

JCI #178 November 2016
Acts 20:24 Gospel Passion to My Dying Day

Paul the Apostle said so many things about his passion for Christ and the gospel that it is impossible to say which one hits me the hardest. But recently I have been challenged, rebuked, and repeatedly encouraged by his statement in Acts 20:24... “But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”

This statement confronts my sinful desire to seek happiness and comfort rather than holiness and purpose. If you’ve got the courage to step into the operating room of the Heart Surgeon named the Holy Spirit, let’s let the scalpel of His two-edged Sword cut deep and bring soul healing to us today.

What makes life worth living?

What makes death worth dying?

If it’s not worth dying for, it’s not worth living for!

Acts 20:24... “But I do not account my life of any *value* nor as precious to myself, if only I may *finish* my *course* and the *ministry* that I received from the Lord Jesus, to *testify* to the *gospel* of the grace of God.”

Paul’s life transforming encounter with Christ on the Damascus road not only saved His soul, but completely changed his purpose in life, his passionate desires and his ultimate goal. Paul was never ho-hum about life. He was either all against Christ or all for Him. He knew where he stood, even when he was dead wrong! Consider the following words from his own testimony about Christ’s claim on his life.

Acts 22:10-15 And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.’...“And one Ananias... said, ‘The God of our fathers **appointed** you to **know** his will, to **see** the Righteous One and to **hear** a voice from his mouth; 15 for you will **be a witness** for him **to everyone** of what you have seen and heard.

Acts 26:14-18 ...And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting... I have appeared to you for this purpose, to **appoint** you as a **servant** and **witness** to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, 17 delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom **I am sending you** 18 to **open** their eyes, so that they may **turn** from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may **receive forgiveness** of sins **and a place** among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

The Lord Jesus Christ placed on Paul a mission, an appointment, a purpose, a bond-slave’s obligation, coupled with unequalled joy and reward. With this background, we can see why Paul said what he said about his life’s purpose and value.

Acts 20:24... “But I do not account my life of any *value* nor as precious to myself, *if only I may finish my course* and the *ministry* that I received from the Lord Jesus, to *testify* to the *gospel* of the grace of God.”

Here are some other translations in more modern phraseology...

But nothing, not even my life, is more important than my completing my mission. This is nothing other than the *ministry I received from the Lord Jesus: to testify about the good news of God’s grace.* CEB

But I don’t care what happens to me, as long as I finish the work that the Lord Jesus gave me to do. And that work is to *tell the good news* about God’s great kindness. CEV

I don’t care about my own life. The *most important thing* is that I *complete my mission.* I want to *finish the work that the Lord Jesus gave me—to tell people the Good News* about God’s grace. ICB

But life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about God’s mighty kindness and love. TLB

If it’s not worth dying for, it’s not worth living for!

The Gospel Gives Me Passion to My Dying Day Acts 20:24

Why live today, tomorrow, every day, all my days?

I meet many elderly and infirm believers in my visits to the hospitals, nursing homes, and hospice centers. Many I meet endure so much pain and loss. Much more than I have ever imagined, much less experienced. And while some will say “I don’t know why God is keeping me here”, many others are fully focused on the lost souls around them and their longing to see them come to Christ before it’s too late. Oh that God may give us the grace to never lose sight of our purpose, our real and enduring purpose, to live to share the gospel with lost souls, to see them rescued and restored to our God through Jesus Christ.

What makes a life worth living and death worth dying? A life-long purpose! Acts 20:24

Who makes a life worth living for and a death worth dying for? Jesus Christ alone! Phil 1:21

#1 *I am not my own.* “I do not account my life of any value ...”

Life’s *Value* is in *doing* what *you were made for, saved for, bought for, chosen for...* 1 Cor 6:19-20

To *know* Christ & *make him known* 2 Cor 5:18

#2 *This is not my home.* “...nor as precious to myself”

Paul did not expect anything other than trouble in this life. When Christ sent Ananias to Paul to open his eyes and baptize him, He said He would show Paul how great things he would have to suffer for His name. For Paul, life was not something to hide and preserve, but to use and expend for Christ. He was eager to go home, but home would never have an earthly mailing address. His citizenship was in heaven, and being with Christ was the only address Paul desired to call home.

#3 There's a race to be run. "...If only I may finish *my course*..."

The Course is your personal race from start to finish. 2 Tim 4:7

The race begins at the starting line called salvation and ends at the finish line called glorification.

We are told to forget the miles behind us and press on with perseverance to the ever upward calling of God in Christ. Phil 3:14 This course is ours to run. No one runs it for us. This course has boundaries and markers called commandments, and if we love Him we'll follow them. Matt 28:19-20, John 14:15

#4 There's a crown to be won. "...If only I may finish... the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus" The ministry is the appointed task given to the bondsman by his master. It is not our place to determine our work. It is not our place to pick and choose our path or our appointed work. It is our place to receive His appointment and do it with all we are and have. The finishing is running this race and completing this task steadily and without stopping until the end. Let there be no slowing, no stopping, no going back. We live and run and labor to reach the finish line and will not stop until we reach it. **1Co 9:24 2 Tim 4:8**

18 Col 4:17

#5 There's a Savior worth living and dying for! "*the Lord Jesus...*"

From beginning to end it's all about Jesus Christ. He is our Savior, our Master, our Caller, our Author, our Finisher, our Sender, our Sustainer, our Rewarder and our Reward! Since He never changes, life is worth living and death is worth dying, for to live is Christ and to die is gain! Phil 1:21

Self-Check

- 1) Jesus said that to seek to save our lives (keep them for ourselves) would result in our losing them. But to lose them for His sake and the gospel would result in our keeping them. Am I saving, or giving my life away?
- 2) Which of the five statements hits you the hardest today? Why?
- 3) Make a list of 10 people you need to share the gospel with soon. Pray continually for God to open the door and make the way for you to do it.

For Further Study: Look over the accounts of Paul's salvation and compare them. Then read Galatians 1, Philippians 3, 2 Corinthians 4-5, and 2 Tim 4 as you think about His life-long passion to serve Christ and make the gospel known.

"Lord, help me to always remember and never forget that **I am not my own**, I belong to you; **this is not my home**, heaven is; **there's a race to be run**, a life of heart-yielded obedience; **there's a crown to be won**, a crown that will bring you glory as I lay it at your feet; and **You alone are worth living and dying for**. Capture my heart, consume my desires, fill my vision, take all of me, now and forever, for Your glory, for Your will, for Your gospel. In Your sovereign Name I pray, Amen."

Remember, you are very special to us and we pray for you.

Living with leaving in view.... John 9:4 Ron& Val

Seeing The Invisible,

embracing The Unapproachable,
declaring The Unexplainable,
changed by The Immutable,
running after The Irresistible
with inexhaustible joy
in our inexpressible sorrows,
spending our time on eternity,
owning nothing yet possessing everything
that matters and lasts.
We are Pilgrims in Paradox.
Welcome to THE JOURNEY