact, there are three of them, at least.

We'll turn first of all to the 146th Psalm verses 3–4. Now, I learned this text many years ago when I was a boy. It's one of the proof texts on the state of the dead. But I find it's very helpful on the state of the living, too.

“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish”
Psalm 146:3–4.

And one reason that God allows men to fail us is so that we'll understand that they're fallible. One reason that He lets us see that we can't depend upon them is so that we *won't* depend upon them.

“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help...” Psalm 146:3.

No lasting help, no security, nothing to count on, nothing to build on.

What happens to the man you put confidence in? Well, for one thing, as the next verse says, He may die. And of course, when he dies, all his help to you is gone. But even while he lives, friends, his purposes may change.

The politician that votes for the measure we wish today may vote against us tomorrow. The church officer or the minister whom we have selected as a pattern of

piety may, next week or next month, greatly disappoint us by some lapse, some failure.

You know, if you and I had been living back in the days when Jesus was on the earth, doubtless we would have been greatly surprised and disappointed to learn that Judas had betrayed the Lord for 30 pieces of silver and that he'd been stealing from the bag all along before that. We would have been greatly surprised and disappointed, wouldn't we? And if we'd been putting our trust or confidence in Judas, we would have been terribly shaken.

And Peter, who would have thought that Peter would deny his Lord with cursing and swearing? Well, Jesus thought so. Jesus knew so. Nobody else did, even Peter.

You know, there are those today who say that the church is built on Peter. I'd hate to be a part of a church built on Peter, wouldn't you? Yes. I'd hate to be a part of a church built on any man, wouldn't you?

"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help..." Psalm 146:3.

Now, let's turn over to the book of Jeremiah, read another verse on this, Jeremiah 17 verses 5–6. Here we have a picture of the Christian experience of those who trust in man:

"Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited" Jeremiah 17:5–6.

Do you trust in man? The plant of Christian experience in your life is not growing on very good soil. And God may allow you to have a great disappointment in men, in order that you may learn how foolish it is to trust in man.

As I read it here in *Ministry of Healing*, 486:

"In His mercy and faithfulness, God often permits those in whom we place confidence to fail us, in order that we may learn the folly of trusting in man, and making flesh our arm" *Ministry of Healing*, page 486.

What is it to trust in man? Folly.

The Bible says:

"...Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm..." Jeremiah 17:5.

You know, Einstein was a great mathematician. I suppose he's considered to be the greatest one in recent time.

But suppose that Einstein, with all his wisdom, should come to you and say, "Two and two aren't four."

Would you believe it? Or would you go on believing that two and two is four?

God wants you and me to be so sure of some things that no matter who goes back on them, we still stand right there, still stand right there.

In the First World War in England, some of our Seventh-day Adventist young men had a very hard time for a while over the question of Sabbath-keeping and conscientiously objecting to bearing arms. The British government had not yet become acquainted apparently with our position as Seventh-day Adventists on those two important points of the Fourth Commandment and the Sixth Commandment.

And so, as our men were called into the army by the draft and confronted with this matter of bearing arms and working on the Sabbath, they nobly took their stand. They suffered imprisonment and went through various punishments.

But finally, a group of them were brought to a very serious court-martial. And it looked as if they were going to have to be martyred for their faith. They were put in solitary confinement, each by himself.

And after a period of time, one of the officers visited one of the young soldiers, and he said, "Now," he said, "It's time for you to give up this foolishness."

He said, "We've talked with the other young men, and they have decided that rather than be killed, the sensible thing for them is to do what their country tells them, to obey their officers. And you're the only one that's holding out. You'd better come and go along with the rest."

Well, this young man looked at the officer and said, "I'm very sorry to hear that about my fellows."

But he said, "Whatever they do, I must be true to God. And so, if I'm the only one standing, I'll stand."

So, the officer went to the second young man; he told him the same story. It was a lie, of course. But the second young man made the same answer, and so around to each member of the group.

Thank God, every one of those young men, after being told that all the others had deserted the standard and were prepared to accept human orders instead of the divine law, every one of them nobly said, "I must obey God."

The sequel of it is very interesting. When the officers found that each man was prepared to stand all alone, regardless of what the others did, they not only took them out of prison, but they said, "The country needs men of principle like you."

And they were allowed their exemptions.

Oh, my dear friends, unless each one of those men, each for himself, had learned not to trust in man, what would he have done? He would have gone the way that he heard all the others were going. Somewhere along the line doubtless, God had prepared each one of those young men to not place confidence in man.

You and I are going into a crisis when if we stand, we'll stand alone. Is that true?

“...Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm...” Jeremiah 17:5.

We're going into a time of sifting when:

“Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat”
Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5, page 81.

We're going into a night of darkness when:

“Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy will then go out in darkness” *Ibid.*

Oh friend, let God prepare you for that now. How? By giving you experiences where men disappoint you, where men seem to fail you. Is there something you think somebody else ought to do for you, and they don't do it? God may be allowing that failure. It may be known to the other party; it may be all unknown. But God may be allowing it for a purpose, to lead you to trust somewhere else rather than in man.

And that leads me to my second point, the second great reason why God allows men to fail us. It is this. That we may learn the security, the blessed security of trusting in God alone; that we may know the joy of being anchored in Jesus Christ.

Back to our verse in Jeremiah 17, notice the 7th and 85^h verses. After having pictured for us the pitiful plight of those who trust in man, notice how glowingly he describes the case of those who trust in the Lord:

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit” Jeremiah 17:7–8.

On our trip recently, we passed through dry sections of the country where for months and months and months, there had been no rain. But occasionally, we would see a line of green there in the distance. What did we know it meant? Ah, there was a stream of water running there, some river or creek.

Jesus says that that green tree with its roots by the river represents the man that trusts in Whom? In God rather than in his fellow human beings. You notice it says that tree is not careful, that is, not anxious, not worried in the year of drought.

Other plants, if they had intelligence, would of course, be looking anxiously at the sky, "When is it going to rain?"

And so, there are people that are today saying, "Oh, when is so and so going to visit me? I'm so discouraged. I'm so disheartened. I wonder when somebody's coming around to revive my drooping spirits."

"I wonder when I'm going to get a letter of comfort and courage. Oh, I wonder, why doesn't so and so write to me? Why do they forget me?"

Why indeed, my friend? That you may learn to put your roots where the water will always be running, the great river of life and love that flows from the throne of God.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river..." Jeremiah 17:7-8.

Isn't God near you when men are not? Isn't He? Can you not find Him with your Bible and prayer? Will He not speak to you through that Word when there's no human one to comfort you? Can you not talk to Him and pour out your soul to Him?

"Ah but," somebody says, "I can't see Him. I need somebody I can see."

Certainly. When I say "certainly," I mean that's the way the human mind works. And do you know that's the basis of idolatry?

That's what the children of Israel argued when they built the golden calf, "We've got to have something we can see."

And when you and I put our faith and pin our hopes on poor, weak, erring men because we can see them, and turn away from Jesus, the unseen Helper, Comforter, shall I say that we are entering into idolatry.

"...Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm..." Jeremiah 17:5.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is" Jeremiah 17:7.

Turning again to *Ministry of Healing*, 486:

"We are prone to look to our fellow men for sympathy and uplifting, instead of looking to Jesus. In His mercy and

faithfulness, God often permits those in whom we place confidence to fail us, in order that we may learn the folly of trusting in man, and making flesh our arm. Let us trust fully, humbly, unselfishly in God. He knows the sorrows that we feel to the depths of our being, but which we cannot express. When all things seem dark and unexplainable, remember the words of Christ, 'What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter' "*Ministry of Healing*, page 486.

Who sold Joseph into Egypt? Who? Who sold Joseph into Egypt? His brothers. His brothers? Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave down to Egypt? Yes. Were they older brothers or younger brothers? Older brothers.

"Well, if that's what Christianity is, I don't want anything more to do with it, do you? If that's the way the older members of the church do, no use for me to make any effort. I'd just as well give up everything."

Is that what Joseph said? Thank God, no. The very fact that he was cut off from all human help, that those who should have helped him had disappointed him, caused him to flee to God and throw himself into the arms of everlasting love.

And did God take care of Him? Yes. God took care of him through those years of slavery and imprisonment. Not, however, by taking him out of the trial. For 13 years, he was a slave. The last three years of that in prison unjustly. Every human help was cut off.

God, as it were, allowed him to see some men kind to him. Potiphar trusted him with all his house, and then suddenly, all that foundation was taken out from under him. If Joseph had been building on Potiphar, what would have happened when Potiphar failed him? He would have gone down in utter despair, given up everything.

But no, friends, when Potiphar took his hand, as it were, out from under Joseph, Joseph stood there erect, fearless, cheerful in God because he was upheld by God and God's promises, not by Potiphar.

It's all very well to be thankful when friends appreciate us when men are glad for what we're doing. It's all very well to rejoice in the love of our dear ones. But friends, we must never build our Christian experience on them. Never! Never!

Why are you a Christian? If it is just because your father, your neighbor, some friend, has been so nice to you, you'll be disappointed. That'll all be cut out from under you. Men will fail you.

But oh, if you are anchored in God, every tie that is cut away here on earth will only cause you to strengthen those ties that bind you to the throne of God.

"What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear;

What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer...

...Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?"

Do they?

"...Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,
Thou wilt find a solace there."

Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, #499, first and third stanzas (partial).

Have you found that, my friend? Have you found that Jesus is a friend and a solace when every human support is cut off?

In the beautiful prophecy of Isaiah the 66th chapter and the 13th verse, God says:

"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort
you" Isaiah 66:13.

Did you ever see a little child come in from play that has been disappointed in the way his playmates treated him? Come running to mother crying. And mother takes the little one up in her arms, and soothes it, comforts it. The little one drops off to sleep. It's all right. What those bad boys and unkind girls outside have done, that's all out there. The little one has solace now in the mother's arms.

Ah friends, God wants us to flee to Him as the little one does to the mother.

"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort
you" Isaiah 66:13.

Now, there's a third reason why God allows men to fail us, why He allows us to go through these experiences. Let's turn to 2 Corinthians, the 1st chapter verses 3–4. And I think this is a wonderful reason. And I trust God will give us all a real appreciation of it.

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus
Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;
Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be
able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the
comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God"
2 Corinthians 1:3–4.

Would you like to comfort somebody else? Well, you'll have to *get* some comfort before you can give it to them. And one of the ways that God has of preparing you to comfort somebody else is to first let *you* go through an experience like the one they're going to have.

So that if you go through it, you can turn around and say, “Brother, be of good comfort. God will help you. I know it because He helped me.”

Do you think Joseph could comfort anybody after he'd had 13 years? Yes. It didn't take 13 years. When he'd had 11 years, we see him down there in the prison visiting those prisoners and looking around for somebody to cheer and comfort. That was what brought about the contact that finally took him out of the prison, wasn't it? Yes. That's right.

And so today, God is leading you and me through experiences that will prepare us to be good counsellors, helpful comforters. Are we willing to pay the price? Are we willing to be disappointed that we may encourage others who are disappointed?

“...That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” 2 Corinthians 1:4.

That's it. Now, I'd like to have us notice for a few moments how Christ Himself entered into these experiences. Did Jesus know as He was in this world, did He know the disappointment that comes through the failures of human beings? Did He? Oh, yes in a preeminent way, He did.

In the 69th Psalm the 20th verse, hear this sad, sad heart pouring itself out on the cross:

“Reproach hath broken My heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink” Psalm 69:20–21.

This is the cry from the cross. Forsaken, forsaken by every human being Jesus hangs there, and He says:

“Reproach hath broken My heart...” Psalm 69:20.

He drank to the last drop that bitter cup of suffering that comes from the failure of human beings. And yet, friends, all *that* was accepted willingly by Him, that He might enter into our experiences.

Now, He also knew through His life that disappointment again and again. You remember that there in the synagogue at Capernaum He preached that sermon to thousands of people who the day before had been ready to crown Him king when He fed the multitude, you remember, with the loaves.

But as He preached the straight truth, what did practically all of them do? They left Him. Till finally, He said to the twelve:

“...Will ye also go away?” John 6:67.

He was forsaken probably by about 98 percent of His followers that day—what a tremendous disappointment! And yet, friends, He did not allow His spirit to be crushed by those experiences.

And when He came to the last hour, when with the disciples in the upper room and on the road to Gethsemane He talked, telling them of the approaching crisis and foretelling that all of them would forsake Him, He'd be left all alone, notice where He was anchored.

John 16:32:

“Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me” John 16:32.

Where was He anchored? Anchored in His Father. And though men forsook Him, though men denied Him and betrayed Him, thank God there was One in whom He could trust. And even on the cross, friends, never forget this, though He felt forsaken of God, yet He was so acquainted with His Father's character that in faith and faith alone He cast Himself upon the Lord and said:

“...Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit...”
Luke 23:46.

“I commend My life to You.”

And so, there was that beautiful trust that when all men had forsaken Him, and it even seemed that God had. Nevertheless, He rolled Himself on the Lord. He was so rooted in that assurance of the Father's love that He was able to go through that awful crisis. Oh, dear ones, we must have that experience.

Now, why did Jesus go through these experiences? In order that He might receive this ministry of consolation. Just as we've studied that God sometimes leads *us* through experiences of disappointment in order that we may be able to comfort others, so we read concerning Jesus in Hebrews the 2nd chapter and the 18th verse:

“For in that He himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted” Hebrews 2:18.

What does “succour” mean? To help, to save, to deliver. And why can He do it? Ah, because He's gone through that suffering.

The 4th chapter and the 15th verse:

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto

the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” Hebrews 4:15–16.

Ah, friend, Jesus on the throne is the One Who went through all these experiences of human disappointment and human failure. He suffered by having those fail Him and desert Him that He should have been able to count on most. And because of that, because He went through all those experiences trusting in God alone, He is able to help and bless others.

You and I may come to Him with perfect confidence. And in every hour of trial and disappointment, we may cast our helpless souls on Him and receive from Him the consolation which we, in turn, can share with others; the courage and the comfort that will be to them the river of the water of life.

Oh, let us be willing to share in His ministry of consolation by being willing to enter into the fellowship of His sufferings [a paraphrase of Philippians 3:10]. What do you say, dear friend?

Now, I wish we could have a few moments of responses. Oh, I trust that many hearts this morning will say, “This is for me, and by God’s grace, I’ll never complain about what others do to me or don’t do for me. I’ll anchor my soul in Jesus. I’ll be like that tree planted by the river of water that spreads out her roots by the river. I will root myself in God. Whatever others may do or not do, I’ll not let it disturb my peace with God. Instead of going around looking for others to comfort me, I will go around looking for those that need comfort. And I will share with them the comfort from God that I have received in these experiences.”

Who wants to speak this morning?

[Testimony meeting followed.]

“O safe to the Rock that is higher than I,
My soul in its conflicts and sorrows would fly;
So sinful, so weary, Thine, Thine would I be;
Thou blest ‘Rock of Ages,’ I’m hiding in Thee.

[Refrain] Hiding in Thee, Hiding in Thee,
Thou blest ‘Rock of Ages,’ I’m hiding in Thee.

In the claim of the noontide, in sorrow’s lone hour,
In times when temptation casts o’er me its power;
In the tempests of life, on its wide, heaving sea,
Thou blest ‘Rock of Ages,’ I’m hiding in Thee.

[Refrain].

Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, #525, first and second stanzas.

Now, as we sing this last stanza, it may be that there’s some weary heart here this morning that is longing for a blessing you’ve not yet received. You’d like to be remembered in a special way in prayer as we close this service. If so, would you like to just leave your seat and come up here and stand with bowed head here, and we’ll

remember you in a special way as we have the closing prayer. There's a blessing if Jesus is calling you, weary heart, come.

“How oft in the conflict, when pressed by the foe,
I have fled to my Refuge and breathed out my woe;
How often, when trials like sea billows roll,
Have I hidden in Thee, O Thou Rock of my soul.
[Refrain].
Ibid., third stanza.

Our Father, Thou God of all comfort, we thank Thee for every dispensation of Thy grace, every manifestation of Thy love. We thank Thee that Thou dost sometimes cut the earthly tendrils that would bind us to other human beings that we may learn to entwine about God and make Him the Rock of Refuge. Oh, Jesus, bless us all with this precious lesson this morning and make us glad to share with others the comfort that we have shared with Thee.

In a special way, bless our sister who has come for special help from Thee. Give her the blessing for which her heart longs.

Dismiss us now with Thy benediction, and bring us back to sit together at Thy table, for Jesus' sake, amen.

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