

# Living Out the Main Thing

## Philippians 3:10-14

Bro. Trad York

My favorite theologian is Barney Fife. Do you know Barney Fife from the Andy Griffith Show? It's so good to be with you this morning. What an honor it is to be here. I didn't sleep much last night because it's kind of like deer hunters in opening season. You don't sleep; you're restless because you're so excited. Last night, I told my wife when we went to bed, "Get ready because I will not sleep good tonight. I will toss and turn and I may be up a few times." I was tossing and turning just so excited to be with you. I think I was thirty-eight or thirty-nine years old the last time I was here standing in the pulpit preaching for Bro Ricky. Now, I am fifty years old; boy, time flies so much! Many of you haven't changed a bit. There are so many things that haven't changed, standing next to Bro Ricky singing...still hasn't changed; he still can't sing a lick! I'm teasing. 😊

I'm here today to encourage you. I'm here to strengthen you. I'm here to say I love you, and what you are doing is making an impact all over the world. Sometimes you have to sit back and just see what God is doing. When you look at me up here, I hope you don't see Trad York; I hope you see Jesus Christ in Trad York. It all started back on Back Street, two roads over. It didn't start here, or even at the other church; it started at the 'first' other church. There is where would go there to visit Mamaw and Pap from time to time. I would hear about this new pastor that had come to Hardin, how exciting he was, and how he preached the Word of God. I remember going as a young fellow and hearing him preach for the very first time. It took a lot to catch my attention. Well, my attention was caught with a lot of other things, but the Word of God being preached then really touched me. There was one sermon, and I don't know if he even knows it, that

really hit home with me that still resonates with me. I believe it was the starting point of the seed that was planted in my life which changed everything for me. It was a sermon entitled, Faces at Calvary. I remember that sermon so well and how Bro Ricky preached on the cross and all the faces that were around the cross. I left there that day just really thinking and mulling all of that over. That was the seed planted in my life that began to grow in me. I didn't become a Christian right away. It wasn't until later that I came to know the Lord, but that was the seed. I also believe with all of my heart that I am a result of a praying grandmother. I believe for all of us grandkids that we are the result of a Mamaw who spent countless hours praying for her kids and grandkids. I believe in the power of prayer. I just want to say this to you to encourage you and strengthen you; don't stop praying. Even when you feel like giving up, you don't stop; you continue praying. Even when things seem dark, you don't stop; you continue praying. I believe with all my heart that there is power in prayer.

Before I go any further, let's read God's Word in Philippians 3. It will be my focal point this morning. I've entitled this message, Living Out the Main Thing. One of the things I've learned from Bro Ricky is the main thing is to keep the main thing, the main thing.

## Scripture

***"...that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."***

This is great news! Again, to be a small part of a legacy, to be a part of what God is doing in the life of Hardin Baptist Church through Bro Ricky to reach the nations. I was thinking on the way here of a tree and the many branches and how these branches all go out in different places. I thought last night of so many people being reached by the faithfulness of one man and of a church that is reaching out all over the place. I was thinking how God is reaching people in Hardin, and right here is where it all began. It branched out to Benton. It went from there to Murray, to Paducah, to Metropolis, IL, even Decatur, IL, where Carlton is at, Owensboro, Paris, TN, New York, Arizona, Brazil, Nicaragua, and Africa. I'm just naming the ones that *I* can name. I'm sure there are so many more. So, keeping the main thing is honing in, focusing in on what God has you for, how God is using you, and how God is going to use you. I understand there may be some here this morning who feel a little out of place. You feel like you're in a dark place, lost. Can I just say this to you? God loves you. He knows where you're at. I wanted to share those things with you to encourage you.

When my daughter was young, about three years old, I remember being at the ballpark and we were walking along. If you remember, she was always tied at my hip. Everywhere I went, she went. So we were holding hands and walking, and we were a little late going from one park to the other. If you have kids that play ball, you know what I'm talking about. We're trying to get from one park to another park. So she's holding my hand and about that time, I feel a thump. I looked back and Allie had run into a pole. I wasn't paying attention and she was looking at all the stuff around her...smack, right dab into a pole! She starts crying and I try to console her.

It's amazing how God will give you an illustration through something like that. It was later on that God gave me this deep theological illustration that if you don't look where you're going, you'll run into a spiritual pole, which is brought to mind with your theme this year of 20/20 vision in 2020. If you're not looking where you're going, you're going to crash. If you're not paying attention, you're going to get hurt. What Satan wants is to distract you. He wants you to pay attention to everything else that's going on around you, except the main thing. It slowly happens. It doesn't happen

overnight; it happens over time. The next thing you know, you're wondering how in the world did I get so far away from God? It's because of all the busyness and all the things going on in your life that we begin to lose track and lose focus of the main thing. The Apostle Paul here was talking about all of these things in his life, and he had an Olympic resume, didn't he? He talked about all these things in his life. He said I consider all of them a loss to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ. This one thing I do is I want to know Jesus. This one thing I do, I strive to know Jesus and the power of His resurrection and sharing in its sufferings. You say whoa! We're not talking about a prosperity gospel where God will just give you. You just follow Me and I'll give you what you want...no! The Bible doesn't speak of that. If you're going to follow Him, then you have to take up your cross and follow Him, day in and day out.

So, I challenge us all this morning to look at our life, look at the things that are going on around us. I'm going through a study right now through Revelation. I'm going through the churches, and it is amazing to see how God commends the churches, but also how He is also correcting them. There are churches that are dead. There are churches that are ministry driven. They are working hard for the Lord and ministry, but He comes back and says 'but this one thing I have against you; you have forgotten your first love.' So, how does that happen? Through busy-ness. You know that you can even get so busy within the church that you forget your first love. Paul is reminding us; this one thing I do is I want to know Christ. I don't want anything else to get in the way of that because that is the most important thing in all of our lives. I'm fifty years old now, and it seems that things are different than they were when I was twenty-five. When I was twenty-five, I was a bull in a china shop. When you're fifty, you tend to slow down and look at things, and you tend to enjoy things a whole lot more, like kids and grandkids. And one of our greatest treasures in our lives is to know Jesus. It's not winning a championship. It's not getting a promotion. It's not driving the best, or typing on the best; it's knowing Jesus Christ and Him being our treasure. The greatest believers in history are those who had a great passion to know Jesus. If we read the scriptures, it was guys like Moses who pleaded with the Lord 'please, show me Your glory. I want to know You.' Psalm 42:1 cries out to God 'as a deer

pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for You.' More than anything this morning, I want to preach, not to the church, but to preach to you. Now, I know that you make up the church, but the reason I want to preach to you, and me, is because if I say I preach to us all, we have a tendency to be able to hide behind someone. I believe with all my heart that God has a word for *you*. You may be here this morning and you're not where you need to be with God. Your desire for the Lord hasn't been I pant for You, God. You may even have come in this morning already thinking about what you have to do tomorrow and the next day, and how you are going to get everything done. That's the busyness of life. What about 'I can't wait to be with You tonight, Lord?' 'I can't wait to be with You in the morning, Lord. You go with me to my job tomorrow, Lord.' 'I need You every breath and every step.' 'Lord, I need more of You in my life.'

In verse 10, Paul has known the Lord for twenty-five years or more, and he longs to know Him more. You don't get too old to know the Lord more. As you get older, you should want to know the Lord more. It should be the desire of our hearts. This word, know, doesn't mean just knowing facts about God. It does not mean knowing God in a casual way. There are some who are happy with just knowing God that way, but I don't believe that's biblical. Some of us want to put God on a shelf. God, you stay right here and if I need You, I will come to You. I've got all this going on in my life, but God You stay right there in case I need You. Then we want to go to Him when we need Him instead of realizing that we need Him every minute of the day, every second of the day. This is something in my own life that I struggle with, and I pray that God will let me see my need for Him all the time. We have a tendency to want to do that on our own, don't we? We do. We have a tendency to try to fix things. The truth of the matter is we can't fix anything. There may be some trying to fix their marriage. There may be some trying to fix themselves. They're struggling. Our last resort sometimes is going to God. Why? Because within us, we try to fix things. Maybe this morning God is saying you can't fix it without Me.

So how do we live out the main thing, and what are the main things in our lives? Thank you, Bro Ricky, for instilling that in my life. That's something we share at Waldo Baptist Church...the main thing is to keep the main

thing, the main thing. They asked me what I was preaching today, and I said the main thing. The main thing is to know Christ and the power of His resurrection, to participate in His sufferings, and becoming like Him in His death. We know Christ through His Word. God gave us His Word so that we could know Him better, so we could know Him more intimately, so we could know Him deeper.

You know, there are Christians I call snorkel Christians. Have you ever been snorkeling? I love snorkeling. I don't like scuba diving, but I like snorkeling. You just put it on and skim the surface. You're over the top of everything; you see just what's around you when you're snorkeling. There are snorkeling Christians; they only skim the surface. Then there are scuba diving Christians. My challenge to us, and I know that you get challenged with this day in and day out, weekly, is that you become scuba diving Christians; that you dive deep into the Word of God. Scuba diving Christians dive deep into the Word of God to see the beauty of God. You see, if you stay on the surface, you'll only see the things on the surface. What I've been told of those who scuba dive is they go down deep and they see things that they've never seen before. Can I challenge you this year to dive deep? I promise you that as you dive deep into God's Word, you'll see things you've never seen before. You'll see the beauty of Christ, the depths of Christ, the love of Christ, the wrath of Christ, the judgment of Christ; you'll see it all! This was Paul's desire, that I may know Him, not just skim Him, but to know Him. I could tell your love and devotion for God by how much time you spend in His Word. Do you know that the word of God is His love letter to us? It's His love letter to us! I'm sure Ron got a love letter in middle school, but he wasn't going to open it in front of anyone because it wouldn't be cool. He couldn't wait to get to the bathroom to open it up to see what she had to say. When he got there, he opened it real quick...check yes or no. You see, this is God's love letter to us and we shouldn't be able to wait to get home to get into it, or at night to dive into it to see the depths and beauty of Christ.

Then, one of the main things is that we communicate with God through prayer. Sometimes in my own life, this is one of the areas that I struggle so much in. My prayer life could be so much stronger. I'm so weak in this.

I covet your prayers that God would give me a deeper prayer life in 2020. Prayer is the engine through the means of God working in your life and in the life of His church. Somebody asked Charles Spurgeon once what the success of his church was, and he took them down into the basement where there would be men praying an hour before church and an hour after church who were praying for the power of God. The altar of every church, every Sunday, should be full of men and women praying. The altar of every church all over the world should be full of men and women praying for the power of God to move in their lives and the life of the church. We have folks right now that are battling addiction. We have folks right now that have someone in their lives they love dearly who are battling with an addiction, someone you care about so much, someone you love. You have someone right now that is battling depression, battling anxiety, struggling with marital issues, or children who aren't in a good place. Right now, it's got you torn and hurt. I believe in the power of prayer, and God is calling you to a deeper faith. God is calling you to a more powerful prayer life because we believe in God. We believe in His power. We believe that He can restore. We believe that He can heal. You may even have someone you know who is battling cancer, or ALS. Sometimes we resolve to say that's just the way it is. I believe in the power of prayer. I have a good friend who is dying of cancer right now. I graduated with her from Tilghman. I saw her last week. She's about eighty pounds. I held her hand, we cried together, we prayed together, and I won't stop praying for complete healing of her life. I believe with all my heart that God could still heal her. I know she's a believer in Christ and I know that He will heal her one way or the other, but as long as she has breath here, I'm praying for healing. I know that it would be far better for her to be with Christ.

Things we need to focus on this coming year and in our own life is a deeper faith. Hebrews 11:6, "But without faith, it is impossible to please God. For he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

We need to focus on more intimate prayer. Philippians 4:6 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with

thanksgiving present your request to God.” Andrew Murray said the place of private prayer should be the most precious place to us in all of life. I'm not talking about a fast food prayer life, praying to God as you are going through. I'm talking about setting time aside to pray privately alone with God. There are a lot of churches today all across the world that don't have the power of God because they don't have the power of prayer in their life. So, we need to pray for a more intimate prayer life, and a more consistent Bible study. Psalm 1, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord and on His law he meditates day and night.” This changes everything! This is radical living.

Another thing we need to focus on is obedience. Deuteronomy 13:4 says, “You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him and keep His commandments and obey His voice. You shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.” Faith is simply saying I believe You, God. Faith is saying I'm a simple person. I'm no theologian. I'm a guy who came to Christ, I'm from Paducah, I went to Tilghman, but the things I've learned in the ten years that God brought me here and took me back was that the main thing was to keep the main thing, the main thing, and to walk humbly before God, to follow Him, to have faith, and have a prayer life. Prayer is simply saying, God, I want to talk to You. Faith is simply believing God for what He can do in your life. Faith is saying, God, I believe You. I believe You can heal my loved one. I believe You can fix my marriage. I believe it. I believe You can restore the broken relationships in my life. I believe You can take away this depression. I believe You can take away this addiction.

Abraham believed God, didn't he? It was accredited to him as righteousness. Noah believed God when there was no rain. He still built the ark. Noah believed God even when everyone didn't. Even when it hadn't rained, he still built the boat. Have you ever thought about the ridicule he must have gone through as he was building it? In Luke 8, Jairus, a grown man, fell at Jesus' feet and begged for his daughter. I was going over that last night, a grown man falling at another man's feet. How humble and broken he must have been. Pride gets in the way many times of us falling before God. Jairus said my daughter is sick. Jesus said let's go to her. She



was about twelve years old. As they were going, there was this woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. She was just trying to get up there to touch the hem of His garment. She believed if she could just touch Him, she would be healed. She touched Him, and she was healed. Then about that time, they got bad news. Jairus' daughter had died. He didn't stop, turn around, and say ok, let's go back. He said let's continue on, she's not dead; she's only sleeping. They get there and He heals her. You see, I believe that my God can raise the dead. He can fix any situation or problem we have.

In Colossians 2:6, we have all of these four: faith, prayer, Bible study, obedience. Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him; that's our faith. Rooted and built up in Him; that's our prayer life. Strengthened in the faith as you were taught, that's our Bible study. Overflowing with thankfulness, that's your obedience. As I was thinking about this, a thought came to my mind. A growing church is built by growing people who are growing in Christ. I'm not talking about shallow growth; I'm talking about deep rooted growth, not growth of numbers, but growth of discipleship.

In closing, the main thing is to know Christ and the power of His resurrection, and to make Him known. How can we make Him known if we keep living in the past? Look what it says in Philippians. "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet have taken hold of it, but one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining forward to what is ahead. I press on toward the goal to win the prize." How can we make Him known if we keep living in the past? Some of you are having a hard time forgiving yourself. God has already forgiven you, but you haven't forgiven yourself. Do you know what you're saying? You're saying your forgiveness is greater than God's. You will never be where God wants you to be until you forgive yourself. You let that past go. Move forward into what God has for your life. You've given God every room in your home but one, and no one is to enter into that. I will say to you that God wants it all! You'll never be where God wants you to be until you give Him all of your life, all of your hurts, all of your struggles. You can never be who God intends you to be if you continue living in the past. Do you know why? You're always looking back.

You're like Allie who was looking back and she ran into the pole. But if you're looking ahead and straining toward Christ, you experience His love and forgiveness. You can't move forward because you can't forgive someone else, or even, forgive yourself. I don't know who God is speaking to this morning, but I believe with all my heart that God's Word will not return void, and I believe He speaks loud and clear. I don't know who it is for; I'm just up here heralding what God has called me to do. Some of you have someone who is sick, I'm going to encourage you to come to this altar and pray for them. You have someone in your family that you love dearly who is lost. They don't know Christ, and they're in a bad place. I want to encourage you to come and pray for them. You may say I've never done that! So? I can't think of a greater time than now, because you care for them and you believe God can change them and their direction. Come to this altar and say, God, I give them to you. You may know someone who is going through deep depression. You need to pray for them. God is putting them on your heart, and it may be out of your comfort zone, but do you believe in the power of prayer? You could do it right where you're at, but there's something about getting out of your seat, going, and giving it to God. Give it to the Lord and believe that He can.