

Live a Life that Counts

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Date: 04 June 2017

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[0 : 0 0] We definitely live in perilous times with what we hear in the news. It's going on lately, yesterday, hearing about those who were killed, the 40-some-odd who were injured there at the London Bridge, the third time in just as many months there in London.

And I believe we're going to be seeing this more and more often. As a matter of fact, we were talking this morning about what is this world coming to. Well, I believe this world is coming to an end one day, and the Bible has prophesied, and we know that this is where this world is going before Jesus Christ comes back, and it will have to be getting worse before Jesus Christ does come back, and the stage is set for the Great Tribulation.

And so this morning, what I would like for us to do, spending the next few minutes, in the third chapter of the book of Philippians, is talking about how that during these perilous times, during these times when we would like as many souls as possible to come to know Jesus as their Savior, that as many as possible when the difficulty comes, and who may be losing their lives, that they would have their future assured in heaven, and to know that to live is Christ, but to die is gain.

And to understand that our lives need to count while we're here on earth, and that we would not live a wasted life.

And this message today, and we may or may not get this message finished today, we may continue on the next week, but it's all based on one truth.

[1 : 5 5] And this one truth is, I believe that God wants to raise up men and women, excuse me, and boys and girls in His church whose lives count for His glory on the landscape of human history.

Because since Jesus Christ has come to the cross, died on the cross, and since the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given to the church, to those who were believers, and as we are indwelt by God's Holy Spirit today, God did not leave us here just to enjoy these earthly lives.

God did not leave us here simply to have families, and to make a living, and to enjoy the comforts of life. God left us here for one purpose, and that is to build the kingdom.

And if we are building the kingdom, our lives need to count for His glory, and we don't need to be wasting them in wasted pursuits.

So this morning, as we look at this, we're going to be in the book of Philippians, chapter 3, and verses 1 through 14. A little bit of a long section here, but we're going to begin by reading that.

[3 : 1 8] Excuse me. In Philippians, chapter 3, starting with verse number 1, the Apostle Paul says, Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord for me to write the same things to you.

It's not tedious, but for you it is safe. Paul says it's good for him to reiterate what he has already been teaching, because it will be good for God's people. And he starts off by saying, Finally.

Well, Paul's got almost half a book left to go, and he says, Finally. Well, you know, preachers do that. They say, you know, and in closing, and then go on for another 30 or 45 minutes.

Well, I know everybody wants to leave in time for lunch today, so we may or may not get through this entire 14 verses this morning, and we'll just stop when I find a good landing area.

And we're going to continue on with this. And we're not really going to be spending time in the first five verses of this chapter, but we're going to just give a little bit of an introduction here.

[4 : 26] He says, Number verse 2, Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation, for we are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, who rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

What Paul is saying in these first few verses is, There were some who had crept in and who were making their way into the local churches who were what we call Judaizers.

They were Jewish Christians, or at least they claimed to be Christians, and they would come in where Gentiles were coming to know Jesus, and they would come in and say, If you're not Jews, in order to be a Christian, these are things that you need to do.

And they would start off by saying, If you weren't born a Jew, you need to become circumcised. And they would take out their list of rules and regulations, and they say, If you're not a Jew, and you want to be a Christian, you have to meet these standards.

You have to engage in and follow these feasts, and these feast days. And you have to live according to the law. And they added all types of regulations, and rites and rituals to these Gentile believers.

[5 : 49] And in fact, what they were doing was, they were hindering and hampering the propagation of the gospel. Because what they were doing was, they were adding things to the gospel.

And what Paul is going to do is saying, These things that they're adding, they're worthless. And they're a waste. And so, until we find Jesus Christ, and the righteousness that He provides, all these other things that are being added, are to no avail.

So as we continue, this is the setting. Paul is saying, these Judaizers, these Jewish Christians, and I find it ironic, that He calls them dogs.

Because the Jews refer to the Gentiles as dogs. And Paul is saying, You dogs. And so that was an affront, and that was a horrible thing for him as a Jew, to call another Jew that.

And he was saying, You mutilators of the flesh. And he goes on. He says, We are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ. And he says this, We have no what?

[7 : 02] No confidence in the flesh. And then he starts off, in verse number four, Though I also might have confidence in the flesh.

And he goes on to say, If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so. So, the English translation really does not do what Paul says justice.

What we see here in the Greek, is kind of like Paul is trash talking here. You know, he's talking smack. He says, Now guys, you who are coming in and meddling where you don't belong, and you are coming and adding all these things to the gospel, that you don't, that shouldn't be added.

And he says, You have all these things that you're proud of. He says, You don't stack up to me. He says, Because if anybody can have confidence in the flesh, if anybody can cite reasons why they ought to be accepted by God, it's me.

And I dare any of you to stand up against me. He says, I even more so. And then he goes into what he lists. The pedigree, the things that they were proud of, or that they thought he could have been proud of.

[8 : 25] And he goes on to say, Circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, concerning law, a Pharisee, concerning zeal, persecuting the church, concerning the righteousness, which is in the law, blameless.

What we're going to look at over today, and possibly the next time we gather together in these 14 verses, is look at four characteristics.

Four characteristics of those whom the Apostle Paul says, whose lives count. Four characteristics of the follower of Christ, whose lives count, on the landscape of human history.

And so what we see first of all here, we see four characteristics. Let's go ahead and finish our verses here, and then we'll come back to this. Verse 7. Paul goes on to say, But what things were gained to me?

What things? Those things he just listed off. Those really seven things. The first part are things he was born with. The other things are things that he did.

[9 : 34] And really, there are seven things he lists. But we can kind of put them in five different categories. He talks about his family, social heritage, biblical knowledge, religious activity, moral lifestyle.

And he says, Those things, verse 7, were gained to me. He says, Those things that I thought were gained to me, I have counted loss for Christ. Verse 8.

Yet, indeed, I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith, that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, if by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected, but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus also has laid hold of me.

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus.

[11 : 13] Let's pray. Lord, as we come into your word this morning, please open our minds, open our eyes to your truth, and Father, help us to understand what really matters and how we can follow you and make a difference in this world for Jesus.

Father, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. As we said, we're going to be looking at four characteristics of the life that counts.

And the first thing, those whose lives will count on this earth as followers of Christ, number one, they treasure Christ above everything this world has to offer.

If we want to make a difference in this world for Jesus that makes an eternal difference, we're going to treasure Christ. We're going to treasure Christ above everything, anything that this world has to offer.

We see that in the first seven verses. Let's look at those again. He says, Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

[12 : 21] He talks about, verse 2, what these Judaizers, these Jewish legalizers, were saying. Beware of dogs. He calls them dogs.

Beware of dogs. Beware of evil workers. Beware of the mutilation. For we are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Though I might also have confidence in the flesh, if anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so. Then he goes on to list these things that he would have been proud of as a Jew.

He says, Circumcised, the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He says, Concerning the law, a Pharisee.

Concerning zeal, persecuting the church. Concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gained to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

[13 : 25] So what we're going to look at as these five different categories of things that really Paul listed as being part of a wasted life. Or a pride in life that he considered futile.

The first thing that we see is he refers to family heritage. First of all, he says, I have a family heritage that people would die for.

And he says, Circumcised the eighth day. Now this would have been someone who would have been born into a religious Jewish family.

Not someone who was adopted into a Jewish family. But as soon as the law said to do it, to be circumcised on the eighth day, he says, My parents did it just right.

My parents were law followers. They were good Jews. He goes on to say, Of the stock of Israel. He says, I'm a real Jew.

[14 : 30] You check my pedigree. If DNA were available in their day, it would have come back 100% Jew. And then he goes on to even clarify it even further, distill it down even further than that.

He says, Not only were my parents good Jews following the law, not only am I 100% Jew, but I am of the family of the Jews that are the family of the family of the Jews.

He says, I'm of the tribe of Benjamin. If you remember, when everyone were leaving King David, when David was in trouble, the tribe of Benjamin was one of the tribes that stuck with David.

And so they were a family that were well respected as part of the Davidic line and part of those who stayed true to David.

So he says, As far as family heritage goes, he said, I've got the pedigree covered. Then the next thing he says, he says, I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

[15 : 38] He says, If anyone aspires to be a good Jew, he says, I have social status. Because remember, he goes back to the Benjamin stuff.

Not only was Benjamin a well-respected tribe, they were the ones who got the area of land that Jerusalem was in, in which the temple was located.

And so if you ever had a family that was well-respected and kind of, you know what, this family owns this place, it was the Benjamites.

And so Paul says, I have the social status. And who gave Israel their first king? The tribe of Benjamin.

What was Paul's name before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus? Saul. He may have been named after King Saul. So his family was a good Jewish family, followed all the rules, did everything like they were supposed to do.

[16 : 45] He had a royal pedigree. He had family heritage. He had social status. As a matter of fact, Paul, or Saul, was at the height or was at the pinnacle of Jewish society.

I mean, if you'd look into the society pages of the first century, you know, Saul's family would have been there. because they were the socialites of the day. They were the well-respected families.

But then he goes on, he says, concerning the law, what did he consider himself? A Pharisee. Now, before we stop and think, you know what, oh, bad Pharisee, Jesus really, really did a lot of bad talking about the Pharisees because they were hypocrites.

And yes, they were hypocrites. But one thing about the Pharisees, they were legal experts. If you wanted to know anything about the law of Moses, if you wanted to know anything about what does the law of God say about inheritance, well, back in Leviticus and back in, they would point to you the spot where it said.

So they were legal experts in the law of God. They knew the law backwards, forwards. They memorized God's word. So concerning biblical knowledge, Saul said, I was a Pharisee.

[18 : 12] I was one of them. You know those guys that were legal experts? You know, they got their PhD in the law? He said, that's me. He said, come on, ask me any question.

I'll give you the answer. He says, as far as biblical knowledge is concerned, he says, I've got that covered. So, be proud of that. He says, got that.

And then he goes on, he says, concerning zeal, I was persecuting the church. And so not only did he have the family heritage, not only did he have the social status, not only did he have the biblical knowledge, but he had the religious activity to go along with it.

Saul was not one of those who was a pew warmer. He went to temple, he listened to the readings, and he just sat there, took it all in, and then just kind of went and did the social stuff and just really lived the life for himself.

No, Paul says, concerning zeal, I was out there every single day of my life doing what I thought God wanted me to do.

[19 : 23] And so he was, in his mind, serving God, and he was persecuting those Christians who were leaving the Jewish faith and were those who should have been brought back, put on trial, and even put to death because they were not pleasing God.

So he says, concerning zeal, I was persecuting the church. I had the religious activity down pat. And then he says, concerning the righteousness which is in the law, what did he consider himself?

Blameless. And so Paul says, this other treasure that I once had that I consider part of a wasted life is a moral lifestyle.

Because notice he says, concerning the righteousness which is in the law. Blameless. Remember what we said about Pharisees? Pharisees were also very moral individuals.

Matter of fact, you probably could not find a more moral individual in that day because they, every morning and every evening, they had their checklist. You know, did I, nope, didn't do that.

[20 : 41] Nope, didn't do that. Nope, didn't do that. Checked off that one. Yep, did I, did I do enough praying? Yep, did that. Did I sacrifice?

Yep, did that. And so they were the most moral, morally upright, righteous, according to the law, people that existed. So Paul says, he says, I dare you, I dare you to find any sin that I've committed in public that you can see.

And probably no one could appoint anything because he was a good Pharisee. He followed the law. He did everything the law required of him. And so, what we see is Paul says all of these things that I once considered to be important, to be rightful, with God, this family heritage, this social status, this biblical knowledge, this religious activity, and this moral lifestyle, what Paul literally is doing is he's putting them in the column, draws a line, and he adds them up.

And what's the total? He says, these I have counted in verse 7 of what? These are in the lost column. So, he looks at family heritage, social status, biblical knowledge, religious activity, moral lifestyle, a big, fat, zero, goose egg.

He says, these add up to nothing. And so, Paul says, if you really want to count activity, if you want to count things that we do to be right with God, he says, I got that covered.

[22 : 28] But he says, I realized, once I found Christ, these things didn't matter. Do you notice anything common about this list? The things that were keeping Paul from Jesus?

They weren't bad things. Family heritage, is that a bad thing? No, of course not. It's great to be able to come from a good, fine, upstanding, law-abiding, productive family.

As a matter of fact, that's a gift. I consider that a gift. And then, what about social status? Social status can be misused, but that's not a bad thing. Biblical knowledge, of course, a great thing.

The more we can know of the Word of God, the better. What about religious activity? Yes, we need to be actively engaged. Moral lifestyle, you say, what is it, wrong to be immoral?

No. It's the great thing. God wants us to follow His Word. God wants us to live a moral lifestyle.

[23 : 30] But what I find interesting is, these were all good things that kept Saul from Jesus. Because he was looking to those things to be counted as righteousness.

And then he realizes, verse 7, but what things were gained to me, these I have counted, loss for Christ. He says in verse 8, Philippians 3, 7 and 8, these things that were gained to me, what?

This list of five things, these I've counted in the loss column, yet indeed, I also count, he goes even further. He says, everything this life has to offer without Christ is a loss.

He said, it is worth less. And if you are living a life like that, and that's what you're counting on to be right with God, he said, it's a wasted life.

And as we're thinking about people dying all over the world for religious zeal, we have to think about do we have the zeal and do we have what Jesus Christ called for us to do to live a life that counts.

[24 : 43] So Paul says these are all wasted, but look at verse 8. He says, yet indeed I count all things lost for the what? Excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ.

So, if this list of five things are worthless as far as being right with God, what does it take and what is it that's important?

I'm so glad you asked. That brings us to our next point. The only treasure of life that counts is Christ. The only treasure of life that counts is Christ.

We need to be engaged in these good things, but don't count on these good things because we see that word count, Paul, we see that word count three times in this passage of Scripture.

And what Paul is doing, I believe, is Paul is looking back and he's reassessing his life. He says, okay, let's take count. Okay, let's count the things that I once considered important.

[25 : 55] Now, I consider those things and we're going to see at the term he uses. It was not a very nice term. He says, I count these, all these things as lost or as lost.

Think about it this way. I think there are people all across the world today, possibly, especially America, who are going to stand before Christ one day or stand before God one day, rather, the great white throne judgment and they're going to say, and he's going to say, depart from me, workers of iniquity.

I never knew you. What does the Bible say they're going to say? Did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not perform miracles in your name?

And there are people that are going to say, did we not attend church every Sunday? Did we not raise our kids right? We spanked them. We made them obey. Did we not give and tithe?

They're going to say, God, did we not come to prayer meeting? Did we not go to Sunday school every Sunday? Did we not look, God, but God, and he's going to say, depart from me, you workers of iniquity.

[27 : 06] I never knew you. So that's powerful. Yes, it is. Because if we're looking at being good and if we're looking at these physical things to get us right with God, God is going to say, that does not matter.

So Paul says, all these things I thought were going to get me right with God, they're really worthless. The only thing that's worth anything is Christ.

These are good things. We need to be engaged in these things, but don't, as Paul says, don't count on those things to make you right with God. So he says, the only treasure of life that counts is Christ.

Christ. And it's interesting that what we, the way Paul says this here is he says, in verse number eight, for whom I suffered the loss of all things and I count them.

What are the them? The family heritage, the social status, the biblical knowledge, the religious activity, and the moral lifestyle. He says, I count all those things as rubbish.

[28 : 16] Now the interesting thing here is the word the apostle Paul used when he referred to those things was a rather vulgar word. It was not necessarily a word that you would use in mixed company.

And because what it literally means is, and I will use a euphemistic word, it's dung. And in other words, it's excrement.

It's waste. And that's not very nice. Matter of fact, when the grandkids come over and, you know, they've got the diapers that need changing, I don't care if you double bag that stuff.

That stuff stinks, right? I mean, you double bag and you put it in there and I'm telling Kath, what's that awful smell? She goes, well, it's been a couple days the diapers have been in the garbage can. Oh, let's take those things outside because those things, that stinks.

That's horrible. Oh, it turns my stomach. Paul says, these five things that I just listed, he says, oh, he said, it's rubbish, it's dung, it's excrement, it's waste because it's worthless.

[29 : 23] He says, so if you're counting on those things to get you right with God, think again because the only thing that matters is Jesus Christ and a life that's lived for him.

And the next thing, this is as far as we're going to get this morning in this first main point, but we'll close on this, and I mean it, we'll close on this.

The person whose life counts for Christ is one who has found something worth losing everything for. We found something worth losing everything for.

We found Jesus. And we're going to get into the next week or the week after when Paul brings out, he brings the issue of suffering and suffering, and I don't really want to make light of suffering because it's not fun, but suffering really is a loss of what this world provides us.

when we think about when we suffer physically, we think about, well, you know, we want to be comfortable physically, and when we lose that physical health, we become uncomfortable and we suffer, but that's what this life affords.

[30 : 38] And all these areas of suffering Paul even talks about, and he says, even the suffering, there's one thing that's even more important than it's Jesus Christ, and it makes all this truly worth it.

And I want us to look at a couple of other passages of Scripture very quickly this morning where the Bible, I think, Jesus expanded this idea of losing everything for the one thing, and we see that in Matthew 13.

Matthew 13, verses 44 through 46. In Matthew 13, 44, we see the parable of the hidden treasure.

He says, again, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field which a man found and hid, and for joy over it he goes and sells what?

All that he has and buys that field. So what's Jesus saying? The kingdom of heaven. When we find Jesus, it's like a man who finds a great treasure and he wants it so badly he goes and he hides it so nobody else can find it, and he goes and sells everything he has, hawks everything, so he can come and buy that field and enjoy that treasure.

[31 : 53] Now, it breaks down if we stop and think about it. You know what? Maybe it belonged to the previous owner. We won't get into that. But Jesus says he found something precious and he sold everything he had in order to have it.

Let's look at verse 45. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls who, when he had found one pearl of great price, one priceless pearl, just, it was an amazing pearl, he went and did what?

Sold all he had and bought it. So I think what Jesus is telling us, I think what the apostle Paul is telling us, is don't put your stock in things that are worthless when it comes to using those things to stack up to be right with God.

He says, these things added up to a big fat zero. I counted them as dung, as excrement, human waste. He says, but the one thing that counts is Jesus.

Having Jesus. So I think what we see this morning in just this first section is that if we can learn how to treasure Christ above anything, above everything this world offers, and if we think about Jesus as this, he's just a big chest full of joy because when we find Jesus and we really get to know him, really spend time with him, in his word, spending time with him in prayer, it's going to be like opening a treasure chest and finding the treasure that the whole world could offer, that more than the world could offer.

[33 : 41] and is Jesus that to us? Yes, I know that the American way is to work hard so that we can provide a comfortable living for our family.

Nothing wrong with that. But if we are relying upon that to say, when I die, I die with the most toys, or I die with the biggest bank account, or I die with the most social status, then I think that person is going to find that they've wasted their life.

Because are we investing our lives and are they counting for eternity by living a life where we realize that we may have these other things? I trust that we're going to have a family that we can be proud of.

And I use that in a good way. I trust that we can have good social standing. Because the early church had social standing in the sense that people respected them because they lived for what they believed.

And they found favor with all men, the Bible says, in the book of Acts. Also, biblical knowledge. We better know God's word. And we better be actively engaged in serving Jesus.

[34 : 57] And we better be living a moral lifestyle. But we're doing it for Jesus. Understanding, we're going to see this when we get into further, is these things are all important when we understand that it's not our righteousness, but it's the righteousness of Jesus Christ that's allowing us to accomplish these things.

And that's what really matters. If we come to a point in our life where we're willing to lose everything because we treasure Christ above everything this world has to offer.

there are missionaries all over the world today who were living that first point. They treasure Christ above everything. They treasure Christ above a six-figure income that they can make in America.

So they go to possibly a Muslim country. They go to a third world country where there's poverty, there's sickness and disease. Why would they do that?

Because they treasure Christ above everything and they want others to know to have what they found in Jesus Christ. So this morning I trust that as we go through this week we think about do I really treasure Christ?

[36 : 18] If I lost everything. We think about Job, we think about what Moses gave up in the family of the Pharaoh. We think about all these who gave up things for the sake of God.

We really see that he gave them so much more than what they gave up. And to read the testimonies and the biographies of these missionaries who give up everything here to go and maybe not even go to a foreign country, some may even go to an inner city and accomplish the same things, to hear the sweet blessings that God provides them even though they don't have the pleasures of this world necessarily, the things this world can offer.

As we think about it this week, I think it gives us more impetus to pray for missionaries, to pray for those who are living their lives on the front lines for Jesus. And as we stop, and I will close with this, you see your job is not your, how do I work with that.

It's really not your vocation, because what should our vocation be? Followers of Jesus. Should be Christians first. And then the job we have, that's what we do to make a living.

But the most important thing we do is, do we live for Jesus every moment of every day? Let's pray. Lord, this morning, thank you for providing our salvation.

[37 : 52] We thank you, Lord God, for providing for us through Jesus Christ, something that is the most precious that we could ever have, and that is the excellency, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and his righteousness applied to our account.

So, Father, as we are raising godly families, as we are finding favor with others through a holy and a righteous lifestyle, as we are learning more about your word, memorizing your word, as we are actively engaged in serving you, and as we are actively engaged in living a moral, righteous lifestyle, Father, help us to realize that it's all because of you, and it's you who provides the power to live such a life.

We praise you, bless each one here this morning. I pray that you would bless each one of us here this morning beyond measure, because you want to open up the storehouses of heaven and pour out your blessings upon us, dear God, if we but ask, and may we be able to be used by you to be a blessing to others, and as we go through our day, may we live a life that counts.

We pray in Jesus' name, amen.