

PHILIPPIANS: OVERCOMING BROKEN DREAMS GOD'S WAY
"Part III: Gaining Career Fulfillment By Losing Ourselves In God"
(Philippians 1:12-30)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

If someone here today were to take a look at his life, and try to evaluate its *worth* and the true *longevity* of his life's worth, it's more than likely that he will wonder just **what** value his life really *carries*:

(1) One of the ladies in our church works in an office where many area children have appointments to see a medical specialist. Just this week she observed that 75% of these children come from broken homes! She can tell this because of statements made or notices about those with whom the children are living! *That figure of family FAILURE alone testifies to what must represent a great struggle with gloom over the VALUE of one's EXISTENCE, not only for the PARENTS, but in these children THEMSELVES!*

(2) I saw a television news program this past week in which a 13 scheduled series will be running out of a local town on "How to Parent Your Children and Teens."

Normally, such a program would not catch my attention, but what **did** astound me was the report that this program was created by **local high school TEENS!** As a class project, they were supposed to construct a program to air on a local television station, and they selected the programming material. Apparently the **teens themselves** feel that enough **PARENTS** don't know **how** to do the job as parents, that they have hired specialists to come in and teach their *parents!*

This is not the first time I've heard this concern from the younger generation. My own son, a collegian who works as a volleyball coach in an area High School, one day came up to me and asserted, "Dad, some of the parents of the kids I coach just don't know how to *parent*, and their kids are showing it in obvious ways!" *This fact shows that an enormous NEED exists in or society right here in Connecticut, let alone in our nation as a whole, a need that MUST produce feelings of aimlessness and worthlessness to existence!*

Well, how can a frustrated, aimless adult or YOUNG adult seeking to make something of himself in life find a fulfilling, VALUABLE career and made a LASTING contribution with his life?!

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

Need: *"Being HAPPY and making one's life COUNT in today's world seems to be an illusion for many! What would God suggest?!"*

- I. **From the HUMAN view, Paul SHOULD have been DISTRAUGHT over what had happened to his career when he wrote Philippians!**
 - A. The Apostle Paul had begun at the **top** of his field as *careers* go:
 1. He was born into the tribe of Benjamin which was one of the last two tribes to turn apostate before the Babylonian Captivity: he thus had begun in life with much respect in Israel! (Philippians 3:5)
 2. Paul was educated under Gamaliel, a great scholar who ruled in the Israel's powerful sanhedrin, Acts 22:3.
 3. Paul himself had apparently once been a member of this religious governing body of all Jewish people, cf. Acts 7:58; 26:10.
 4. He was a Roman citizen by *birth*, a prized status, Acts 22:27-29.
 5. Also, Paul enjoyed cultural status as a citizen of Tarsus who could speak the trade language of Greek with his Hebrew, Acts 21:37-40.
 6. On credibility, Paul had been a practicing Pharisee of a party of theological reputation among Orthodox Jews, Acts 22:3; Phil. 3:5.
 - B. Yet, while writing Philippians, his career had *humanly* badly crashed!
 1. Paul was in a Roman prison for defecting to Christianity, a faith that he and his past colleagues had persecuted as a cult, Acts 22:4f.
 2. Even fellow Christians opposed Paul, taking advantage of his confinement to undermine his ministry by seeking to win away his disciples unto themselves, Philippians 1:15.
 3. On top of it all, there was uncertainty as to whether Paul would be soon executed as a prisoner, further limiting what he could achieve by way of a **humanly respectable** career achievement, Phil. 1:20b.
- II. **Yet, CONTRARY to an UNDERSTANDABLE human DISMAY, in writing from prison, Paul expressed only his FULFILLMENT:**
 - A. He said he rejoiced in his state, and would **continue** to rejoice, 1:18!
 - B. Even in considering the potential of martyrdom, Paul said he couldn't decide what would be more **desirable** -- life or *death*, Phil. 1:22-23.
 - C. We know Paul was not suicidal by this remark: he expressed fearless joy and concern for fellow believers of their **own** need not to fear opponents, but to rejoice in suffering for the faith, Phil. 1:28-30.
- III. **Examining Paul's REASONING, we note his FULFILLMENT arose from LOSING himself in God's WILL by the Holy Spirit:**

- A. When Paul first converted to Christianity, he put his faith in Jesus Christ as his personal Savior from sin, cf. Eph. 2:8-9; 1 Cor. 15:1-8.
- B. At that instant, as happens to all believers today, the Holy Spirit came to indwell Paul so he could live righteously, 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 5:16.
- C. This indwelling God also equips every believer like Paul to face **even persecution** for his faith with a **positive** outlook, 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:2.
- D. Well, since Paul leaned upon the Holy Spirit by faith for living, we note his following **godly views** that kept him **positive** and **productive**:
 - 1. Paul was equipped by God's indwelling Holy Spirit to look above the usual negative perspective to see events in God's **positive** light:
 - a. As a prisoner, Paul was bound to Roman guards who were thus obliged to listen to his witness of the Gospel, Phil. 1:13a with Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, ftn. to Phil. 1:13. Paul could see and rejoice that through many soldiers having been bound to him to hear this word, Christ's Gospel had spread throughout the entire 9,000 members of the **imperial guard!** (Ibid., Ryrie)
 - b. Though some fellow Christians preached the truth with errant, competitive motives, Paul could **humbly** rejoice that Christ's word was yet spreading even at the cost of his pride, 1:15-18!
 - c. Being yielded to Christ, life for Paul meant service while martyrdom, the ultimate service, meant great eternal reward: thus, he could accept either death or life in God's will, 1:19-23.
 - d. Since Paul knew it would be better that he live so he might edify his readers, he accepted God's will to live, Phil. 1:24-26.
 - 2. Thus, he **productively** urged his readers to live for Christ, 1:27-30.

Application: *To make our lives truly COUNT for ETERNAL VALUE, and be HAPPY about it, like Paul, (1) we must begin by trusting in Christ for salvation from sin, Jn. 3:16. (2) At that instant, God the Holy Spirit comes to indwell us PERMANENTLY (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:30) so we might live by faith in HIS power to do HIS plan FOR our lives. (3) If we, like Paul, LEAN on Christ to do HIS will, even if we LOOK bad from the usual human perspective, GOD makes all events a WIN-WIN situation FOR us, even if it means service by way of martyrdom, and gives us the insight to see it and rejoice in it! (4) Then, like Paul, we stay buoyant and productive!*

Lesson: *Through the control of GOD the Holy Spirit, Paul could SEE God's SOVEREIGN hand making his career VERY SUCCESSFUL from GOD'S perspective REGARDLESS if his NATURAL viewpoint might judge him as failing to be fulfilled. Thus, Paul was both ETERNALLY very successful as well as truly quite HAPPY in the PROCESS!*

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

Claude V. King who with Henry Blackaby wrote the book, Experiencing God: Knowing And Doing The Will Of God tells in the workbook by that name of a big **failure** he initially had in the ministry.

Claude King started out church planting in 1984 after having read all the right books and acquiring a seminary education. He spent eighteen months establishing his own plans to do the work, and then set out near Atlanta, Georgia to try to plant churches for Christ.

He admittedly bombed. Six months after setting out, he was still without a job to support himself as a church planter, his furniture was still in storage, and he had no money. Discouraged, he and his wife moved back home to live with his parents. Reverend King said the failure as devastating, because he did not know what was wrong.

Nevertheless, convinced the Lord had called him to plant churches, he began **following** the Lord, **being CONTENT to go with ANY opening the LORD provided for him in ministry!**

He met up with Henry Blackaby who had this same "follow-the-Lord" view of ministry, and together they began planting churches. In two years, through many experiences where the Lord actually **gave** them opportunities for church planting, Claude King reports he saw six new churches with full-time pastors planted, and another home Bible study meeting with plans to start the 7th church.

His testimony is this: **"I found that I could not plan or even dream how GOD might want do do HIS work. I found that my relationship to God was of supreme importance. I learned to love Him more dearly, to pray more faithfully, to trust Him fully and to wait on Him with anticipation. When HE was ready to use me, HE would let me know . . . I am praying that God will use this course . . . in your [the workbook reader's] life . . . He will bring purpose and FULFILLMENT to your life and ministry with overflowing joy . . ."** (Ibid., King & Blackaby, Preface to the workbook)

When we YIELD to GOD'S control of our LIVES as believers, being CONTENT to do WHATEVER He assigns, HE GIVES us outlooks like He gave PAUL so He could USE him to be CHAINED to Roman guards and thus evangelize 9,000 soldiers!

So, yield to God's will in our careers, die to self, go with the openings God offers us, and stand back and marvel at the results!