

Don't Live for Lesser Things

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the beauty found in risking one's life to share the good news, highlighting the call to embrace suffering and persecution for the sake of Christ. It challenges listeners to prioritize eternal matters over superficial distractions, urging them to be willing to die well and live a life of sacrificial, risk-taking love for others.

Scripture: Romans 10:15, Romans 8:17, Luke 21:16, Romans 8:35, Romans 8:37

Topics: "Sacrificial Love", "Embracing Suffering for Christ"

Description

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Transcript

My guess is that in this room, being the average human beings that you are at your age, most of you are not entirely happy with your looks. Guys know they could be more handsome and stronger or taller, and the women wish your hair were different or wish your hips were different. Everybody is dissatisfied, right? With the way, except for a few.

And that's okay, I think. We're just plain, right? Just ordinary, plain human beings, and that's good. I wouldn't want you to be distracted with too much thinking about your own looks.

But I can give you an infallible path to great beauty with biblical authority. How beautiful are the feet of those who risk their lives to tell the good news to others. You want to be a beautiful person, and if your feet are beautiful, goodness gracious, I mean, feet are ugly.

They're gross, they smell, you have to wash them, and slaves do that, right? So feet are beautiful. He means, I love looking at you. I love looking at you.

You're my child and you're beautiful to me. And we ought to see each other that way. And the reason I say risk your lives, I know I'm inserting that into the text in Romans 10.

The reason I say risk your lives is because Romans is crystal clear. Chapter eight, verse 17, if we suffer with him, we will be glorified with him. If we suffer with him, we will be glorified with him.

And that suffering refers both to the normal sorrows of life and it refers to persecution as well. Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword. As it is written, we are being killed all day long.

That's Romans 8, 36. Most of the unreached peoples that are remaining are in places that don't want you to come and will make it hard for you if you go there. Christ will build his church.

Nothing will stop him. And he promised, Luke 21, you will be delivered up by parents and brothers and relatives and friends. And some of you they will put to death.

You will be hated by all for my name's sake. Not a hair of your head will perish. They will put you to death.

Don't worry, not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance, you will gain your lives. This mission will not be finished without martyrs.

So at the end of Romans, Paul celebrates first in chapter 16 as he closes, he celebrates first Prisca and Aquila, the couple. What does he celebrate about them? Chapter 16, verse three. Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ, who risked their necks for my life.

He thinks that's wonderful. He's thankful for it. And so it will be until the mission is finished.

So let me close with this illustration. My guess is most of you have never heard of John and Betty Stamm. They graduated from Moody Bible Institute and went to China as missionaries when they were 25.

China Inland Mission. It was September 1932 and they ministered for two years till December 1934. On Thursday, December 6, 1934, the communists swept in to their village and took them captive.

They were 25, remember. The Reds announced in the streets that these foreigners would be executed. The reason, quote, the foreigners have ruined China.

Christians have always been slandered. You would hope that you would be a martyr and they would say the real reason why you died instead of shaming you with a lie. But that's what they said.

So they stripped them of their outer clothing to make the shame even worse. They led them to Eagle Hill. They had a baby.

A baby. The baby was left behind in the village. They didn't even know what would happen to this baby.

And they went out of the city. A young soldier lifted the sword while John knelt in front of his wife and they took off his head in front of her. She didn't scream.

She trembled. She fell on his body and the same sword dispatched her to King Jesus. There is no way forward in this mission without at least a willingness for that to happen to you.

If you say to Jesus anything but that, you're not a faithful disciple. We didn't urge you to come to this conference to make life easy for you. We urge you to come to make your life count, not to make it easy.

So don't waste your life on superficial things. Grow deep. Get ready to die well.

Give your life unreservedly to what matters. Take hold of life which is life indeed. Turn off the television.

Shut down the empty computer games. Go deep with God. Be much alone with God.

The world needs godly people, not superficial, worldly people who happen to be culturally hip and cool. It doesn't save anybody. You need to be weird, out of step, and full of sacrificial, risk-taking love for people.

So every day, preach to yourself this Romans text. In fact, I would just plead with you to memorize all of Romans 8. But here's the end of it. If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things? Who should bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus who died, who was raised, yes, who is alive at God's right hand, and indeed intercedes for us. Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, as it is written, we are being killed all day long. We are counted as sheep to be slaughtered.

No, in all these things, mark that phrase, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. That's your message for the nations.

That's your hope in suffering. And there is no greater message, and there is no greater hope.

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