

**PHILIPPIANS: OVERCOMING BROKEN DREAMS GOD'S WAY**  
**"Part II: Overcoming Broken Dreams By Discerning God's Valid Ones"**  
**(Philippians 1:3-11)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

When in high school at your graduation, the guest speaker and valedictorian both encouraged you to dream big dreams because you could rise only as high in life as your dreams took you. However, life is often a mixed bag where some of our greatest dreams have not only not come true, but seem sadly impossible:

(a) This past week, in spite of the fact that the party had been fully academically accepted and had tried to the limit for scholarships, grants and loans, the parents of a teen in our Church had to report that they could not financially help defray academic costs involved. Accordingly, even though this institution is a "dream" situation for the teen who has worked hard to qualify, the dream may not become a reality.

(b) Before the stock market tanked over the last few weeks, especially this past week, a number of people in the congregation had a net worth of many thousands of dollars greater value than now. They might have had specific plans with that money - plans to use it to take care of immediate and pressing needs. However, they have the choice of waiting for a distant market rebound or selling shares to take a loss and forget about their plans.

However, even dreams of being fruitful in serving the Lord can be left unfulfilled, producing confusion and sadness. Failure in witnessing ventures for Christ, failure in getting along with fellow believers, failure to feel or even see that we are making a difference for the Lord's glory in Christian service efforts - all of these things can discourage us and cause us to feel like throwing in the towel and saying, "What's the use?!"

**CAN a believer deal with "broken dreams" even in his Christian walk that can equip him to live a FULFILLED life of service for Christ?**

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

*Need: "To be honest, I've not seen my life ambitions come true! But since that fact is too painful to dwell upon, like Little Orphan Annie, I stay happy by hoping for a better tomorrow! Is this correct, or is there a better route to take?"*

- I. **Paul's epistle to the Philippians addressed people who struggled with misplaced ambitions that only led to elusive human unhappiness:**
  - A. Because of their culture's tendency to strive after wealth, fame and power, Philippi's citizens tended to be unhappily competitive:
    1. Long discord between Rome's aristocracy and poor classes over the unequal distribution of wealth erupted when aristocrat, Brutus assassinated Julius Caesar, Burns, Western Civilizations, p. 218ff.
    2. Two wars followed, the last battle coming at Philippi as Augustus' men avenged Julius by defeating Brutus, Z.P.E.B., v. Four, p. 760.
    3. In compensation, Caesar's soldiers whose lands had been seized by Brutus were relocated to Philippi and the city made a colony where its people were granted coveted, powerful Roman citizenship, Ibid.
    4. Thus, Philippian believers in Paul's day were culturally disposed to a selfishly ambitious craving for fame, power and wealth that could only lead to unhappy strivings, Bib. Know. Com., N.T., p. 647-648.
  - B. This errant ambition is noted by Paul in Philippians 2:1-3 where he implies that strife for this life's vain glory existed in these Philippian believers.
- II. **To HANDLE this need, Paul introduced His letter with mention of his prayer for his reader's to arrive at VALID ambitions for genuine fulfillment:**
  - A. First, Paul found hope in God's sovereign work in his readers to date to hope that their errant cultural ambitions could be overcome, Phil. 1:3-8:
    1. Paul noted his *thanksgiving* to God's work in his readers' to direct them to be selfless enough continually to support his work, 1:3-5.
    2. This consistent support from them meant **GOD** had been at work in their hearts since their conversions, and that God would continue keeping them selfless enough to keep meeting Paul's needs, 1:6-7.
    3. Accordingly, Paul shared how he longed to be with them to enjoy spiritual fellowship with these fellow disciples of the Lord, 1:8!
  - B. Second, Paul prayed that his readers would be disciplined by the Lord into **discerning valid** from **errant ambitions** to become **fulfilled in living**:
    1. He prayed that their love would develop in knowledge and "depth of insight," 1:9; Bible Know. Com., N.T., p. 650.
    2. The **goal** behind Paul's request for such knowledgeable insight was that his Philippian readers would be able to **discern** between "highest matters and side issues," Ryrie Study Bib., KJV ft., 1:10.
    3. In the context of the epistle, Paul revealed the "highest matters" from the "side issues" as follows:

- a. Beginning in Philippians 1:12-17, Paul detailed how his ministry was wrongly challenged by carnal believers who tried to belittle his ministry through promoting their own works at the cost of Paul's fame since he was in jail.
  - b. Yet, instead of reacting in bitterness against these competitors, Paul rejoiced over Christ's being preached in spite of the cost to his pride in the process, Phil. 1:18.
  - c. This thinking fit Paul's concern that the Philippians learn the value of sacrificing selfish ambition in favor of self-sacrifice for the furtherance of God's will, Phil. 2:4-8.
  - d. The **value** of these *highest* ambitions were seen not only in the work they accomplished for God, but in the **reward GOD** supplies for such selfless service as illustrated for Christians in Christ, Phil. 2:9-13. a) Paul revealed that since Jesus humbled himself to die on the cross as The Father's obedient Servant, The Father rewarded Him with great honor, 2:9-11. b) Accordingly, as the Philippians obeyed Paul's instruction to follow such a self-sacrificing example, they could expect God's rich spiritual rewards for such self-sacrificing service, 2:12-13! . .
4. Thus, Paul prayed that his Philippian readers would discern the value of self-sacrificing service and humility from the vain goal of promoting one's personal pride, earthly fame and carnal power. This would enable them to be sincere and without offense at Rapture, and produce righteous works for God's glory, 1:10b-11.

***Application:*** *To overcome life's broken dreams, (1) believe on Christ as Savior from sin to become a child of God, Jn. 3:16; 1:11-13. (2) Then, as a believer, (a) yield to God's leading and teaching that selfish ambition for power, fame and riches only yields strife and broken dreams in the end. Then, (b) we live GOD'S way of self-sacrifice and humility toward others to further God's will. This route produces eternally valuable works for God and gains His rewards of fulfillment! (3) If we see other believers in need of this insight, like Paul, we can (a) thank God for what working we see in them that God is disciplining them, and be thereby encouraged to (b) pray for their discernment to grow into acknowledging the self-sacrificing route over the selfish ambitious one. (c) Then, as God gives us opportunity, we can EXAMPLE such service and (d) inform others on this route of fulfillment. !*

***Lesson:*** *Overcoming broken dreams is available by the believer's yielding to God's rule in his life that INFORMS him that selfish ambition bears worthless, unhappily broken dreams where selfless, humble obedience to God produces invaluable works to God's glory and final divine reward.*

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

Howard Brant wrote an account in the Fall, 1992 issue of SIM NOW of a Mr. Beitzel. Mr. Beitzel once worked as a missionary in a very spiritually unresponsive section of Nigeria near the town of Malumfashi.

Mr. Beitzel told his niece, Mrs. Hamilton of the hardness and resistance of the people to the Gospel. Yet, he would remain faithful to the Lord. Often, Mr. Beitzel would load up his pickup truck with young Nigerian Christians and leave them at various strategic places along the road to witness the Gospel. In the evening, Mr. Beitzel would return, picking up these young evangelists to return them to his home and theirs.

Mr. Beitzel passed away, wondering if his work was at all fruitful.

Years later, Mrs. Hamilton attended InverVarsity's missions conference, Urbana. At the meeting she was relating to missionary Howard Brant of her uncle, wondering if he had ever heard of a Mr. Beitzel. Howard Brant had not, but while Mrs. Hamilton was speaking, a tall Nigerian, Maikudi Kure, president of Nigeria's Evangelical Missionary Society, strode up. Howard asked Mr. Kure if he had ever heard of a Mr. Beitzel.

"Oh yes!" Mr. Kure replied. "My home is very near Malumfashi. When I was a young man, Mr. Beitzel used to take me and my friends in his pickup truck for evangelism and then come back at the end of the day and pick us up. Today there are many, many churches in the Malumfashi area, and the work is very strong."

Howard Brant reported that he saw tears of joy begin to roll down the faces of both Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton. He noted that she reached out to grab the hand of Mr. Kure as she remembered the long, hard, barren years her uncle had mentioned to her of his missionary days in Nigeria.

Mr. Brant wrote, "In this moment, she knew that his **sacrifice**, and the **sacrifices** of those who prayed and gave so that he could share the gospel in another land, had indeed borne fruit. In that spiritual reunion in Illinois, a Canadian couple and a Nigerian man reaffirmed that in serving God, there are no wasted efforts." (Ibid., p. 12)

**The pathway to real fulfillment in this life is NOT found in the way of seeking fame, fortune or power as this WORLD system defines it. Rather, in living and in serving the LORD, the path of SELFLESS SACRIFICE for the welfare of others and to obey the Lord's will, no matter how seemingly difficult or futile from man's perspective, is by far the most FULFILLING in terms of time and eternity.**