



WHEN DREAMS COME TO NOTHING

I think it's safe to say that for most of us, 2020 has not gone according to plan. Business ventures, exam results, holidays – all of them thrown into disarray by C-19. It's an uncomfortable reminder that in life, disappointments happen.

We might even end up feeling like disappointments ourselves.

Today, we're going to look at a psalm that was dedicated to someone who could probably identify with that feeling:

Psalm 132

Psalm 132 is referred to as 'A Song of Ascents' – one of the songs the Israelites would sing as they ascended the slopes of Mount Zion to worship God in the temple in Jerusalem. And these songs tend to be pretty joyous - yet look at how this one begins: "O LORD, remember David and all the hardships he endured" (vs1). It sounds more like a song of *descents* than a song of *ascents*; a downer not an upper!

Now there's a back-story to Psalm 132, and you can find it in 2 Samuel 7. David wanted to build a temple for God and a resting place for the Ark of the Covenant (vs2-9). But then Nathan the Prophet turned up with a message from God: "No David, you won't." And although the Bible doesn't record exactly how David felt, I think there's a clue in vs10.

But God had something positive to say, too.

According to this psalm, disappointments in life happen when we pin our hopes on any 1 of 3 things:

1) A Good Idea, Not A God Idea (vs11-12). David thought he knew what God's plan was, but God had other plans – better plans, in fact. David wasn't going to build a house for God; God was going to build a house for David: a house or family (the word *beit* can mean either) which God Himself would become a part of, in Jesus (Matthew 1).

Which has got to be better than a temple made of stone, right?

Now there have been many times in my life when I have been disappointed. Sometimes it's because I think I can make a better job of it than God; other times it's because I'm planning for something that God isn't. And then I start to wonder: "Is God angry with me? Perhaps I'm not where I should be? Perhaps I'm not even a Christian?! Help!" But in reality, the issue is that I'm not hoping for the right thing. Pure and simple.

So, if your circumstances don't match your expectations, what should you do? You've got 2 choices:

- Change your circumstances (if you can).
- Change your expectations (that may be easier).

More often than not, it's the expectations that need to change. So, give your plans to God, be ready for Him to do whatever He wants with them – and roll with it!

2) A Good Timing, Not A God Timing (vs13-16). God was more than happy with a temple being built on Mount Zion (vs14) – the problem was the timing. God wasn't saying "No", just "Not yet." David didn't realise it, but there were other battles that had to be fought first.

Everything these days is 'instant.' To illustrate the point, I decided to Google the word 'instant' (I got 256 million results!):

- Instant coffee
- Instant pasta
- Instant noodles
- Instant recipes
- Instant loans
- Instant wins
- Instant sports results
- Instant golf-swing tips
- Instant downloads
- Instant sound effects
- Instant drum-kit assembly instructions
- Instant Hebrew.com (learn to read it in 2 hours!)

I.e. life is fast, and we expect it all now. And that affects everything – relationships, work, church. Only problem is: God’s clock runs to a different time. So, the lesson we need to learn is this: God’s timing isn’t necessarily our timing, but it’s always the best timing; God’s plans aren’t necessarily our plans, but they’re always the best plans; God’s way of doing things isn’t necessarily our way of doing things, but it’s always the best way of doing things.

Imagine if your kids were to say, “Mum, Dad, can we have a go in the car?” And you reply with, “Kids, take the keys.” Would that be wise? They might think you unfair, but in reality, you’d have to say, “Erm ... not yet.”

3) A Good Outlook, Not A God Outlook (vs17-18). Why did God say “No” to David but “Yes” to Solomon? For one thing, David was a battler, not a builder. Solomon, the “horn and lamp” or ‘strength and hope’ of vs17, was the other way around.

But God could also see things that David couldn’t – aspects of David that needed sorting out, e.g.:

- **Integrity.** God knew that David had the potential to self-destruct - and that’s exactly what happened. Just a few months later David had an affair with Bathsheba and had her husband killed on a suicide mission.
- **Family.** A multitude of children born to numerous wives would breed jealousy and resentment within David’s family – and eventually explode into a full-blown military coup led by David’s son Absalom.
- **Humility.** David was becoming reliant on himself rather than God – an attitude which came to a head when he carried out a census to see how big his army was, and brought a plague down on Israel as a result.

I.e. God still had a lot of work to do with David!

We may not have the same issues as David, but we’ve still got issues. We need to remember: there are more important things to God than a temple in Jerusalem. *We* are more important. Why? Because *we* are His temple.

The Only Way Is Up

So, are you feeling disappointed with life or yourself at the moment? Sometimes, in order to ascend, you first need to descend – as Jesus Himself did! But if you can praise God in the midst of it all, then it can become your very own ‘Song of Ascents’ – a song you sing as you draw near to God.

Because the more we say “Yes” to God and His plans for us, the closer to God we get. And in God’s eyes that’s not a negative at all.

That’s the greatest success there is.