

Whose Hands Have You Placed Your Life In?

By Bryan Loritts

Ron Hafer:

Well let's thank Todd Proctor and the band for worship. Thank you. So excellent. A Biola guy who during his time here was drilling and in his life, in his gifts, in his openness to the Lord, then he had a chance to connect with another Biola Talbot guy and they traveled the states, probably the world. In those days Todd led worship but he did a lot of songwriting and he had a heart for teaching, Lord brought him back to the LA area where he's been over at Rock Harbor for a number of years, not simply leading worship, but doing a ton of teaching and God has just continued to stretch him and use his gifts and we are so thankful to the Lord for bringing him back for this day, married and has 3 sons, his 3 sons, and the next hour I've called it Todd Proctor and worship and the word, where you'll doing a great deal of what he led us in this morning.

Well I had already shipped Bryan out and told you he was gone. But I lied, he's back, and thank God he is. Bryan Loritts has just opened the word of God, carved into our hearts and challenged us to be real men and women of integrity, to have the courage to change and to actually give our life to the Lord. I know that there have been significant decisions made already the week. Not just because of the response to me, but because of email and call, and what I've seen taking place. This is the last day of Torrey, but it is not the end of the movie, of the end of God. It is a beginning and for what God has done we praise Him through His servant, this sweet spirited guy, Bryan Loritts. Let's welcome him for this the final--

[Audio cuts]

Bryan Loritts:

If you have your Bibles, if you could meet me in Philippians chapter 1. Philippians chapter 1. As you're turning there, I just wanted to let you know once again how thankful and how grateful I am for the invitation of being here with you, Ron thank you so much for inviting me here this year. I have had just an incredible time with you all, again thank you so much again for your words of encouragement, for your words of affirmation, and for your prayers for me and my family as well. Philippians chapter 1, we are actually going to look at 2 passages this morning, but we are going to begin in verse 12 of Philippians chapter 1. If we could stand once again for the reading of God's word. Paul says these words, Philippians 1:12, "Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that i am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of my brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will, the latter do so in love," verse 16, "Knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false mortices or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice."

And if you could go two doors to your right to Philippians chapter 3, Philippians chapter 3, beginning in verse 17. "Join with others in following my example brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For as I have often told you before and now say again, even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction. Their God is their stomach. And their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on

earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. We eagerly await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body, Therefore," verse 1 of chapter 4, "My brothers you whom I long and you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord dear friends." You may be seated.

Now Father we enter once again into your presence and we do thank you for your servant Todd and the band. As they have led us in praise and worship. We have spoken to you Father that you alone are good and you're a father, and you're savior, and you're God. We have cried out that we are hungry for you and that we long for more and more of you. And now Father as you have heard from us, now we long to hear from you. We dare not leave your presence without you an eternal timeless God speaking to us. God we have not gathered here today merely to hear the words of men but we have gathered today to hear from the Creator of all mankind. Whose son Jesus Christ will at one day every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is king of kings and lord of lords. So Father as we have discussed the surrendered life, so now Lord God I would ask that you would speak boldly and clearly to us. About what the type of life that is completely surrendered to you looks like. How that translates into our perspective. How that looks Lord God when we go through persecution. Unfold your word in your scripture to us as never before, And finally, lord God, I pray as I've often prayed before, stand in my body and think with my mind and speak with my tongue those things you'd have us know, say, and do. I'm utterly available to you right now. In Jesus' name, amen.

Several years ago there was a young hustling gambler from the south side of Chicago by the name of Willie Stokes Jr. who was brutally murdered. Prior to his death, hardly anyone in the metropolitan Chicago area had heard of this bold and brash gambler by the name of Willie Stokes Jr. But as preparations for his funeral commenced, his celebrity began to grow. It all began when word leaked out that the parents of Willie Stokes Jr. had decided to fashion his coffin in the likeness of a Cadillac Seville. They had taken this coffin turned custom caddy, and they had outfitted it with working taillights and headlights, they had put tires on there and rims. What are rims, now that's an African-American colloquialism for hubcaps. Watch Pimp My Ride, it'll show you, but they had put on there these tires and rims and windshield wipers. Later on the Chicago Tribune would put on the cover of this newspaper an embalmed William Stokes Jr. propped upright behind the steering wheel of his coffin turned custom caddy. In a hot pink suit and sunglasses, and 5 crisp 100 dollar bills firmly embedded between his left forefinger and thumb.

I remember the first time I heard about this story in Philip Yancey's latest book Rumors of Another World. I remember sitting there and shaking my head and laughing and soon the laughter subsided and I said how foolish of these people to bury their son in such an ostentatious way. But the more I pondered that story, the more I began to speculate that could it be that the parents of Willie Stokes Jr, were simply trying to bury their son in such a way that it was clearly communicated what he valued most while he lived in this life. Or to say it another way, could it be that the parents of Willie Stokes Jr simply wanted to use the funeral of their son as a vivid accurate illustration in which it was loudly communicated that this was what our son valued most while in this life. So that all who came to his funeral would know that this was a man who valued

the material and the temporal pleasures and possessions of this life. Seen in that way it caused me to beg the question. If I were to die today and my wife Corey Ann Benevenitts-Loritts was given the solemn sacred task of burying me in such a way, that all who came to my funeral got the vivid clear accurate description that this was what Bryan Crawford Loritts valued most in this life while he lived, how then would my wife chose to bury me? Maybe my wife would chose to fashion my coffin in the lifeless of a stage, and would position closely to my mouth a microphone. After all it is how I make my living, I speak and I travel and I teach and I preach, so that if you came to my funeral you would probably leave saying here lies a man who valued most in his life the communication of God's truths. Or would my wife bury me in such a way that everyone got the clear accurate depiction that here lies a man who while he lived in this life sought to love the Lord his God with all of his heart and mind and soul and body and strength.

If you were to die today, and those who knew you the best were given the solemn sacred charge of burying you in such a way that what you valued most in this life while you lived was early communicated through your funeral, how would they bury you? No doubt the apostle Paul upon his death if friends like Timothy and Titus were given the same charge, no doubt if we attendee's that funeral we would leave there saying here lies a man who while he lived in this life was not caught up in the temporary pleasures of this world, but here lies a man who sought to love the Lord his God with all of his heart, mind, soul, body, and strength. Here was a man who lived the surrendered life, who lived with eternity constantly on the forefront of his mind. Part of the reason we know Paul lived this way is because Paul was passionate about getting others to live this way as well. To get people to live this life in light of eternity. We know this from our passage in Philippians chapter 3 beginning in verse 18, will you look at it with me? Paul says in

Philippians 3:18, writing to the Philippians, he says, "For as I have often told you before and now say again, even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. He says in verse 29, their destiny is destruction, their God is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthy things." Now scholars often debate this text, specifically verse 19, scholars are wondering who in the world is Paul talking about when he says that their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach and their glory is in their shame.

One set of scholars believe that who Paul is talking about are the Judaizers. The Judaizers were a group of people who sought to synthesize the major tenets of Judaism with Christianity, and specifically they taught that if a Gentile male wanted to be a true follower of Christ, he had to be circumcised. Another set of scholars say no who Paul's talking about are not the Judaizers, but instead who Paul has in mind are the Gnostics. Gnostics were a group of people who viewed life through two lenses, the material and the immaterial. To them the material was inherently evil. Th body was inherently evil. Because of that they denied the physical bodily resurrection of Christ. Conversely, they saw the immaterial as being inherently good. And because they saw the body as being inherently evil, there was a subject of Gnosticism that said because the body is evil and it is beyond redemption, eat as much as you like, drink as much alcohol as you like, engage in as much fornication as you like, in fact that's why some scholars say that Paul has this sect of Gnosticism in mind when he says that their god is their stomach.

Others say that no Paul isn't talking about the Judaizers or the Gnostics, he is merely talking about immature or carnal Christians, Christians who live in the flesh. To me it really doesn't matter who Paul is talking about. Because whoever Paul is talking about, they have this

one fundamental thing in common. Paul says their mind is on earthly things. Translation, this group of people whether Christians who are immature or Gnostics or Judaizers or whoever it may be, their problem is they live this life as if this life is all there really is. This is a group of people who do not live with eternity in mind. This is a group of people who get locked into this life as if this life is all there is. To change their perspective Paul says in verse 20, "But our citizenship," he says, "is in heaven." Underline that word citizenship it is one of the only times in all of scripture that this Greek word translated as citizenship is used. It's very interesting that Paul would choose to use this word when writing to the Philippians. For you need to understand, the city of Philippi was a strategic military and commercial center. The Romans understood that, and because of that they labeled the city of Philippi, they gave it the honorable distinction as being a Roman colony. And because it was a Roman colony, that meant that all of its inhabitants were Roman citizens. That is, they were not governed directly by natural or rather native law, but they were governed directly by the empire, the greatest empire there ever was, Rome. Think of the sense of pride and value and significance the Philippians must have had to be citizens of the greatest empire on earth.

And yet Paul says as great as Rome is, as great as Caesar is, there is a greater empire, there is a greater king, governed by the king of kings and lord of lords Jesus Christ. Our citizenship he says, is in heaven. That is where we draw our sense of value and significance. And self-worth is in God, in God alone. Friends if you get nothing else I say this morning, get this one fundamental principle. What Paul is trying to drive into the head and heart of the Philippians is this one fundamental thing. This world is not our home. This world, Paul says in so many words, it's not our home. This teaching of this world not being our final destination, it wasn't unique to Paul,

but this teaching is woven beautifully throughout the scriptures. In Matthew chapter 6 Jesus says to his disciples, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures here on earth, where moth and rust destroy, but rather lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." Why? Because Jesus wanted his followers to understand that this world is not our home. In Romans chapter 12 verse 2 Paul says, "And do not be conformed any longer to this world." One paraphrase says, "Do not allow this world to squeeze you into its mold." Why? Because this world is not our home. The writer of Hebrews would say it this way. It is appointed unto man when to die and then the judgement why? Because this world is not our home. Peter would say it this way, "We are merely strangers." One translation says it "aliens passing through." This world is not our home.

Last Christmas my wife and I, after Christmas we went to a do the Christmas conference that crusade put son in San Diego. And we went down there and it was my fourth consecutive year doing that conference. But I didn't realize it until the fourth year when I went with my wife that there was a mall not too far away from our hotel. Once we got there, my wife informed me of this fact, and that she would prefer to spend some quality time at this mall. So I went with my wife to this mall, and it was after Christmas, and there was a lot of great stores there, like Tiffany's and Neiman Marcus and Banana Republic, so on and so forth, and my wife wanted to go into Tiffany's and I said what are we doing here and she said, well, we've got an anniversary coming up, it's time to upgrade on the diamond. I said sweetheart that ring is like our marriage, till death do us part. So we're walking along that mall that day and we are looking at all this great stuff and we are seeing all these wonderful after Christmas sales, and if we lived in San Diego we would have bought a whole lot of stuff that day. But because of the fact that we were leaving from San Diego to go up to Minneapolis, from Minneapolis down to Atlanta, and from Atlanta

back home to Memphis, because San Diego was not our final destination, it radically impacted the choices we made while in that mall that day. Likewise, Paul says friends, when you and I really get into our spirits, that this world is not our home.

When we really allow that fundamental spiritual and biblical principle to sink in, that this world is not our home, Paul says it will radically impact the choices and decisions that we make while in this world. When we understand that we are merely strangers passing through, that should have a radical impact and motivate us to share that faith. When we fundamentally understand that principle, that should radically impact the financial decisions we make in this world. When we get that kind of perspective, it should impact every facet of our lives. Friends are you living that way today? Are you really living under the reality that our citizenship is not here, it's in heaven. Will you turn back to Philippians chapter 1, because this was not only a message the Paul preached, that our citizenship is in heaven, that this world is not our home, and that is to impact our behavior. But it's how Paul lived. Paul exemplifies in Philippians chapter 1 the life of a person who really gets that. That their citizenship is in heaven. You need to understand as Paul sits down and writes the Philippians, he's in jail. He's been incarcerated and not only has he been incarcerated but he has been assigned to be watched over by a special unit of the praetorian guard was a special unit that was sent by the emperor to watch specifically dangerous criminals. In fact if the praetorian guard were around today, I believe they would be assigned to watch such criminals as Saddam Hussein.

Now some of you may be asking why in the world then has the emperor assigned the praetorian guard to watch a harmless preacher named Paul. Well if you read the book of

Acts, one of the things you'll come away with is that Christians had an uncanny habit of escaping from jail. In fact in Acts chapter 16 Paul and his buddy Silas had been in jail in Philippi. Around midnight the text says an earthquake showed up and the shackles fell off. Emperor had gotten word and no doubt he had said, this ain't happening again. And so he assigns the praetorian guard to watch Paul. He puts, one scholar notes, one guardsman on either side of Paul who was chained directly to him for a total of two. Two more on the outside of that cell for a total of four, and two more out of that cell for a total of six. Six people are watching Paul. His situation seems to be precarious. The Philippians hear about Paul's circumstances and they want to cheer him up so they send him a gift through his buddy Epaphroditus. Paul gets the gift, and you may be wondering what Paul's response was. In a word, remarkable. For 16 times throughout the book of Philippians, the word joy or one of its cognates is used by Paul expressing his thanks in so many words to the Philippians. Let me tell you what's remarkable about this. I have a buddy of mine who's serving 60 years in jail without the possibility of parole. He's not an acquaintance, he's a friend of mine.

I remember when he was first in jail, going to go visit him, driving down highway 85 there in Atlanta and as I'm going to visit him, I'm wracking my brain as to how me a free person can cheer up the incarcerated man. Those of us who have friends in jail that we have visited, we understand that's a natural thought. How can we as free people cheer up those living inside the jail. Here in Philippians you have the exact opposite, You have an incarcerated man, Paul, telling free people no you cheer up, no you have joy. And here we see an incredible lesson, an incredible trait of the person who really lives this life understanding that this world is not their home. For the person who really gets that principle, no matter how bleak their circumstances

may be, they never live beneath their circumstances, but because they understand that his world is not their home, they live above it. I'll give you two illustrations of this. Samuel Westley, the father of John and Charles Westley was a pastor and a preacher. One night, his house went up in flames. He got all of his kids out of his house, and he's looking at the house and his precious possessions and books and moments are being consumed by the fire. History would record that Samuel Westley on that night would get on his knees with the burning house as a background and he prayed this prayer. Lord let it burn. I am rich enough.

Or consider Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who on Sunday April 8th, 1945 found himself incarcerated in the Nazi concentration camp of Buchenwald. He had just gotten finished leading a chapel service where he was encouraging the brothers. At the end of that chapel service, the doors fly open and in come the Nazi guardsmen. They say Bonhoeffer come with us. Everybody inside of that chapel knew what that meant. As Bonhoeffer is leaving, and history would record, he would die the next day, he turns to one of his fellow inmates and says yes this is the end, but for me this is only the beginning. What Paul and Samuel Westley and Dietrich Bonhoeffer teach us is that when we really understand that this world is not our home, no matter how bleak the circumstances, no matter how dark the trials, no matter how intense the dilemmas, we never allow ourselves to be ruled by our circumstances but because we understand that there is a God who is bigger than any trial we may go through, we live above them.

In a room this size friends, some of you will be stricken with terminal diseases. Others of you will experience intense unfathomable heartbreak and tragedy. All of us will experience trials of various kinds, and yet those trials and those tragedies, those heartbreaking experiences. In a way

God allows us to experience them. To really let us know if we are living this life as if this life is not our home. We're passing through. Well Bryan that's good stuff, but give me some specifics, what specifically does that look like? Paul says in verse 12 of Philippians chapter 1, he says to the Philippians, "I want you to know brothers that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result it has," and then please underline this phrase, "become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ." That phrase become clear one word in the original language Greek, it means to shine a light on, it means to expose, it means to manifest, but here's what I want you to see, the essence of that word means this. It means to put on display. Paul says to the Philippians, "Philippians thanks for the gift but I don't want you to worry about me I understand that this word is not my home. And yes I'm in jail, but I want you to know, Philippians, that what looks like a setback is really God setting me up to give him glory. I want you to know Philippians that what looks like an obstacle is really an opportunity. I want you to know Philippians that what God is doing through this trial is he's putting me on display so that the glory of Jesus Christ might be revealed."

When I decided that my wife was the one. That I was going to marry my dear Corey. We began talking about rings. My wife kind of got me, she is half Latina and half Irish and she has a deep complexioned skin, and she said Bryan gold doesn't really look good with my complexion. Why don't you get me platinum. Well I don't know anything about jewelry so I thought she was giving me a cheap route to go. So like a dummy, a fool, I said okay. And so I remember going out and looking at these diamond rings, and I knew two things about diamond rings: little and nothing. And I would walk into a jeweler and give them the specs that Corey had given me, and I'd notice to a T that every single jeweler would do the same thing. They would pull out these diamonds

and they would never plop the diamonds on the glass countertop. The first thing they would do would be they would take a dark black velvet cloth, they'd lay it on the countertop, and against the backdrop of this dark black velvet cloth, they would then take the diamond and lay it on top of it. Now when they took that diamond and put it not on the glass countertop but on the black dark velvet cloth, it caused that diamond to shine a lot brighter. It was against the backdrop of this dark black velvet cloth that the brilliance and the radiance of this diamond was further illuminated.

Likewise Paul is saying, "Philippians don't worry about me. I'm in this jail cell but I want you to know Philippians that this jail cell is really serving as a dark black velvet cloth against which me the diamond of the brilliance of the radiance of Jesus Christ would be further illuminated. Don't worry about me, yes the situation is dark, yes it's bleak, but don't worry about me Philippians, because I've surrounded all of who I am to all of who he is. God's glory is going to be illuminated far brighter through my life." And that's the perspective we are to have friends. When we encounter trials and tribulations and tragedies. When we go through hard times and sicknesses, when we experience the difficulties of this life, yes Paul would cry yes he would be discouraged a little bit, but he would never stay there. Because he would look at those situations as an opportunity to give God greater glory. Specifically how did Paul give God greater glory? Two ways as we have it. Paul says, "As a result it has become clear," verse 13, "Throughout the whole palace guard and everyone else, that I am in chains for Christ." Actually at the end of verse 12, he gives us the first key of what's happened here, he says what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. He says hey Philippians I want you to look at it this way, I've got an opportunity in this jail cell I could never have when I was free. I've got chained to me

on either side two members of the praetorian guardsmen. And so I look to my left and I say, "Jesus Jesus Jesus," and I look to my right and say, "Jesus Jesus Jesus," and they ain't going nowhere. They rotate off and two more come on, and "Jesus Jesus Jesus," and "Jesus Jesus Jesus," and they ain't going nowhere.

He says look, when I had that kind of perspective I now use this as an opportunity to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ. See friend in the midst of our tragedies, when we have the perspective that this world isn't our home, we see obstacles now as opportunities to bring God further glory. And then finally he says, verse 13, "As a result it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and everyone else, that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains most of my brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly." Paul understood that there were people watching how he was going to handle that situation. Paul says that because I've surrendered all of who I am to all of who he is, I turned this obstacle into an opportunity and the gospel's been preached and the brothers have been encouraged. But it all began with Paul placing all of who he was to the hands of God. Because Paul understood that as it relates to his life it all depends on whose hands it was in. Paul says in so many words that the fundamental decision that he made early on was to place his life to the hands of God. Because it all depends on whose hands it's in.

Likewise friends if we are going to be people who God uses to do extraordinary things in his kingdom, must begin with us today placing all of who we are into the hands of God. Because it all depends on whose hands it's in. A golf club in my hand is worth about a hundred strokes or so around, and it's a scary thing. But a golf club in the hands of Tiger Woods is worth about 8 major

championships and hundreds of millions of dollars. Why? Because it all depends on whose hand it's in. A basketball in my hand is worth about 14 dollars and 99 cents. But a basketball in the hands of Shaquille O'Neal is worth three NBA championships and over a hundred million dollars. Why? Because it all depends, Biola, on whose hand it's in. A trumpet in my hands is a noisy get on your last nerve kind of instrument. But a trumpet in the hands of Miles Davis will get you such classics as My Funny Valentine and Someday My Prince Will Come and Kind of Blue. Why? Because it all depends on whose hand it's in. A rod in my hand will beat off a couple of dogs in my neighborhood. But a rod in the hands of Moses will part the red sea. Why? Because it all depends on whose hand it's in. Five smooth stones in a sling shot in my hands will break a few windows in my neighborhood. But five smooth stones in a slingshot in the hand of a little teenage boy named David will kill mighty Goliath. Why? Because it all depends on whose hand it's in. A hymn in my hand is worth about \$5. But a hymn in the hands of a woman with the issue of blood means healing for her body. Why? Because it all depends on whose hand it is in.

Some bread and some fish in my hand will make you a high carb not Atkins friendly kind of meal. But some fish and some bread in the hands of the Savior means a gourmet meal for 5,000 folk. Why? Because it all depends on whose hand it is in. Some dirt and some spit in my hands might get you a few mud cakes and a few mud pies. But some dirt and some spit in the hands of the Master means healing for blinded eyes. Why? Because it all depends on hose hand it is in. Nails in my hand might build you a crooked little bird house. But nails in the hand of the Savior means salvation for all mankind. Why? Because it all depends on whose hands it is in. My life in my hands might get me a little bit of success by the world's standards, my life in my hands might

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earn me a few degrees. My life in my hands might earn me some notoriety. My life in my hands might even mean destruction and divorce. But my life and your life in the hands of the Savior is an incredible powerful combination that God can use to change the world for the sake of Jesus Christ. So Biola, as I leave this place, I ask you this parting question. Whose hands have you placed your life in? Have you surrendered all of who you are to all of who he is? For when that happens Biola, you gain the perspective that this world is not our home that will radically and powerfully impact the decisions that you make while in this life and how you view even the darkest circumstances.

Now Father I've tried to be faithful to the task to which you've called me. To tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I pray for my brothers and sisters Lord God on this great campus that has meant to my life and my development, I pray oh heavenly Father that even though they may find themselves learning more about you and in an academic environment and even maybe going through some hard times form no and then, I pray that they would never lose their zeal and their love and their desire for you, and to surrender all f who they are to all of who you are. Oh God loosen the grip of our hands from our lives. May we jump into the hands of you the everlasting Savior. May you use these my brothers and sisters as powerful instruments and catalysts of revival that will change a city a state a nation and a world for the cause of Jesus Christ. It is in Jesus' name I pray, amen.

[Silence]

[Audience applauds]

Ron Hafer:

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If you would enjoy extending the preaching ministry of Bryan Loritts here next year if Jesus carries his coming, just raise your hand. Okay good, well that's pretty well settled, thank you.

You are dismissed, we will see you in half an hour. Card slide, leave those lovely evaluations in the box. Thanks.

[Audio cuts out]