



FEELING DISAPPOINTED?

The airmail letter came from a successful applicant for a grant, enabling him to attend an ICMDA conference. 'Please pray for those who have not received bursaries,' he wrote. 'They could feel bitter or resentful, which would spoil the fellowship.' It seemed that this group of young believers still needed to learn from the apostle Paul, who said: 'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.' (Philippians 4:11)

When I was growing up and upset about something, *my* father used to say, 'Learn to spell disappointment with an *'H'* - His appointment.' Learning is a lifelong process and some lessons have to be reinforced before they become basic to our thought life and responses. Yet if we have handed over our lives to the service of our loving Lord, can we not trust him with all that he allows to happen to us? Whether or not our problems result from errors that are clearly human, we still have the definite assurance that, '*All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.*' (Romans 8:28)

God is able to take shattered dreams, failures (including failed applications) and all other occasions when we are tempted to feel that he's let us down, or made a big

mistake, and work any of these things together for good. Unlike us, he is not in a hurry, but with the retrospectoscope we may well see what he has made of the mess we had thought we were in. Such lessons strengthen us for the next time as, like Paul, we '*learn*' to rely on his judgment more than our own aspirations.

It may be that we will never see why he permitted some major disappointment to come our way. Perhaps how we took it will draw someone else closer to faith. It could simply be that we learn to know him and his ways better as we experience something of the 'fellowship of his sufferings', whilst also finding resilience from 'the power of his resurrection'. (Philippians 3:10) The outcome must be trusted to him.

When next disappointment comes our way, it could be consoling to read through the whole of the letter to the Philippians - and remind ourselves that it was written by someone chained up in a prison.

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