



Christmas 2025 – Part 2

The Christmas Purpose

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I'm always amazed, aren't you, at how our modern culture seems to be so all in on all the trappings of Christmas? I mean, every year the decorations at the entrance to your neighborhood, the street posts that are decorated in our town, even Denny's is compelled to get involved in decorating their restaurant booths. It's amazing how everyone is all in on that. There's a lot of effort for the lights, the events, the plays, the trees, the presents and the parties. And then there's the cost. But according to the National Retail Federation, which you probably didn't read their newsletter this month, but it says that this year we're on track to spend more as a family, every American family, for Christmas than we did last year. And last year, they said we spent substantially more than we did the year before, which they reported we spent that year substantially more than we did the year before.

So it seems like there's plenty of cost and plenty of effort that goes into Christmas. And if you ask, well, why all this effort and cost? Well, that answer is easily lost on the average person that maybe you work with or live next to. And that's understandable. The person gets forgotten amid the parties and the presents. And that's why the Christian grandma wears those sweaters that say Jesus is the reason for the season. And to that I say, well, you're right, grandma, that's true. And I'm 100% behind the fact that that is the "who" behind Christmas and the "who" that often gets forgotten.

But a sermon in December from Matthew Chapter 1, or Luke Chapter 2, or maybe a kid's choir that quotes all those verses, can easily bring that into sharp focus. And we do that plenty here at Compass. But there's another question that rarely gets asked. It's one that doesn't nearly get the attention it deserves but it's just as important. And it's not the "who" that Christmas is about, but it's the question asking "why" there is a Christmas in the first place. Why is there Christmas at all? Now, a good Sunday school graduate would reflexively fire off maybe a quick answer to all of that, but there is another follow-up question that goes right with that that is just as important and far less considered and that is, well, "how" does Christmas actually accomplish that purpose? Right? There's the "why" and there's the "how." And if we ask the "why" and the "how," which I'm glad you asked just now, I'm happy to report that there is a very clear answer for us in Philippians Chapter 3. And it would be really sad for us to go through another December and feel really proud of ourselves that we know, you know, "who" Christmas is all about, but we really have not had a clear, sharp focus on "why" and "how" that all works.

So I want you to turn to Philippians Chapter 3, because it would be sad for us to miss this and actually it could be devastating and catastrophic if we miss this. So let me read this for you in Philippians Chapter 3 verses 7 through 11. Now, if you know the book of Philippians and if we were talking about just the "who," you might say, well, I would expect him to go, if you're a Sunday school grad, you'd say well I expect you to go to Philippians Chapter 2 because that talks about the fact that there is this one who exists "in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself," and then he was found in the



appearance and the likeness of a human being, of a man. And you say, well, there's the "who." This is the "fullness of deity dwells bodily." And I would say, well, yeah, you're absolutely right.

But this ties this all together. Knowing that from Philippians Chapter 2, Paul starts in this testimony about himself in Philippians Chapter 3 and embedded in this, implied in all of this, is not only the "who," but the "how." So I want to make sure we get this. I'm starting to sound like a Dr. Seuss book, but I didn't intend that to happen. Philippians Chapter 3 verse 7. Let me read it for you from the English Standard Version. It starts this way. "But whatever gain I had," Paul had just talked about what a good and progressing Pharisee he was becoming. He was probably going to sit on the Sanhedrin. He was very smart, a very bright, excelling past all of his contemporaries. And the last word there of verse 6 was the word "blameless." I mean, no one could point a finger at him and say he wasn't great as a religious figure, as an ethical and moral figure. "Whatever gain I had," he said, "I counted as loss for the sake of Christ." Verse 8, "Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order 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 comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith." Then he talks about how this all fleshes itself out now, "that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death." Well that's strange. Verse 11, "that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."

Now, if you found your worksheet this morning, the printed worksheet, you have an error, a typo, and I apologize for that, it's fully my mistake. Point one it reads "verses 9 and 10," but really I meant to say "verses 8 and 9." So forgive me for that glaring imperfection on your worksheet, but if you download the electronic version, that'll be up to date. So there you go. Another reason you should bring your laptop to church. Not only if it gets boring in the sermon, you can do other things but you can get the latest worksheet with less typos on it. So that's a good thing. But we want to dive into the middle of this, and I want to start in the middle, which often is the case just so I can homiletically and at least logically work our way through this and figure out what's going on and really how does this relate to Christmas? And it's that phrase here at the end of verse 8 and the beginning of verse 9 where I want to start with, then we'll go to what Paul has decided to do in verses 7, actually all the way through 9, the end of verse 9. But let's start in the middle here of verse 8. Look at this second sentence in verse 8. "For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ." Now, after giving his resume, his moral and professional religious resume, he says, I'm going to suffer that to be dismissed. It's gone. I'm going to count it actually as rubbish in order that I can gain this person, whatever that means. I'm going to gain this person "and be found in him." Found in him by whom?

Well, okay. This is the whole point. The whole point of your pharisaic path to be a religious and holy person was to have some connection with God. Whatever your connection in pursuit of a relationship with God is it's going to have to now be ditched in the trash can so that now you can exchange all that for this relationship with Christ and be somehow, legally or



relationally connected to Christ being "in Christ," so that now you can be found in Christ, "not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law." So here is this exchange that Paul is talking about, this substitution that Paul's talking about. I've taken all that I've done and I realize what I really need to do is to substitute all that I've done for this person, this person who was born from his perspective, what some, you know, 50 years ago as Paul writes this.

Well, what's going on here? We now are saying the same thing, the whole message of the New Testament is that you need to do the same thing. Whatever you are, whoever you are, whatever your religious or moral or ethical resume looks like it needs to be exchanged for this person and all that he has done 2,000 years ago. So this provides the purpose. If we ask, well, who is Christmas all about? Well it's about Jesus Christ, born 2,000 years ago. Everybody knows the story of a little baby in a manger. But what about that baby? Well, the "who" is very important. We can dive into that. He's really God in human form, which is very important to actually the purpose for it all. And the "why." And the "why" has to do with something that we can't accomplish. God has to accomplish this on his own. And as he accomplished it, he couldn't accomplish it without also doing this as a human being. So we have God entering time and space as a human being. Fullness of deity. Fullness of humanity. This is called the Hypostatic Union in our theology, these two natures in one person. And these two natures in one person do something that has to be exchanged for whatever you are. You have to say, I want that instead of all that I've got. And that word substitute or exchange, that's a big word, an important word. We can never lose that in our theology and most people you talk to about Christianity, they just don't understand that. They've never even really considered it, they haven't pondered it, they haven't gotten below the surface of the fact that Jesus might help me go to heaven. That's about all they know. If they even think of heaven at all. If they even think of Jesus at all at Christmas.

They may think, well, Jesus, yeah, and then they may say, as I say, the Sunday school graduate might pop off with this, yeah, he came to save us, right? "God so loved the world, he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." We learned that, sure. That's the Sunday school answer. He's going to help us somehow get to heaven. And your neighbor could probably tell you that, right? But we have to understand how does that all work? Why did God have to step into time and space as a human and live 2,000 years ago? And as I often say, if it's just about the cross, he could have shown up on Friday, could he have not? Right? If it's just about the substitution of absorbing a punishment on a cross that you and I deserved as strange as that sounds. Well, yeah, "The wages of sin is death." He has to suffer some kind of death in my place. Well, that could have happened if he had just shown up for the weekend. But he lived this whole life and this whole life through all the development stages into manhood, all of that, what was that about? The whole point of him living here was to do something that you then had to exchange your life for his life, and that's how you needed to see your life. And that's hard.

Number one on your outline, put it down this way. You need to "See Christ as Your Perfect Substitute." This baby, born 2,000 years ago, was the babyhood that you need. You need to exchange your babyhood for his babyhood, your toddlership, for his toddlership, his grade school age stuff for your grade school age stuff. You need to exchange all of that. I need his



junior high experiences when he had pimples on his face for the time I had pimples on my face. And you exchange his teenage years for my teenage years. I need to have him with all the ambition of a 20-year-old, I need to have that experience that he had and all that he did, I need that exchanged for all that I was doing when I was twenty. And in his adult life, everything that he did, I need all that exchanged for everything that I did as an adult. That has to be a complete reason for me to say that life is super important. He's not helping me get right with God, right? I want to be found in him not having a righteousness of my own and some people are so quick to say yes, I want Jesus to help me be acceptable to God.

Every cult group just about out there, you can go all over Orange County and look at all these groups that claim to be Christian organizations, and they have some other revelation some other guy came around and said, well, I have this to add to it, add this to it, add this to this, or let me tell you how to understand the Bible. But they don't go just to the Bible to understand the gospel. They have to have some other authority out here. And when they do, guess how they always define the gospel. Christ came to help us, right? You do your best with the rules God gave us and however short you fall from the measuring line, he'll make up for that. Right? If you got a B- on the ethical test at the end of your life. Right? You know you're not a D or an F. You've read those in the crime blotter every day, right? But he'll help you, right? He gives you the extra credit and you get there. That's not at all what the Bible says. Matter of fact, it keeps telling us things like this, like in Isaiah it says, you know, your righteousness, that actually the Israelites were confessing, "our righteousnesses are like filthy rags." It really doesn't cut it. All that we do doesn't cut it.

Jesus told a story about a Pharisee who went up to the Temple Mount, and it says Jesus told that parable for those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous. And the whole point was the Pharisee goes home not right with God, but a tax collector who comes who knows he's not acceptable to God goes home justified. Goes home righteous. That word "justified" simply means in the Greek language "righteous." He goes home considered righteous. Why? Because he knew he wasn't. He needed to be completely changed out. I need a whole other life for my life even though the cross hadn't even happened yet, he had that sense. Every Old Testament saint who is ever going to be saved is saved because they throw themselves on the mercy of God saying I know I can't do it. They have that same confession that they had in Isaiah where they said, "all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags." Or even like Job who was outstanding and blameless in his day. And yet he said, I know no one's right before God, who can be pure before the eyes of a holy God.

We're getting really close to the end of the book of Revelation in our Daily Bible Reading, we'll end this week, but we read about this eternal state and when we get there, Revelation Chapters 20, 21, and 22, you read all these great things about this place that we're going to. Now it's a lot of apocalyptic themes are still there so it's kind of hard to piece some of this together. But you put that together with some of the things we have in the Old Testament regarding the future home that we're all headed to, it's just a great picture. There's a great line at the end of the Bible that talks about all the stuff that's given to us in this place is given free without cost. You say that's pretty cool. And then you think about how great this would be that Jesus has said, I'm going to "go and prepare a place for you," John 14, "I will come again and



will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." I'm going to take you to this place I'm making. And in Revelation Chapters 21 and 22, in particular, I'm going to talk to you about this place and this place is going to be great.

It's like you and me, if I said to you in 20 years, I'm going to have you go to this country club, right? Now I know when you were a kid you watched the lives of the rich and famous, right? You remember that guy? Nobody? Okay, old man. But you read stories about mansions or cribs, whatever. You young people? No, that's even old now. You drive through Nellie Gail every now and then. I don't know, somehow you experienced in your imagination what it would be like to live in these big mansions. Well, let's just say there's this place I'm going to take you in 20 years. It's the ultimate country club. And you can watch the documentary on it if you want. It's on YouTube. And this country club that you're going to go to everything there is free. Everything is given without cost, right? Water from the living, you know, living water without cost. Everything is free. And this was built for you and it cost \$500 trillion, this country club. And everything in it, there are no dues, there's no payment there. If you get in, and I'm going to tell you how to qualify, but if you get in, everything's free. It's going to be amazing. As a matter of fact, you don't even know what it's like to go to a nice place. This is the nicest country club you could ever possibly go to. Okay.

Speaking of the crime blotter, which is interesting to read in the Orange County Register, yesterday in the Orange County Register, if you keep up on the news, you might have seen an article, it was reprinted from somewhere else, about household affordability in Southern California, which is always really depressing to read about, certainly in California. We have one of the lowest home ownership rates, 55% I think in California it says in the article. And so everyone, you know, is basically trying to talk you out of the fact that, you know, in other words, and feel okay if you can't afford a house because, you know, you can't afford it and so whatever. You're a have-not and give up basically. So this is what I felt like reading the article. In other words, you know, it is sad. You think about young people not being able to own a house, right? That's what it's all about. But I think to myself, I'm going to preach tomorrow morning, read this in the paper yesterday, and I'm going to look out there and I don't think anyone I'm going to preach to sitting there in their Sunday clothes. Right? Which is, you know, it's California Sunday, Sunday clothes. I don't think anyone is living under the underpass. I don't think so. No one lives in a cardboard box. No one's living on a bench in a park. Everyone has a place to live. And the whole point of the article was really trying to tell you that if you rent, it's really ultimately a better deal than all the expenses, particularly in Orange County, of what it costs to own a house. Right? All these hidden expenses. Just super expensive. And so, you know what? You could live here on the chart, but to live here it shows Orange County just off the charts in terms of home ownership costs.

If I said to you to get into this \$500 trillion country club where everything's free, the costs are amazing, but there's an infusion of cash every month, and you don't have to pay a dime for it. It's there for you. It's the fullness of pleasure. It's the fullness of happiness. Everything. Every whim is met. It's perfect. But to qualify for this you need to live right now and pay right now for \$1 billion house. You need to live in \$1 billion house. Okay. I thought to myself, I picked a number, hopefully, no one lives in \$1 billion house that I'm going to preach to you today,



right? Maybe on the radio but not here. Right? No one lives in \$1 billion house. If I said right now, you're living in a place, think of the worth of your home right now. Now, that's only going to be 55% of you if we're the average of what the Orange County Register said yesterday. So half of you are going to say, yeah, I will live in a house. We own the house. And what's it worth? Okay. And the rest of you are renting, okay. Well, you pay rent and now what do you think that costs? That little, you know, whatever, 700 square feet, 1,500 square feet. What does that cost? You live in that place. Some of you said what you would \ have to live in, it doesn't matter if you own it or you have to live in a place that's worth \$1 billion. No one qualifies.

But I guess there is a place, it's a place in Newport Beach, and it's a big place, and it's worth \$1 billion. And everyone who lives in that place, if you live in that place when you die, it's \$1 billion, then guess what? You are qualified for the \$500 trillion country club, and you go there and you live there for the rest of eternity. But you have to live first in the \$1 billion house first. If you live in the \$1 billion house, whether you live in \$1 million house or a \$5 million house. Or whether you rent a 700 square foot apartment that you pay whatever that costs today, \$6,000 a month? You have to move out of that house and live in the Newport Beach \$1 billion house, which is great. It has a great room for it. It's a good place to live. The problem is you get to live with people and, you know, you don't get the whole place and, you know, but whatever, it's good, there are going to be some hardships there. But you have to move out of your place. Right? Now, I've just built this analogy. If you die in the \$1 billion house in Newport then you get to go to the \$500 trillion country club. If you die in your house, sorry, there's another place I could tell you about but that would really harsh out our Christmas service. So we won't talk about the other place. But there's another place. It's real for all the people who are doubting it. It's a real place. You go there if you don't live in the \$1 billion house.

Now, that's not a bad illustration, at least from my perspective, of how this whole thing works called Christianity. It also helps you with passages like Matthew 19, how hard it is for "a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven." Think about that. Because if you are sitting here living in a \$5 million house, if I said you have to move out of that \$5 million house that you get to fully control, and you now have to live in the \$1 billion house in Newport Beach, but you only get a little part of it. You're going to live there and, you know, you don't have all the freedoms you have in your house, but whatever, it's going to be fine. You'll get all your needs met. But you have to move into that house. And when you move into that house, you lose your house. And if some of you who live in a 700 square foot apartment, you're like, I'm ready to move into the \$1 billion house in Newport Beach. You're ready. That's why the tax collectors and sinners often came to Jesus when he talked about exchanging your life for my life. Give up everything. Matthew Chapter 16 verse 24. Give it all up and follow me. And they did it. But when Jesus would say that to someone who was rich or famous. Nah, I don't want that.

As a matter of fact, it may help you with other passages like this one in Matthew when Jesus says here's the deal. When it comes to the kingdom, it's like a man who comes upon a treasure in a field, and "he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." Right? The



treasure in the \$1 billion house is you get to go to the \$500 trillion country club, however you have to sell everything you have. You have to move out of your place. Or the man who's in search of the pearl of great price. And when he finds it, I want this, I'm looking for this. And there are some who stumbled upon the treasure. There are some who are looking for the treasure but they all have to give up everything. They have to exchange everything. And I know some of you just can't handle that. I don't want to substitute. I want to kind of earn my place in the eternal state. But you can't. And this is the problem. We often struggle with Christianity because it is about grace. And grace does not give us a place for our works when it comes to earning our place in the family of God. Justification has no place in this discussion. That's why every cult group that says work real hard, keep the rules, your sincerity, your hard work, plus the rules AND a little bit of God's grace will get you across the finish line. Every time that's always the equation. Every world religion, every cult group.

Real Christianity that's willing to say to a guy on death row today who's molested children his whole life and decapitated fifteen people. Right? We're willing to say if he becomes a Christian in the last week of his life then he's qualified for the \$5 trillion country club. That's why non-Christians can't handle that story. That little analogy right there, they can't handle that. They'll say, no, not him. He lived under the freeway underpass. Yep, it doesn't matter if you live in the \$1 billion house. How do you do that? You have to transfer your home for this home. Christ is the \$1 billion life. You have to be "in Christ." You have to gain. You have to take your life, no matter how great. Paul had a great \$5 million ethical house, but he couldn't add Jesus to it. Paul had to substitute his life for a life that was lived in his lifetime, born and died, rose again, and then he split. Paul had to trust in that life. But when he split, he said I'm going to come back and I'm going to usher in this new thing, but you cannot be qualified for it unless you are accepting the great exchange of my life for your life. Yeah, my life's pretty good. Ask your neighbor if he's going to heaven. Ask him that. Ask your friend. Hey, do you think if you die you're going to heaven? Here's what she's going to say. Yeah, I think so. Why? Because I am a...

Here's what God requires. And let me help you with a passage real quick. I know I'm spending a lot of time on the first point but that happens every week. James Chapter 2 verse 10. Here's a verse that's often misunderstood. James Chapter 2 verse 10. It's quoted a lot in the modern church. And James talks about the fact that if you break one law it's as though you've broken them all. And what people will use that verse to say is that if you're a gossip, it's as bad as you being, you know, an ax murderer. Right? But that's not what this verse is teaching. Matter of fact, look at verse 9 and verse 11. It really ends in verse 11 just perfectly, "you become a transgressor of the law." In other words, you qualify as a sinner. It doesn't matter if you, in the context, show partiality at church because selfishly you think if this guy likes me, I'll get something out of this relationship, or if you murder or commit adultery? The point is some are bigger and some are smaller, but it doesn't matter if it's small or big, you still become a transgressor of the law. And if you're a transgressor of the law, you're not acceptable before God. If you live in a \$5 million house, even if you live in a \$100 million house, that's a good life but it still is not qualified for the kingdom of God. And people struggle with that.



But let's say you had a surgery planned for the new year, and you're going in on June the 15th to have surgery. And they wheel you in and your family is in the waiting room waiting for you, and they're going to crack open your body. And the surgeons are in there, and the medical device guys are in there, and the nurses are in there, and the assistants are in there, and they're all gathered around. They're all smocked up and they bring in that tray of utensils. Right? All those instruments, and they unpacked them from their thing. They lay them out there. All the lights are on and everybody's ready to cut you open and get their instruments into your body. That's a pleasant thing to think about. Merry Christmas. So that's all going to happen on June 15th. They roll you in. But as those packets of instruments get opened here's the one reason those are in special packets. They need to be sterilized. Okay. Let's just say maybe for some weird reason one of the nurses goes like this, digs deep into her ear, and then she grabs the scalpel by the blade and goes, oh, whatever. Sorry. Here and hands you the scalpel. If your wife is in the room, I hope she says whoa, whoa whoa whoa, wait a minute. What if for some reason, you know, one of the guys pulls his mask down and sneezes on the instruments? What if someone ate a bad burrito last night and tossed his cookies all over? Right? Would it matter what the contamination is? Would it matter? I don't want you putting your contaminated utensils inside my body. Right? That won't work.

We think we can cruise into the kingdom because we're not that bad. My sins aren't that bad. Christ has to perfectly fulfill righteousness. He has to go and encounter all the temptations. By the way, it is in that passage in Matthew 3 where he goes and gets baptized because everybody should be baptized because that's what the prophet says. Go, be baptized. And it's a baptism of repentance. Jesus had nothing to repent for. John the Baptist knew that. He said, why, I can't have you be baptized today? And Jesus says, you have to allow it at this time to "fulfill all righteousness." And so John says, okay, and he baptizes Jesus. He didn't need to baptize Jesus but he did need to because Jesus needed to fulfill all righteousness. A lot of people who weren't going to get baptized who should have been baptized. He fulfilled it. Three verses later, four verses later in Matthew Chapter 4 verse 1, it says the Spirit led him "into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." Do you know what we're supposed to do? Flee from temptation. Do you know what we're supposed to do? "Resist the devil, and he'll flee from you." We're supposed to run away. And the Spirit drags Jesus right into the battle and says go face the temptation. So the third person of the Godhead takes the second person of the Godhead into the diabolical situation of facing all of these temptations. Why? So that all the temptations we had and failed at he could successfully conquer.

And it wasn't just in that scene and we get three of them explained to us, but it says and then Satan "departed from him until an opportune time." And for the rest of his life and even before that he'd been tempted the whole time and he was going to be tempted more. But in this showdown it was a clear picture of, you know, Adam failed, everyone failed, Moses failed, David failed. Did you notice that all the people in the Bible, including the greats, there's always a picture of them failing. Have you noticed that? It's very clear. The best of the best, they fail. But here comes Christ, shoved into all of the temptations, "tempted as we are, yet without sin." So that perfect life that said yes to righteousness every time could be transferred to your account so that you could qualify to go to heaven. If Christ had not been born in time and space as a human being, fully divine, as a human being, hypostatic union, the kenosis,



taking the divine prerogatives and setting them aside, if that had not happened, we have no hope. We have a bunch of sinners who fall short of the glory of God. You can read about it in Romans Chapter 3, there's no hope.

So why is there a Christmas? And granny, I'm grateful for your bumper sticker. Jesus is the reason for the season. That's good. But why? Why is he here? Why did he come? Why was it planned? Why was the whole Old Testament looking forward to the coming of the Lord? Because here's what it said. God looks in the book of Isaiah for someone to stand in the breach. Someone to intercede. There was no one found. So his own right arm accomplishes salvation for him. That's so good. Psalm 98, we rejoice because the Lord has brought salvation with his own right hand. God is solving the problem that we made. See Christ as your perfect substitute. That's why Christ came.

Now look at the whole section. That's the crux of it. Bottom of verse 8, top of verse 9. But he says look what I'm doing. I'm taking all that I am, and I'm counting it as loss. I'm taking everything I have. "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing..." Well, of course, the worth of living in Christ and being qualified for the King is way better than my best efforts. "So I've suffered the loss of all things." He uses the word "loss" twice here, "and count them as," and then he uses another word, "Skybalon" in Greek. It's the only time it's used in the New Testament. Skybalon. It's not even used in the Septuagint and the Greek translation of the Old Testament that precedes the time of Christ. We don't even have this word used there. It's used in classical Greek. It's used for food scraps. It's used most colorfully of poop. How about that? I've said it, okay? "In order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but which comes," I want the righteousness, "through comes in faith in Christ, the righteousness from God depends on faith." So I can have faith to trust that I can get his righteous life applied to me. But I have to take my life and my accomplishments and my moral greatness and I have to "count them as skybalon." And all this is trying to say, like sometimes in classical Greek it's used as food scraps or feces. Right? It's not something you hang on to. Right?

Moms, you change a diaper. You know, every fourth or fifth one, you know, say I'm keeping this one. I'll put this one on the mantel. I'll put this one under my pillow. I'll keep this one around in the room and put it up. I'll put this one in the closet. We don't keep the diapers, right? You get rid of them. And this is what Paul said this is what I think of my moral accomplishments when it comes to thinking about my qualifications to stand before God. Number two, you have to "Put Confidence in Nothing but Jesus." That's the whole point of this. Confidence in nothing but Jesus. This is why it's hard for you Sunday school grads, you church kids who grow up in church, you moral do-gooders, it's hard for you to become Christians, just like it's hard for a rich man to become a Christian, because it's hard for you to look at your good life and say, you know what? My relatively good life is better than the next guy's. I actually think I'm in the top 10% in this church. Well, congratulations. But none of that qualifies you. If you put any trust in that you've missed the point of how this works. What's the purpose? He fulfills all righteousness. How does that work? You have to put no confidence in your righteousness. None.



Here's how it's put elsewhere in verses that I know you know. After you learn John 3:16, hopefully you learned in an evangelical church Ephesians 2 verses 8 and 9. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it's a gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may..." What's the last word? "Boast." Now you don't stand in the mirror normally and say I'm such a great person that I qualify for heaven. You don't boast out loud, but there's kind of a quiet boasting that's done when a righteous person starts to think, yeah, I must be qualified. Right? There's something about me that's better. I'm going to heaven because I'm better. You put no confidence, no confidence. Because there's nothing. It's put great this way and I know a lot of our home fellowship groups are not meeting this week, our small groups, but I did put on the worksheet, it would be great devotionally, maybe tonight or tomorrow you can spend time going through those five questions on the back of the worksheet. You can find all the typos in those, which I hope there are none.

One of them takes you to the end of First Corinthians Chapter 1 and it talks about because of Christ, right? Because of him, rather, it just uses the pronoun, "because of him you're in Christ," right? Because of God you're in Christ, right? So ultimately the whole point of those last two verses in First Corinthians 1 is so that boasting is excluded. So there's no boasting. But him who boasts and it quotes Jeremiah Chapter 9, "let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." If you want to boast about something, there's only one thing to boast about when it comes to thinking about who's in Christ, who's in line to get into the kingdom, this \$500 trillion country club, as I tried to illustrate it, and has their name written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Right? Who's there? Someone who comes up with no boasting about their own accomplishments. And if you ask your neighbor, as D. James Kennedy had made famous in the evangelism explosion questions there in Florida, and it went all over the country, it's a great question, a diagnostic question. You die, stand before God, and he asks you, why am I going to let you in? Right? That's what you're supposed to ask of a non-Christian, a good diagnostic question.

Let me just say this. If you ask your neighbor, why do you think you're going to heaven, right? If there's anything that comes out of the mouth that points back to the person themselves, right? It's over. We've lost it. You can't talk about yourself and your accomplishments. This is nothing. If you start using the words "good" or "better," or I'm this or I'm that. That's not the point. You have to be able to say my only confidence is in Christ. He's qualified, and I'm related to him by faith. That's the gospel. That's why Christ came. That's how it works. It's not as easy as it sounds. We really, really, really like to earn our own stuff. You have to trust in this completely and it's very hard to do, but it's logical. It is logical. It's as logical as you being a skydiver and jumping out of the plane and saying, well, today I'm not going to trust in the parachute, I'm going to trust in myself. Right? So I'm going to forego the parachute. You would be absolutely ridiculous. Or to be a scuba diver. I'm going to go down there. I'm not going to trust in those tanks, right? I'm going to turn the tanks off. I don't need them and I'm going to trust in myself. Ridiculous. I'm going to go into surgery and I'm not going to test the surgeon. I'm going to repel; I'm not going to trust in the rope. I'm going to fly on a 747, I'm going to do it without a pilot. I don't need a pilot.



It's like people today, especially people who have no reference to Christ. They say I'm going to die and if there is a heaven, I'm sure I'll get in, right? They're going to die but they're trusting in themselves. They're not trusting in the only person who qualifies. And you better be associated, you better be living in his life. Anybody living in that \$1 billion life, that's the only way to do this. And if you say anything about your old house, your old life, well, you know what? I get in because I had a pretty nice house. Your house doesn't matter. Were you in Christ? That's all that matters. I need to appeal to some of you because I can only say Satan's number one lie throughout all of the church age from the beginning all the way to this week has been just add Christ to the menu and that will get you across the finish line. It is not about that. And I know this is incredibly humbling that you have nothing to boast about when it comes to being qualified. That's why you and the guy in jail who becomes a Christian before he gets executed in, you know, the gas chamber or whatever, how are we killing them today, which is rare, but whatever. You'd say we're brothers in Christ on the same grounds. We get into heaven on the same grounds.

That's why you can sit in a small group in our church with someone who you maybe were the Sunday school grad, you were the good kid who grew up in church, you were doing everything reading your Bible when you were six or whatever. Congratulations. And this guy who's in your small group, or this gal in your small group has a sordid, ridiculous past. Think about John Chapter 4 and the woman at the well. She's had five husbands and the one she's living with now is not her husband. She comes back justified across that Sychar valley, and she's coming leading other guys saying Christ is the answer. Here's Christ. It doesn't matter what your life has been. What matters is that you're moving into the house that Christ built. That's it. Is he going to have you straighten up? Absolutely. You're going to live a different life after this. We're not talking about sanctification. I'm not even talking about the fact that you can earn a few things there in the kingdom, in this \$500 trillion country club, by the way you live your life. The rewards that you'll get by how you live in the \$1 billion house. But when it comes to our acceptance before God, that's what Christmas was all about.

All right, the hard part here to understand is maybe verses 10 and 11. Let's look at this and it may seem to go negative on us but it's not negative. The first thing is certainly not negative. This person, this house that we're in, we need to know the house. We need to know the person "that I may know him." This faith that I have in putting my trust in Christ I would like to know him now. That's how John Chapter 17 starts all this as Jesus prays and he says, "this is eternal life," this is what I came to bring them, "that they know you," Jesus praying to the Father, "the only true God, and," speaking of himself now, "Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." They need to know you, the Father, and they know me the Son. And by the way, the Holy Spirit. Don't start getting any of these books about oh, he's the forgotten part of the Son of God. The Holy Spirit's job is for you to focus on the Father and the Son. His job is even to guide prophets and apostles to write a book that's all about getting the attention on the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is all about that. That's his job to get us to know the Father and the Son.

That's why the book that he wrote should be the focus of every day of your life. Because how do we know him? Well, in that passage he goes down to say in verse 14, "I've given them," as



he prays to the Father, the Son says to the Father, "I've given them your word," these disciples of mine, "and the world has hated them." I've given them your word and the world hates them, "because they're not of the world, just as I'm not of the world." Right? They've moved into my house and in my house they are hated. He says, "I don't ask that you take them out of the world." They have a job to do. "But that you keep them from the evil one," though, please. "They're not of the world, just as I'm not of the world. "Sanctify them," set them apart, "in the truth; your word is truth." Who wrote that? The Spirit of God moved people along to write this book. The book stands there as a "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword" book. And the Spirit of God is going to speak through that book as we read it.

The words of God are in ink for us to learn who God is and who his Son is, and how trust in his Son is going to change everything. We should know everything there is to know about the Son. We should study this book. You should read through it, at least at the very minimum we should read through it every single day like we do here at our church, getting through it at least once a year, talking about it in small groups every week, studying it. I mean, going into some passage in depth, sitting under the explanation, the exposition of it, seeing the product of exegesis in the bookstore through the books that are written by people who have worked hard to understand the topics through the lens of Scripture. We need to do this all the time, because we need to know the Father and the Son. This is the job. It starts by knowing Christ and all we'll do is pump up our hope. It's going to get us hopeful in a dark world. It's going to give us a... "In this world you have tribulation. But take heart." It's a great word. I'll come alongside of you. I'll give you hope. I'll bring you confidence, "take heart; I have overcome the world." That's what knowing God will do.

Number three, you have to "Live Out Christ's Hope." Now, the rest of this passage, we'll get into through sacrifice. This is the hard part, right? He says, "I may know him and the power of his resurrection." Why would I need that? Let's just start with this next part. It's starting to get into the hard stuff. Why do I need to...? I was doing okay before I became a Christian. I got up every morning and put my boots on and went to work. Right? Well that's true. But now you have a mission. And just like it was in Acts Chapter 4, Peter and John, were arrested after their preaching. What were they preaching? They were preaching to the elite of that society saying you crucified Christ. He's the cornerstone. You rejected him. Well, that's pretty bold. You're a fisherman from Galilee with an accent. You're telling these guys who have seminary degrees that they're wrong. Well, in the next verse, if you know verse 12 of Acts Chapter 4, Oh, and there's "no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." These guys have rejected Christ. Now, he says, he's the only way. You're lost if you don't put your trust in Christ.

The next verse says that those leaders said, I don't get it. What's the deal? "They were uneducated, common men." "And they recognized that they had been with Jesus." Right? There's something about the power of Christ being activated, fueling people who before were just going along to get along and now they're willing to stand out. That all starts because in Acts Chapter 1. Hey, stick around. Is it time for the kingdom? No. Stick around here on earth. I'm going to send my Spirit. My Spirit's going to enable you to be "my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." See the whole point of this thing



about having the power of his resurrection, you need to be fueled not just to get along in this life. You're not just trying to survive. You're trying to be missional. You have a mission. You have a job and the job is for you to tell people what Christmas is all about. The job is for you to say why Christ came, not just who Christmas is about, but what it's about, and then even how it works because that's the message of the gospel. My second point was all about how to get saved. That's how someone gets right with God. You move into the \$1 billion house. You can't afford it. Christ can afford it. He qualifies. You live in that house then you get to go to the kingdom. That's where you want to go. If not, you're going to pay for your sins and you don't want that.

You need that fuel. You need that resurrection power, which is really all about the fact that you need something, a kind of power where before you would have cowered, you would have been dead but instead you're doing stuff you wouldn't have normally done. This is how God expects to have you live. It's the whole passage. Don't be drunk with wine, right? It's debauchery. In other words, wine will make you do things you wouldn't normally do in a debauched sense. But the Holy Spirit... be filled with the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit is going to empower you to do things you wouldn't normally do, like Peter and John telling the leaders of Jerusalem, hey you guys, you're wrong and Christ is the only way. That's bold. Right? The Holy Spirit's going to allow some people to say some things this Christmas that they wouldn't have said, because the Spirit of God is going to allow them to say it with gentleness and respect. And Peter and John were saying things with respect, but they were speaking the truth. That takes a kind of change. Second Corinthians Chapter 5 says that's what happens when you're in Christ. You move into the \$1 billion house. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old is passed away; behold, the new comes." You start living differently when you live in Christ and you have power every morning when you wake up to say, okay, I have a job to do. I'm not just surviving. You know, it's not like those pop songs of the '80s. Just getting by, getting along 8 to 5, 9 to 5, whatever, blah blah blah. I'm here to thrive as a missionary in my culture, as a light in my generation holding out the word of life.

Turn with me to one passage just to drive this home. First Corinthians Chapter 1, before I get to the next line, which is a strange line in our passage, right? That I "may share in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death." Well that's strange. Well, maybe this will help. First of all, the resurrection part. The power part. The fueling part. Colossians Chapter 1 verse 29. And I guess I should give the "For this." There's a demonstrative pronoun, the second word in the English Standard Version, which points back to verse 28. "Him we proclaim," Christ, we proclaim warning... we should go back to the last phrase of verse 27. But verse 27, the last few words, four words, "the hope of glory." Right? "Christ in you," and you in him, "the hope of glory." Then he says, "him we proclaim," this Christ, who gives us a great hope, "warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works with me." That's the kind of thing where you say I never thought I would do that.

I don't want to get all autobiographical, but I've told you this story before. Mike Fabarez should never be speaking on a platform with a microphone. This was the complete opposite of anything I ever would ever do, and no one would have elected me most likely to be a



preacher. Trust me. Junior high or high school. Most likely to never say more than five words at a time. Maybe if there was an award for that I would have gotten that award. Most likely to sit in the back row of class, most likely to ditch if there was an oral report. That's the award I won. Why am I doing this? Right? Because the power of God has changed who I am to say you may not like it, but you're going to do it and you're going to do it in a way where you're going to throw your life into this, you're going to say I'll speak up for Christ. Come what may. And God does that kind of stuff. His energy works powerfully within us.

Paul never thought he'd be preaching for Christ. He was out there persecuting people who were speaking up for Christ. Look at verse 1 of Colossians Chapter 2, "I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you." This is all about providing them that hope of glory, "for those that Laodicea and for all those who haven't seen me face to face." I'm all about people I don't even know. I'm trying to get the message out. I just want us to be much more missional about our lives. And then don't leave Colossians but remember the next line that comes up in our passage that we may "share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death." Now his death was a vicarious substitutionary death. The atonement of our salvation took place because he died in our place. I can't be like that. There's nothing I can do to die for someone else in their sins. Of course, that's not what he means. But what was it about his death that was so remarkable? Well, he prayed in the garden just before he went to the cross and said, oh, man, if there's any way I can get out of this that'd be great. But "not my will, but yours, be done." He was so stressed about that he was sweating. And in his humanity he said I want another way, but I'll do whatever I'm supposed to do. I will do it. He struggled and suffered, and Paul said I'd like to be like him in his death. He was willing to sacrifice.

And let's just look at Chapter 2, because really you can't read Chapter 3 of Philippians without thinking of Chapter 2 of Philippians. In Chapter 2 of Philippians it says he set aside all of his glory, went through all of this, humbled himself to be a human, not only a human, a servant, not only a servant, to die a death on a cross. Why? For us. And the whole thing started with you should be looking out for other people's interests. That's not what we're good at. And in this passage this is exactly what he's saying. I want to be like him in his death, which is the ultimate act of sacrifice for someone else's good. Now, go back up in Colossians 1. Are you still in Colossians? Look up in Colossians Chapter 1. Look at verse 24. "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake," Paul says. Hey, Colossians, I'm happy that I'm suffering for you. What a weird thing that is. Masochist. You're happy that you're suffering? Well, I'm happy in this sense. "And in my flesh I'm filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is the church."

Now, again, what was lacking in the death of Christ when it came to redemption? Nothing. When he said, "it's finished," it's finished. And that literally means "Tetelestai" in Greek. To tetelestai means "paid in full," paid in full, complete. But he's filling up afflictions. There are afflictions lacking? Well, sure, he said, you can do greater works than I do. What kind of works are we talking about? You'll do a magic show that's better than my magic show. No, never. You're never going to walk on water. But you are going to do things with a greater impact than I did. That's amazing. That's amazing. I've preached to more people than Christ has. Well, you're so prideful. I'm not prideful. I'm just saying Christ was here in a locale. Paul



is suffering for the Colossians. Jesus didn't suffer for the Colossians and his earthly ministry, right? He suffered for those whom he knew. Peter, James and John, the 70, the crowds in Jerusalem, he put up with the Sanhedrin. Paul is now in Asia Minor, and he's filling up what's lacking, not only as he says later for the people in Colossae, but also in Laodicea. He's doing all this for the Thessalonians, for those in Ephesus. He's filling up what's lacking. Why? Because God was building a body and he said in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth.

Jesus was never put out for helping Christians grow in his earthly body in Southern California. Ever. But there are a lot of people like you who have an opportunity to do that very thing. You can be like him in his death, saying, I'm going to be willing to be uncomfortable. I'm willing to suffer for the well-being of someone else. Because now that I understand what it is to exchange my life for his life, that is my mission to be his witness in this world. "I'm filling up what's lacking in Christ's afflictions ... of which I became a minister." This is what we're talking about, "according to the stewardship of God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known." The Spirit's book, I need to make that known. That's your job, too. No matter what your business card says, you better be holding out the word of life through your actions, through your words, through your discussions, through what you talk about at the water cooler. There should be discussions about the truth that's going to lead them ultimately to consider the reason for the season. "The mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to the saints," you know it. It's explained to you in this sermon. "To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery." This country club is amazing and ultimately we live now in a life that's perfect, which is Christ in you and us in Christ, the hope of the great country club of glory. You have to live out Christ's hope through sacrifice.

That last line in verse 11, if you can go back to our passage, Philippians Chapter 3 verse 11, "that by any means possible," if you think, by the way, if you've read this in isolation, you may think Paul doesn't even know if he's going to be resurrected. Oh, man, he's not. He has assurance problems like I do. No, he has no assurance problem. Read the rest of his letters. He knows in who he believes, he's entrusted his soul to someone. He's absolutely sure he knows where he's going. Read First Corinthians, he knows he's going to be resurrected. He knows he's a Christian. Right? Just like John said, "I write these things ... that you may know that you have eternal life." This is a statement about I want to do everything I can in line with this whole purpose. This is what he's all about. And then he uses a phrase that's very unusual in the original language. Matter of fact, it's the only time that this word "resurrection" is used as a compound with the preposition epsilon kappa in the beginning of it, which is the preposition "ek" and ek means "out of." It literally is in this phrase that by any means possible I might attain the "out of resurrection," and then again ek is employed "out of" out of the dead.

Usually we would think of the word resurrection of the dead. The dead are going to be resurrected. The physically dead are going to be resurrected. That's not the construction of this. It is the only time it's ever given this way in the New Testament. Paul says, I may attain this out of resurrection from the dead. Paul is saying here he's raised out from among the dead. It's like Jude saying what we're doing in our mission is plucking people from the fire,



snatching them from the fire. And Paul is putting this in the first person because he started with a testimony if you look up in this chapter and he's saying just I'm being plucked from the penalty of my own sin. I can't wait to get this path done and by any means that I may attain to be a part of this being snatched from death, from the penalty. It's rescue. It's a rescue mission.

I don't normally flip through the channels on the radio. Sometimes I do, especially when I'm in a rental car maybe in some weird city. But if you do that you'll find all kinds of things today. It's amazing too. Depending on the city they'll be like five different languages you'll hear of stuff. And it's all kinds of commercials and ads and sports and weather and news and pundits, talking heads, debates. So the radio waves are filled with all kinds of noise and chaos. But the first voice ever to be transmitted over the radio was on one frequency on the East Coast and people were tuned in. And the only reason they had listeners when the first broadcast was made with a human voice was because these frequencies were used by sailors for listening for some time at this point to their very needed navigational directions through Morse code for some time. So they heard a lot of dots and dashes coming through their radio frequencies. When this man, Reginald Fessenden, had figured out the technology and gotten all together when he was ready to broadcast for the first time, it happened to be on December 24th, Christmas Eve 1906 over 100 years ago from a place called Brant Rock, Massachusetts. He decided, what can I broadcast for the first time that the radio is ever going to be used for a human voice? And he read the nativity story from Luke Chapter 2. I thought, man, that's a good thing. And then he played the violin of the song O Holy Night, which I thought was such a good one-two combination. Right?

Luke Chapter 2 certainly tells us about the who. Christmas. And even then, in 1906, you guys are going to celebrate Christmas. It's about Jesus Christ, but it's a holy night. Why is it such a holy night? Well we're not just talking about it's a special night. It was a night for the first time that a set of lungs that were holy, completely morally, ethically perfect and would continue to breathe in this world's oxygen. It was going to be holy, a holy night and a holy life and a holy person was going to live out the life that you should have lived, that we couldn't live, that we couldn't afford to live. We failed at every turn. But he lived it so that if you could put your trust completely, solely in him, you would exchange his life for yours. Just like the radio spectrum today, there's a lot of din and chaos going on this December. But don't lose the first message at the first Christmas. It was there, it was clear. The angels talked about it and Jesus got to work. He knew his mission and he fulfilled it. Don't let your Christmas be without a clear picture of the purpose. And if you haven't appropriated the "how," today's the day for you to make sure you would never say, if I asked you, why are you going to go to heaven? You would never start talking about your behavior, your morals or your accomplishments. The only hope you have is trusting fully in Christ.

Let's pray. God for those here that need that last sentence, I just pray for them. They know enough. They've heard enough. They've been intellectually convinced enough of the truth of all of this. They just haven't acted, they haven't done the hard part. They haven't resigned as Luke Chapter 14 verse 33 says, to give up their lives, to surrender their lives. They haven't done what the rich young ruler refused to do in Matthew 19 to say yeah, your life is what



matters, mine does not. Let us count our lives as nothing in light of the immense value of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord. No aisles to walk, no cards to fill out, no hands to raise, no classes to be a part of. Just to right now do business with God. If some are here to do that, I pray they would do that today. I know your Spirit will drive them to take the right steps that are next. Talk about it. Get involved in a church that teaches the Bible. Be able to speak up for yourself. I pray that would happen. That among some hearts that are here listening to my voice right now. God, and for others who know that they know that they're right with you. I pray for them to have a real crystal clarity about the "who," the "why," and the "how" of Christmas this year.

In Jesus' name. Amen.