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FACING DISAPPOINTMENT

Mayan Revelation Number 264

Prepare for Life

Sublimate Your Sorrow

Accidents May Prove to be Assets

Take the Long View

Toughen Your Will

Be Sustained by Faith

Affirmation

Beloved Perfector:

We all face moments when our hopes are shattered, when our lives are broken. We expect enjoyment, and meet with boredom. We labor for success, and are confronted by disappointment. We seek for love, only to find it is snatched from us.

Sometimes we can overcome our handicaps by starting over and working more diligently. At other times this is not possible. Sometimes we are tempted to run away from the situation that frustrates us. We may try to hide in busyness, or in alcohol, or in tranquilizers. The person of strong character stoically endures whatever comes, summons all his courage and refuses to flinch or complain.

But there is a far better way to face disappointment. It is the Christian way. At the core of our faith is the knowledge that we cannot expect life always to be easy; but that we can profit from adversity as well as from success. We ought to use hours of sickness, not merely endure them. We should benefit from criticism, not just submit to it. We should profit and grow through heart-break, not just drag on in a mood of frustration.

This Lesson will help you to salvage the hours of disappointment - to use them, not waste them. Approach it with the earnest prayer that you may have wisdom for the trials you face today, or that you may gain knowledge to sustain you in some future emergency.

Meditate as you repeat the following prayer and then proceed with the Lesson.

PRAYER

O Lord, I thank Thee for the promise that there is more to life than what I can see. Forgive my blindness, and my impatience. Help me to take the long view. Open my mind so I can more fully

comprehend Thy love and Thy purpose. Show me how to live triumphantly even when I suffer disappointment and sorrow.

In Jesus' name. Amen

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PREPARE FOR LIFE

ONLY as we understand the nature of life is it possible to live triumphantly under every circumstance. Don't imagine that if you do what is right, good fortune will inevitably follow you at all times. Moral behavior and positive thinking foster material prosperity and physical health, but sometimes outer conditions of inharmony must be faced.

An industrious lumber dealer, with large holdings in Canada, had his life's savings swept away by an act of Congress which placed a heavy duty on imported logs. A skilled mechanic lost his job because new machinery made it necessary to lay off the last four men who had been hired. A devout woman gave birth to a deformed child.

These people faced disappointment in its most testing form. Men and women who must carry on under such circumstances need a faith that is deep and sure. It is unfortunate if they waste time and strength kicking against fate and poisoning their minds with resentment. In their hours of trial, they will be aided in keeping their equilibrium if they recognize that one of the laws of the universe is this: Growth requires sacrifice; but nothing is ever lost.

See this principle exemplified in nature. We are given warmth as coal, or gas, or oil is consumed. We enjoy light as electricity meets a resisting force and a bulb becomes incandescent. We have flour for bread after wheat has been crushed and ground. Laws of physical life demand the consumption of one substance in order to manufacture a product that is needed; but every element is conserved or converted into energy.

In the laws of the spiritual life, a similar situation prevails. Sacrifice is often required. But it can raise the innocent victim to new plateaus of living, and it can inspire others to nobler conduct. Hardship can be a spur to greatness. Heartache can make our lives glow to warm and light those about us.

Try as you will to avoid trouble, moments may come when there is no way of escape. Do not attempt by some trick of thought to lift yourself into an atmosphere of ease and pleasure. Life is not a fairyland. Comfort is not your goal. You can live triumphantly, not by seeking to escape difficulty, but by striving nobly to do your best under all conditions.

Expect disappointment, as well as victory. See misfortune, hardship and suffering as an integral part of life.

When you are disappointed, don't weakly give way to grumbling and despair, or even take false pride in being able to "grin and bear it". See the situation forced upon you as an opportunity for development and service. Destiny may not give you the opportunity you think you deserve, but you can use each bump of adversity as a step on which to climb to a higher plane of living.

Many people go through life complaining about their misfortunes. The job that they hold, or the investment that they have made, never measures up to their expectations. When a physical infirmity lowers their efficiency, or a door of opportunity is slammed before them, they say, "It isn't fair!" They spend much time in misery.

What we all need to realize is that in life is both good fortune and ill, both joy and sadness, and disappointment is one of the strands of life. When it is handed to us we must learn to weave it into the fabric of our days. It can bring strength and beauty to the design.

Prepare for life by recognizing the fact that sooner or later everyone must face disappointment. As a mature student, seek a philosophy more profound than that of Pollyanna. Recognize the Truth that in life is the disagreeable as well as the pleasant, but that you need not be a slave to thwarting circumstances. Some values will accrue from disappointment when you understand that true satisfaction lies deep, and frustration as well as happiness can contribute to calm and fruitful living.

Make character, not comfort, your goal. When unavoidable tribulation comes, accept it. Don't wear yourself out by beating against a solid wall of fact. Don't waste time in futile attempts to escape the inevitable. Bend every effort to live triumphantly under the conditions that have been imposed upon you. As you heroically carry your burden, you will grow stronger and wiser.

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ACCIDENTS MAY PROVE TO BE ASSETS

A STUDY of the lives of famous men reveals the fact that for many of them disappointment was a spur to magnificent effort. They used some accident as a steppingstone to greatness. When Victor Hugo was banished from France and sent into exile, he might have been bitter. Instead, he let his loneliness serve as the inspiration for his famous novel, "Les Miserables". Near the end of his life Hugo said, "I should have been banished earlier." These were the words of a man who faced misfortune with courage and rose from the shock of disappointment to make good use of the limitations that were forced upon him.

John Milton was not defeated by the blow of blindness. He surmounted it, and out of the dark came his greatest contributions to our literature.

Beethoven was not silenced by deafness. He listened more intently for whispers from the Eternal, and he composed some of his most sublime music when he could not hear a tone.

Jean Francois Millet had difficulty selling the paintings that we now call masterpieces. He was so poor that he wondered how he could acquire food for his family. He shivered in the cold, and was tempted to dash off cheap works to earn enough money to relieve his poverty. Instead, Millet gained from destitution a greater understanding of the longings of the common people. In his own suffering he found inspiration for his famous painting, "The Angelus".

Abraham Lincoln knew what it meant to be defeated. Success often seemed beyond his reach. But he allowed failure to become his teacher. Lincoln let his

humble background train him to be more tolerant of the imperfections in others. He let his sorrow make him more sympathetic. He turned his disappointments into assets.

You can do the same. If the opportunity that you sought has not opened for you, do the best you can where you are. Seek new possibilities for service and satisfaction in your present position.

If illness lays you low, don't waste time bemoaning the fact that you are incapacitated. Relax. Renew friendships. Study to gain new insights. Tune in on the divine wave length and seek God's direction for your life. Then use all your talents and all the ability that you can summon.

Turn every delay into some useful channel. Remember that accidents may prove to be assets. When adversity comes, face it with courage. It can become your teacher. Often it can be the doorway to some area of greater joy and service than any you have previously experienced.

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TOUGHEN YOUR WILL

WE have been considering the challenge to turn misfortune into a useful channel. Certainly we want to do this whenever it is possible. Some failures prove to be disguised blessings. Some accidents are turned into assets. But let us be realistic. There will come times when our bravest attempts do bring the results that we desire. Release may not come from a meager income, an unpleasant environment, or a broken body. What then? Toughen your will and put your roots deeper into the solid ground of faith.

In the days when sailing vessels crossed the Atlantic, shipbuilders cut the masts from timber that grew high on some mountainside. They knew that trees that had withstood constant buffeting by gales would not break when under stress.

The fiber of man is toughened as he fights hard to stand erect. The wise mother knows she must not shelter her baby too long or he will become a weakling. Pilgrim men and women were made of sturdy stuff because they had battled with adversity.

I think of two girls whom I recently visited in a nearby hospital. One of them had been brought in for minor surgery. She clung to her mother's hand, and if left alone for five minutes she rang for the nurse. The other girl was badly deformed, and in constant pain, yet she did not complain or demand attention. She had spent almost half of her fourteen years in hospitals, and she had learned to be brave and patient. Her hope of recovery had been tested again and again. In the school of disappointment, she had developed an indomitable will.

Your character is strengthened when you bravely meet one ordeal after another. You develop resiliency and resourcefulness. You may also acquire an unusual amount of patience and kindness.

A man said of a friend whom he admired, "If you want to feel his goodness

and generosity, hurt him." Evidently that friend had a will so tough, and a heart so generous, that unkindness could not break his spirit, or ever make him bend to do or say anything that was low and mean.

Unfortunate experiences provide opportunities for you to prove your worth. Accept them without whining or complaint. Grow strong as you struggle to do the work that you are compelled to do, or to endure conditions that are not of your own choosing.

The piano keys must be struck before music is produced. Trees must be pruned if they are to grow the finest fruit. Men reveal their greatness when rising above trials.

Financial hardship frequently increases both the drive and the endurance of a man or woman. The youth who struggles to surmount some physical handicap may outdistance his competitors. Glenn Cunningham and Babe Didrickson are two shining examples.

Trouble will at times interrupt your pleasure or your progress. When it cannot be diminished, accept it and let it serve to make you wiser and stronger. Let the stress of disappointment toughen your will and strengthen the sinews of your spirit. Frustrations are disagreeable, but they can call forth your hidden powers.

Even when you feel depressed, appear to be cheerful and you will gain some degree of happiness. When you are frightened, act brave and you will have more courage than you imagined. Meet disappointment with fortitude, and you will find you can not only bear the burden that is placed upon you, but new strength will come as you live valiantly day by day.

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SUBLIMATE YOUR SORROW

ONE characteristic of victorious living is the ability to take a drab situation and touch it with splendor.

In a Paris restaurant, beautiful paintings have been hung on the walls to cover ugly stains. An artist who had no money to pay for his meals used his talent to brighten the dingy dining room in the Latin Quarter. The place has become famous.

The stains that need to be covered may not always be of a physical nature. They may be wounds on the soul. Goethe's mother said, "Whenever my son met disappointment he wrote a poem about it, and this relieved his frustration." During the year in which Franz Schubert was rejected by his sweetheart, and abandoned by his friends, he composed the beautiful music of "Ave Maria". And James McNeil Whistler reported that his failure to qualify for entrance to West Point was like a disastrous storm, but it prompted him to use his brush to paint scenes that portrayed beauty shining through heavy mists, and his work obliterated the scar on his mind and heart.

In a less dramatic way, experiences like these can be yours. Take the jarring discord that confronts you and shape it into harmonious living. Sincere

effort, not genius, is required to sublimate your sorrow.

In common, everyday affairs, situations arise that will dampen your spirit unless you find a way to touch them with splendor. By bold strokes of imagination and courage, you can change a blue hour into a joyous and rewarding one. You can do this for your own life, and, if you will, you can do it for others. When disappointment comes to your loved ones or friends, help them to find avenues of expression that will relieve their anguish and bring peace to their hearts.

Financial reverses can prompt you to discover the free wealth in nature, in friendship, and in books. Enforced leisure can be turned from a bore into an adventure in travel, or used for acquiring some new skill. A child's sickness provides hours when parents may open new windows on music, literature, and wisdom.

At sixty-two, an active man was forced to retire. His days dragged. The sudden death of his son-in-law came as a shattering blow to all the family. It left four boys without a dad. The grandfather stepped into the gap. He contributed not only monetary aid, but spiritual guidance. He covered the gaping wound with love, and by so doing regained his own sense of purpose in living.

While such urgent demands for service come infrequently, all about you are men, women, and children who need encouragement. Perhaps one of your grandchildren, or the boy next door, is suffering from an inferiority complex; if so, help to make him feel important and secure. In your family there may be a teen-ager who is bewildered; if so, you can patiently listen to his problems and help him to find himself. Close to you may be an older person who is haunted by the fear of becoming a burden; your request for his services, however meager, can enhance his joy and his sense of security.

If you have eyes to see, there are endless opportunities to help those who are frightened, or discouraged. Some of your contributions may seem trivial, but they are important. It is surprising how small acts of unusual thoughtfulness often are remembered for a lifetime.

A woman who was seventy years of age said, "When I think back over the happy experiences of my childhood, one stands out most clearly. I had made a jagged tear in my Sunday dress, and I can still see Mother patiently darning it, and then embroidering a pink rose to cover the ugly spot."

Not only the tear in the dress, but the sorrow in a child's heart were covered by that rose. And, no doubt, the mother found joy by comforting her child.

Acquire the habit of doing what you can to lift others when they are disappointed. Say the word that will bring new courage. Stir yourself to do the deed that will help to heal a wound. Bring brightness into a dismal day. The beauty that you inspire in the lives of others will be reflected in your own soul.

TAKE THE LONG VIEW

THE news that seems so devastating today may look less tragic in the light of next year. So learn to take the long view. Focus your attention upon the far horizon. It is surprising how often today's disappointments turn into tomorrow's delights.

We should learn a lesson from history. Columbus sought India; the American continent seemed like an obstacle, but time proved that its discovery was providential. San Francisco, when leveled by an earthquake, was a dismal sight; but it arose greater and more beautiful. Strip mining exhausted a vein of coal and the landowners became penniless until dire extremity forced them to search for new resources; then oil was discovered.

When shocking experiences disturb your complacency, or your customary pattern of life, don't become discouraged and give way to resentment. Don't fight against them. Resist the temptation to indulge in self-pity, for this will make you unable to constructively approach your problems.

Keep ever before you the fact that pleasure and satisfaction form one side of life, and hardship and trial form the other. When storm clouds gather, remember that glorious days will come. While you prepare for a brighter future, let your soul be purified and refined in the fire of adversity.

Many disappointments are transitory. When these threaten to produce a mood of dejection, project yourself into next month, or next year. The incident that depresses you now may seem insignificant when seen from that vantage point.

This mental exercise will help to quiet your nerves. It will put your mind at rest. It will shrink the size of your problem. You will see more clearly what you should do next. Then seek for further guidance and support by putting your roots deeper into the ground of Christian faith.

The Old Testament prophet, Hosea, told his downhearted people not to give up. He said that the Lord promised to turn the dale of Achor - their symbol for the valley of despair - into a door of hope. (Hosea 2:15)

If everything is now going well for you and your family this promise may seem to have little relevance. The best time, however, to prepare for disappointment is when you are undisturbed. Then it is not as difficult to see clearly and to think straight as it would be when you have been afflicted. Endeavor to grasp the Truth: **WHAT TODAY LOOKS LIKE MISFORTUNE WILL EVENTUALLY BE SEEN AS ONLY AN INTERRUPTION OF YOUR HAPPINESS AND YOUR SPIRITUAL PROGRESS.**

How crushed Joseph must have felt when his heartless brothers sold him as a slave! He was to be separated from his family and exiled from his native land. In the agony of that moment, he could not see the marvelous opportunities that were later to open before him.

More than a thousand disappointments contributed to Marie Curie's discovery of radium. In her black hours, she had courage to continue her experiments because she never ceased to hope that eventually she would find a way to separate a gram of the precious metal from a ton of the molten ore.

In these and countless other lives, you can see the value of the long view. Acquire it yourself and disappointment will never lay you low. Today's boredom or heartache will decrease as you see it in the light of tomorrow. Your sorrow will be eased when you think of eternity. Serenity depends upon your ability to keep a good perspective.

Hold fast in your mind the assurance that setbacks and separations are only temporary. We see but part. God has planned a whole.

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BE SUSTAINED BY FAITH

LISTEN to the words of the Psalmist: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." (Psalm 55:22) When your dreams are shattered, you will not despair if you have already grasped a faith that is based upon eternal values. It is impossible to understand why some people escape pain and others must endure it, but it is easy to see that frustration and suffering play an important role in both national and personal growth.

The Cross is central in our faith. The Master made the worst instrument of torture a symbol of redemption. He suffered pain and disappointment beyond anything we shall ever know. Yet, in apparent defeat, Christ was triumphant. He promised his followers not escape from trials, but victory through them.

The Christian church was born in the heat of persecution. It grew strong through opposition. Our faith does not offer ease, or comfort, or freedom from problems. Instead, it gives the assurance of power to triumph over whatever comes, and of peace in the midst of struggle.

Study, and meditate, and pray until you can claim these promises for yourself. Let your faith become not a second-hand belief, but a personal conviction. Then you will be prepared to face disappointment. By God's help you will be able to live victoriously even under adverse circumstances. This has been the experience of earnest Christians from the First Century until the Twentieth Century.

Paul dreamed of preaching in Rome and then taking Christ's message to the end of the known world. He wrote to the Christians in Rome, "I long to see you," and "I am eager to preach the gospel to you." (Romans 1:11,14) Paul's high hopes were expressed in the words, "When I take my journey into Spain I will come to you." (Romans 15:24)

Paul's plans, as you know, were unrealized. He went not to Spain, but to prison. Surely that was reason enough to be despondent! But Paul was triumphant even when he was in prison. A cell could not confine his spirit. Paul did his best in the situation in which he found himself. When he was prevented from preaching to crowds, he gave his Christian witness to his jailor. His faith enabled him to say, "I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ." (Philippians 1:12,13)

How could a man believe that imprisonment would serve a useful purpose?
How could Paul's confinement possibly advance Christ's cause?

It was because his faith was so vital that, when his desires were frustrated, Paul had the vision and the will to use the conditions that he had to endure.

You can do the same. Disappointment need not bring despair. Hold fast to a faith like that of Paul. Remember that the Cross is not the symbol of death, but the symbol of hope. Faith in the Way of Christ can sustain you. You will find stimulus in adversity, value in suffering, and satisfaction and contentment even in apparent defeat.

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AFFIRMATION

I will use every disappointment as a steppingstone to a more triumphant life.

Blessings,

YOUR INSTRUCTOR.