

# Disappointment--What Is Necessary--God's Patience

by John Newton

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting God's plan and guidance, even in the face of disappointment, and living a life of humility, spirituality, and obedience to His will.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 37:5, Psalm 40:8, Proverbs 3:5, Proverbs 19:21, Isaiah 55:8, Romans 12:2, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 4:6, James 4:13

**Topics:** "God's Providence", "Surrendering Will"

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## Description

John Newton preaches about the importance of surrendering our own wills to God's guidance, highlighting how the Lord often disrupts our plans for our own good and to teach us reliance on Him. He emphasizes the need to trust in God's management even when it contradicts our desires, as His ways are higher and wiser than ours. Newton encourages a life of daily surrender to God's will, acknowledging that true happiness and contentment come from aligning our will with His and trusting in His providence.

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## Transcript

August 17, 1767.

It is indeed natural to us to wish and to plan, and it is merciful in the Lord to disappoint our plans, and to cross our wishes. For we cannot be safe, much less happy, but in proportion as we are weaned from our own wills, and made simply desirous of being directed by His guidance. This truth (when we are enlightened by His Word) is sufficiently familiar to the judgment; but we seldom learn to reduce it to practice, without being trained awhile in the school of disappointment. The schemes we form look so plausible and convenient, that when they are broken, we are ready to say, What a pity! We try again, and with no better success; we are grieved, and perhaps angry, and plan out another, and so on; at length, in a course of time, experience and observation begin to convince us, that we are not more able than we are worthy to choose aright for ourselves. Then the Lord's invitation to cast our cares upon Him, and His promise to take care of us, appear valuable; and when we have done planning, His plan in our favour gradually opens, and he does more and better for us than we either ask or think.

I can hardly recollect a single plan of mine, of which I have not since seen reason to be satisfied, that had it taken place in season and circumstance just as I proposed, it would, humanly speaking, have proved my ruin; or at least it would have deprived me of the greater good the Lord had designed for me. We judge of

things by their present appearances, but the Lord sees them in their consequences, if we could do so likewise we should be perfectly of His mind; but as we cannot, it is an unspeakable mercy that He will manage for us, whether we are pleased with His management or not; and it is spoken of as one of his heaviest judgments, when He gives any person or people up to the way of their own hearts, and to walk after their own counsels.

Indeed we may admire His patience towards us. If we were blind, and reduced to desire a person to lead us, and should yet pretend to dispute with him, and direct him at every step, we should probably soon weary him, and provoke him to leave us to find the way by ourselves if we could. But our gracious Lord is long-suffering and full of compassion; He bears with our forwardness, yet He will take methods to both shame and to humble us, and to bring us to a confession that He is wiser than we. The great and unexpected benefits He intends us, by all the discipline we meet with, is to tread down our wills, and bring them into subjection to His. So far as we attain to this, we are out of the reach of disappointment; for when the will of God can please us, we shall be pleased every day, and from morning to night; I mean with respect to His dispensations. O the happiness of such a life! I have an idea of it; I hope I am aiming at it, but surely I have not attained it. Self is active in my heart, if it does not absolutely reign there. I profess to believe that one thing is needful and sufficient and yet my thoughts are prone to wander after a hundred more. If it be true that the light of His countenance is better than life, why am I solicitous about anything else? If He be all-sufficient, and gives me liberty to call Him mine, why do I go a-begging to creatures for help? If He be about my path and bed; if the smallest, as well as the greatest events in which I am concerned, are under His immediate direction; if the very hairs of my head are numbered then my care (any farther than a care to walk in the paths of His precepts, and to follow the openings of His providence) must be useless and needless, yea, indeed, sinful and heathenish, burdensome to myself, and dishonourable to my profession. Let us cast down the load we are unable to carry, and if the Lord be our Shepherd, refer all and trust all to Him. Let us endeavour to live to Him and for Him to-day, and be glad that to-morrow, with all that is behind it, is in His hands.

It is storied of Pompey, that when his friends would have dissuaded him from putting to sea in a storm, he answered, It is necessary for me to sail, but it is not necessary for me to live. A pompous speech, in Pompey's sense! He was full of the idea of his own importance, and would rather have died than have taken a step beneath his supposed dignity. But it may be accommodated with propriety to a believer's case. It becomes us to say, It is not necessary for me to be rich, or what the world accounts wise; to be healthy, or admired by my fellow-worms; to pass through life in a state of prosperity and outward comfort,-these things may be, or they may be otherwise, as the Lord in His wisdom shall appoint;-but it is necessary for me to be humble and spiritual, to seek communion with God, to adorn my profession of the Gospel, and to yield submissively to His disposal, in whatever way, whether of service or suffering, He shall be pleased to call me to glorify Him in the world. It is not necessary for me to live long, but highly expedient that whilst I do live I should live to Him. Here, then, I would bound my desires; and here, having His word both for my rule and my warrant, I am secured from asking amiss. Let me have His presence and His Spirit, wisdom to know my calling, and opportunities and faithfulness to improve them; and as to the rest, Lord, help me to say, "What Thou wilt, when Thou wilt, and how Thou wilt."

I am, &c.

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