

LIVING WITH PURPOSE

Philippians 1:21

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** There is one thing universal to all of mankind: Every man/woman seeks a purpose in life.
2. There is probably no one who has not asked such questions as:
 - A. “Why was I born?”
 - B. “Why am I here on this earth?”
 - C. “What is my reason for living, or what is my reason to continue living?”
 - D. “Why should I get up in the morning?”
3. The fact that all men search for a “purpose” in life can also be demonstrated:
 - A. When someone dies prematurely it is often said, “Oh, how terrible, they had so much life ahead of them, so much to do, so much to accomplish; but they didn’t have a chance to reach their full potential.”
 - B. Or, when someone performs some terrible deed, such as committing a heinous crime or blowing their mind out on drugs or alcohol, it is often said, “What a waste, poor so and so just wasted their life.”
4. It is certainly sad that most people flounder in life and never fully come to grips with life; they never find the true purpose in life.
5. Even more tragic are Christians that should know better. When we allow the things of this world to distort our purpose in life to the degree that we pursue “earthly”/”worldly” things, we will then ultimately depart this life “empty-handed” and destroy our own soul and perhaps the souls of our loved ones.
6. **3** So, tonight let us spend a few moments discussing **LIVING WITH PURPOSE**.

II. DISCUSSION:

1. **4** Purposes for which the majority of men live:

For many the purpose of life is to...

- A. Obtain money/material possessions: “He who dies with the most toys—wins.”

1. A man’s position/importance/value/esteem is often measured by the answer to this question, “how much do you make?”
 - (a) Highest paid professional athletes: LeBron James: \$64.8 million/year; \$20.8 M salary, \$44 M in endorsements, but Floyd Mayweather: \$300 million/year, \$285 M salary/winnings, \$15 M in endorsements (2015 figures).
 - (b) Highest paid actor is Robert Downey, Jr., \$80 million/year (2015 figures).
 - (c) But even dead people make big bucks: Michael Jackson is the second highest pop star, \$170 M in sales last in 2014).
2. Many Christian’s measure things this way too! (“I need to move because the company is giving me a big promotion.” or “My son/daughter has this ‘big’ new job with MegaCorp X and they make \$\$\$\$!”)
3. America has a preoccupation with material possessions (e.g., Black Friday, Cyber Monday).
 - (a) These spiritual problems not limited to the “rich.”
 - (b) We may not consider ourselves “rich,” but we are!

1 Tim. 6:6-10: “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

1 Tim. 6:17-19: “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

4. Is the value of a man measured by his checkbook balance? **Matt. 8:20:** “And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.’”; **Lk. 12:15:** “And He said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.’”

(a) Jesus speaks vividly of one whose wealth led him to poverty:

Lk. 12:13-21 (Passage addresses priorities and trust -- serving riches or serving God; trusting God or trusting riches.)(Jas. 4:13-16; **Eccl. 2:18-19:** “Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. 19 And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity.”; **Matt. 6:24-33**)

- (b) Job 2:9-10: Amazingly, in God’s eyes Job was “whole” even though he had lost it “all”; his possessions; his children, his health, and even the comfort and support of his wife. (integrity = *tummah*, from *tom* = completeness, prosperity, etc.) Job’s life did not consist in the abundance of the things he possessed!

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B. 5 Experience as much pleasure as possible:

- (1) Why do people take drugs? The euphoria they provide is pleasurable!
- (2) Why do people buy Playboy or Penthouse magazines or dabble in internet pornography; why do they commit adultery? Sex is pleasurable!
- (3) The world’s mottos are: “Grab for the gusto!” Because, “It doesn’t get any better than this!”

Lk. 16:19: “There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.”

(a) Pleasure turned to misery:

Lk. 16:25: “But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.’”

(b) Paul provides an apt description of 21st century America:

2 Tim. 3:1-5: “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”

(c) We cannot deny that sin is pleasurable (Heb. 11:25: “*passing pleasures of sin*”), but in the end the lusts of the flesh will leave us empty-handed! **1 Jn. 2:17:** “*And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*”

(d) What God offers us is of far greater value and enduring:

Heb. 11:25-26: “*choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.*”

Heb. 11:13-16: “*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*”

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C. **6 To achieve fame:** For example, everyone has heard of Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods; people nearly everywhere in the world recognize their faces. But, seeking fame can take many more subtle forms (**Matt. 23:5-7:** “*But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. 6 They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’*”).

(1) **Herod Agrippa I** (grandson of Herod the Great of the gospel accounts):

Acts 12:1-3: “*Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. 2 Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. 3 And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread.*”

(a) Herod enjoyed fame, at least for a season:

Acts 12:21-22: “*So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. 22 And the people kept shouting, ‘The voice of a god and not of a man!’*”

(b) But, his fame ended in shame!

Acts 12:23: “*Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.*”

(c) His fame didn’t last, but noticed what lasted:

Acts 12:24: “*But the word of God grew and multiplied.*”

(2) If the world stands, who will remember Michael Jordan, Elvis, Tiger Woods or Madonna in 1,000 years? What about in eternity?!

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D. **7 To obtain and wield power:**

“Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.”
(Abraham Lincoln)

(1) Absalom, David’s third, and favorite, son (**2 Sam. 14:25-26; 15:1-6; 15:13-14; 18:9**).

(a) Power ended in humiliation: **2 Sam. 18:14-17!**

(b) Power, like fame, can take many more subtle forms:

1 Cor. 1:10-13: “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. 12 Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’ 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”

Col. 2:8: “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”

Col. 2:18-23: “Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations — 21 ‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,’ 22 which all concern things which perish with the using — according to the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”

3 Jn. 9: “...Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them...”; Phil. 2:5-8

E. 8 Three critical observations:

(1) Materialism, pleasure, fame/power - are real dangers to Christians:

(a) Can choke out the word: **Matt. 13:22:** “Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.”

(b) Can lead to seeking “positions” in the church: **Matt. 20:20-28.**

(c) Can lead to wrong attitude toward the lost: Lk. 9:52-54 (sons of thunder)

Lk. 9:52-54: “and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. 53 But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. 54 And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, ‘Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?’”

Lk. 9:55-56: “But He turned and rebuked them, and said, ‘You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. 56 For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.’ And they went to another village.”

(2) These worldly pursuits carry a very high cost! (e.g., shattered family life, lost health, and the ultimate loss of losses...one’s soul, **Matt. 16:26:** “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”).

(3) In a very real sense these pursuits are stupid! Because, we must remember that our earthly accomplishments are vain—because they pertain only to life “under the sun”:

Eccl. 2:9-11: “So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. 10 Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my reward from all my labor. 11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the

labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun.”

(1 Jn. 2:17; e.g., MJ’s 6 NBA titles, Tiger’s “Grand Slam”; 14 major titles). What will be the value of all these accomplishments in eternity?)

2. **9** The real purpose of life: (purpose for which the very, very few live!)

A. Paul understood it! **** Phil. 1:21:** “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

B. Paul did not always follow God’s eternal purpose:

(1) At one time Paul thought he had “life by the tail,” but he didn’t!

Phil. 3:4-6: “though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”

(2) To find real purpose in life, Paul had to let go of what he had valued; he let God give him purpose in life:

Phil. 3:7-11: “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

(3) God created us to have fellowship with Him, but man sinned and totally ruined all that!

(4) But God’s foresight/foreknowledge provided redemption!

(5) God’s eternal purpose is the redemption of man through Christ Jesus:

Eph. 1:3-11

Col. 1:12-23

2 Pet. 1:1-4

(6) In Christ: (We really need to meditate very often and careful on these things!) **10, 11, 12**

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| “every spiritual blessing” | “forgiveness” | “redemption, forgiveness of sins” |
| “chose us” | “riches” (unsearchable) | “reconciled” |
| “holy” | “fellowship of the mystery” | “holy, blameless, irreproachable in His sight” |
| “without blame” | “boldness, access, confidence” | “all things that pertain to life and godliness” |
| “adoption as sons” | “qualified to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints” | “exceeding great and precious promises” |
| “accepted in the Beloved” | “delivered from darkness” | “partakers of the divine nature” |
| “redemption” | “translated into kingdom” | “escape the corruption that is in the world through lust” |

C. **13** What is the point?

(1) From all eternity God had a purpose for man, for you and for me and for every man/woman—to be His friend, to be His companion, to be intimately associated with Him for all eternity!

- (2) But we blew it!! SIN! An infinitely holy and righteous God cannot befriend sin, cannot find companionship or be intimately associated with carnal man—it's like mixing oil and water—it **WILL NOT** happen (Rom. 3:23; 6:23).
- (3) But God fixed it! God has a plan, an eternal plan; whereby, though man through sin has lost his original purpose for life; God restores that grand purpose through Jesus Christ.
- (4) There is only **one true purpose** for you and I:
Phil. 1:21: *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."*
- (5) And until we realize that great truth and grab on to it with every fiber of our being, we will never find true happiness, true meaning, or a true purpose to our lives:
Phil. 3:7: *"But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ."*
Phil. 3:7: *"I once thought all these things were so very important, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done."*
- (6) God is our maker, our designer; how could we ever think that we could find happiness and fulfillment without pursuing the purpose for which He designed us and made us?

III. CONCLUSION: 14

1. There is no need for anyone to wonder what their purpose is in life or to flounder trying to find a purpose in life.
2. God has the grandest purpose for us in life, a purpose more fantastic than any purpose we could ever come up with on our own.
3. His purpose is to give real meaning to our lives, to make us so close to Him that we can live with Him eternally.
4. Don't you want to make God's purpose your purpose?!
5. ** Does your purpose in life harmonize with God's purpose? If not, you can't say what Paul said!
 Phil. 1:21
6. Invitation:
 - ✓ **Hear:** Rom. 10:17
 - ✓ **Believe (faith):** Heb. 11:6
 - ✓ **Confess:** Mt. 10:32; Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:36-37
 - ✓ **Repent:** Acts 2:38
 - ✓ **Baptism:** Acts 2:38; 8:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 12:13
 - ✓ **Faithfulness:** Col. 1:18-23; 2 Pet. 1:3-11

(Partially based on a sermon by Richard J. Boone, Chattanooga, TN)