

How To Live With Frustration

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Scripture: Colossians 3:15 (RSV); Matthew 17:20;
Isaiah 30:15; John 14:27

OUR conception of a Sunday morning sermon is that it ought to be directed to the personal needs of individual human beings and to the correction and improvement of society as a whole. It can never be either solely personal or solely social, for these are opposite sides of the same coin. We can never expect to have a better world until we have better people, for the better world will not endure if built on people who aren't themselves living on a high standard of life and thought. And Jesus was interested in the individual. He wanted to help him to say that he was not a failure. This is by way of saying that my sermon for today was developed out of a conversation I had one day with a man on Fifth Avenue. We met in the crowd, had a few words together, after which I turned to go my way and

he to go his. But then he called to me and wanted to speak some more. He was rather hesitant in what he said this time; he was a bit apologetic. "I've been to your church several times because I'm driven by necessity. I've simply got to find something, or else I think I'll end up with a nervous breakdown."

"Well," I asked, "have you been helped by coming to the church?"

"Yes," he replied, "I've been helped to a certain degree, but I haven't found my answer yet. I wonder if you would do me a favor. Will you preach a sermon on how to live with frustration? I am driven mad by it."

And so many people talk about frustration that I looked it up in the dictionary. Do you know what the definition of frustration is?"

"Really I don't," I admitted, "but I could give you my own definition."

"Well," he said, "this is what Webster says about it: 'To frustrate is to baffle. And another word used in the definition is to thwart, meaning to get in the way, to hinder, to put obstacles in the path. And Webster goes on to say that frustrate means to irritate and even to exasperate.'"

And my friend concluded, "I've got all right. Please preach a sermon on how to live with frustration."

And it is a prevalent modern malady, frustration. It affects the old and the young alike. As a matter of fact, I think it affects the young more acutely than the old,

for young people tend to become more philosophical. But young people, wanting a thing and not getting it, become baffled and thwarted and sometimes throw themselves around without order or direction because of what other people have done to them.

Here, for example, is a letter from a young girl whose name is Susan. She signs her last name too, but I'll not mention that. She lives in Tennessee and she writes:

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resentment, annoyance, exasperation, irritation. All these eat at a human being unless and until they are ruled, so that they no longer eat at him. Without Christ rule, man dominates instead. That is why we must have Christ rule in our hearts. When we have Christ rule, we become organized and we are able to see ahead. The fact that there is a great Power in the world. They do not need to feel that you, with your own inadequate strength, must deal with everything that gangs up on you, but you yield it to God, you surrender it to you put it in His hands. He does it for you. He over comes for you that mass of difficulties that seems to have you defeated.

READ an article the other day by a lady named Mary Katherine MacDougall. I don't know her, but she writes very well indeed and she has a grasp of truth. In this article she tells of how a man in great frustration came to have the peace of Christ rule in his heart and as a result got answers that seemed to him incredible. He says he wouldn't have believed if others had said such a thing had happened to them. But since it happened to him he knows the power of it.

There you have a little girl nine years of age who already is in contact with the frustrations of human existence.

What, then, is the answer for her - and for all of us - in the problem of having to live with frustration? Now to understand this man's experience requires the concept of a great God. One of the evils of our time is that the great, enormous God has been made so small in people's understanding that we no longer believe in His tremendous wonders. God is great. He is the God who threw all the stars and planets out into illimitable space and has them perfectly ordered according to scientific law, so that when men go out from earth with their scientific precision they find out there that same precision, the inscrutable wisdom of a great God. You hear Him in the thunder; you see Him in the clouds;

The significant thing in this passage is the word you see Him in the might of science - a wonderful you have other conditions in your heart: antagonism, yet in the mixed-up modern conception of our

Christian faith we have reduced and eroded. Well, he was strangely impressed and, although he minds so that if you talk about wonders you find that skeptical, he started talking to God out loud. He many react with skepticism. If you want to get a partner, it looks as if I need someone who knows frustration and live with power. Then get yourself a more than I do. Will You work with me? I desperately big God, a God who will guide you in every difficult need a partner who has a lot on the ball." And suddenly he felt strangely relaxed and very sleepy. So he of this life.

To get back to the story: It's about an oil-well driller who lay down on a pile of lumber and slept until the first by the name of Henderson. He had drilled many dry holes and streaks of dawn. Then, remembering his prayer of producing wells, but now three dry holes in succession the night before, he asked the Lord, "Partner, what do come in. He was a good man. He believed in God, and he had a wonderful wife who believed in God more than he did, which is an asset, believe me."

He was drilling the fourth well and he was running out of money. The geology was as promising as it could be; the contour of the land was perfect; there should definitely be oil down there. But after drilling for some time, and he himself was immobile and all around day they finally went into sand at the level where they had expected to strike oil. The oil had departed a long time ago. Henderson said, "Yes, there is oil. that sand generations before. It was just another dry well. Go deeper. Deeper. Deeper."

He was heartsick. There is nothing, he says, so sick as when you realize you've drilled a dry hole. He had ening as when you realize you've drilled a dry hole. He had known men who had gone deeper into dry holes and And he had these men. They were good workers; they had come up with oil. However, he also knew of many were fathers of families. He hated to lay them off. cases where after deeper drilling there were still just Evening was falling, so he let the men go home and dry holes. But he decided, "Okay, if You say drill there a long time alone. Then he became aware that, I will."

he was hungry - he hadn't eaten since breakfast. So he asked another question: "Partner, do I ate the lunch in his dinner pail. His wife was always enough money now?" He says that even as he putting little notes in with his lunch, trying to help him. He was sure he didn't have. But presently he dis spiritually. Sometimes he read them; sometimes he distinctly heard the answer, "You will have." didn't. And when he'd consumed the lunch that evening, he got in his car and drove into town and stopped at there at the bottom was this note staring up at him: the first gas station to call his wife and to call the men

back. As he went back to his car, a man he had known a long time pulled up in a truck and said to Henderson, "I hear you're quitting."

"No," he replied, "just gave the men a night off."

"Well," said the man, "I've got five thousand dollars burning a hole in my pocket. Here it is. Use it." (No contract, no written word, no security of any kind.) "I want to tell you, in conclusion, about a friend of mine. He is a man I do not know too well, but well enough to have been blessed by him. I already knew him slightly when I encountered him one morning in the coffee shop of the Hotel Roosevelt in New Orleans."

Henderson says he stood there transfixed. "I said, 'Thank You, Partner,' meaning of them." Three days later they got to a sand that brought in a nice well. His frustration ceased.

You see, the point of all this is that maybe you yourself are struggling too hard with something that you can't handle, so that naturally you're frustrated, perhaps even hopeless. Let it go, give it to God in His mighty power. He can do wonderful things, our God. So great is He that Jesus said, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed . . . nothing shall be impossible unto you." Believe that. You name the difficulty, and then you name God contrary to it. Stay with it and believe and work away. So let the peace of Christ rule in your heart.

But to have that peace of Christ requires some doing. You have to yield yourself to Him, let Him take the tensions and the stress out of you. Yield to Him. He has the power to quiet you deep within your mind. And when you get quieted in your mind, then you have entered

power that will give you dynamic drive for whatever you is you have to do. So many of us, unfortunately, do it ourselves to pieces with disorganized tension and stress. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." Then you will become master of your frustrations.

A silence falls over the congregation as I say these things. Why is that? Because something is being said, however poorly, that is a basic truth about human beings. You do not live successfully with your frustrations while you are all torn up inside. You must have inner peace. Otherwise, the power is not there.

At this point the waitress came and told me, "Now, look, honey, here's what I want, and I want it now! Two soft-boiled eggs, boiled as soft as you can get them, and two pieces of soft toast." "Oh, I don't like soft-boiled eggs much myself," I commented. "Oh, I don't either," he said, "but I've got so much to do that I take them because they slide down faster than anything else." Then he actually put the toast, when he got it, in the coffee and made it soggy so it too would slide down.

"I'll just grab something on the fly," he said, "then I'll be back." "I like a leisurely breakfast," I replied. "My wife and I have a nice leisurely breakfast together. We have prayer and devotions and get the day started on a great relaxed note - and," I added, "with God."

He gave me a strange look. "Oh," he exclaimed, "at least I've gotten on top of them." And he told me "everything's ganging up on me. I'm so frustrated that I have had six gems of wisdom which he repeats to me." He was the picture of misery and despair. "Well," as medicine for frustrations:

he said, "I've got to get going." The first is a word of advice from Cicero: "To live well, live slowly." And you might add, if one may permit me to improve on Cicero, "To live well, live slowly." The second is from Confucius: "The way of a superior man is threefold: virtuous, he is therefore free from anxiety; wise, he is therefore free from perplexity; bold, he is therefore free from fear."

"Well," he said, "I haven't got much time, but you invite me I'll come along." Third, is a great thought from Robert Louis Stevenson: "Sit loosely in the saddle of life." Don't ride life in that chair and stick out your feet as far as you can. Put your head back on the headrest. Take three deep breaths and relax. And now shut your eyes."

He did as I said, but he was a little suspicious. "What are you going to do - give me a treatment?" And from Isaiah, "In quietness and in confidence shall you be your strength."

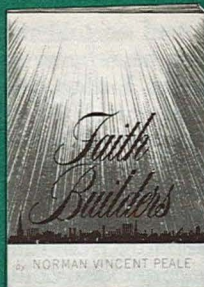
"I certainly am," I told him, "for I'm a doctor, and right; I'm a spiritual doctor. And I hate to see you tearing yourself to pieces." So he shut his eyes. "Now say out loud after me, 'Jesus, put Your hand on my heart and take the fever out of my mind.'"

I said, "say out loud after me, 'Jesus, put Your hand on my heart and take the fever out of my mind.' Now say, 'The hand of Jesus, cool and strong, is on my forehead.' Now say, 'The hand of Jesus is on my tense face.' Now say, 'The hand of Jesus is on my heart, taking the strain and tension out of it.' And now feel the hand of Christ in your heart."

Jesus touching your whole body." I noticed that tears were coming out under his lids. He said, "You know, this is the most beautiful thing I ever heard of. I never knew that Jesus could do this to you."

"Jesus can do wonderful things for you," I answered. And Jesus did. Some months ago I met that man again and he said he had been working at this ever since. "I've gotten rid of my frustrations," he said, "or Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, we thank You for Yourself. Help us all, we pray, to overcome frustration and turmoil through the peace of Christ in our hearts. And for this we give You thanks, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

And Jesus did. Some months ago I met that man again and he said he had been working at this ever since. "I've gotten rid of my frustrations," he said, "or



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