

This morning, I want to invite you to open in your copy of God's word to Philippians. Philippians chapter four. That's where we're going to be in verses two through nine today. But I want to start off by sharing the moment that I was Chris. He serves as one of our missionaries in a country in North Africa. And Noah Greene and I had the chance to go there and to be there. And we're actually sending a team, there's a team of four that are going from First Baptist in April. And so we are so excited and we'll be sharing more about that mission trip and that partnership. But as we're sitting there together, and Chris lost one of his eyes because he was doing ministry in South Africa, in a shanty, in a time that was a lot more dangerous.

And a young teenager shot him in the face as part of an initiatory act to be part of a gang. And so this is a man that knows what it is to have suffered much for the sake of the gospel. This is a man who's committed to the task. And as we're sitting there and we're in this place where he's been laboring and living for 17, 18, almost 19 years doing this work of bringing the gospel and helping establish a church where there was almost no known believers. What he emphasized to me as he looked at me, with that one glass eye and one eye, you know, staring right at me and really piercing my soul, was we have to keep the main thing, the main thing. We have to keep the main thing, the main thing. And this is a man who's a water engineer. What he does is he helps in these really rural contexts of being able to get clean water into villages that have no clean water. You're going to see some footage in the weeks ahead of moments where they're getting water for the very first time into their village and just the absolute joy that they have. And this is clean, you know, drinking water that's being pumped out of the ground and developing these systems. He's working with some of the villages to be able to do sanitation—where, you know, they're not contaminating their water, but are having safe ways to get rid of waste. And those sort of things. It's just an incredible thing. And you would think like, "that's the main thing." Clean water. I mean, we know that how just important that is and sanitation getting, you know, human waste away from drinking water and other things that can result in e. coli and other sicknesses.

That's the main thing. But they know, just like JB and Liz shared a moment ago, that the main thing has to remain the main thing or we will lose the mission. We'll completely lose focus. But here's where this hits us, okay? You and I are on the same mission. Our mission isn't different than their mission. The main thing there is the main thing here. And that's hard because we have allowed ourselves, as we've gone on in our Christian faith, to allow other really good things—really good things—to become the main thing. We have allowed First Baptist New Orleans, churches of New Orleans, churches of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, the Southern Baptist Convention, churches, if we cross over, that are still evangelical, that they're still professing Christ. So many of us here in the West have allowed other good things to replace the main thing.

And you say, "Chad, what is the main thing?" The main thing is what? Christ. Jesus spoke to his disciples after his resurrection at the end of the gospel of Matthew. In Matthew chapter 28:18-20, where he says, "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe everything that I've commanded to you. For surely I'm with you always, until the very end of the age." That's what we call the great commission. But it is the mission, it is the main thing. The main thing for us is to make disciples of all nations. That's what the missionary task is, is to make disciples of all nations. And don't miss this—Reclaimed, the main thing is to make disciples of all nations. Every one of these ministries, every believer devoted to one task.

And that's what Paul is calling us to today in a passage where he gets a little personal. Where he kind of starts to call out some names. And it may even make you a little, you know, uncomfortable. You know, especially if I were to do it today, start calling out names, especially people that maybe seem to be on two different pages. And what I hope you'll see today is that what he's doing in an overall way is

encouraging them together, as the church at Philippi, and so therefore, encouraging all churches everywhere, "keep the main thing the main thing." So I want to invite you to stand for the reading of God's word, as we hear God speak to us. We believe that God speaks through His word. And so we give him our full attention in this moment as God speaks to us, beginning in Philippians 4:2,

"I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I also ask you, true partner, to help these women who have contended for the gospel at my side, along with Clement and the rest of my coworkers whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things. Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you."

Father, I pray that today through the reading and the preaching of your word, that we would experience that rekindled focus on keeping the main thing, the main thing, and being reminded in your word today of just what joy there is when we do. It's in Jesus saying that we pray. Amen. You can be seated.

What we're going to do today is to walk through this passage, just looking at each verse and how it's encouraging us. What Paul is doing is encouraging us to keep the main thing, the main thing. Well, first of all, you should say, "well, Chad, where'd you get that? Where'd you get the idea that the point of this passage is to keep the main thing, the main thing?" Well, it's in verse two. And it's important for us to know as much as we can about the context, because again, 2000 years has passed, and so we've lost some context.

We don't know exactly what's going on in this space, but we can deduce, we can arrive at an understanding from this passage, that it has to do with keeping the main thing, the main thing. Paul says, "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I also ask you, true partner, to help these women who have contended for the gospel at my side, along with Clement and the rest of my coworkers whose names are in the book of life." What seems to be at odds here is not just a personal dispute. It'd be kind of like if I came in today, and I'm just going to pick on two guys that I know get along and teach their class really well—Barry and Don—you know, that's two of our teachers here. If I got up here today, I said, you know, "I just want to encourage Barry and Don to get along." Barry and Don probably won't go to church here anymore because of being called out in that public fashion.

But it is important for us to know that this letter, when it would've arrived at the Church of Philippi, it was read publicly. So everybody heard these two names in this way, but it seems that as Paul speaks of these two women, he speaks in very commending terms. In fact, what we see in other passages that helps us know that he's not just getting onto them in a publicly shaming kind of way, is the fact that when he would've certainly had the chance to call out somebody by name over in 1st Corinthians—a man who was having an immoral relationship with his mother-in-law—certainly that would've been an occasion to call names and to say, "Mike, you need to either get right or leave," you know, like, if his name was Mike or something like that. But in the first century, it was actually more shaming to not say the name.

Everybody knew who it was. No need to even say their name. It's kind of like we do in our culture today that when there is a mass shooting, when there's someone that you know is like a sniper and they're shooting a bunch of people, we've actually learned in our own media that what we don't want to do is use their name. We just say "a shooter," now. I don't know if you've noticed that shift. Because sometimes when you begin to name the shooter and to give them that notoriety, it actually attracts

more people to do the same. Many times people living in obscurity than all of a sudden become a household name. And so to kind of distance from that, even our own media, we're learning, you don't need to give them the press that maybe they're after and maybe that'll help avoid future mass shootings.

And so in the first century, there's this work that's going on that's helping us to see that even within the early church, there was beginning to be a different focus. But what Paul brings them back to is the gospel. Notice how he does it. He says, "to help these women who have contended for the gospel at my side." We turn back over to Acts 16, and that's where we see the real birth of this church in Philippi. On this missionary journey of Paul. And going there, we meet this woman named Lydia, who's a dealer of Purple Cloth. She's a business woman, and she's one of the early converts there. And so we see that likely because Lydia had relationships with other ladies, that there's a strong presence of female leadership in this place, and that these women are living, godly lives, they're coming to faith in Jesus, and they're contending for the sake of the gospel along with Paul in this place.

And so he commends them. That's a good thing for us to understand is that Paul wasn't oppressing women. Paul wasn't about, you know, saying they have no value in the church. Because there are some passages that some people will go to and say, you know, "Paul said he doesn't permit a woman to have authority to even speak in church. I mean, like, what's going on here? It seems like he's shutting women down and sees them having zero value in the body," but we have to look at all of the council of the word of God. And here he's calling them by name. He's elevating them, by naming them, not putting them down, not shaming them, but then encouraging that both of these women are doing good things. "And the best thing that they've done is they've contended at my side for the gospel." In a way, he's saying, "whatever it is that's taking them in diverging paths, let them come back together."

You see, Paul was one who had tasted of a disagreement that led him to part ways. There was a disciple—John Mark—that was with Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey. But when things started to get a little tough, he ducked out. He went ahead and headed back home. And then on the second missionary journey, Barnabas is wanting to bring along this guy and Paul says, "no, he abandoned our company in our darkest moments. I don't want him." And it says they had such a sharp disagreement that they went separate ways, and Paul took along Silas, and then Barnabas took along John Mark. But we see reconciliation later in their lives. But it's almost as though Paul is saying, "it wasn't worth it." That sharp disagreement, that parting of ways, was not something that really needed to take place.

And, so, learning from his own life experience, in a way he's encouraging these two people to come back together for the sake of the gospel. Make the main thing the main thing. He's elevating it. He's elevating these ladies in the life of the church is exemplars. He's putting them forward in a way that really commends them. But he says, "what is commendable is when we are on the same page about the gospel." You see, when we keep the main thing, the main thing, it keeps us united. That's the first point as we walk through today. It keeps us united. When we make the main thing, the main thing, it keeps us united. These two exemplary women in the life of the church in Philippi remain united now, hopefully, as a result of this letter of coming back to contending for the gospel.

Now, is that to say that other matters are not important? No, but we do have to determine a priority. What is of ultimate importance? What is it that unifies us above everything else? And brothers and sisters, it has got to be the mission of making disciples of all nations. We have to be a church united in that, that that is the ultimate goal for all of us. Because if we make other goals, other good things, the ultimate importance, then we'll miss it. And we won't be united. And we'll will do a lot of good things, but we won't really have the unity that we see called for in scripture.

But as we keep going, Paul then almost starts to give an apologetic. A defense for why if you keep the main thing, the main thing, this is what is going to result. He doesn't put in those terms, but if you begin to unpack it that way, as he's calling these women to have the same urgency along with Clement and the others whose names are written in the book of life. I mean, he's talking about how important this is that we contend together because one day there's going to come a day when the end will come, and those whose names are written in the book of life will spend an eternity with God. So eternity is at stake. He says that when you make the main thing, the main thing, then you can rejoice in the Lord. Verse four, "always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" Now each of these are imperatives. He's calling them to rejoice. But hear me, when you and I hear about what God is doing among the nations, when we hear stories like we've heard recently. I love this story of Elaine Colligan. I'm going to share this story with Rivarde of a recent moment where she sensed that maybe God was leading her in a new direction.

And then Mark Hagelman was just sharing about us going into juvenile detention centers over in Jefferson Parish. And going in that, on that night when there were no ladies for her to be able to work with, and her feeling that maybe God was now saying, "you don't need to be here anymore," she then went over into the guy's side. Now, certainly, a lady might feel intimidated to go into an all-guys unit to be with the young men, but her experience was life changing. As she went in there, she said the young men were so respectful. They were so hungry. They were excited that we were there. They were attentive and interactive, and just all of this stuff. And the young man that she was spending the most time with—I mean, don't miss this, just the beauty of these moments—had a tattoo of his mom's name, and his mom's name was Eileen. And it was tattooed on his head. So the whole time that Eileen is sitting there, right there on the forehead of this young man is her name. I mean, it's as clear as a Macedonian call that Paul experiences where a man is saying, "come over and help us." And in that moment she realizes like, "maybe the Lord is leading me to work with the guys now and not just with the ladies." And that night, that young man prayed to receive Christ. Gave us life to the Lord. Brothers and sisters, when we make the main thing, the main thing, it gives us great reason to rejoice as we then begin to see the movement of God's kingdom in places that most people will say God's not at work in those places. In fact, a lot of Americans will even reduce people that are incarcerated to almost a non-human status. Throwaways.

But the gospel says otherwise, the gospel says those boys and girls, those men and women who are incarcerated, are worthy of our greatest love. They're worthy of our greatest respect. They're worthy of our greatest effort to bring the gospel into those places. JB and Liz shared just a moment ago that one of the most encouraging things for them is to hear from us what God is doing in New Orleans because that encourages them in the hard days when they're in South Africa and in Lesotho. Brothers and sisters, if we don't make the main thing the main thing, then we'll have nothing to really share with them. We'll be able to share about the conflicts that we have with each other, the internal disputes and those things. But when we make the main thing, the main thing, and we see moments like that where the gospel is on the move and how God is working, it greatly encourages them. And then they, in turn, are able to greatly encourage us. And just see that beautiful cycle of encouragement and how the source of rejoicing is always the Lord and what he is doing. So when we keep the main thing, the main thing, it keeps us united. It keeps us, secondly.

And then third, it keeps us humble. In verse five, he says, "let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near." "Let your graciousness be known to everyone." What this idea is here with graciousness is not demanding obedience to the letter of the law. Let me give you an example of this, that I saw going out in New Orleans doing door-to-door evangelism with a man named Preston Nicks. Dr. Nicks is a professor over at the seminary, an incredible evangelist, one who loves to bring the gospel to our city. And as we were going and doing door-to-door evangelism, we had the chance to visit with a young man who was sitting out on the porch. And that man prayed to receive Christ—right in that

moment. God had been at work in his life, and so rather than just leading him through a prayer that he just repeated after Preston, instead he just began to pray. But in his prayer he said a cuss word. And immediately he was like, "oh, I'm, I'm sorry about that." And Preston said, "brother, you're being as honest with God as I think you've probably ever been. Keep going." Now Preston, in that moment, could have said, "oh, whoa, whoa, son, nuhuh, you're a believer now, you can't use those kinds of words" and shut him down right there in that moment. But don't miss it. The Spirit was already at work convicting him that, "Ooh, I just said a word I really don't need to be using."

But Preston, rather than exacting exactly what he could and say, "Nuhuh, and take your hat off right now too, because you're not supposed to cover your head when you pray," and just piling on all of these letter-of-the-law rules on this young man who had just prayed to receive Christ. He let his graciousness be known, "brother, it's okay. Don't you worry about that. You just keep speaking honestly with the Lord." Brothers and sisters, we have to have that culture here. Where as people are coming to the Lord, and they are brand new in the faith, we're not exacting all of these rules on top of them and making them feel like, "gee whiz man, I'm way behind here. Maybe I need to go somewhere else. Or maybe I'm not cut out for this." You know, "I don't have 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 years of training in all of this stuff, you know, of, like, the Bible and how you're supposed to live and all that kind of stuff." And then they back away. Let our graciousness be known to all, so that as they are coming in, they experience the very same grace that we experienced when we began our journey with Christ.

Let your graciousness be known to all. May there be a humility that pervades us as we keep the main thing, the main thing. You keep going, in verse six, when we keep the main thing, the main thing, it keeps us praying and believing. He says, "don't worry about anything, but in everything through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." And he goes on, "and the peace of God that surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." There's a man named Bruce who had just been his four years of military service, had served during the Vietnam War. And he had come back. And he had a friend named Mike that, at that point in his life, Mike didn't have a whole lot going on in life. And he said, "man, what I would love to do, having come back from doing this tour in Vietnam, is I just want to go to Europe and just spend some time just, like, just seeing the sights, you know, just kind of recovering from this experience."

So Mike said, "alright, man, I'll go with you." But Bruce was a believer. Bruce was a man who had given his life to Christ and he was keeping the main thing, the main thing. Bruce was always trying to lead his friends, his fellow soldiers, to Christ. And so the same was the case with Mike. When they first met up to go on this trip, he said, "Hey man, I want to give you something, and I just want you to read it, and then while we're traveling, I just want to talk about it." And it was a copy of the New Testament. And so Mike said, "I'd never read any of the Bible before. I'd gone to church, you know, I tried to be basically a good person, but I'd never read the Bible." And so Mike began to read the gospel of John, and God just began to open his eyes and to present these new questions that he started asking Bruce.

But he said one of the turning moments in this trip was we got somewhere super late at night. It was after midnight, and the place where you, you're supposed to go to find out where we could stay had already closed. And so we got there, and he said, "my temperament was to panic." He was like, "just to freak out." "Like we're in this major city, you know, it's in the middle of the night. We don't have anywhere to go. We were just flying by the seat of our pants. We weren't making reservations and all this kind of things. The internet wasn't invented, you know, all that kind of stuff." And he said, "and I watched as Bruce, in that moment, immediately began to do what his faith called him to do and to pray. But not prayers of desperation, just prayers of confidence in the Lord. 'God, you know our timetable. You know where we are. And God, we just pray that wherever you want us tonight, that you will make that clear.'"

And he said that in that moment the lady who had been working the desk apparently had forgotten something, and had come back—in that moment. Like in the moment that Bruce says "amen"—she walks back in and says, "can I help you guys?" "Yes." And she says, "well, actually, there is one room available, and it's just one block away. I'll go ahead and make the arrangement." And he said, "and, in that moment, I saw him not panicking, not worrying, but calling on the Lord in prayer." Now, you don't know the guy named Mike. His last name is Minter, and he went on to get married and have a kid—Kelly Mintor. And I think some of you ladies heard her this weekend. Don't miss the impact of you and I just exercising faith in simple and small ways—showing up in a city in the middle of the night and trusting the Lord—and the ripple effect that that one act of obedience had. Because God used that moment out of all the moments in Bruce's life. This guy who had served in the military, who was not a vocational minister, but was a committed disciple of Jesus Christ, who was keeping the main thing, the main thing.

Don't miss it. It wasn't some evangelist that led Mike to Christ—who went on to become a pastor. Whose pastored for 50 years in the same church that he started. Whose daughter is now a primary Bible teacher for women's Bible studies in the Southern Baptist Convention. Don't miss it—it was Bruce, in his small act of faith and obedience, of clinging to this word and doing it. Not worrying about anything, but in everything through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, presenting your request to God. And God using that moment for His glory to usher in peace into Mike's life. And then peace into so many of your lives. I've talked to several women this morning who were so blessed by this weekend, the relationships with one another that the speakers that they heard—Kelly Mintor, and Stephanie Lyon, and Tara Dew—just being blessed with this time together. The breakout sessions—all of those things—in part, extend back to that moment in Paris where Bruce prayed and gave everything to the Lord.

Don't miss those moments. You don't know the story that God's going to write with just those simple acts of faith. When we keep the main thing, the main thing it keeps us united, it keeps us rejoicing, it keeps us humble, it keeps us praying and believing. But then notice, fifthly, it keeps us at peace. You see, I was tearing up on the front row as we were singing the song, "The Goodness of God," because—I'm about to tear up again just thinking about it—The team leader that JB and Liz work with, Jim and Teresa Flora. Jim was diagnosed with cancer and he quickly perished from cancer. And at the funeral, his wife, Teresa, who in Lesotho we called "Mother Teresa," she really was that kind of woman. She was a nurse, and she used that platform to just be this incredible agent of the gospel throughout the country. She sat on the front row of her own husband's funeral. A man of God who had pastored churches, who had led in missions, was mobilizing the nations. They were the poster child for WMU and for missions, you know, all of these things. She sat on the front row of her own husband's funeral, praising the Lord. Praising Him for the goodness, the goodness that He shows. Not cursing his name, not saying, "how could you take from me my husband, when we still had so many more years together." No, she was singing about the goodness of God.

And you look at a moment like that, and you see those hands lifted. And I told them it reminded me of the funeral that you graciously hosted for the death of a one-year-old. For one of our faith families at St. Rose Community Church, here in town. The parents of the one-year-old lifting their hands and praising the Lord, proclaiming that the Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord. How? How does a wife mourn the loss of a husband? How do parents mourn the loss of a one-year-old son that they were told they would never be able to have? "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Brothers and sisters, when we make the main thing, the main thing in both of those instances, those were families that were committed to the main thing. It is amazing how God is so present in those moments. Notice this isn't a thing that we do. This is something that God does for us. This whole verse. "And the peace of God." It's his peace. His peace will guard. He will guard, with his peace, your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. God's saying, "I've got you through every season, through every hardship, through every trial. I am with you until the

end of the age." But then sixth, verse eight, when we keep the main thing, the main thing, it keeps us looking for God. You see, one of the things that I love to be influenced by are missionaries. And reading their biographies. And I want you to turn your attention to the screen to watch a story of maybe a missionary that's lesser known, but no less significant in the work of God.

Click here to watch the video about missionary George Liele:  
<https://vimeo.com/781946403/3eb773586a>

That's the impact when you allow these stories, men like George Liele, to influence your life. It encourages you to keep going. That's the importance of reading Good books. Go to [lifeway.com](http://lifeway.com) and look around at Christian biographies and begin to read them. Read them to your children if you have children at home. And allow their stories—I'm so thankful for the legacy of the Women's Mission Union, WMU. I know that in many circles they've fallen out of favor, but can I tell you: that's what they've helped keep alive through the years. And it's because of the faithfulness of women like Joyce Harrington. And women like Janice Hunter. Women who were faithful members of this church that kept WMU alive, and missions in front of our children and our teenagers and our adults. That we have continued to have that sort of a focus on missional living.

And listen, the ones who are living the mission are the ones that are doing regular jobs in our city. People like Hannah Pounds, whose grandmother was such a key leader in that, is now a physician in our city. But doing it for the glory of God. Don't miss it. Don't miss the impact of missionary stories like these. You see, the way Paul says it is this, "finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things." You and I, we make choices about what we do with our time and whether we're going to allow what comes in through medium sources, like, you know, Netflix, or Disney+, or Prime, or whatever, you know, that source is to have an influence, or we make a decision to allow other influences like good books, like God's Word to come into our life and begin to influence us.

Please hear me. I know that we're going to continue to watch a movie and do things like that, but you and I have got to be more mindful and intentional and allowing these sorts of influences to come into our life. And the biographies like George Liele have that sort of influence, and keep us looking for God. They keep us looking for God. But then, finally, what we see in this passage is this. When we keep the main thing, the main thing, it keeps us in the word and doing the word. Here's how he says it in verse nine. "Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you."

Paul was so clear about the importance of doing the things that they had seen, doing the things that they had learned from him, knowing that the peace of God would be with them. But you say, "well Chad, we don't have that same experience. We don't get to be with Paul. We don't get to watch his life." Brothers and sisters, when we open God's word, we get to experience so much more than even many of the churches were able to experience. Because in one opening, we're able to open and read not just one letter that he wrote to one church, but to read all the letters that he wrote to all the churches. We're able at the same point, to then flip over to the Book of Acts and to see his way of life unfold from the moment on the Damascus road all the way to the end of his life. We're able to look and experience that influence when we open the word and invite God's word into our life. Because we're not just allowing Paul to influence us, we're allowing God to influence us.

But you know, it's interesting, he uses similar language when he talks to the church in Corinth and communicates to them that which was of first importance. And over in 1st Corinthians 15, he reminds them of what was of first importance. He says, "now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preached to you, which you received, on which you have taken your stand and by which you

are being saved, if you hold to the message I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Then he appeared to over five hundred brothers and sisters at one time; most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, he also appeared to me."

Now what's Paul making clear? He's making clear the gospel. And earlier in 1st Corinthians, he makes clear the gospel by returning them to the very thing that God has again and again used to recenter his people on what is the main thing. And the main thing in us making disciples of all nations is never losing the gospel. We have to hold on to, cling to the gospel, and we have to extend the gospel with an open hand to all who would believe. "Well, how do we see that clearly?" Well, Jesus makes it clear we see the gospel clearly in baptism. Jesus makes it so clear that he says that when you make disciples, you are to baptize them in the name of the Father of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Because baptism proclaims that I was dead in my sins and trespasses, but I've been buried with Christ, with His death, and I, therefore, have been raised with Him. Just like Jesus was raised to new life, life on the other side of death, so I have been raised with him to, in this moment, experience life. But even though I die, I will be raised with Him because he himself has been raised. So baptism proclaims the Lord's death. Baptism proclaims the Lord's resurrection. Baptism proclaims the gospel. And so that's why we continue to do it. And that's why we're so committed as Baptist to baptism by immersion because it's just this beautiful portrait of "buried and resurrected." It's so powerful. But there's another aspect of what we've been given by Christ that we were never to lose.

And Paul reiterates it here. He says, "for I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread." And then he says, "the Lord took the cup." And so you and I today, we take the bread and we take the cup. When you came in, you should have received this small packet. If you didn't, if you'll just lift your hand, our deacons right now are going to come to you and bring you one of these. Now, if you're here today and you have never committed your life to Christ, I'm just going to ask for you to just sit and to watch and to consider what these things mean. Think about what these elements represent. Because what we're not saying is that by drinking this small amount of juice and eating this little wafer, we're being saved.

That's not what we are saying in this room. Instead, what we are doing this moment is something very important. We are reminding ourselves of the essential message of the gospel. Because this is what Paul says—and I want to invite you to open the section with the bread and to take that small piece of bread and to have that in your hand because Paul said—that "I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it, and said, 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'" And so when we take this bread, we're remembering that His physical body was given so that we could be saved from sin and be given life eternal. So take in remembrance of what he has done for us.

And then if you'll open the juice portion. Paul goes on to say that, "in the same way also he took the cup, after supper, and said, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'" And what he's proclaiming is that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins. But Jesus's blood was shed for our sins. And so we are forgiven, and we have entered into a new promise, a new covenant with God by what Jesus did for us. So we do this in remembrance of him. So take in remembrance of Christ.

And then Paul concludes, "for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." We're those that remember. We're those that point back to what happened 2000 years ago. But were only doing it until he comes. We are a people who are living for his coming.



And there is no more powerful way to live a life ready for His coming than to make the main thing the main thing.

Father, I pray and through the preaching of your word, that the hearts of your children would've been encouraged. Would've been enliven to the importance of living a life where the main thing remains the main thing. Lord, please, through this act of obedience, of taking this bread and taking this cup and remembrance of Christ, I pray that our hearts will be reminded of the power and goodness and grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ and how that gospel is intended, not just for us, but for every person who would believe. And so Lord, make us faithful, pleased to go into New Orleans and all nations with the gospel. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.