

LIFE'S FRUSTRATIONS

Deut. 34:4

INTRODUCTION:

A little boy was sitting on a curb crying as though his heart would break. He was not hurt, he was not lost, but his playmates were just around the corner and he could hear their shouts. Their game was in full swing. The source of grief was, that he was left out. He was forgotten. And he felt the sense of frustration - and hence, his tears.

There is a story that Sir Francis Drake, once having climbed a tall tree in the Isthmus of Panama - he got his first glimpse of the Pacific Ocean. And he straight way cried, 'Almighty God of thy goodness give me life and leave to sail once in an English ship upon that sea.'

Now much of the tragedy of life is due to the fact that for every Sir Francis whose desire is fulfilled and for every little boy who is included in the game - there are thousands to whom it is denied.

The episode of Moses is something that is thrilling and yet helps us to understand life's frustrations.

All Israel stood on the banks of the Jordan in the plains of Moab beyond Iay Canaan, the Promise Land. For forty years they had journeyed through the wilderness to reach the blessed place and to see this blessed sight.

The day of their inheritance had come. The one great high day toward which all of life had moved for a generation.

But the tragedy stalked in their midst. Instead of joy and gladness - the day was filled with tears.

Moses, the man of God, and a servant of the Lord is standing before the people he had loved. He had led them for almost a half a century. But as the great prophet stands before the congregation - his face betrays the grief in his heart. He is not going to be privileged to go over - God has said that he must die in the plains of Moab. But the tribes would enter into the Promise Land without him.

Why did God make this stern denial to Moses.

Num. 20:8 - Look at the Scripture and we will find the occasion for the judgment of God. The fickle people found fault with Moses, their leader, because there was no water. And they wished even that they were back at the place that he had led them from. And they even had ideas that they would just as soon die in Egypt. When Moses took the matter to the Lord, the Lord replied, speake ye unto the rock before their eyes. And it shall give forth water. And thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock. And thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.

Moses was a very impulsive man or passionate man, with a strong temper at times.

You will recall that while he was down in Egypt, his anger got the best of him and he slew an Egyptian. And that had never left him. Numbers 12:3. And yet he is spoken of as a meek and humble man - and one of the greatest figures in the Old Testament. He spoke to God face to face as a man might speak to his friend.

But there were times in which his passion took the upper hand. And he left God out. So it was at this instance. He gathered the people together and in disgust and anger - because of their murmuring and their dissatisfaction of their leadership - he said, hear now ye rebels. Must we fetch you water out of this rock. Then Moses took the rod he had in his hand. Lifted it up, and in wrath, struck the rock twice. Water poured out - abundant water, streams of water. Water for the thousands of people and for their herds and their flocks.

But it was done as though the power lay in Moses. And of course, the people said, he did it. And God was forgotten and God was left out.

Numbers 20:12 - And the Lord spake unto Moses because ye believe me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel - therefore, you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

Now this was the most frustrating news and heartbreaking sentence, ever uttered. And it spoke of a daily sorrow that was going to be in the life of this man of God.

He recorded this in his five farewell sermons, as he delivered them in the book of Deut. - which is partly made up of the discourses of Moses, where he refers to the judgment again and again. As he recounts of years of ministry and he talks about them leaving Egypt. He discusses the tragedy at Kadesh-Barnea. But he always brings back this frustration in his life. Deut. 1:37. Also the Lord was angry with me for your sake - saying, thou also shall not go in further.

Deut. 3:23-26 - He describes his pleading with the Lord in an agonizing prayer over the matter. Oh Lord God, thou has begun to show thy servant thy greatness and thy mighty hand. For what God is there in Heaven or on earth, that

can do according to thy works and according to thy might. I pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan. That goodly mountain in Lebanon. But the Lord was wrought with me for your sakes. And would not hear me. And the Lord said unto me, let it suffice thee, speak no more unto me of this matter.

Inventing his frustration, Moses again - Chapter 4: 21 and 22. Exhort the people to be obedient to the words and commandments of Jehovah. It is almost as if he had said, look at me, and the indescribable hurt in my life because of my transgression of the words of the Lord. In the midst of that great appeal for obedience, Moses turned aside to say - the Lord was angry with me for your sake and swear that I should not go over Jordan. And that I should not go unto the good land which the Lord Thy God giveth thee for inheritance. For I must die in this land. I must not go over Jordan. But ye shall go over and possess that good land.

We can almost hear a sob in his voice, as he refers to the day of separation - the people are to go over without him. They are to enter the inheritance of the land but he is to die in a strange place.

Deut. 3:27 - God seems somehow to have pity on this prophet. And he is going to show him some mercy and some grace. God said, Moses, I am going to do something for you. You cannot enter the land but you can see it. It's whole length and breadth shall you see. In other words, get thee up to the top of Pisgah and lift up thine eyes Westward and Northward, Southward, and Eastward. And behold it with thine eyes. For thou shall not go over this Jordan.

So Moses went up from the plain of Moab into Mt. Nebo, the top of Pisgah - and he saw all the land that the Lord God promised to Israel. And the Lord said unto him, this is the day which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob saying - I will give it unto thy seed. I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes. But thou shall not go over. Deut. 34:4. So Moses, a servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord.

Like Moses, you too have frustrations which come to you and they come for many reasons.

There are various kinds of frustrations - Moses was quite upset with his.

First, they come because of solitude. Moses was somewhat frustrated because he was left out. It is like a 19 year old man who stood on the ledge 17 stories before Fifth Avenue in New York. Police and firemen sought to get him to come down. But he said I am a lonely frustrated man. I wish somebody would convince me that life is worth living. And he jumped.

The greatest problems of young people today is that of solitude. Have you ever been along the ocean side with only the pounding surf as a companion. Or think of the young man on sentry duty at an outpost in Vietnam. Or think of a prisoner of war in solitude. Or think how during World War II many men spent long days in a life raft, on the mid Pacific Ocean.

Think today of the person who live in the high rise apartment who never knows the hand clasp of a friend. Living in a big city and never receiving a letter. Think of the country girl who may come to town looking for bright lights - but as she walks down the street, she feels nothing but the loneliness and the frustration of the crowd.

In John 5, we read of a man who sat beside a pool for 38 years, knowing the frustration and the loneliness, and the solitude - no body would help him. Jesus came along and touched his life and transformed him.

✓ Second, [suffering.] Moses had to suffer this alone. As I think today of the suffering which brings frustration to so many people, in this world. Have you ever thought of the veterans hospitals. Today there are men who were gassed or wounded in World War I - some of them are still suffering. Still paying the price for serving their country.

Few people think about them anymore. They are very much alone in the midst of that condition. There must be a great deal of frustration.

When people suffer they do have frustrations that come to them.

✓ Third (sorrow.) This frustration brought great sorrow to Moses.

Mary and Martha were saddened by the death of their brother Lazarus. And said Jesus, if you had been here - my brother would not have died. Their's was a sorrow. The shortest verse in the Bible tells us that at the tomb of Lazarus Jesus wept. John 11:35. Jesus enters into our sorrows and the frustration it brings. Jesus does not promise to exempt us from trouble or sorrow. Tears will come. And deep inside, there will be a joy that is difficult to explain. It is a joy from God produced by the Holy Spirit. We all feel forgotten when our nearest vanishes to the unseen. But we must not dwell upon our grief and upon our sorrow. Time will help to heal some of our wounds.

Man - Time get Things ready Enjoy life - sorrow comes -
Retired Year 200 - 6 months lost wife -

Fourth, there was the frustration of sin. Moses felt this. And perhaps this is the feeling that people sense today. Like the little boy crying on the curb or the thousands of remaining women who walk life, or the man who sits on a lonely bench in city park. And repeats to himself that he has been forgotten. And man says over and over, how long wilt thou forget me - forever? Hath God forgotten to be gracious.

This was the thing that Isaiah said for 50 years his people's shrine had been layed in ruin. For 50 years there have been no fires on the altar, to glow, and it made it hard to believe in God. And at last word arrived that Babylon had crumbled and that Cyrus had conquered. And there would be mercy shown. And Isaiah 49:13 - he says see no Heavens and be joyous oh earth. Break forth and sing Oh mountains. For the Lord hath comforted his people. And will have mercy upon his afflicted. In other words, God had not forsaken them. Often a mother is bereaved and fears that she has deserted. But Isaiah said, God has not forgotten. Though there were sins.

I think in a city like ours, there are many people, who may have the joys in life - but there are those in our city who go through a dreadful night with their frustrations.

This may be the reason why Robinson Crusoe has such a general appeal - because of his adventures. Not because he is clever or because he arranges and regulates his existence. I think it is because of his frustration of being left alone on that island. And it strikes a universal cord.

But we must recognize even there is this frustration because of sin. But we have not been forgotten of God. He has not overlooked us. Is it because we have been ill, because we have lost money, position, or recognition. The lack

of these things prove nothing concerning God. It proves only that we would like to possess them. And God's concern is with our minds and with our soul.

Quite often this sin is self-pity. I think the swiftest and surest cure of self-pity is really to do something for others. People who have frustrations and pass through great sorrows - I think can find great Christian fellowship in going out and doing something for others. This is a good cure.

✓ Sixth (physical) frustrations - this too I think was not a frustration of Moses but of people today. There are various people today who have what they think is a liability. It is something they have inherited. But these people who have a physical handicap or an imperfect body. Have you not known someone who has used a handicap wonderfully and made a success of life despite the limits of that person. Many have given up initiative, and the will to succeed - just because he did not believe that ordinary human beings could make frustrations become fruitful, to overcome them.

The comic stripes - Donald Duck and Peanuts - are amusing to us - but they develop some of the frustrations that people have today.

It may be some social frustration - your pride has been wounded. We have failed to achieve in a social group and so we feel we are a social misfit. We have genuine concern about this. Because we do not know how to make others feel at ease and happy in our midst. Maybe young men and young women feel frustration because of lack of success and lack of popularity. Failure can happen to anybody, in the wrong kind of work. Lincoln was not an outstanding success as a store keeper. He made law his vocation.

✓ II. How can we make our frustrations fruitful.

Against all the lacks and the hurts that seem to pull us down - has God forgotten you. Why not put all the blessings which you have together and discover that God remembers you.

Dr. Alexander Whyte said to a complaining old lady who felt like she was forgotten by the Almighty, by the church, and by everybody else.

He said, and mind you - forget not all His benefits. Count your blessings faithfully, count them one by one. It will not be easy to conclude that he has forgotten you.

Now this is what Isaiah tried to get across to his people. That Zion had forgotten God. He said can a woman forget her infant. Forget her baby. Yet, he says, never will I forget you. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands. Thy walls are continually before me.

It is not history that makes faith in God. But it is faith in God that makes history.

This is an unusual statement by Isaiah, that here he has the name of Jeresalem and the picture of it's very walls as a constant and a permanent thing in his love.

Now we ought to remember this in the place where you life. It may be when we feel frustrated and forgotten of God, it is not God that has forgotten. Are not 5 sparrows sold for 2 farthings - and not one of them is forgotten before God. Fear not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. Luke 12:6-7

It may be that we have forgotten God. You who feel overlooked and feel side-tracked, shut it off at the mainline of entrance. You have your part in God's plan too.

Paul is a good example of a man who took his frustrations and made them fruitful. He created something better out of them.

He was leading in a new spiritual movement, traveling across the country. Organizing churches. And at last, misfortune strikes. He is arrested and put in prison. And he is going to spend two long years in prison. Now that must have been a great frustration to Paul. While he was there in prison - he used that time to write some of the most priceless treasures of our faith.

It is simply astonishing that a positive attitude toward failure and disappointment can revolutionize things. Even a severe physical disability - a man who suffered from a weakness and a crippled body. Somebody asked him about his constitution. He replied, that's gone long ago. I am now living on the By-Laws.

The story about two men selling patent medicine and running a show. These two brothers - they were young, they were poor, they were ambitious. One of them did a juggling act and he drew the crowds and then his brother sold the medicine. And they had 100% profit. At last the law caught up with them and they were told that they were practicing medicine without a license. It was a real disappointment and frustration, to those two men. The one thing they knew they could do - they were prevented from doing.

The elder of the two, Harry, said here is what we will do. I will get a job with a carnival and I'll put you through medical college. In a few years, you

will have a license to practice. Then no law can order us around. We can go back into this business and really clean up. So one boy went off to the medical school - and the other went off to the circus and show business. Years later, the medical student became chief radiologist in a New York hospital.

Harry became known as Houdini, The foremost magician of all time.

Often, he said, what seemed like the worst troubles in my life have often paid me the biggest dividends.

What can our Christian faith do for us when we experience the defeat of our chosen plans and the frustrations of good desires and hopes.

Can we not be like Paul. Here again he could lead us. When he talked to the Lord about removing the thorn in the flesh. God answered his prayer but not with deliverance. God told him my grace is sufficient for thee. Strength is made perfect in weakness. And how does this power come. It comes in line with God's will.

The Christian has something like the strange Africian berry - I have read about it. You take this berry in the mouth and it sweetens the taste of everything that you eat. Those who follow Christ, who make faith their aim - have a power to transform every frustration into an opportunity. Quite often we worry about the injustices done us, and the criticisms which fall upon us. And there are few human beings who get along without life's frustrations. They really are relentless in one form or another.

And quite often a parent may have personal hopes for his child. He may transfer these hopes to his child. He may see him develop through childhood. And

then the possibility is almost there. Then death may come and take him away.

I recall one such incident of a young girl - who had a beautiful voice. Well trained - and got into college. And it seemed that all the possibilities were just opening up. And then a very dread disease came. And took her away.

The realization - have we desired the things we have labored for. And quite often the things that we believe we deserve. And they never quite become a reality. We are dissolutioned and unsatisfied. This is a great temptation to many - to abandon faith.

But remember we are disciples of one who believes that there is a purpose in life.

Just like Moses - he had a great purpose in life.

Just like Wesley said, rejoice, the Lord is King - your Lord and King adore. Even to the last day of our earthly life. We are going to be tested, disappointed, and there will come little problems, and they will come repeated and bring rebuffs and resistance to us.

When the son of man cometh - shall he find faith on the earth.

Think of Jesus going into the darkness of Gethsemane. My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death. Through my Father, if it be possible, let this pass from me. One of the chief elements in the agony of the garden was this. Was he going to be a total failure.

Yes, I think that we need to make these frustrations fruitful.

First, I believe that Moses (accepted his failure) and frustration.

This was part of bringing spiritual power to him. One of the heaviest spiritual burdens which we carry lies in our unwillingness to accept the inevitable.

We rebel against limitation, which cannot be changed.

Because of the factors sometimes of our own folly or the folly of others - or because of the doors that close, or because of the circumstances that we find ourselves in. Or the walls of the restrictions - or the firm barriers.

Why not meet these inevitable things, with something of submission and heroism.

Why adopt an attitude of bitterness, and unceasing protest, and becoming a rebel which is really against our own souls.

You and I are not the only souls facing frustrations. To accept these limitations mean that we may not change them all - to accept them inwardly and hopefully. I think is one of the first steps. I think this is the way that Jesus gained peace. The giver of all peace. His adjustment to the inevitable.

Just like Moses - taking hold of a difficult situation - with both hands and letting God show him the way in that situation. It is not what life does to you that matters so much - it is what you permit life to do in you. See that old man on Mt. Nebo - how quiet he is. Our imaginations move us to tip-toe - no real bitterness - no self-despising.

As we see that young man on the Mt. of Olives - life becomes sublime. Oh, my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it. Thy will be done.

✓ Second, I think by understanding Moses turned his frustration into fruitfulness. I think Moses must have understood what had taken place. That God accepts his purpose and that even though he prayed about it and his intentions and his deeds - that God thoroughly knew his heart. Even though his dreams were rebuffed.

Like Moses, you long to go over - but what if it is enough that we aspire and labor that others might know that fair country. Then ever we inhabited.

✓ Yes, Moses didn't go in and possess all that kingdom. But think about the thousands that went in because of his leadership.

Let us understand this if we are defeated - let us still give hospitality to one who can help us. Let us thank God that if this is in his purpose, if this is the intention for our soul - that we shall be judged according to it.

✓ Third, Moses made frustration fruitful through the grace of God. It was by the means of grace that Moses was able even to see the promise land. He went up to the top of Pisgah - yet he was not alone. And though his sight was very good and he had all the advantage of high ground. The Lord showed it to him. All the pleasant prospects we have for a better country, we behold in the grace of God. He saw it at a distance and such a sight! Why Abraham looked at it a long ways away. He saw it but he must never enjoy it. And he saw it all just before his death. And sometimes maybe God reserves the brightest discoveries for the dying moment.

Now you must remember that part of the frustration of Moses had been guilt. And I suspect that it has been a great frustration in your life. Just like Adam

and Eve. They rebelled against God in the midst of the Paradise. And God's government drove them out of the garden and his grace saved them from their sins. They ran and concealed themselves - trying to hide from God.

Today, when half the hospital beds are occupied by mental patients - many times it is guilt about something that has been done, something they think or feel responsible for. But we are all guilty of sin. Guilt plagues the whole human race. We have all broken the laws of God. And God sent his son, Jesus, to die on the cross to wipe away that guilt. And we don't have to go around carrying a load of remorse for sin.

The greatest word in the English language is forgiveness. Think of hearing, God said, your sins are forgiven.

When we are forgiven, we are justified. That means, just as if I had never committed sin. God places us in his sight as though we had never sinned.

Now Moses listened to God. And God said I have forgiven you of your sins. You are still to be my friend and to be my servant. I will not shut out from you all the beauty of Canaan. You shall see it with your own eyes. Come, get thee up to the top of Pisgah and behold the land that flows with milk and honey.

And though he had transgressed, and though God sent judgment upon him - he still was given God's grace which covered his frustrations.

The grace of God will forgive neglect and rebellion in love and put the remembrance of them aside. When you forego your opportunity you are like Esau. No amount of tears will bring it back to you. You have traded your birthright for a mess of pottage and there is no place of repentance.

This is the seriousness of the moral law. There are some things that simply cannot be recalled. There are some things that simply cannot be undone. Yesterday is gone forever and death is no less final.

I remember a story out of Dr. Criswell's life - he said a family moved next door to one of the Deacon's in the church. None of them were Christians. And the Deacon invited him to come and see if they couldn't win the family. Either the Deacon or the Preacher could bring them to a decision for Christ or even to attend the services in the church.

Then one morning at 2 o'clock a Christian nurse at the hospital called the Pastor. There is a boy that is critically hurt in a traffic accident and in a little while he will die. His father is here by his side. When the boy dies, it will be terrible - an awful blow to this man. I thought possibly you could come and be with him when the moment comes. He says he knows you - but what is his name nurse. And when she told him it was the name of the man that lived next door to the Deacon. And as soon as possible he stood by the father. And as he watched the life of the boy every way - in a little while the nurse turned to the father and said, Sir, your boy is gone. She drew the sheet up over his face of the silent form. The father stood by the bed stunned - too stunned to move and then he burst into tears. Oh my God, my God - my boy is gone. And I have not lived right before him!

After the body of the youth was layed to rest, the Preacher went by the home again to speak to them about Christ. Who alone could help and to save. The next Lord's Day the entire family was present and answered the invitation to come to the Saviour. The people in the church said, to one another, is it not a beautiful sight - father, mother, son, and daughter. All in the Kingdom and all in the church.

But to the Preacher, it was one of the saddest sights of his life. For he could not keep back the tears - because in God's mercy and grace, he had saved the father and the mother and the two children. But there was a lonely grave in the cemetery that held the silent form of another boy who had gone out to meet God without hope, without salvation, without the hope and forgiveness of sin.

It was a cause of rejoicing on the part of the church, that a family of four was saved - but there was another member of the family that the people of the church did not know about. And that boy's life was sacrificed on the altar of sin. And the indifference of his parents. But the grace of God had reached the parents.

When we think about our frustrations, we ought to think - God is asking me for faith, obedience, and consecration. And that is the thing that we ought to answer. Lord, I give my all to thee.

Recall again, what God said to Moses - I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes. But thou shall not go over. No, he did not go in physically, bodily - into that earthly Canaan. But after viewing that land, the next verse tells us about him passing away. And God must have conducted his funeral. It must have been glorious. Because there is no other record.

Of course it was hard upon Moses. He had gone through all of the fatigues of the wilderness. To be prevented from enjoying the pleasures of Canaan. When he had bore the burden in the heat of the day and yet, he had to resign the honor of finishing the work to another. Not his son, but his servant, who must enter into his labors.