

What to Do When You Disappoint Yourself

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[0 : 00] Hello, hello, hello.

Welcome to the Providence Podcast. My name is Chris Oswald, Senior Pastor at Providence Community Church. This was not a planned podcast. This is an impromptu podcast. I thought I would drop in and share an insight that I got today. By reading from Spurgeon's, in part, by reading from Spurgeon's morning and evening devotional for December 10th. And one particular little spot in that devotional prompted a few thoughts that I thought I might share with you. I hope it will be edifying to you, so let's go ahead and get into that. Again, for December 10th, I think it was the morning devotional. Spurgeon quotes a line from an old hymn called Sons of God in Tribulation. Here's the line that he quotes.

[1 : 03] If today he deigns to bless us with a sense of pardoned sin, perhaps tomorrow he'll distress us, make us feel the plague within.

All to make us sick of self and fond of him. All to make us sick of self and fond of him.

The author for that particular poem is John Kent, writing right around the Puritan heydays back in the 1700s. And this is a thought that has, I think, escaped us.

We don't typically think in this way. And I thought, you know, we should talk about this. This was a well-known thing in the Puritan world. While God will always eventually lead us to assurance and joy, he sometimes takes a path that involves a season of allowing us to feel a kind of sin sickness, an unusually clear sense of sorrow for the state of our not yet fully sanctified self.

And this was a well-known understanding in the Puritan world. The hymn that I first discovered this being discussed in is one from Isaac Watts. And there are a couple of really good versions of this.

[2 : 26] It's I Asked the Lord That I Might Grow. So if you look that up on Spotify or if you're a civilized human being that pays your taxes, Apple Music, and you will find a couple of good versions of this hymn.

One is from, one has a female singer. I can't remember. That's the one I prefer. Oh, it was Sandra McCracken. That's the one that I prefer.

But there's also a Sovereign Grace version that's quite good. Again, the hymn, I Asked the Lord That I Might Grow. Let me read that hymn to you. Starts off, I asked the Lord that I might grow.

In faith and love and every grace. Might more of his salvation know. And seek more earnestly his face. T'was he who taught me thus to pray.

And he, I trust, has answered prayer. But it has been in such a way as almost drove me to despair. I hoped that in some favored hour, at once he'd answer my request.

[3 : 34] And by his love's constraining power, subdue my sins and give me rest. Instead of this, he made me feel the hidden evils of my heart.

And let the angry powers of hell assault my soul in every part. Yea, more with his own hand he seemed intent to aggravate my woe.

Crossed all the fair designs I schemed. Lord, why is this? I trembling cried.

Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death? Tis in this way, the Lord replied. I answer prayer for grace and faith. These inward trials I employ from self and pride to set thee free.

And break thy schemes of earthly joy. That thou may find thy all in me. These inward trials I employ from self and pride to set thee free.

[4 : 44] And break thy schemes of earthly joy. That thou may find thy all in me. Or from John Kent. If today he deigns to bless us with a sense of pardoned sin.

Perhaps tomorrow he'll distress us. And make us feel the plague within. All to make us sick of self and fond of him. The Christian life is ultimately a comedy.

It's ultimately a joyful song and a triumph. But there are no doubt dark moments of the soul. And it's important to know that these do not come by accident. That among the Lord's many gracious, mysterious means of sanctification.

He sometimes chooses gravity over gladness. Sometimes he chooses to give us a sense of joy over all that he has done and is doing in our life.

But sometimes he gives us a sense of angst and disquietude over all that has yet not been done in our hearts. Have you ever had an experience like that?

[5 : 50] Have you ever gone through a season where it is not that you are feeling great assurance and joy and triumph from the Lord?

You're mostly just feeling like a scummy little sinner. You're extraordinarily frustrated over your lack of progress and grace in some area. Here's how I would kind of describe what the Lord's doing there.

And the main point of this podcast is I just want you to see the Lord is at work there. Maybe at some point you dated somebody and for a while you thought maybe they were the one.

And then at some point you become weary of that person. They may have done something terrible. They may not have. They might have just become annoying to you.

But you see in one way or another that they are not who you hoped they would be. And you realize that you and this person are not meant to be. Distance grows and then some kind of severing takes place.

[6 : 54] Sometimes it's dramatic and other times it's just a love that grows cold. Well, I think that's what the Lord is doing in these moments where he reveals our sinfulness, our lack of progress.

He allows us to go through a season of disquietude. Only it isn't a weariness toward another that we feel, but rather a weariness toward ourselves. But what God is doing is he's stirring up a discontent toward ourselves.

And in this way he is making us, I guess, kind of break up with ourselves, if that makes sense. He's making us sort of resent our pride and our foolishness and our sinfulness.

He's causing us to see that we are not our own Savior and never can be. When this is happening, it's just crucial that you lean into Christ, that you look up to Christ, that you draw near to Christ.

In the moments where you disappoint yourself, you are given a choice. You can live in this sort of detached disappointment with yourself, constantly going back and forth between the version of you that is eager to not be an idiot sinner and the version of you that is not so eager to be a saint.

[8 : 22] And you can go back and forth and you can prolong the angst and so forth. But really what's supposed to be happening there is you're supposed to be disappointed in yourself so that you can remember that he will never disappoint you.

That he is the true lover of your soul. He is the one. He's detaching you from self, but also attaching you to him. Let me think, let me describe it this way.

Suppose that there is a woman who, you know, her marriage isn't going great at this particular moment. She's feeling some distance from her husband and to be honest, she's starting to take him for granted.

And there's this guy that she works with, not her husband. And in part because of her discontent with her husband and just also because she's a sinner, she starts to find this guy at work attractive. And she starts to see that he has some of the qualities that she kind of wishes her husband had maybe. It's all new.

[9 : 33] It all feels special. Well, maybe this guy is more affirming or whatever. And so she's headed toward a bad thing, right?

I mean, it's still all in her head, but she's headed toward a bad thing. Well, imagine like the great mercy it would be if one day she was watching this man that she's kind of developing this crush on. And suddenly she sees like, you know, he's kind of ugly. And he's not very strong. Like he couldn't even open the jar of jelly beans in the office break room.

He kind of, he's not very good looking. He's kind of weak. He has an annoying laugh. And all of a sudden, like, you know, suddenly this person that was becoming a crush becomes, ew, an ick, you know?

Well, that's a great grace. And then in that, she starts to see that, you know, my husband's actually handsome and he's strong. He can open a lot harder things than jelly beans.

[10:44] And he's my husband and I like him and I love him and I really like him more. Well, that's a tremendous gift from God for that gal to go through that, you know, that story development where she realizes that this other guy isn't the guy and that she has the guy.

That's what the Lord will do with us from time to time. And man, I wish that wasn't necessary. I think the fact that it's necessary is the most annoying thing about being a sinner.

About being fallen. But God is so good. He will help us in seasons of gravity, in seasons of angst, to be disappointed with ourselves, to maybe even look at ourselves with a bit of ick.

And he's doing that because we have a true lover of our souls. And it's not us. It's Jesus. And so what he's doing with these seasons where he allows inward trials to develop, he wants to break us from self and pride and break the earthly schemes of joy that we might find are all in him.

So that's just an encouraging thought for you. Maybe you're going through what they would call a dark season of the soul. Just remember, God didn't suddenly lose control of the wheel.

[12:17] He's still working. He's still working on your behalf. Romans 8.28 is always true. On the ups and on the downs, on the mountains and in the valleys. Romans 8.28 is always true.

He's always working for your good. And sometimes he allows you to just feel this kind of ick towards yourself so that you would break up with yourself. And that you would return back to the one whom your soul really, really should love, the true lover of your soul.

So that's just a brief thought I thought I would drop in. Don't need to say anything else about it. The two hymns again. I asked the Lord that I might grow.

And what was the other one? Sons of God and Tribulation. So if you want to look those up and look through them.

The Sons of God and Tribulation. You know, I read one line from that. You can read more. But anyway, start with a bang, end with a whimper, I guess, huh? I'm all out of juice.

[13:27] That's all I wanted to share. If you're not doing great, you know, remember that God is great. And that we do have to, from time to time, be reminded that we are not our best hope.

The Lord is our best hope. Let me pray for us. Father God, you are so faithful and patient with us. That when you see us starting to get a little full of ourselves, it is a work of great grace for you.

To then help us to see ourselves in the mirror naked, if you will. To be reminded that we're not all that. To be reminded, in fact, that we've really squandered a lot of your grace.

We've really wandered in a number of ways. It's good for us to sometimes feel an ick toward ourselves. The place where people get in trouble, Lord, and the place that I hope to urge my church from and myself from, and that is I don't stay in that spot where I keep looking at how gross I am.

[14:50] I look to you and am reminded that I was created to walk with you. I was created to be in a love relationship with you. I was created to praise you and pray to you, trust you.

You're my hope. I'm not my hope. What a grace it is, Lord, that you would allow us to do that so that we don't plunge headlong into a full, extended, relationship-wrecking affair with ourselves.

We get full of ourselves and think too highly of ourselves. It's a grace, Lord. Thank you for letting our love for ourselves grow cold instead of our love for you.

And, Lord, if anyone is in a situation where they're just feeling frustrated with themselves, with their sin, obviously there's a ton of practical questions I'd want to ask them about how they're fighting sin and how they're employing the help of other brothers and sisters.

But just for right now, God, would you just help them to have some perspective and understand that what's going on there is not outside your control, but it is, in fact, one of your many diverse means of grace for sanctifying us and making us more and more into the saint.

[16:09] You've shed your blood to turn us into. So I pray for those who are weary with themselves, and I pray for those who need to get weary with themselves.

Lord, people who are too big for their britches right now, would you, in the fatherly way, through the expert care of your Holy Spirit, do the work that is necessary to make them less inclined to boast in self and more inclined to boast only in the cross.

Lord, we thank you that you are the lover and carer and shepherd of our souls. You do good work. That's an understatement.

May you be praised and glorified in our hearts as we wean ourselves off of self-dependence and lean into depending on you. In the mighty name of Jesus Christ, we pray.

Amen. Amen. Be well, friends.