

You Can't Always Get What You Want

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Preacher: Jeremy Martinson

[0 : 0 0] And we are in Philippians chapter 2, and we are looking for verse number 19. Philippians chapter 2, and we are down to verse number 19.

Chloe is going to read our scripture today. I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you.

For I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy's proven worth, how, as a son with a father, he has served with me in the gospel.

I hope, therefore, to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me. And I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger, and minister to my need.

For he has been longing for you all, and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

[1 : 1 0] I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. So I receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men. For he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

Thank you. If humility leads to obedience, could we agree that pride leads to rebellion?

If humility says, I may be wrong, it's pride that argues, I know I am right.

If humility says, God knows what is best, it's pride that says, I deserve something better than this.

If humility says, not my will, but your will be done, it's pride that says, I have a wonderful plan for my life.

[2 : 2 7] But, the rolling stones are correct. You can't always get what you want. It's easy to trust God when life is comfortable, when life is going according to our plan.

But what happens when your circumstances are unpleasant? What happens when your circumstances are inconvenient, when they are disappointing to you?

When your plan that you had for your life is not going at all the way that you thought it would? This, this, at this point, when life is not going according to plan, this is when your faith is tested.

And this is when your faith will either be deconstructed, because it has not been built on the firm foundation of God's Word and hope in Jesus Christ.

It will either be deconstructed, or during this same time in your life, your faith will be galvanized. This text directs our attention to two men, and both of them are examples of the Jesus-like humility that leads to Jesus-like obedience.

[3 : 57] One of these men is highly esteemed by the Philippian church. And I wonder if the other man feels insecure, and perhaps even a little bit like a failure, because life has not gone according to his plan.

Let's reconstruct, if we can, the events that lead to our text. In AD 51 or so, in response to a vision, Paul and his ministry team set sail for Europe.

And the first stop is in Philippi. This is an important Roman colony. It's in the northern region of what is modern-day Greece. And they meet several God-honoring Jews there, and they preach the gospel of Jesus to them.

And these faithful women respond to the preaching of the gospel, God saves them, and Paul and his ministry partners plant the first Christian church in Europe.

And Timothy seems to have played an important role in the planting of this church. And so there's a bond that develops between the church at Philippi and Timothy.

[5 : 22] But Paul faces persecution and imprisonment in Philippi. And when he is asked to leave, then he departs for another city called Thessalonica.

And during his ministry there, the Philippian church sends financial support. During Paul's ministry in Corinth, where he is for about a year and a half, again, the Philippian church sends Paul financial support.

And when Paul raises money to send to the struggling church in Jerusalem, even though he's not expecting the Philippians to participate, because they have already gone above and beyond in their care for him and for the advancement of the gospel, the Philippian church insists and again puts together a large gift to support the church in Jerusalem.

By the year 59 or 60, Paul is imprisoned in Rome. And when the Philippians learn that Paul is in prison in Rome, again, they raise money and prepare to send it to Paul.

But their generosity cannot hide the serious problems that this church is facing.

[6 : 51] They face opposition in the form of social blacklisting and bullying and persecution and even death.

And all of this leads some people within the church to say, is following Jesus really worth it? Is it really worth it to follow Jesus? If this is what life will be like, perhaps there's an easier way to go.

Manipulative and influential religious leaders who have a perverted gospel have infiltrated the church and they are splintering the unity that the Philippians have enjoyed.

It is not at all hard to imagine the grumbling and the arguing that would take place in this type of an environment. Even some of the Philippians' strongest leaders are fighting amongst themselves.

They trade the humility that they have previously had for selfish ambition and they are prioritizing their own needs over the needs of others.

[7 : 58] The Philippian church needs serious help and they need it very quickly. And so they dispatch Epaphroditus with their large gift that they have raised and they send him to Rome to Paul.

Perhaps they even ask Paul to keep Epaphroditus and send Timothy to help them, to shepherd them through these difficult issues that they are facing.

Do you get sick in the car? Kids, do you get sick in the car? No? Like car sick? Sometimes you do, Sophia. Sometimes I get sick in the car as well.

I get motion sick. Okay? While Epaphroditus is on his way to Rome, he gets sick, but this is not motion sick.

Like motion sick, you just stop the car, right? Or you go to sleep, you take a nap, and when you wake up, you stop reading and you just look out the windows and you feel fine. Epaphroditus is not motion sick.

[9 : 06] He is deathly ill. Very sick. News gets back to Philippi and they are, of course, concerned, but God kindly spares Epaphroditus' life and despite the health risks that he is facing, he continues on and makes his way all the way to Paul in Rome.

Now, here is Paul's dilemma. He wants to thank this church for their consistent generosity, but he also needs to address these very pressing issues that are facing the church.

And so, Paul writes them a letter. Now, there is no postal service, no FedEx, no UPS, no email, social media, text messaging, not even Snapchat.

And so, Paul sends the letter back to the Philippians with a trusted ministry partner. But, you can't always get what you want.

Look in your Bible at verse number 19. Now, I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon so that I too may be encouraged by news about you.

[10 : 38] In other words, I hope to send Timothy and then I want him back. I want him to come and report on how you are all doing. For I have no one else, verse 20, I have no one else like-minded who will genuinely care about your interests.

All seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ, but you know his proven character because he has served with me in the gospel ministry like a son with a father.

Can you see why the Philippians hoped that Paul would send Timothy to them? He is a model of the Jesus-like characteristics that Paul has just written them about in this letter.

He is like-minded. It's that idea that we looked at a couple weeks ago of being soul-joined. Remember, like a conjoined, like conjoined twins are physically joined together somehow, being soul-joined.

Timothy says, Paul says that Timothy is soul-joined with him. He has the same mind as me. And Timothy genuinely cares about the interests of others.

[11 : 54] He is not self-centered. He is others-centered. And Timothy doesn't just merely believe the best. He actually seeks God's best for others.

We would all want Timothy to come and minister to us at Steadfast, wouldn't we? Timothy. Timothy's character helps us to understand why the Philippians wanted him, but it also helps us understand why Paul was unwilling to part with him.

Paul needed Timothy to be with him. But I want you to notice how Paul cares for this Philippian church because he doesn't want them to assume that because he couldn't send Timothy that somehow he is in such dire straits.

So look at how he assures them that he expects to visit them soon. This is in verse 23. Therefore, I hope to send him as soon as I see how things go with me.

I am confident in the Lord that I myself will also come soon. and then the hammer drops.

[13 : 13] But, I considered it necessary to send you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker, and fellow soldier, as well as your messenger and minister to my need.

He is your messenger and your minister. He's the one that they sent to Paul, perhaps hoping that Paul would in turn keep Epaphroditus and send them Timothy.

They sent Epaphroditus and they got Epaphroditus back. Not their beloved Timothy.

It seems as though Paul is, if we can use the idiom, killing two birds with one stone. On the one hand, he needs Timothy to stay with him.

But there's a second reason why it makes sense to send Epaphroditus back. Epaphroditus is not well. Look in your Bible at verse 26.

[14 : 26] Since he, since Epaphroditus, has been longing for all of you and was distressed because you heard that he was sick.

Two very forceful phrases Paul uses to describe Epaphroditus. The first one, longing for all of you. Do you remember back in chapter 1 in verse 8 when Paul talks about his affection that he has for the Philippians?

It was that Greek word splanknon. Remember? It's that word for bowels because they didn't talk about I love you from the bottom of my heart. They talked about loving people from the bottoms of their bowels, from the depths of their bowels.

Paul uses that here. He says, Epaphroditus has been longing for you from the depths of himself. And then there's a second phrase that he uses and it's a phrase distressed.

And two of the gospel writers use this word to describe Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus is praying to his Father and he is in such emotional stress and such deep, deep agony in the Garden as he anticipates going to the cross.

[15 : 58] These are the words that Paul uses to describe Epaphroditus. Their concerns are legitimate.

He did nearly die bringing their gift to Rome. Look at verse 27. Indeed, he was so sick that he nearly died.

And then skip down to verse number 30. Because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up what was lacking in your ministry to me.

And then notice in verse 27, the second half. However, God had mercy on him and not only on him but on me also.

It wasn't that the Philippians, that Epaphroditus was somehow making up for lack of generosity. When we read that word making what was lacking, lacking in your generosity, this is not that somehow their gift was less than it needed to be.

[17 : 14] They just didn't have opportunity. They're in Philippi and Paul is in Rome. So, what does Epaphroditus do? He bridges that gap. He makes effectual what they have collected together as a church.

But Paul discerns in the Lord that Epaphroditus' emotional and mental health require him to return back to Philippi.

But, because, perhaps, they hoped for Timothy, Paul also recognizes that the Philippians may feel like Epaphroditus is a consolation prize.

Do you know what a consolation prize is? This is when you don't win the big prize and you get a secondary prize, something less than the big prize.

I used to participate in some fantasy football goings-on back in the day when I was younger and foolish or more foolish than I am now.

[18 : 25] And if you play fantasy football, it's all fun. I love all of that. So good. So much fun. Okay? So I used to do this and what would happen is that the top teams would get to go and participate and play for the Super Bowl.

Right? But the bottom four teams would also play in a bit of a playoff and we were playing for the Toilet Bowl award.

And I tried to find a picture of this. I know I have one somewhere. But the trophy for the Toilet Bowl award, the winner of the bottom bracket, was this crummy piece of wood with a roll of toilet paper that had been hung on it.

This was the consolation prize. You did not win the big award, but you got this. I think on Jeopardy, the consolation prize for second place is maybe \$2,000 and third place is \$1,000.

Wheel of Fortune, I think they give you parting gifts. I don't know what that means. Maybe you get like a Wheel of Fortune t-shirt or something like that. Parting gifts. It's a consolation prize. Timothy is well known by the Philippians.

[19 : 37] He was there when the church was planted. He's who they want. He's the big prize that they want to come and help them through these issues that they are having.

But they don't get Timothy. They get back Epaphroditus. And I wonder if returning home causes Epaphroditus to feel insecure and inadequate and something like a consolation prize.

Perhaps even like a failure. when life doesn't follow our plans, we can feel that way too, can't we?

I can. And so Paul instructs them how they ought to respond to their weaker brother. And he doesn't want them to be angry at him.

He doesn't want them to shame him. He doesn't want them to treat him with disrespect or resentment or reproach. He wants them to to honor him with joy.

[20 : 49] Look at your Bible, verse 27, the very end of the verse. So that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow for this reason, I am very eager to send him so that you may rejoice again when you see him, and I may be less anxious.

God says, therefore, welcome him in the Lord with great joy and hold people like him in honor.

If I may use a word picture, sometimes God picks up a strategic chess piece in order to reposition it somewhere on the board.

And we look at what God is doing and we wonder, what are you doing? Why have you done this? Why this change?

Why this adjustment? Why this loss? Why this grief? Why would you move me from this, which seemed good and exciting? Why would you move me from that over here?

[22 : 12] That was according to my plan. This is not according to my plan. This feels unfair and this feels perhaps unjust and inconvenient and uncomfortable.

I can't make sense God of what you are doing. Consider Moses saved from death in the Nile River only to be kidnapped as it were by the princess of Egypt and he is raised for 40 years in the Pharaoh's house and then he spends 40 years shepherding in the wilderness wilderness.

How long oh Lord right? How long oh Lord will you forget me out in this wilderness forever? I'm the prince of Egypt.

What am I doing out here? Humility trusts God even when life doesn't follow your plan.

imagine John the Baptist. He is preparing the way of the Lord as the prophets foretold that he would.

[23 : 41] He is boldly preaching what no one has dared to preach for hundreds of years. Jesus arrives and before long John is arrested and thrown into prison.

did John wonder cousin Jesus why is this happening to me?

We could have made a great ministry team. We could have done great things for God together. Humility trusts God even when life doesn't follow your plan.

Think of the apostle John. He is exiled like a criminal on the island of Patmos. Are you done using me Lord? Is this the end?

Have I run the race? Have I finished what you've asked me to do? Out here all alone, no community, no one around me except for these other criminals?

[24 : 49] And yet it is here on the island of Patmos that God gives the apostle John the revelation of Jesus Christ, the last book in the New Testament.

Humility trusts God even when life doesn't follow your plan. Think again of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane.

He knows exactly how the next three days are going to go. Exactly how those days are going to go. This is not a surprise to Him. He has told the disciples, I must go to Jerusalem, I must suffer, I must die, and then be raised again.

He's told them, Jesus knows exactly how these next three days are going to go. And yet we find Him in the garden in deep grief, horrendous emotional anguish, nearly unbearable stress.

Matthew 26, Jesus said to them, I am deeply grieved to the point of death. going a little farther, He fell down and prayed.

[26 : 22] Look at this. My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me, yet not as I will, but as You will.

Humility trusts God. Even when it doesn't follow, life doesn't follow Your plan. man, it doesn't seem fair, does it?

It doesn't seem fair that Jesus would have to suffer on the cross. It doesn't seem right that His suffering needs to be so shockingly severe.

It doesn't seem reasonable that the Son of God must also be the Lamb of God. But there was no other way.

To redeem sinners, to rescue His bride, to provide forgiveness for all who would believe, Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, Paul has just told us, even to death on a cross.

[27 : 37] in humility, Jesus trusted the Father. Is Jesus your Savior?

Have you trusted in Jesus for the very first time for the forgiveness of your sins? Have you received God's grace? Won't you trust Him today?

Won't you believe in Jesus today? and have your sins forgiven? It's easy to trust God when life feels comfortable and under control.

But it is when circumstances are unpleasant and inconvenient and disappointing. This is when faith is either deconstructed or galvanized.

perhaps your plans for your life look like a bunch of crumpled up pieces of notebook paper that are collecting around the garbage bin.

[28 : 51] And these are your plans, torn out of the notebook, crumpled up and thrown away. perhaps your future seems hollow, maybe empty, maybe hopeless, not at all what you had in mind.

Maybe friends and family seem distant and uncaring. perhaps you are enduring a long season of unemployment and life feels full of compounding grief rather than compounding interest.

Are you weary? Are you tapped out? Do you feel like you are walking wounded? Are you struggling through the ordinary ups and downs of life and yet you find yourself neck deep in insecurity?

Perhaps God picked you up and placed you into a circumstance that you didn't ask for. Or perhaps God has picked you up and He has not yet placed you somewhere and you're wondering, God, what are you doing?

Just set me down somewhere. Put me down somewhere. I don't have any special insight into what God is doing in your life, but I know this.

[30 : 23] He has you right where He wants you and I know that trusting our Heavenly Father will never lead to a consolation prize.

Life is often disorienting life. And this is because God's ways are not our ways. Life may feel confusing, but I assure you God has not lost control.

Life can be so frustrating, but God is not hindered in His purposes. And life may seem so utterly unfair, but God, friend, is not unjust.

How will you respond when you can't get what you want? When life doesn't go according to your plan? Are you going to grumble and say, I deserve better?

are you going to argue and say, I know best? Or when life doesn't follow your plan, will you humbly trust God?

[31 : 43] Let's pray about this together. Father, You know our hearts and You know where our needs are this morning.

You know where we are pushing back against something that You are doing, where we are hesitant even though You seem to be opening doors.

You know where we in our hearts, even if we're not verbalizing it yet, are objecting to something that You seem to be doing in our lives.

And so, would You help us as we take a few moments and repent, confess, and acknowledge again our need to humbly trust You.

Father, trusting You is hard. it's hard to trust You. It's hard to trust when life doesn't go according to our plan.

[32 : 53] And yet, we recognize the value of being humble before You, following the example of our Savior Jesus, and saying, not My will, but Yours be done.

Would You give us this kind of humility by the power of the Holy Spirit? Would You take away pride that leads us to rebellion and give us humility that leads us towards obedience?

We ask that You would do this because we believe that it is for our good and for Your glory, that we trust You. Even when we think we know what is best, we don't.

Help us trust You. Thank You for sending Jesus. Lord Jesus, thank You for coming and thank You for going all the way to the cross.

You didn't just risk your life to complete the mission like Epaphroditus. You laid down Your life for the sake of Your people, Your church, Your bride.

[34 : 17] We are so grateful for all that You have done for us to reconcile,! to redeem, to restore us to a relationship with our Father. Lord Jesus, to You alone be all the glory and all of the praise.

Thank You for giving us this time that we can be under the preaching of the Word. And now as we turn our attention and celebrate communion together, please remind us again of all that You have done for us.

Blessed Holy Spirit, we are so humbled, we are convicted, we feel the weight of Your Word. Help us to respond with humility, give us the grace that we need to obey what we have heard.

Holy Spirit, would You please do work in the hearts of those who have not yet trusted in Jesus as well. Perhaps today would be the day that You would save them from their sins, they would call upon the name of the Lord Jesus and receive forgiveness, forgiveness, and they would begin to walk with us in humble faith before You.

We ask this also for Your glory and their good. In Jesus' name, Amen.