

James Shepherd

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- [0 : 00] One man's trash is another man's treasure. I mean, this idiom shows how people value the same things differently. Someone might value something as trash, worthless, a waste of space, and no longer need it in their life.
- But another person might view the exact same thing as treasure, something that is of immense value to them. And this couldn't be more true during the time of council cleanup.
- I find it both amazing what people will see as trash and will throw out and what others would see as treasure and pick up as you see people drive you along the streets with their utes and their trailers and their trucks, searching for the treasure amongst all the trash.
- And I feel like being a poor, more college student, doing ministry on the North Shore, there's often more treasure than trash out there, dumped on those streets. It's only in my view, of course, but I see a lot of perfectly good couches and dining tables, beds, mattresses, TV, stereos that I presume actually work, they look like they work, toys, scooters, the likes, pots and pans, books, children's things.
- Oh, there is so much stuff that gets thrown out that I just look and go, man, is that really trash? It amazes me to the point where I reckon I could furnish a whole house with council cleanup furniture, and none of you would know.
- [1 : 20] Unless you threw it out, of course, and you recognised I was yours previously. However, all these couches and dining tables, these TVs and stereos, these things were once new. These things were once considered something of valuable because they're now out of date or because they're broken or unnecessary.
- It has caused their previous owner to reassess their value, and now they have been considered as trash, thrown out to make room for all the better and newer things in life.
- I remember when the iPhone 5S came out a few years ago. I was very excited. I went to the Apple store in Castle Hill and lined up at 6 in the morning with my friends.
- We were in a line of about 200 of us. I was about 100th in the line itself, and everyone there was very, very excited. We were all, like, talking about the iPhone. Everyone was talking about what colour they would get as well.
- When the first person walked into the store, the Apple employees made an arch for them and clapped and applauded them and cheered them on as they got to their iPhone. It was very, very exciting.
- [2 : 24] My friends and I, when we got our iPhones, had an unboxing ceremony at the local cafe, and I held my iPhone thinking, this is precious to me. This is amazing and invaluable to me.
- Three years on, I have no idea where my iPhone even is anymore. I think I sold it because it was outdated, and I was getting my new iPhone 6S. Its value did not last.
- It caused me to reassess the value of my iPhone 5S, and I saw it as trash, something that was broken and slowly dying. And then someone else bought it.

And so my trash became someone else's treasure. This is what our society does. Because we participate in a society built on novelty, built on wanting the next best thing, we always need to reassess the value of the things in our life.

And so when our gadgets and toys and cars wear out, we reassess their value. When our jobs or schooling gets really tough or too boring, we reassess its value.

[3 : 31] When our friendships and marriages get hard and the joy, which was there to begin with, begins to dwindle, we reassess its value. These things we once treasured, or began to treasure, have slowly become ultimately trash in our lives.

And as Christians, the gospel of our Lord Jesus calls us to reassess what is most precious and valuable in our life. And if we truly believe the gospel, it changes our perception of what is truly valuable.

But as people who are driven in the world by novelty, we are always tempted to try and build upon and develop upon the gospel itself, importing ideas and concepts from the world, making us view the gospel through the lens of the things that we value.

Whether we go one way and begin to think that the gospel is all about doing certain things right, that Christianity is all about obeying the law and making sure you have done enough to come before God rightly.

Or whether we go the other way and say the gospel is all about receiving material blessing and living a lifestyle that's free from having to worry about your sins. These patterns, these things distort what is truly the gospel and they shape our understanding of it.

[4 : 52] We are always in danger of corrupting the gospel, distorting it, and therefore losing it when we fail to assess the things we value in this world through the lens of the gospel.

The gospel needs to be the lens by which we look at the things in our life that we value. But too often, we're looking at the gospel itself through the things that we value. And this danger is ever-present and persistent.

And this is why Paul writes in chapter 3. He does so for our safety, it says in verse 1, so that we might reassess our relationship with the world itself, viewing the things we value through the lens of the gospel that we might not lose Jesus and therefore our faith.

And so let us open our Bibles and reassess together what it is we most value as Paul reminds us once more of the gospel. So Paul begins by warning his readers in verse 2, watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh.

There are those in the church whom Paul considers a threat to the gospel. The third category gives us a clue as to who he's speaking of. Jewish Christians who want the law to be a necessary part of their faith.

[6 : 13] Jewish Christians consider themselves here in Philippi better than others. they consider themselves exemplars of the faith because they held the law to a high regard.

They were even circumcised and therefore meant that they had the sign that they were God's people from the Old Testament. They looked down at everyone else because of who they were and how they could hold the law.

These are the kinds of people in church who are proud of how much time they spend reading the Bible and looked down at other people for not doing as much as they can. Those who gossip about people's sins behind their back.

Those who brag about all the missionaries they are supporting and praying for. Those who look at themselves and thank God they are not ultimately like other sinful people. Ultimately, these people, these kinds of people value being seen as better than others.

They value their status above anything else. And Paul says to watch out for these kinds of people. They might portray an image of holiness.

[7 : 18] They might seem to tick all the holy boxes but they are nothing more than dogs, evildoers, mutilators. That last category is particularly offensive, particularly for the Jewish Christians.

For Paul would not describe them as circumcised but would use a derogative term instead, mutilation. to show that they are not truly part of God's people.

He's saying, yeah, you might carry that sign on your body that you are part of God's people but that sign is no more of a mutilation like the ancient pagans who would mutilate themselves in the service of their fake and weak God.

You are no different to them. Paul is saying that you are like a pagan. You are like someone who doesn't believe in a real God. His strong, offensive use of the word mutilator here is so he can be clear about the kinds of people who are part of God's people, who are truly circumcised, that is, who are truly part of God's family.

And so in verse 3, for it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus and who put no confidence in the flesh.

[8 : 38] The true Christian is marked by humility. Unlike the proud Jewish Christians who value their deeds and status before the law, justifying themselves as exemplars of the faith, Paul says the people of God are those who humbly trust and boast in the work of Jesus, knowing only in him they can receive eternal life.

And above all else, they value him and treasure him alone. And we must realise all of this so far is in the context of a warning.

we are called to watch out for these kinds of people, not because Paul wants us to go on like a witch hunt and try and get rid of them out of our fold and our gathering, although he would want that.

He's warning and he's out of concern for us as a church because such people can be really damaging to us and to the gospel.

And the temptation for the church in Philippi was to look at these guys and be impressed by them, to see them as role models for their faith, to see the things they valued, which are status and works, and take them on board for themselves and look at the gospel through the things that they valued and then truly forget what it actually means to be the people of God.

[9 : 59] And Paul is all too aware of how easy it is to slip back into that mindset of box-ticking Christianity, where the impressive Christians seems to be the true examples of faith who then leaves the rest of us feeling bad and somehow less of a Christian because we're not able to be like them.

The issue is that these Jews have allowed what they value, their status and their works, to creep into their view of the gospel and corrupt it. And that's what Paul is afraid will happen to the rest of the church if they continue to look at these guys as role models of the faith.

However, there's another danger here as well. It's to go in the totally opposite direction and promote freedom from having to live in any certain way. Believe in the mantra that Paul spoke against in Romans which is why not sin that grace may abound all the more?

And that response is also dangerous. And there are people in churches who promote this kind of response. They say it's okay to sleep with your boyfriend or your girlfriend outside of marriage.

It's okay to lie in your tax return to get a little bit more back from the government. It's okay to get drunk not that bad as long as you don't hurt anyone. And God doesn't want you to give money to church that's okay.

[11 : 21] God just wants you to love him. Such proponents who say these things of this kind of message misunderstand the gospel because of the things they value.

They are looking at the gospel through the things they value. And they value material things. They value their lifestyles and their freedoms. And so in turn looking at the gospel through those values they have corrupted it and distorted it and have led many people away from it as well.

We need to watch out for these people. For people who tell us that the gospel is all about works and achieving some sort of status before God that we can be right before him.

But we all seem to watch out for the other extreme as well. Saying that it doesn't matter about how you act and how you live. Just believe and Jesus will still love you. We must clearly anchor our mind and our heart that to belong to the people of God is to serve him the power of the spirits.

to boast only in Jesus and what he has done for us and to put no confidence in ourselves. It's a call to humbly trust in Jesus and in him alone.

[12 : 40] However the antithesis of humbleness is pride. And the world would feed our pride by having us think we are capable of our own salvation whether it's eternal or simply just to live the good life.

the world would use the things we value to infiltrate our thinking twisting our perception of them making us view the gospel through the lens of what we value most and therefore opening us up to being distorted and misunderstood.

And hence what you get is the dogs in Philipians. You get the liberalist Christians of then and now who say you can do whatever you want. Paul knows all too well this danger and how easily the gospel can become corrupted and distorted and so he puts himself forward as a case study that we might truly grasp but there is no benefit in being like those he's opposing here and there's no benefit in looking at the gospel for the values of those lifestyles and freedoms of the liberalist type Christians that we would not be tempted by these things.

From verse 4 Though I myself have reasons for such confidence if someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh I have more circumcised in the eighth day of the people of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin a Hebrew of Hebrews in regards to the law a Pharisee as for zeal persecuting the church as for righteousness based on the law faultless.

As he so often does Paul applies the logic to himself You know these Jewish Christians they might have a lot to boast about they might have done a lot of good works and they are circumcised as well so yeah they might be pretty good Jews but no one compares to Paul Paul is the Jew he is the Jew you want to be pretty much he doesn't get much better he's almost perfect and so if anyone could know God as a Jew it would be Paul and if you had the credentials that Paul had as a Jew you'd be thrilled you'd be stoked because you knew that Paul was someone who could know God and yet in a sharp reversal the treasure becomes the trash verse 7 the terminology here Paul uses of loss and gain is basic commerce language and he's borrowing it to help him describe how much he considers

[15 : 32] Jesus to be the ultimate thing he values and how his credentials his status his past life as a Jew is ultimately just worthless and therefore trash so if you think of a balance sheet before Paul heard the gospel all his credentials were listed as positive as profit as gain you know as a Jew it looked immensely profitable you probably want to invest in Paul he was a very good investment but then when he heard the gospel it all changed he came to know something of unprecedented value that was now his and this calls Paul to reassess everything in his balance sheet and without question or pondering he straight away gets his list of credentials and strikes them out as a loss their asset value had dropped significantly to the point where they were no longer profitable and more than that they weren't just no longer profitable they were now a liability they are now costly to Paul and so he has to strike them out and get rid of them lest these liabilities would now affect or even take away what he has gained as something so precious in Jesus indeed he feels so strong seeing seeing the things not only as he wants valued as merely lost but also as trash and garbage in verse 9 now the translation here is probably not strong enough the word used is skubala it's more or less of an ancient swear word and the early church fathers who were reading

Paul were so embarrassed by Paul's use of the word they tried to kind of soften it a little bit saying no Paul didn't really mean that he more meant just you know not very nice not very good worthless but in reality the word describes something vulgar and abhorrent it's better understood as someone's excrement dung and crap are probably the strongest words I could use in front of you right now but that's how he considers his past credentials crap it might seem so drastic and offensive and it should but Paul is so deeply convicted that if he doesn't draw the line to such an extreme if he gives even some value to his past credentials then he will be giving them a foothold into his heart he'll be giving them a chance for him to then view the gospel through his credentials the lens of his credentials and that's just not worth it for Paul so much so that he sits in prison writing these words having truly lost everything that he's ever had but having kept and having always gained

Jesus which is all he needs you see the danger for Paul is that if he places any value in these things he'd be tempted to also place his confidence in these things as well and therefore his confidence for them in salvation and that's the primary issue for us here it's the temptation to look at the things we value in our life and place our confidence and our trust in them above Christ allowing them allowing them for the gospel to become corrupted and distorted it's a subtle danger but one that comes at great cost if it's left unchecked indeed what's at stake for Paul was the knowledge that came by gaining Christ a knowledge unsurpassed in value verse 9 and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the Lord but that which is through faith in Christ the righteousness that comes from God and the basis of faith

I want to know Christ yes to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings but becoming like him in his death and so somehow attaining to the resurrection from the dead the knowledge of Christ that we are made right with God through faith alone that we are made righteous through Christ's own work itself that we partake not only in his suffering but in his resurrection that we can one day be assured that our own resurrection as well all of this our knowledge in Jesus is at stake for Paul when we fail to consider everything loss a liability to gain Jesus what are the things in your life that are potentially becoming more and more of a liability to your faith is it your desire to be seen as holy and good are you beginning to think that to be saved and right before God you need to be at least this good or have done this in your life and have never done that is it your desire to be comfortable and happy are you beginning to think that it's unimaginable that God would ever ever take away good things from you that he would ever let you suffer and then still be good somehow these things are liabilities the gospel calls us to consider garbage lest we lose our faith in the true knowledge of Jesus they have potential to shipwreck your faith and make you lose sight of the truth they have the potential to destroy your knowledge of what is true what in your life that you value is becoming more and more of a liability what is it as you sit here now reassessing your relationship with the world what are the things in your life the things that you value that might become your liability to what you should value most

Jesus how do we continue to not lose sight of Jesus how do we stop everyday things in our life becoming too valuable because reality is we're bombarded every single day by a world that tells us to value this or value that value your own comfort value your own happiness value your own life above anything else it's hard to keep Jesus at the centre of our life it's hard to continue to see him as the most precious and valuable thing in our life when the world is saying otherwise and we only gather here once a week the world is bombarding us six other days of the week 24 7 so how do we not lose sight of Jesus and how do we continue to value him above all else that we might not let liabilities in our life take that away it's very simple actually but very hard to do and at the beginning of the first verse he says

[22 : 45] Paul at the very beginning further my brothers and sisters rejoice rejoice in the Lord Paul's command to watch out for those in the church who might warp our understanding of the gospel stems from his ultimate purpose for us his ultimate command for us as a church and that is to rejoice rejoice always in Jesus to never forget who and what is at the centre of your life of our life to choose daily to make the object of your joy and of your delight your passion Jesus who is supremely more valuable than anything you could ever gain in this life he has made a way for you to know God he is the one who can give you what the world is searching for in all the wrong places eternal life he is the one who gives us hope in times of suffering and despair and in a chaotic world we can hold on to him knowing that he will bring us through and so daily choose him choose to take joy in him choose to rejoice in him continue to make him the object of joy in your life make reading the word a priority make prayer a priority make gathering together in small group a priority that you might continue to look at the world for the lens of the gospel and not the world through the gospel the world will always be there to feed our pride to tempt us to find value in things of the world and so it will always bombard us and it will always be difficult but that's why we have this right now that's why we gather together because what we're doing here right now is reminding each other of the good news of

Jesus we gather here each Sunday to continue to reassess our life against the gospel itself to continue to tell each other the good news of Jesus that we might continue to place him in our life as the most valuable thing there is we remind each other of this good news so for those of us who doubt that good news we can be encouraged encouraged to continue trusting in Jesus as the most ultimate and valuable thing and for those of us here who have forgotten that who have begun to value other things in the world we come to him remind each other that no Jesus is the most valuable thing and so repent and turn back to Jesus that we might continue to rejoice in him and him alone because he is the most satisfying thing the most worthy thing of our time and our praise there is nothing better in this whole world than gaining and keeping Jesus which is yours today and this evening so continue to rejoice in him let me pray heavenly father we thank you so much that in your word you are merciful to us and you reveal to us how we can know you through your son we pray father that we would not be tempted by this world to value other things to look and to read the gospel through the things of this world that we value but father we continue to reassess ourselves always through the lens of the gospel would we always see how incredibly wonderful it is the gift of your son that he has come to save us and to die for us that we might know you father we pray that we would never take our eyes off of him that we would continue to always trust in him and to see him as the most valuable thing in our life that we would always keep him for all eternity and we pray this in your son's precious name amen