



DON'T WASTE YOUR LIFE – PART 1 **Philippians 3:1-14**

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, I invite you to open it with me to Philippians 3. I encourage you to pull those notes out from your Celebration Guide. That will be our guide together today. I think the greatest challenge I face this morning is looking back over the last month at all the Lord has been teaching me and resisting the temptation of just pouring it out on all on you at once. I am going to do my best not to.

This outline, I will go ahead and guarantee you that we are not going to get even close to finishing today. We are going to dive into this text that is so rich, so potent. I think one of the theme passages in all of Philippians, maybe in all the New Testament, about what it means to be a Christ follower. What it means to follow Christ. I want us to dive in and see that this morning.

Because this text, I really do believe, summarizes a lot of the things that the Lord has been teaching me. My time in the Word, my time reading, reflecting. You sit in an apartment in Kazakhstan for too long, you have a lot of time to think about things. I think if I had to sum up the one thing that the Lord has been teaching me over and over and over again is I want my life to count. You have time to reflect and evaluate when you step away from the busyness of the world that you live in, and you look at it, and you say, "I don't want to waste my life. I want my life to count."

Even yesterday, on the plane on the way into Birmingham, I am sitting there holding Caleb who is asleep in my arms, and Heather is asleep on my shoulder. I look at these two faces and I think, "I want my life to count for him and for her." I think about the family and friends who are waiting for us at the airport, I want my life to count for them! I think about you. I've thought about you a lot. I think about this church, I want my life to count for this church. I want my life to count for you!

I think about the city that we were in, Caleb's city, about 300,000 people. A small handful of known believers. The parting gift we got when we left Kazakhstan was a little hat that is customary for Muslim boys to wear when they go to the mosque. I want my life to count for that city and for the hundreds and thousands of other cities like it. Amidst it all just to think about the faithfulness of God, His provision every step of the way. Maybe superseding everything else, I want my life to count for His glory. I don't want to waste the life that has been entrusted to me, and I am guessing that is a truth that rings home across this room. We want our lives to count!

One Truth ...

One truth is going to penetrate our time in this text over the next couple or three Sunday's. We'll see how long we are going to be here, but one truth is going to penetrate it all. It's this truth: God wants to raise up men and women in His church whose lives count for His

glory on the landscape of human history. God longs to, desires to, raise up men and women in His church whose lives count for His glory on the landscape of human history.

That word "count" is going to be mentioned three different times in the text we are about to read. This is Paul stepping back and evaluating his life. Paul stepping back and giving us a picture of what it truly means to be a Christ follower. The truths we are going to see unfold in this text, I am convinced, will penetrate our Christianity to the core. They will shake us to the core because they are deeply profound, life-changing truths. So, let's see them unfold. Let's soak in every word.

Philippians 3:1, *"Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you."* This is kind of funny here in Philippians 3. Paul starts off and says, *"Finally..."* but he still has half a book to go. Preachers do that, you know. We are going to close out with this, and then like an hour later, you are still there. Again, I'm going to try. I know you guys want to go to lunch, and I've got a little guy waiting for me at home, so we are going to try to get through this.

Look at verse 2. He starts to address the problem in the church. He says,

Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh - though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Four Characteristics ...

What I want us to do is I want us to take Paul's re-evaluation here in Philippians 3, and I want us to see his example and look at four characteristics of men and women whose lives have counted for the glory of Christ on the landscape of human history. Four characteristics.

They treasure Christ above everything this world has to offer.

The first one is this: If we want our lives to count for His glory, people like this treasure Christ above everything that this world has to offer; they treasure Christ above everything that this world has to offer.

Now, we are not even going to be able to dive into the first verses in depth in this chapter, but what Paul is doing from the very start, he's addressing a problem in the church that had arisen because a group of people called Judaizers. Basically, these were people...Jewish Christians, at least they claim to be Christians...but their practice was to go into situations where Gentiles were coming to faith in Christ, and they would start telling all the Gentiles all the things they needed to do in order to become Christians. "Well, if you are going to become a Christian, and you are not a Jew, then you need to become circumcised. If you are a Gentile coming to faith in Christ, then you need to start following this Jewish rule or this Jewish regulation or this Jewish practice. You need to start doing these things." They would pull out their list of things the Gentiles needed to do in order to come to faith in Christ.

As a result, they were hindering the advancement of the gospel throughout the Gentile world because they were putting all these rules and regulations that were masking the gospel. It is by grace through faith alone, which is what Paul is talking about here. Paul uses some pretty fierce terms to describe them. He says, "Watch out for those dogs." There is some irony there. Jews would refer to Gentiles as dogs, and so Paul would turn it around on them and said, "You guys are the dogs, mutilators of the flesh." That is not a kind term to call someone else. That is what he does; that is how he describes the Judaizers.

Then, he comes to verse 4. In the second half of verse 4, he says, "*If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more...*" You've got to catch it. This is a great picture. You don't get it as much in the English, but in the original language of the New Testament, this is like Greek trash talking here, okay? Paul is talking a little smack here. He says, "If anyone else thinks he has reason..." and there is a major emphasis on "anyone else". In other words, he's like, "If any other man, anybody else, anywhere, thinks he has anything that can match what I've got when it comes to being favored before God or having righteousness before God, I challenge him to step up to me." So, he's calling anybody out. "You come up to me and I guarantee you I will knock you out of the ballpark with all the things I have in my court."

What he does is he gifts seven different things that can be split up into two main categories. One are things he had received just by birth. Things he didn't have anything to do with but some things that had been given to him; things that he received. Second are things that he had achieved, things that he had worked for, his achieved righteousness.

What I want you to do is read that list with me, and I want you to think about them in five different groups that he is really emphasizing here. He says, first, "*circumcised on the eighth day...*" Second, in verse 5, "*of the people of Israel...*" Third, "*of the tribe of Benjamin...*" Fourth, "*I am a Hebrew of Hebrews...*" Fifth, "*in regard to the law, a Pharisee...*" Sixth, "*as for zeal, persecuting the church...*" Seventh, "*as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.*" He gives the list.

Then, after he gives the list, he comes to verse 7. He says, "*Whatever is to my profit...*" which is a reference to all the things he had mentioned just before. "All of these things that I have mentioned, I consider them loss for the sake of Christ." So, what he does is give a list of things, and then he says that all together, they come together as one big loss. One big zero!

What I want you to see in Philippians 3:4-5 is a list that Scripture gives us of treasures of the wasted life...wasted life, because Paul comes to the end, and the Bible tells us they are all a loss. Wasted! Let's think about what they are. First of all...many treasures of the wasted life...first, family heritage. He talks about his family. "I was circumcised on the eighth day." That is something that would only happen if you were in a strong Jewish family. That is when it was customary for them to do that as early as possible. So, Paul was not adopted into this Jewish family later on. From the very beginning, he was thick in Jewish heritage. "*I was circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel...*" Not just of the people of Israel, but he gets more specific, "*...of the tribe of Benjamin.*"

Now, you go back to the Old Testament, and you see the tribe of Benjamin was an extremely significant tribe in the people of Israel. It was the tribe of Benjamin...when other tribes were turning away from the Davidic throne, it was the tribe of Benjamin that stayed faithful to David. It was the tribe of Benjamin, did you realize, that gave the nation of Israel its first king. The first king of Israel's name was, what? Saul. Anybody know what this guy's name was before he wrote Philippians? Saul. It is very possible he was named after the first king of Israel that came from his tribe. So, his family heritage was strong. He comes to the end of that first part where he says, "I am a Hebrew of Hebrews." You don't get any more Jewish than I get. So, he had a strong family heritage.

Second: Social status. Second treasure of the wasted life is social status. This goes back to the tribe of Benjamin stuff. This is the tribe...you look back in the book of Judges, and you see how the tribe of Benjamin included the land that surrounded Jerusalem, which had the temple inside it, and as a result, the tribe of Benjamin was prestigious; maybe even more prestigious than a lot of the other tribes. So, here Paul was...he's from the tribe where there is kind of an upper echelon mentality. He was at the pinnacle of Jewish social life.

Number one, family heritage. Number two, social status. Number three, biblical knowledge. The next thing he says is, "*...in regard to the law, a Pharisee...*" Now, we have to be careful at this point because many of us who have read the New Testament, parts of it, especially in the Gospels, we have a negative impression of Pharisees. We always think of them as hypocrites, which in many ways they were, and Jesus exposed them. We have got to realize that in this day, Pharisees were extremely well respected. The talks...when you think about people who loved the Word and know the Word, that is how Pharisees were viewed. These are guys who know the law, the Word, backwards and forwards. They love it. They meditate on it day and night just like the Old Testament tells them to do. They have it memorized. They follow it. Their lives reflect the law. Everything was devoted to the law. Paul said, "I was a Pharisee." Biblical knowledge...had it to the core. Paul knew the Word and loved the Word.

Fourth: Religious activity. The next thing Paul says is, "*as for zeal, persecuting the church.*" Not only was Paul a nominal part of the Jewish religion, Jewish faith, but he was a zealous member of Judaism. He was so zealous that he went out persecuting the church, that in Acts 7, when we see the first Christian martyr, the people are laying things at the feet of a man named Saul. He's right there; he was zealous. He went throughout these areas persecuting Christians who had turned against Judaism. He was zealous in his religious activity.

Many treasures of a wasted life: Family heritage, social status, biblical knowledge, religious activity, and then, fifth, a moral lifestyle. A moral lifestyle. Legalistic righteousness, which basically, is a term that basically means, "I follow the rules; I do things right." He says, "I am faultless; I am blameless." It is almost like he is challenging them to show an area in his

life that is not right, where he has not followed the rules and the rituals that he was supposed to follow.

So, there's the list. The many treasures of the wasted life: Family heritage, social status, biblical knowledge, religious activity, a moral lifestyle. I want you to look at that list with me. I want to ask you a question. What do you see that all five of those things have in common? If you will notice, every single one of those things are good things. Do you see that? Family heritage. Is that a bad thing to have? Love for your family, respect for your family, pride in your family. Social status could obviously be corrupted, but in and of itself, not a bad thing to have; it's a good thing. Biblical knowledge. Is that a bad thing to have? That's a very good thing to have. Religious activity, zeal in regard to what you believe. That is not a bad thing to have. A moral lifestyle. "David, are you saying it is a bad thing to have a moral lifestyle?" Absolutely not! All of those things are good things and that is what we need to see in order to realize, ladies and gentlemen, it was not bad things that were keeping Paul from Jesus; it was good things that were keeping Paul from Jesus.

This is huge! Do you catch the gravity of what Paul is saying here? He's telling us that it is possible to love your family and take your family to church, and take your kids to church, just like your parents took you to church. Have a good reputation in your culture and your society in the community where you live; to have biblical knowledge, to know the Word, to love the Word and even to teach the Word. On top of that, to not just be involved in church but to be active, zealous in church activity. Then, on top of all that, to be a decent moral person; it is possible to have all of those things and come to the end of your life and it be written across the top of it, "Wasted!" That is what he is saying here. All of those things are treasures of the wasted life.

Now, some of us are thinking, "If those are the treasures of the wasted life, then what in life counts?" Well, I am glad you asked! Paul comes to the end of this list, and he groups them all together and says, "They are one loss. One big zero compared to one thing. The one thing is the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus my Lord."

Many treasures of a wasted life: Family heritage, social status, biblical knowledge, religious activity, moral lifestyle. The only treasure of the life that counts is Christ. "The only treasure of the life that counts is Christ," Paul says. Christ is the decisive difference. Look at verse 7 and 8. You see in the very beginning of these verses, they are parallel. Paul says, "Whatever I considered profit, I now consider loss" in verse 7. It says almost the exact same thing in verse 8. "What is more, I consider everything a loss; whatever was to my profit, everything, I consider them a loss." Then, right in the middle, we see the difference. For the sake of who? "For the sake of Christ." He repeats this over and over again. It is redundant all the way through verse 11. He says, "I consider it all loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ, for whose sake I have lost everything. It's all rubbish, so I can gain Christ. I want Christ. I want His righteousness," he says in verse 9. Verse 10, he says, "I want the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings. I want to be like Him in His death." Over and over again, Paul says that Christ is far greater than all of the good things in this world piled together into one. They pale in comparison to His greatness. The only treasure of the life that counts is Christ!

We need to step back at this point and realize what Paul, what Scripture, is teaching us here about what it means to be a Christ follower in this room. To be a Christ follower according to Philippians 3 means that we discover that Jesus Christ is a treasure chest of holy joy, and we take everything and everyone else in our lives, and we write over the top of it, "Loss without Him." Everything, everyone, the most cherished family relationships, our reputation, even the good things that religion says we need to do, our morality, all of it...we write one

big word across it, capital letters, "Loss." He even says, "It is rubbish. I consider them rubbish."

This is a very interesting word in the original language of the New Testament. One of those areas where we don't get the full meaning here because it is actually kind of a vulgar word. In the first couple of centuries of the church, when the early church fathers were translating this, they tried to minimize it. It was almost kind of an embarrassing passage because, basically, what Paul is saying is, "I consider all these things as dung." Some of you think I just said dung in a Sunday morning worship service, and I did. That is what he said. I know that is awkward. It is awkward for me, and it is awkward for you, but it is literally what this word "rubbish" means. Excrement; waste. We won't continue, but you've got the picture. A dirty diaper, okay? All right! I changed my first one last week! Heather had gone, just me and Caleb. He starts laughing, says, "Sumptin' up!"....anyway, okay!

Paul comes to the end, and he says, "All of those things are one big dirty diaper; all of them rubbish, dung." Don't miss the gravity of this statement, what he is saying here, because this is radically different than the kind of Christianity that is being celebrated across our country this morning. It is radically different than the kind of Christianity that is being practiced in all our lives all across our country this week and sung about this morning. You say, "What do you mean Dave?" There are thousands upon thousands of people who, this morning, have gone to church with their families thinking that their life is going to count because they have brought their kids to church just like their parents did for them. There are multitudes of people who are sitting in seats and pews across our country this morning in nice clothes with nice cars in the parking lot and nice homes waiting for them this afternoon with nice jobs and nice businesses who cannot fathom the fact that it all doesn't matter a bit. It is wasted!

There are countless people who are going to Bible study this morning who are listening to the Word of God being taught and preached, and it is all wasted. I am convinced that there are countless people who are preaching the Word and teaching the Word today in small groups that think that that counts for something, and it is loss; it is wasted. Scores of people who are living high moral lives, who are the most decent of people, and it is all wasted.

I am convinced, based on the authority of the Word of God, that there are people in this room, right now this morning, who will be surprised and shocked to stand before the Lord one day to give an account for their lives. They'll say the words just like Jesus said, "Lord, Lord did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name perform many miracles and drive out demons? Did we not serve in church? Did we not participate in church? Did we not take our family to church? Did we not lead good lives as mom and dad? Did we not have a good reputation in our community, even knowing the Bible and reading it, studying it? Did we not do these things? Did we not live up to the highest standards we could in comparison to the rest of the culture around us? It will be written across that life: Wasted! It doesn't matter. Those are the many treasures of the wasted life. God, help us to get a hold of this. These treasures are subtly deceptive because they mask our true spiritual condition.

The question I want to ask every single person in this room, regardless of your age, regardless of whether you are on staff at The Church at Brook Hills, you are a member at The Church at Brook Hills, or you are a guest here; whether you sing in the choir or serve in the nursery, whether you teach a small group or you attend a small group, whether this is your first time in church or you never miss a Sunday in church: Get through all the rubbish; get through all the things that don't matter. The question is, "Do you know Christ?" Don't let all the other thoughts come in. "Well, I've got this and this and this." "Well, I prayed a

prayer and I signed a card." That is not the question that Scripture gives us. Do you know Christ? Do you know Him, and is He the treasure chest of holy joy around which everything else in your life revolves so that everything else in this world, even the greatest things in your life, pale in comparison to Him? That is biblical Christianity. That is the heart of Christ followers. Do you know Christ?

Somewhere along the way we have forgotten, and I am convinced that it is one of the most effective, prominent strategies of the Adversary. He numbs us and lulls us to sleep with the pleasures of this world, the good things that are around us in this world. He masks us from seeing this question, and we have forgotten, ladies and gentlemen, that in Christ, we have found something worth losing everything for. God, help us to recover this truth. We have found something worth losing everything for.

That is what he said in verse 8. Not just the things I have listed. "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ." Is this just Paul talking here? No, this is Jesus. This is Him saying, "If anyone is going to come after me, he must lose everything. Father, mother, brother, sister...take up your cross, take up death and follow me." What a radical statement.

Turn with me back to Matthew 13. I want you to see this truth from Jesus' mouth. We have found something worth losing everything for. Look at Matthew 13:44, the first book in the New Testament, right before, Mark, Luke and John. If you need to use your Table of Contents, please, feel free to do that. Look at Matthew 13:44. Jesus said this; two short little parables, short little pictures, but so thick. What an incredible picture. Listen to this: "*The kingdom of heaven...*" which is the life of the Christ follower, "*...is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had...*" He didn't begrudgingly go and sell all he had. "Oh no, I found this treasure, so now, I have to give up all these things." No, he was glad. "Get them out of here as soon as possible. I want to sell it all so that he could buy that field."

Second picture: "*The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.*" You might write in the margin of your Bibles right next to that passage, "We have found something worth losing everything for." This is a core truth of what it means to be a Christ follower. To find a treasure of value that is so infinitely great, surpassing greatness.

That is redundant language in the New Testament in Philippians 3. He is making a point. "The surpassing greatness; something so infinitely wonderful, infinitely beautiful that even the best things this world has to offer, I lose them for His sake; I risk them, I sacrifice them, for His sake." All the good things that we talked about: Family, socially, biblically, religiously, morally, all those things.

Isn't this the cry of men and women throughout Scripture, throughout church history? I have been reading a good bit over the last month in Exodus and in Job. Looking at Job. A guy who one day lost it all, everything, all of his possessions, all that he owned, all of his wealth taken out from underneath him, and not just the things, but the people. What agony! You can't read Job lightly when you realize all of his children died just like that; all of them, not one of them left. The only person left is a nagging wife. Job is left with nothing...nothing...not even his health anymore. He's got boils all over his skin, and in Job 19, he says, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and He will stand for me. I've lost it all, but I've got my Redeemer."

Moses. It says he led the people of God to much disgrace to himself. He could have had all the treasures of Egypt. Hebrews 11 says, "He forsook, he left behind, all the treasures of Egypt, and he counted it..." Listen to this. "...he counted it wiser to suffer disgrace for the sake of Christ." Yes, Hebrews 11 says, "For the sake of Christ." It is kind of weird because it was Moses in the Old Testament, but he knew the infinite greatness of God and the promise that He had given in the salvation through Christ. Moses counted disgrace for the sake of Christ, suffering for His sake as better, infinitely better, than all the treasures of Egypt combined.

Hannah...a text that has been real especially for Heather and me praying through our desire to have a child and, as she prays, she says, "I know that my God has power to give life and to take life, and I trust in Him." In her agony, she has Him. It is the cry of men and women throughout biblical history.

Some of us might think at this point, "Paul, Moses, Job...pretty sharp guys. I'm just not there spiritually. I'm not on that pedestal spiritually." Let me show you a guy in Scripture who you may not even recognize. Go back to Philippians with me, and I want you to see Philippians 2. Go back to the passage right before the passage we were reading. I want to show you kind of a "no-namer" in Scripture. You might recognize it when you see it, but you might not.

Look with me at Philippians 2:25. Paul says, "*I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus...*" I'll tell what name was not on the list for possibilities for Caleb, okay? Epaphroditus. Now, who was this guy? Listen to what it says about him. "*...my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.*" A little background here. Paul here is writing from prison, house arrest, and the Philippian church has sent this dude, Epaphroditus, to come and support him and encourage him and bring resources to him. They had sent Epaphroditus to care for him.

Verse 26,

For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him...

Now, listen to this. Verse 30...you might underline it; great verse. "*...because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.*" Paul says it actually two times in this passage that Epaphroditus almost died. We don't know why he was ill, how he was ill, or what exactly his illness was, but what we do know is that he was sick. Why was he sick? Because of the work of Christ that he had given himself to; because of what he was doing, his health had suffered very badly to the point he was on the doorstep of death.

Then, it says, "*He almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life...*" Now, you might circle that phrase because this is thick. This is actually only one word in the original language in the New Testament. It's "*parabalosubulominose*". Isn't that a great word? Did you get that down? It's sixteen letters, and it is packed with meaning. The word literally means "to wager almost as if in a game of chance; to gamble." This was a term that was used to describe gambling in that day. To wager in a game of chance, to gamble something. Here we have a picture of Epaphroditus, God's gambler in the best of ways...the gambler. What

did he gamble? He risked his life. He risked everything to go and support Paul, to be a part of the mission the church had been given by Christ.

Why would Epaphroditus risk it all? He knew what he was getting into. He knew what it would cost him. Why would he do it? He decided to do that because he knew the surpassing greatness of Jesus Christ. He realized that this is really not a gamble at all because, compared with His greatness, anything is worth losing, even my life. Does that sound familiar? Philippians 1:21, "to live is Christ and to die is gain."

We'll look at that some more next week when we get into the rest of Philippians. So, we have a picture of Epaphroditus. You know it is really neat. In the first few centuries of the church after this, there was a group of people in the church that formed together in a group called "the riskers" or "the gamblers." They used the same Greek word that was used to describe Epaphroditus to describe themselves; they followed his example. Now, what they would do, is the group would say, "We will go to the places that nobody else will go." They went into the prisons, they went in to care for the people who were sick, not just those who were sick, but those with the most contagious of diseases that nobody else wanted to be around. They said, "We are going to risk our lives to help these people, to care for these people."

In the third century in Carthage, North Africa, there was a severe plague. Thousands and thousands of people were dying, and the pagan inhabitants of Carthage got to the point where they would, even family members, would not be near them if they had the plague. Even after they died, they would not go to care for their bodies and bury them because they did not want to risk getting the plague. It was a group of believers...gamblers, riskers...who said, "We're going to rise up." Cyprian of Carthage, the bishop of the church there, got together Christians, and they would go around from person to person, house to house, and they would care for the people that nobody else would care for. People who were suffering from the plague, they went and cared for them, and some of them got the plague as a result. They risked it all!

Do you see the picture here of New Testament biblical Christianity? This kind of Christianity holds on to no one in this room; holds on to nothing in this room. That whenever it comes to choosing between something and Christ, we always choose Christ. Someone in Christ, we always choose Christ. When the people or the things in this world...the good people, the good things, the things that mean most to us...are taken away, we never lose our joy. We never lose our lives. Why? Because Christ is our life; He is our treasure. Does that mean there is not pain when you lose? Absolutely not! There is deep pain. We've got tears from Jesus Christ Himself when He knelt in the Garden of Gethsemane. We've got real pain, not an artificial, "Oh, I've got joy even though I don't have anything." It's a real pain, but it's a pain that says, "Christ is still my treasure, and as long as I've got Christ, I've got everything I need."

Is that the kind of lives that we are living in this room? Is that the kind of perspective we have? Or are we hiding behind the many treasures of the wasted life, living a life that says, "I'm going to have Christ and these treasures." That is what the Judaizers were doing. "We'll follow Jesus, but we will also do this and this and this and this. We'll have this and this and this." Paul says, "It's all rubbish. All I've got is Christ, and that is all that matters. You take away everything from me."

Imagine how frustrating it was for the people who were caring for Paul in this Roman jail cell. For him to look at them and say, "You know, if you kill me, that is actually better for me. If you let me live, that is going to be a really good thing too. You do anything to me,

and I am happy because I've got Christ." God, help us to risk it all. God, help us to stop playing games with the surpassing greatness of Jesus Christ. God, help us to sacrifice every treasure of the wasted life.

Ladies and gentlemen, how are we ever going to impact inner city Birmingham with the gospel if we hold on to our comforts and our social status and our families more than we hold on to Christ? We won't do it. How are we ever going to accomplish the Great Commission if the least reached parts of the world today are the most dangerous places in the world today? The reaction to this point has been, "Well, if they are the most dangerous places, then we need not go there. We need to stay away from there." The kind of Christianity we are seeing in Philippians 3 is radically different. It says, "We are going to the most dangerous places, and we are risking our lives, we are risking our families, we are risking our jobs, and we are risking our finances. We are risking it all so that Christ will be exalted in us. We want to gain Christ. We want to know Him completely, and we want the world to see that He is a treasure of lasting value. You take anything from us, and we will be pleased with our Savior." That is much bigger than a Sunday morning routine.

One of the biographies I had the opportunity to read over the last month was one of my favorite missionaries. A guy for whom Caleb is named in part...Caleb Thomas Platt...his middle name comes from my Dad, my hero. If I could be half the dad that my dad was to me, then I would have more than succeeded in my relationship with Caleb. His first name, Caleb, comes from a picture in the Old Testament of a bold follower of God who stood on the brink of the Promised Land when people were having to decide if they would die in their religion or their devotion. He said, "Let's die in our devotion. Let's go into the Promised Land." He was risking it all.

However, even his initials, C.T., one of my favorite missionaries from church history is a guy named C.T. Studd. Pretty cool name, huh? Kind of has a ring that C.T. Platt doesn't have, but that's all right. We do what we can. C.T. Studd. Talk about risking it all. One of my favorite quotes from C.T. Studd, he said, "Some wish to live within the sound of church or chapel bell. I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell." This was a guy who was a wealthy English athlete. He had lots of money. When he came to faith in Christ, and he realized the joy of Christ, he literally sold all of his possessions, gave them all away. After that, almost like he was being tempted by the Adversary, he received an inheritance from his father, and he gave it all away. He had no money to his name.

He went off to China where he began sharing the gospel with unreached peoples there. Not ten years, a wife and four children later, he came back to England, and he prepared for his next mission. He left, and he went to India. He lived there penetrating unreached groups with the gospel. He came back. Then, when he was older, he did not store up treasures for retirement. Did not count his 401K and say, "Okay, I've made it; I've done my work." He left for Africa. He said, "This is the most un-evangelized place in the world today, and I want to go and proclaim Christ." He risked his life and went into inland Africa.

During the last thirteen years of his life, he saw his wife for one night because she was raising funds to support what he was doing there. To see the letters they wrote to each in their partnership in the gospel, even from a distance...I'm not advocating, this but goodness, what an amazing picture.

He faced a lot of resistance from the church. The church said he had kind of lost it. He was risking too much. They said, "Don't go to China, don't go to India and don't go to Africa. What kind of difference can you make on the continent of Africa? Wait until another time; wait until other people will go with you." Of course, nobody else was willing to go with him,

and he wrote this, kind of a rallying cry. I want you to hear what he said. He said, "Believing that further delay would be sinful, some of God's insignificants and nobodies..." That is what he called himself. Isn't that a great name for a group? "We are God's insignificants and God's nobodies."

We have decided on certain simple lines, according to the book of God, to make a definite attempt to render the evangelization of the world an accomplished fact. Too long [Listen to this] we have been waiting for one another to begin. The time for waiting is passed. The hour of God has struck. In God's holy name, let us arise and build. We will not build on the sand but on the bedrock sayings of Christ, and the gates and minions of hell shall not prevail against us. Should men such as us fear? Before the whole world, before the sleepy, lukewarm, thankless, namby-pamby Christian world [He said namby-pamby], we will dare to trust our God. We will venture our all for Him. We will live, and we will die for Him, and we will do it with His joy, unspeakable singing aloud in our hearts. We would a thousand times sooner die trusting in our God than live trusting in man. And when we come to our position, we realize that the battle is already won, and the end of the glorious campaign is in sight, because we will have the real holiness of God, not the sickly stuff of talk and dainty words and pretty thoughts. We will have a masculine holiness, one of daring faith, and works for Jesus Christ.

I don't want to come to the end of my life...and it is possible for me to come to the end of my life...preaching every week, leading a good family and being zealous in religion and, in the middle of it all, to have it wasted because I missed the whole point. I don't want to come to the end of my life and have "wasted" written across the top. I want to come to the end of my life and see that all things have been counted loss and Christ is my treasure. I want us to be a church, and we could be a church, that could go through the next twenty, thirty, forty years and do some great things and have some great programs and have some great ministries and have it over the top written, "wasted."

I want our church to count for His glory on the landscape of human history such that we say, "We consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ." It seems like too great a risk; it seems like too great a gamble, but here's the beauty of it. When we consider everything a loss, and we treasure Christ, it is then, and only then, that we learn to honor these things best and to use these things best. All of these good things now become avenues through which we treasure Christ more. What a radically different way to look at life. God, help us to risk it all. Help us to realize that Christianity which costs nothing produces the same. God, help us to realize that it is better to lose our lives than to waste them.

God, we praise you for the surpassing greatness of Jesus Christ. Lord Jesus, we honor you today as the One who paid it all, who paid the price for our sins, so that we might know you. Lord Jesus, help us to see the treasure that you are. Help us to value you for who you are. God, take our eyes, we pray, off of even the best things of this world to see you, and then, in turn, help us to take the best things in this world and use them for your glory, to trust and to treasure you more than anything else. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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