

PHILIPPIANS: OVERCOMING BROKEN DREAMS GOD'S WAY
"Part VIII: Living Above This Life's Fame-And-Fortune Route"
(Philippians 3:4-21)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Some weeks ago, our Youth Group witnessed the video, "When Things Seem Impossible" of a true story about missionaries with New Tribes Mission who were taken captive into the jungle by communist guerrillas.

A very poignant scene centers on the missionary pilot, Paul Dye who was separated from the other captives and was forced to fly the Cessna 185 aircraft at gunpoint to a guerrilla airstrip. The captors had hid his plane under camouflage at the side of the strip, and guarded him as he sat confined to a bunk in the jungle.

At the time, he was feeling pretty discouraged, wondering if his life was soon coming to end with the possible destruction of his plane.

The thought that bothered him most was that he might be killed not for witnessing his faith to some Stone Age Indian tribe, something you would expect in a contemporary missionary martyrdom, but that he might be killed by communists who thought he was a CIA spy! He didn't mind dying for Christ, but to be killed by communists for thinking he worked for the CIA -- that seemed such a waste of his life!

There are times in the Christian life when, like that captive missionary pilot sitting despondently on his make-shift bunk in the jungle, when WE TOO may have been tempted to feel discouraged at the turn our lives have taken. We ALSO might be wondering, "Why THIS direction for my life -- of what USE is my living this way in PRACTICAL terms anyway?!"

Well, how do we RESPOND to such uncontrollable, humanly discouraging turns in life in a PRODUCTIVE way?

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "All I have tried to attain in my life now seems beyond reach. It's SO disappointing that I wonder why TRY anymore! Any ideas?!"

- I. **As we have noted in our study of Philippians, Paul wrote to Roman citizens who tended to strive only for what *this* life offers, Phil. 2:3.**
 - A. Philippi, a Roman colony was founded to give displaced soldiers loyal to their emperor the *consolation* of Roman citizenship by living in Philippi as **pacification** for their estate losses in a war over wealth and fame, Burns West. Civ., p. 218ff; Bible Know. Com., N.T., p. 647
 - B. Hence, as is also reflected in Paul's Philippians 2:3 charge, Philippi's Christians struggled with a cultural bent to exalt fortune and fame.
- II. **However, in CONTRAST to this Philippian *bent* to strive for fame and fortune, Paul testified how HE had *actually* DISOWNED his PAST Jewish FAME and FORTUNE for his Christian faith, 3:4-7:**
 - A. Though many had gained Jewish identity by circumcision as adults or as "Ishmaelite" Jews at age thirteen, Paul was circumcised the eighth day as one **born** a Jew, Phil. 3:4 (cf. Bible Know. Com., N.T., p. 660)
 - B. He was of the tribe of Benjamin, a clan honored for being the single tribe to stay faithful to David's tribe of Judah during the division of Solomon's Kingdom, Phil. 3:5b (J. B. Lightfoot, Philippians, p. 146)
 - C. Paul was a Pharisee, a group in Judaism so upright in its **theology** that even **Jesus** complimented its beliefs, cf. Mtt. 23:2-3; Phil. 3:5c.
 - D. Unlike many fellow Jews, Paul **applied** his beliefs with **dedication**:
 1. He persecuted Christians whom had thought were cultists, 3:6a.
 2. In regards to the Mosaic Law, Paul kept all of its stipulations, 3:6b.
 - E. Yet, Paul counted this **envied** past as **loss** to **gain Christ**, Phil. 3:7.
- III. **In PLACE of this PAST, Paul described a HIGHER way, 3:8-14:**
 - A. As we learned in the last message, Paul viewed all his past allegiance to the Mosaic Law as refuse that he might be righteous in Christ, 3:8f.
 - B. But, going **deeper**, Paul wished to **MATURE** as a believer by **experiencing Christ's** resurrection power in his **life**: (Phil. 3:10-14)
 1. The word "know" in verse 10 is *gnomai* in the Greek Testament, and pictures one's **experiencing** "a distinctly *personal, intimate, practical, religious*" insight (Ibid., J. B. Lightfoot, p. 150; William Hendriksen, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, p. 167)
 2. What Paul desired to **experience** was the **resurrection power** of His risen Messiah in his new Christian **LIFE**, Philippians 3:10a.
 3. However, to **do** so, he logically first had to "die", to fellowship in Christ's sufferings, being made conformable to His death, 3:10b.
 4. Paul explained this exercise in a practical way in 2 Cor. 4:7-18:
 - a. He noted that the treasure of God's indwelling spiritual power was displayed in the fragile "clay pot" of his earthly body so that this contrasting power could be seen by others, 2 Cor. 4:7.

- b. In other words, he was allowed to suffer trials and persecutions while never quite being totally defeated **BY** them, 2 Cor. 4:8-9.
- c. This **irrepressible buoyancy** in **trials** indicated a power greater than Paul at work in him -- his risen **Lord's** power, 2 Cor. 4:10f.
- d. Thus, Paul experienced **daily RENEWALS** of his inner man, a kind of "habitual **resurrection**" that he **loved**, 2 Cor. 4:16.
- e. This whole process produced an eternal glory of reward for Paul as well as glory to God, 2 Cor. 4:17-18; Mtt. 5:11-12.

5. Hence, Paul yearned to have **all** of this renewal experience that he could possibly receive this side of the rapture itself, Phil. 3:11-14; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Bible Knowledge Com., N.T., p. 661.

IV. **Thus He URGED his Philippian READERS to MATURE out of their OWN earthly FAME-AND-FORTUNE bents to attain this new and SURPASSING lifestyle as well, Philippians 3:15-21!**

- A. He urged his readers to mature in adopting this loftier lifestyle of his in their own lives, speaking of their need to stand against Judaizers even if it meant shouldering persecution with him, Phil. 3:15-17, 18f.
- B. He noted that their **ultimate citizenship** was **not** that which was valued in **this life** as **Romans** participating in the Roman colony of Philippi: rather, they had a **superior** citizenship in **heaven**, 3:20 NIV!
- C. That citizenship implied a destiny loftier than what Rome could offer -- a destiny of a glorified destiny with their risen Lord Jesus, 3:20-21!

Application: *To gain fulfillment FAR EXCEEDING what this life's fame and fortune can begin to offer, (1) believe in Christ as Savior from sin and be given Christ's eternal life and heavenly citizenship, John 3:16; Phil. 3:20. (2) Then, WHILE awaiting heaven, (a) accept the TRIALS of THIS life in obedience to Christ, and (b) look in FAITH for His DAILY RENEWAL of the inner man. (c) This brings God great glory and us eternal reward!*

Lesson: *God offers us in THIS life a path far SUPERIOR to THIS life's fame-and-fortune route. That path is available to believers in Christ, and involves their being permitted to suffer so as to experience daily renewal by God's power through faith to their eternal reward and God's glory! >*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

We opened the message speaking of the despondent missionary pilot, Paul Dye in New Tribe's video, "When Things Seem Impossible" who had been taken captive by communist guerrillas.

As he sat on his bunk, he recalled passages of Scripture that encouraged him.

Paul recalled that he had gotten into this fix by a storm that had come up, forcing him to land quickly without checking for safety from guerrillas by ground signals from his associates. "That's it!" he thought. "**God** Who the Bible says controls **storms** assigned me to this -- otherwise I wouldn't have had to land without checking for safety from my ground contacts! **GOD ASSIGNED** me **this captivity!**"

That changed the pilot's whole outlook, and he began to live each moment by faith to see what God had for him in this venture.

He was eventually led of the Lord to escape, flying his plane in pitch darkness out of that jungle with an intense cloud cover and landing it over an hour of flying time later safely without a scratch!

The other captured missionaries, Tim and Bunny Cain with pilot Steve Estelle who had been separated from Paul were later released. They testified that one Sunday in their jungle captivity as they had felt despondent, at about 11:00 a.m. when their usual worship would normally have begun, a flock of birds of all kinds and colors flew in and landed in the trees around them. The birds began to sing like they belonged in a choir! Strangely, at noon, just the time when their service would have been over, the flock suddenly flew away!

The same thing happened the **next** Sunday, so the missionaries concluded God had brought **His** worshipers to **encourage them!**

On another, very hot day, one of the missionaries had said how nice it would be to have a cold soda to drink. No sooner had he said as much than one of the guerrillas produced some grape sodas for each of them. These sodas had been kept cool for weeks submerged in the nearby river! Again, these missionaries realized their captivity was an assignment -- not a mistake -- from the **Lord**.