

Joke: A Baker was asked to print 1 John 4:18 on a wedding cake.

He baked a beautiful cake and began to put the Scripture on, but he had wrote down the wrong one on the order so instead of 1 John 4:18 he used John 4:18.

Just so you know the difference

1st John 4:18 reads “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.”

Whereas, John 4:18 reads “For you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband.”

Dealing with Unreachable Destinations - Proverbs 13:12

Here we are church the last message in our series.

So far in our series on The Path, we’ve learned that:

1. Your direction determines your destination.
2. Life is a series of mid-course corrections.
3. We can’t always trust our hearts but rather we should trust our hearts to God.
4. Reputation matters, so choose the story you will tell.
5. Wise people seek counsel.
6. Attention determines direction.

And an important point to remember is to look straight ahead and don’t get distracted by things that will lead you off the path.

Last week we spent some time looking at that. . .remember?

Proverbs 4:25–27 (NIV): Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. 26 Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. 27 Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.

But what do you do when you realize that the destination you're trying to achieve is unachievable or at least seems that way, or that the dream you had is not going to come true, the hope you had is going to go unfulfilled.

What do you do when you find yourself trying to reach a destination that is unreachable?

And the truth is some are unreachable. Sometimes it's because of the choices we made. And honestly, your not going to drive a semi if you have had 4 DUI's. And sorry to say this but, your probable not going to make the NBA if your 4 foot 8.

Andy Stanley writes, "Some destinations are unreachable. Some dreams won't come true. Some dreams can't come true. Some destinations become unreachable because of lifestyle choices. Some are unreachable because of a single decision. Some destinations are out of reach because of mistakes we've made. Some are out of reach because of decisions others have made. Sometimes we are to blame. Sometimes there is no one to blame. In time, the reason behind our inability to get where we want to becomes irrelevant. We are where we are, we aren't where we want to be – and there is nothing that can be done to change that."

And I think everybody faces this kind of disappointment at some point. Time is often the culprit.

Vince Lombardi, the famed coach of the Green Bay Packers, said, "We didn't lose; we just ran out of time."

Perhaps with unlimited time we could make more of our dreams come true. If we could stop the clock, we might be able to reach any destination we choose. But there aren't any time-outs in life. The clock is always running. At some point we wake to the realization that it – whatever it is – is not going to happen for us.

The Bible says,

Proverbs 13:12 (NIV): Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

That's true, isn't it? When you realize your dream is unrealizable, your heart gets sick. It's the natural first reaction. We ache, we hurt, we wake up gasping in the middle of the night.

What do you do when you can't reach your destination?

You get heartsick.

When you are heartsick, you either stay there and get bitter or work at it and get better.

As a seventeen-year-old, Joseph had all the dreams in the world. He had a literal dream that one day he would rule over his father and brothers. Then he found himself in slavery, and the dream died. His heart must have been beyond sick.

Daniel, at about the same age, found himself chained to other young Israelites and dragged hundreds of miles into exile in a foreign country. His heart must have been sick. Would he get bitter or would he get better?

King David got word one day that his newborn son was probably going to die. How would he deal with that?

The Apostle Paul found himself with a physical disease. He called it a “thorn in his flesh.” We don’t know what that was exactly, but it was a handicap that likely limited him in some way.

Some believe he had poor eyesight. Imagine struggling to read if your whole life revolved around communicating and writing and preaching? Some believe it was poor knees. Imagine barely being able to walk in a culture that had no trains, planes, or automobiles. They didn’t even have bicycles. Others believe that he had epilepsy. Imagine getting up in front of crowds to speak and finding yourself suddenly thrown to the ground in an uncontrollable seizure?

We don’t know what Paul had, but he despaired over it. His heart was sick.

Then there’s Jesus. The Bible says that on the night before He was crucified, He went to the Garden and prayed about the kind of death He was facing. He prayed, “Father, if there is any way we can do this without me having to die on the Cross, please take this fate away from me.” He was so anguished about it, he actually sweated drops of blood.

What do you do when you’re heartsick? How can you avoid bitterness and work toward “betterness”?

Andy says, “What do you do when your dream can’t come true? . . . You can get angry with God, angry with life. You can despair. You can try to make something happen anyway. You can try and live your dream through your kids. I’ve seen that plenty of times. But at the end of your striving and manipulating, nothing will have changed. You will be just as far away from whatever it is you desired. But now you will be far from God as well.”

Your second option is to do what Paul did. He writes to his friends in Corinth:

2 Corinthians 12:7–8 (NIV): or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

Paul had had some amazing things happen to him in his life—his highs were really high. But now, he's got a low. He's got a physical ailment that he is going to have to live with for the rest of his life. It's probably painful, and it certainly keeps him from fulfilling his dreams.

So you do what Paul did.

He prayed. . . fervently.

That's the step pray. Paul prayed fervently three times: Then he tells us what the Lord's response is to that fervent prayer. . .

2 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV): But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

2 Corinthians 12:9 (TPT): But he answered me, "My grace is always more than enough for you, and my power finds its full expression through your weakness." So I will celebrate my weaknesses, for when I'm weak I sense more deeply the mighty power of Christ living in me.

Next step, You need to listen for God's voice.

How many of you realize that in the midst of prayer, it is possible to hear God's voice?

So many times we just shout out our prayer, but never take the time to sit and listen to what God has to say in response to that prayer.

Maybe for fear of Him not answering how we hope He answers. Whatever the excuse we need to wait on Him.

Sometimes, like in Paul's life his prayer didn't bring the change he was hoping for. He felt God saying, "This is going to stay with you," so what do you do in that circumstance.

Trust God even more. . .

Joy and I went to see the first two episodes of The Chosen season 3 last night. And Jesus is having a conversation with James. James is complaining about a healing that he could use. And Jesus said I haven't healed you because I trust you. Your testimony isn't like so many others, God healed me, yours is that even the midst of your circumstance you praise God anyway.

So church, when the answer doesn't come like you were hoping, trust God even more.

Romans 8:28 (NIV): And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Paul found a way to believe that God's grace was sufficient for him, that God's power would be even better displayed in his weakness, in his physical infirmity.

So, you learn to accept the reality and find the good in it.

That's the start of becoming better instead of bitter.

Paul continues:

2 Corinthians 12:9–10 (NIV): But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

So, you learn to use your hardship's for God's glory.

Whatever it was Paul had, he determined to use it for God's glory.

When Jesus was facing his darkest moment, wrestling with the unreachable destination of staying alive and avoiding the agony of the Cross, he chose this option. He prayed fervently, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will"

The second time he prayed about not having to face his inevitable hardship, his prayer changed slightly: "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done"

He accepted reality, found the good in it, and determined to use his hardship for God's glory. In this case, for the saving of you and I, the world actually.

Can you imagine your life if Jesus had taken another path. Said no way to the cross? Truth is we would have no purpose of even meeting together. But Jesus decided. . .

Hebrews 12:2 (TPT): We look away from the natural realm and we fasten our gaze onto Jesus who birthed faith within us and who leads us forward into faith's perfection. His example is this: Because his heart was focused on the joy of knowing that you would be his, he endured the agony of the cross and conquered its humiliation, and now sits exalted at the right hand of the throne of God!

For the joy of having you and I in right relationship with Papa He endured the cross. I'm sure He would have not chosen that path for Himself. Scripture even told us Jesus prayed if there is another way I'll take that one instead. But Jesus said, not my will but Yours be done.

Remember Proverbs 13:12 says, Hope deferred makes the heart sick.

Can you imagine how sick Jesus' heart must have been in those closing moments before his arrest? He was a man as well as God, so He knew everything, He knew what was coming.

As God He was let's do this, but as God robed in flesh I can imagine the agony He was expecting. He even prayed drops of blood.

Our hope is deferred sometimes because we realize that our dreams probably aren't going to come true. We probably aren't going to get married, or get married again. . .at least not for a long, long time. We find out we probably aren't going to be able to keep our home, or keep our job, or get the promotion we always wanted, or have the kind of health that we assumed would be ours. Hope deferred makes the heart sick.

This is a reality of life on earth, church. Earth is earth—it is not heaven. But Jesus tells us. . .

John 16:33 (NIV): 33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

I don't know a single person who has had all their dreams fulfilled.

I suspect it wouldn't even be healthy if they did.

Consider these verses, and more importantly take notice the “buts”:

We already read a couple, but let me share them as well once more. . .

John 16:33 (NIV): 33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Proverbs 13:12 (NIV): Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

Matthew 19:26 (NIV): Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Genesis 50:20 (NIV): You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Acts 3:15 (NIV): You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead.

Romans 5:6–8 (NIV): You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his

own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 12:21 (NIV): Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Proverbs 10:12 (NIV): Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.

Proverbs 16:9 (NIV): 9 In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.

Isaiah 40:8 (NIV): The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.

Psalms 34:19 (NIV): The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all;

Ephesians 5:8 (NIV): For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light

2 Timothy 1:7 (NIV): For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

Romans 6:23 (NIV): For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Get the idea? When your circumstances, are not what you were hoping for. Just know. . .but God. . .

Romans 8:28 (NIV): 28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Joseph's heart must have been was sick.

He was a slave and then a prisoner. Then one day he was summoned before Pharaoh, and his dreams began to be fulfilled in ways he could never have imagined. He became Prime Minister and saved all of Egypt, and his own family, from starvation. He saw his brothers bow down before him and his father fall to his knees in gratitude to God that his treasured son was really alive and doing so well.

Sometimes, God leaves us with a thorn in the flesh, an obstacle or two that we have to learn to trust him with. Then there are other times He does something more than exactly what we wanted—it's beyond what we could have asked or imagined.

I believe that every dead and dying dream is in the hand of God today. He knows about your dream. He cares about your dream. And he cares about you even more. So he may not restore the dream, but never believe that he can't, or he won't, if it is truly good for us and according to His will.

What I'm trying to say, is don't give up on your dreams, but don't feel you need to force them either by forgetting God in the process.

God may have very well given you the dream so steward it well.

Sometimes God buries our dreams because they wouldn't be good for us. Sometimes he asks us to bury our dreams so that he can resurrect them to better things.

Jesus faced his worst nightmare in going to the Cross. There was no dream-fulfillment there. Only pain. But God made good out of it: our salvation, our opportunity to be in right standing with the Father.

Look at what Philipians says about Jesus. . .

Philippians 2:5–11 (NIV): In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

To the glory of who. . .?

Let's look once more at Proverbs 13:12 as I try to bring this series to a close.

Proverbs 13:12 (NIV): Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

The second part of that Scripture says, "but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life."

What do you do when your longing is fulfilled?

The Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years. They had disobeyed God and lost their chance to enter the Promised Land. Their dream was dead. Then one day God said to Joshua, "Let's resurrect that dream. Line the people up tomorrow and we'll cross the Jordan."

Joshua 4:1–7 (NIV): When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, 2 "Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, 3 and tell them to take up

twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, from right where the priests are standing, and carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.” 4 So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, 5 and said to them, “Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, 6 to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ 7 tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.”

So when your longing is fulfilled, your dream does happen. Make sure people hear your story.

The Israelites stacked up some rocks so that whenever anyone saw them they’d say, “What’s that about?” And they’d reply, “That’s about when God showed up, let me tell you the story. . .”

Think for a minute. How many of you have a story of when God showed up and fulfilled the longing of your heart? Some of you are sitting next to him or her. Some of you live in it. Some of you bear the scars of it. Some of yours are in the Promised Land.

What will you do with a message like this? I want to suggest the following

When you get up each day, talk to God. Spend a few minutes alone with him.

Create your own rock of remembrance.

Remember one specific instance when God has been good to you.

Display the rock so that when people ask you what it's for, you can tell them the story.

Maybe not a physical rock but how about this. . .And I will close with this.

Matthew 5:14–16 (NIV): 14 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

And let me encourage you with this today. . .

Philippians 1:6 (NIV): being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 1:20 (TPT): For all of God's promises find their “yes” of fulfillment in him. And as his “yes” and our “amen” ascend to God, we bring him glory!