

August 10, 2003 **The Best Laid Plans of Mice and Men** J. M. Terrett

What do you do when what you have hoped for, and planned for, doesn't turn out the way you expected? How do you handle disappointment? We live in a success oriented society where people expect us to do our best and everybody wants the best. In school we are told to try our best and the idea is that if you try your best you will eventually succeed and get the job you want, the house you want, the spouse you want and even the kids you want. Many of your parents came to this country for that very reason, I know mine did.

Well, things rarely turn out the way you want them to and even though people tell us that everything was for the best, many of us struggle with **an inner sense of deep disappointment, of being let down**. When our lives do not turn out the way we want, we feel like second class citizens and that horrible word: "**failure**" or its cousin: "**loser**" hang around our hearts. We don't want sympathy or comfort, we want to succeed and to win, and when we can't there is something that has to happen in our hearts, so our lives do not turn bitter, so we don't just give up or worse, learn to cheat or do anything to succeed.

Lets look at a few verses to gain a **spiritual perspective on disappointment** that will help us not to grow bitter or sell our souls in order to succeed – or worse, poison our ability to be satisfied with what we have, when it is not what we really wanted. I would like to do this in three stages. First what is **true ambition**. Second, learning not to set our hearts on **the uncertain**. And finally, developing **the wisdom to press ahead** and succeed whether or not our plans succeed or not.

George Bernard Shaw said there were two tragedies that could happen to a man during his life: Not to get what his heart desired, and to get what his heart desired. King Solomon said: "Hell and destruction are never full, so the eyes of man are never satisfied" (Prov. 27:20). Yeshua (Jesus) said: "What will it serve a man to gain the world if he loses his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).

True ambition understands that the desire to succeed is carnal, untamed and, is never really able to be satisfied by whatever it is it succeeds in accomplishing. King Solomon said that whatever we do, we should do with all our strength (Eccl. 9:10), and the Apostle Paul said that we should everything we do with a good heart, for the L-rd and not for men (Col. 3:23). True ambition, spiritual ambition focuses on doing our best for the L-rd and leaving the results with Him, because we understand that nothing is really decided or final until the L-rd returns (I Cor. 4:5).

We need to make Him the L-rd of our failures, as well as the L-rd of our successes. ***If we have to be the best, in order to be any good, then, we are really in trouble.*** When I work out, I see these young men and ladies, trying to get the perfect body, because they want to look their best and be the best. They spend so much time fixing their hair, doing the right exercises and eating the right supplements, that what they are really saying is: "I am

never going to be good enough as I am, so I better change who I am and become someone else." Many of them have such fragile egos, they are really closet losers. Now, not all of them are like that. I love to watch a true athlete in action. I love to watch a true musician in action and I really enjoy a discussion with a true scholar. Why? Because they do not care what people think, and they are trying to prove anything. They are doing what they love to do and what they are driven to do with a joy that is contagious.

True ambition recognizes our limits and does not try and compete against people, and to get recognition and fame. It just enjoys the sweat, the challenge and relaxes into the race. But there is a problem. I hate to lose at anything and I just love to win and get it your face, and slam dunk, knock over the goalie and cross the finish line first. **This drive is just as carnal as any other human drive.** It is an appetite which I must learn to curb, or it will cause me to try so hard that the task eats up my life and my soul and turns me into a slave who could never enjoy the success it wins, because it came at such a high personal price.

King Solomon also said that success in this life is most frequently a fluke – being at the right place at the wrong time (Eccl. 9:11), because everything depends on circumstances – in this life. The Apostle Paul warns us about the love of money and the incredible satisfaction which contentment brings (I Tim. 6:6-10). At the end of his life, despite being a late starter, and encountering an incredible amount of opposition, betrayal and failure (2 Cor. 11:23-29 makes some good reading, when you think you got it rough), he was able to say he had finished the course, fought the good fight and kept the faith. When your turn comes, will you be able to say that. No other goal is worthy of our consideration, no other ambition should drive our lives as believers.

That is all that really matters. Now I am not saying you should not try and get a career where you make discoveries, become famous and do your momma proud, but what about your Poppa- I mean the one in Heaven? Eccl. 12:13, 14 speaks about the conclusion of Solomon's unsuccessful attempt to understand life. He drove himself nuts trying to figure things out, and he lived in a golden palace with incredible riches and boy could he sing, could he think – and there was no one his equal. But, **at the end of his life, he realized that his ambitions were vain, and that it is a waste of time to do anything that does not have an eternal impact.**

He said keep the commandments and fear G-d, cause there is a judgment coming. **We need to give our ambitions to G-d and do our best for Him, and make Him the L-rd of our successes and of our failures.** We need to surrender to Him our desire to be in charge of our lives, because we cannot depend on uncertain riches, or on uncertain troubles.

What happens to us in our lives is not really our business, how we respond to what happens to us is our business. True ambition does not need success to be satisfied, and does not have to be the best, the strongest or the smartest to do its best and to be happy with its life. The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft aglay, but the plans which we give to the L-rd, will not lead us astray, and will not disappoint us.

Sure we want the best, and I still want to win every time I play or do something, but if I understand that this is just another carnal desire, which may hide fear, and which may drive me to destroy myself just to prove that I am not really a loser, then I am not fooled by it.

Kipling said: "If you can face success and failure, and treat those two impostors the same, then you will be a man and all of life will be yours to enjoy – why? **Because you are living it for the joy of living and it is not driving you like a donkey trying to get the carrot, which will always be out of its reach.** This is the whole duty of man.

Pray for our family this next week. My son is getting married and there are so many things that can go wrong, and I want to have the best ceremony in the world. But I know it is not going to happen the way I want it to, and **if I have to have things happen the way I want them to, in order to be happy, my best laid plans, will turn me into a mouse, and not into a man.** Give your ambitions, your successes and your failures to the L-rd, because He is the only One you can depend on – can He depend on you?

Let's hear the words of Paul, before we close in prayer: "knowing that you shall receive an inheritance from the L-rd as a reward. Therefore serve Christ the L-rd. For the one who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, for there is no favouritism." (Col. 3:24, 25).