



Message Transcript

Engaging in Gospel Ministry

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Thank you so much for choosing to worship with us today. And we've had a chance to seek the face of the Lord and worship him. Now we're getting ready to hear his word. So let's go before him again and prepare our hearts to receive and put into practice what he shows us this morning. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we just praise you for who you are. We praise you that you're high and exalted and lifted up, Lord, that you loved us so much that you came to this world and died for our sins, that you rose from the dead in victory, and that you'll offer life to all who confess you and repent of their sins. So, Lord, we just pray today that your word would go forth and that we would hear directly from you. Lord, we don't just want to hear a message. We just want to pass the time.

Lord, we want to hear exactly what you have for each one of us and what we need to do with what you tell us. So speak clearly, Lord, we know you will. And, Lord, we just ask right now, you'd prepare our hearts. If there's any known sin in our life, anything we're aware of, we're just going to confess that before you right now, knowing that you're faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And, Lord, we just give you all the glory.

Lord, we're ready. We want to hear you, and we want to put into practice the very things you show us for your mighty name. And so all God's people who are ready to hear his word and do what he says very loudly, agreed with me by saying, amen. I want to encourage you. Open your bibles this morning to one corinthians nine, first Corinthians, chapter nine.

We're going to be starting in verse 15, and we'll finish the chapter this morning. And as we've been talking and going through the book, first Corinthians, we've been talking about how to grow as a stronger disciple of Jesus Christ and what that looks like and how we do that. And what Paul began to spell out in chapter eight was our liberties that we have in Christ. And it was in relation to food sacrifice to idols. And while we really aren't concerned with food that is sacrificed to idols, many of us as a Christian wanna know that since I'm freed up in Christ now, what is it I can and can't do?

What do I participate in? What do I not participate in? And Paul talked all throughout chapter eight that while he had liberties to do certain things, that because of the gospel of Jesus Christ, many times he relinquished his right for his liberties in order

to share the good news of Jesus Christ in chapter nine. What he's begun to do is he's begun to put together a understanding from his own experience of what he had rights for personally, but what he chose not to do. And so last week, the title of the message was paying your pastor.

Now, some of you lucked out because it was a snowstorm, but that's what we preached on. For those of you that were here last week, and it takes a lot of courage to talk about that, because what Paul was saying was that he had rights as an apostle, as one who was ministering on God's behalf to this group of people, to be remunerated for his services, to be compensated for that. And now what he's going to talk about is how he never cashed in on that rite, how he never took advantage of that rite, because the gospel was so powerful, he didn't want anything to get in the way of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. And so what we're going to talk about today is engaging in gospel ministry. What does it look like for you?

What does it look like for me to be all in with Jesus, with this understanding of what the gospel is? So if you have your bibles open to one corinthians chapter nine, starting in verse 15, we'll take a look at three things today that the gospel requires us to relinquish or let go of, things that we might be entitled to. But we're going to choose

not to do because we want to make sure we're living our best for Jesus. Notice what Paul says in one corinthians chapter nine and verse 15, right after he says, even the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should get their living from the gospel, even after Jesus himself says, hey, Jesus says I should get paid by you. Here's what Paul responds.

He says, but I have used none of these things and am not writing these things. So it will be done in my case. For it would be better for me to die than to have any man make a boast, make my boast an empty one. For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of. For I am under compulsion.

For woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward. But if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me, what then is my reward? That when I preach the gospel. I may offer the gospel without charge so as to not make full use of my right in the gospel.

And there you see in those first four verses what engaging the gospel ministry requires you to relinquish. And the first thing that requires you to relinquish if you're

going to engage in gospel ministry is compensation. It's compensation. Relinquishing the right to compensation because of a compelling from God that cannot be successfully opposed. I'm going to relinquish my right for compensation because of a compelling from God that cannot be successfully opposed.

Notice what he says. He says, but I've used none of these things. I have a right. He's gone through all of his reasons why he should be paid. The scriptures say he should be paid.

Jesus said he should be paid. All the old testament priests and prophets, they were compensated for their work. He's like, I have every right to expect to be paid from you because of what I'm doing in your midst. Yet I didn't take advantage of any of these rights. I relinquished these rights to compensation for the sake of the gospel and why I'm compelled.

And notice what he says. And I'm not writing these things so that it will be done in my case, for it would be better for me to die than to have any man make my boast an empty one. In other words, here's what he's saying. He's like, I never said you owe

me. I never said you need to give me something.

As a matter of fact, we read last week from two corinthians, chapter ten and verse eight. I believe it was where Paul says, I robbed from other churches so that I could preach the gospel to you. And he said, and I'm not writing this to you now so that you'll feel bad or that you'll cluster a group together and say, well, okay, let's give Paul something. Let's take a special love offering. He goes, because I'd rather die than to have anybody in the church take away my ability to boast in bringing you the gospel for free.

Now, you might say, well, christians don't boast. Why is he boasting? Boasting can mean to rejoice in or to celebrate. And let me tell you what Paul's celebrating. Paul is celebrating the fact that Jesus Christ has given him the opportunity to preach the gospel free of charge to the Corinthians.

He's given him the opportunity of being supported by some other churches so that he can do it. And what Paul doesn't want to be robbed of is somebody sitting in the church in Corinth saying, the only reason he did this is because we gave him a

good honorarium. The only reason he did this is because my wife and I wrote him a check, and that's why he felt good about it. He's like, you can't rob me of my boast. My boast is this, Jesus Christ brought me to you.

Jesus Christ took care of me so I could bring it to you. I did it free of charge. I proclaimed the gospel so that you could clearly hear it. And notice what he says next. He says, for if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of.

Can I tell you this? Preachers can't boast. Good preachers can't boast. Do you know why? Because all a good preacher is doing is communicating clearly what God has already established.

Good preachers aren't making stuff up. Good preachers are standing and boldly proclaiming what God has already revealed to us through his word. I mean, there's these two words that float around in our day and age. They get put together. I don't get them.

It says something like this celebrity preacher, like, what the heck is that? Like, a preacher's not to be celebrated. What a preacher's communicating, to the extent he's faithful to the word, is what's to be celebrated. Paul says, if I'm preaching the gospel, let me tell you something. I didn't create the gospel.

I didn't invent the gospel. I didn't make the gospel happen. I didn't have anything to do with it. I'm not doing any. I can't boast in that.

I'm just telling you the gospel. That's what he says. But notice what he says next. For I am under compulsion. For woe is to me if I do not preach the gospel.

Now, compulsion means this. It's a necessity. It's an obligation. It's. I have to do this right.

We talked last week about calling and two parts of calling. And the first was that there's this divine compulsion that I can do nothing else. This is what I must do. I have

to do this. I could do other things.

I could be successful at other things, but this is the one thing I must do. And then the second part of calling is that the church would say, yeah, we see that in you. We see that gifting in you. Everybody sees that. That's what's true, right?

That's calling. And Paul says, I'm under compulsion. Now, if you look at your notes like the way I wrote this was Paul's relinquishing his rights for compensation because of a compelling from God that cannot be successfully opposed. Meaning this. He can't get away from it.

The word I had in my notes originally was the word thwarted. But I turned my notes in to see if people can understand him. Nobody seemed to know what the word thwarted meant. And thwarted means to be successfully opposed. It means this.

If God's called me to do something in his kingdom, I can try to do any number of other things. But guess what? At the end of the day, I'm going to do what God wants

me to do. I can't oppose God. I mean, do you remember Jeremiah in the Old Testament?

Very unfortunate calling. He was the one voice in the entire nation that stood up. And here's what he preached every single time. Same message every week, same message every day. Imminent judgments coming.

You've disobeyed the Lord. You need to repent. God's bringing his judgment. It's imminent. And every other priest in the day was saying, what?

Peace, peace, peace, peace. And God was saying, but, jeremiah, there is no peace. You're the one person standing for me. And every time Jeremiah stood up and preached this message, it was not received. Well.

Many times he was put in stocks or thrown into a cistern or any number of things. And so he was like, I'm done with this preaching thing. I don't like communicating the

message to God's people that God's people don't want to hear, you know? But what did he say in Jeremiah 20? But God's word is like a fire in my bones.

I am weary of holding it in. Indeed, I cannot. Here's what Jeremiah was dealing with. I'm not preaching this imminent judgment thing again. I'm done with that.

I'm done with that. And then he opened his mouth and said, judgment is coming, right? He couldn't help it. Or what about Jonah? Remember Jonah?

In the Old Testament, God calls Jonah. What's he called Jonah to do? Go to Nineveh to tell people about my love for them. So what's he do? He hops to the next ship to go to tarshish in the exact opposite direction.

I ain't doing that. People in Nineveh don't deserve the grace of God. They're not worthy of that. So what does God do? Fine, I'll send a storm.

You'll get thrown in the water. I'll swallow you with a fish. I'll let you repent. Then I'm going to spit you out on land. And then does he go willingly?

No, he goes. Cause he knows he has to. He opens his mouth, he preaches the word. Hundreds of thousands get saved, and what happens? Chapter four.

He's mad about it. Greatest revival in old Testament history. What's he like? I knew you were like this. God saving ninevites.

They don't deserve that, right? When there's a divine compulsion, you're going to do what God wants you to do, whether you want to do it or not. And Paul's saying woe to me if I don't preach the gospel. Because Paul understands this, that one day, just like me and you, he's going to stand before the resurrected Christ in all of his glory to give an account for what God the father through his son and empowered by the holy spirit, poured into him. And he's going to give an accounting for that.

And Paul says this, I'm coming to preach to you not because I was sitting around one day and saw a catalog of Corinth and said, hey, that'd be cool to go there and maybe speak a little bit. I'm here because God compelled me to come. The message I'm preaching to you is from God. And woe to me if I don't do that, because I'm going to stand before Jesus Christ himself to give an account for what he's called me to do. So I'm relinquishing my rights to compensation.

Now, can I just pause here for a second? Because for those of you that are sitting here, it's like, well, I'm not a preacher. I really don't get paid for my work. What's all this compensation talk? Let me tell you how you can be compensated in the church without money.

Let me tell you how a lot of you want to be compensated. Here's how you want to be compensated. I want to be known. I want to have accolades. I want people to recognize how special I am.

I want a badge. I want to be called a leader. I want people to recognize me. Here's what you're doing because of the gospel of Jesus Christ. You're relinquishing all

your rights to be known.

You're relinquishing all your rights to be affirmed. You're relinquishing all your rights to be paid. Why? Because the gospel of Jesus Christ is more important than what you get on this side of heaven. That's what Paul's saying.

So I'm relinquishing my rights to be compensated, to be recognized, to be known, because God's compelled me to do this. Now, notice this next verse. It may sound confusing, but it's really not. Paul says, for if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward. But if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me.

Here's what he's saying. If I was sitting around and I just decided, hey, I think I'll just go preach. That's my reward. If I decide God, here's what I'm going to do for you. That's my reward, right?

But if against my will. Now, what does it mean against my will? Well, Paul

willingly did it. What does it mean against his will? It means this.

Apart from meeting the resurrected Christ, there's no way he's in Corinth preaching the gospel. Paul had other plans for his life, but when Jesus Christ got ahold of him, here's what he said. My life is no longer my own. My life is Christ. Whatever he wants me to do and however he wants me to live, that's what I want to do.

And so he's compelling me to do this, and I'm not doing it for rewards. I'm not doing this thing voluntarily. I'm doing it because I have to. Because God's given a stewardship to me. In other words, God's entrusted me with something he's holding me accountable to.

Now, we have volunteers in our church. So let me just clarify, Pastor Jeff. You always talk about volunteers. You want people to volunteer. We have a lot of people in our church that volunteer is volunteering.

Wrong? No, but it's the motivation behind volunteering that's important. In other

words, if all you do is decide, I'm gonna help here, I'm gonna help here, I'm gonna help here, I'm gonna help here. I just like helping. That's not what God's looking for.

Here's what God's looking for. He saved you, and he gifted you with a certain gift, at least one, if not more than one, and here's what he's saying. I'm calling you to use your gift to build the body of Christ so that my name can be known throughout all the city, throughout the entire nation, and throughout the entire world. And I'm giving you something that I'm entrusting you to that one day, I'm holding you accountable to. So what are you doing with that?

See, so that's not, like, a volunteer. Like, I'm doing this. Cause it's so fun. It's this. God's entrusted this to me, and woe to me if I don't serve with the gifts God's given me.

See, that kind of volunteer has the right motivation. Because inevitably, no matter where you volunteer or no matter what you do to volunteer, here's what's going to happen. You're going to get tired and you're going to get weary and you're going to be unrecognized and you're going to ask yourself the question, why am I doing this

anymore? And if your only reason is because I'm a good person and I like to volunteer, you'll quit or you'll need a break. And I'm not talking about refreshing yourself.

I'm talking about give me three years off. But if you have a compelling of God saying I've gifted you with this, then you're no longer serving for others, you're serving for the Lord. And you're doing it so that even if nobody else notices you, God notices you and you're going to use your ministry to glorify him. That's why Paul is saying, I'm not doing this because I volunteered. God chose me.

I didn't choose him. And because he chose me and invested in me. Woe to me if I don't do this. God's just given me a stewardship and I'm going to manage it to the best of my ability, to the glory of God. That's what he's saying.

So then you ask the question that he's asking in verse 18. What then is my reward? I mean, how do I get rewarded for this thing? Here's what he says, that when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge so as to not make full use of my right and the gospel. What's his reward?

His reward is that one day he's going to get to stand before Jesus and he's going to get to say this, I completed what you wanted me to do. I did what you called me to do to the best of my ability. And yeah, I failed at times. And yeah, I didn't always get it right, but I was focused on what you called me to do. That's my reward.

And my reward I'm not living for in this life. My reward is so that I hear the words of Jesus Christ say to me, well done, good and faithful servant. And the gospel of Jesus Christ is so important to me. I want nothing to get in the way of that. I don't want people to miss out on knowing Jesus because I was so worried about other people recognizing me.

I don't care if they recognize me, as long as they hear Jesus. That's why I love testimonies. You know, people, and they were visiting a church, or I was down in Texas, or I was out in Washington, and I heard a preacher. I really don't remember who it was or what was said. But the gospel became clear to me, and I trusted Christ.

That's a great testimony. See, Christ is the testimony. Now, can I tell you about the gospel? Because I'm about ready to get really fired up right now. Because most of us, we miss out on what the gospel is.

Most people that come to church kind of get the back half of the gospel. And the back half of the gospel is this, that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins and was raised from the dead. And if you believe in him, you can have eternal life. And that's the back half of the gospel. But let me ask you this question.

If Jesus saves. Let me ask you this question. What did Jesus save you from? What's your answer? What did he save you from?

Cause there's a lot of people that come to church that say they're saved. But if you ask church people that question, what do you save from? They would say, I don't know. I'm not really, I guess, from living a bad life. So let me tell you the whole gospel.

Cause if you miss out on the front part of the gospel, there's really no gospel. Gospel means good news. If you miss out on the truth, then there's no good news in the gospel. So let me just tell you the truth. See, here's where the gospel starts.

The gospel starts with you being separated from God. That's where it starts. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And so when you look at your life, you can see different ways that you've sinned from the time that you came out of the womb. Some of you, in the world's eyes, it's worse than others.

I get all that. But those are just symptoms of what's truly wrong in your life. Those sins that you list and some you're really ashamed of and some aren't as big of a deal, those are just symptoms. Here's what the Bible says. Your condition in your heart, your heredity of sin, is your problem.

What's coming out is just an effect of that. It would be like this if I looked and I had lesions on my arm or some sort of itch. I mean, I wouldn't necessarily just go and put calamine lotion on, because if I had something that was internal that was the problem. If it doesn't get fixed internally, it doesn't matter how much anti itch cream I

put on, I still have a problem. Here's the problem.

It's not that you've done bad things, as I've said before. It's that you are a bad thing. Do you get it? You have the sin virus. Here's what happens when you have it, you die.

It is a guarantee for every single person that's alive. I mean, every baby that you hold in a nursery, they're dead. They're going to die. It's a fact. That's the problem of sin.

That's your number one problem. You might be like, in the world's eyes, like a good person and philanthropic. But here's the problem. You have a condition in your life that's sinful. You're dead.

That's what the Bible says. Here's fact number two. There's a penalty for your sin. See, every single person is going to die. And after that, stand judgment before the

Lord Jesus Christ.

So the first one that you will see, let me tell you what happens when you breathe your last breath. The first thing you will see is the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will see him exposed in all of his glory. And here's what happens for those who have never trusted in him, who die in their sin. Here's the words that they're going to hear.

Depart from me, you worker of iniquity. You evildoer. I never knew you. We never had a relationship. I created you, I loved you, but you never came to me.

Get out. Right. And hell is a real place, where real people go every single day by the thousands or by the hundreds of thousands. Right? See, this is what Paul believed.

Paul believed that every single person he saw had either trusted in Christ or they didn't trust in Christ. Here's the thing you need to get your arms around. You're dead. And you're facing an eternal penalty for your sin. That's where the gospel starts.

If you don't believe that, I'm going to tell you what you're not. You are not a Christian. You can call yourself whatever you want. Because if you don't believe that, then what's Jesus going to save you from? See, there's a fact of sin.

There's a penalty of sin. And then guess what? There's the payment of sin. Praise the Lord that God the father sent his son Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, who never, ever sinned, who fulfilled the law in every way. And then what Jesus did is God the Father took all of your sin and punished his own son to death.

That Jesus Christ stood in your place, that he took nails in his hands and in his feet, that he shed his blood, that he breathed his last. That he said, it is finished, and he died for you. And so every way that God the Father treated his son was supposed to be how you were treated. But God, in his great love for you, paid the penalty for his son to take the blame. That's.

.3 guess what .4 is. That ain't enough either, because the devil believes all that.

Here's point number four. You must repent of your sin, which is this internal heredity, and say, I don't want to be dead anymore, and confess Jesus Christ as your lord.

Meaning I want to turn from this life of sin and I want Jesus to save me.

Save me from what? Save me from hell. Save me from judgment, save me from my sin, save me from myself. I want him. And when you repent of your sin and you trust Christ, then you are a new creation.

The Bible calls that moment being born again. Now let me just explain something to you really quick. Cause for some of you that are sitting here, I know what you're saying. I've never had that experience. That's just spooky.

I've kind of always believed in Jesus. Let me tell you something. You haven't always believed in Jesus. You were born dead in your trespasses and sins. God's wrath started out upon you.

The penalty of sin is, is coming. You are going to die. So when in your life did you trust Jesus Christ by repenting of your sins and crossing over and placing your faith and trust in him? Because if you haven't done that, here's what you're not. You're not a Christian.

You're not a Christian. You can go to church your whole life and say, well, I believe in Jesus. I believe in Jesus and still go to hell for all eternity because you've never turned from your sins and turned to Christ. It's not what you say, it's what you believe and it's who you believe in. So here's my question.

When did it happen for you? When did that happen? Because here's what you need to know. Well, that never really happened. But I know it'll be okay in heaven.

Just so that you know, every single person that's in heaven now and every single person that will ever be in heaven will be able to clearly say, I know I'm a sinner. I knew God's wrath was on me and was going to hell. I believe Jesus died for me and rose and I repented of my sins and trusted him. Those are the only people that are there. And if you can't say that here, you won't be part of his coming kingdom.

Period. End of story. That's why Paul said for me to come to you. I'm not looking for your payment for me to tell you about these eternal truths. It's enough for me to tell you that.

That you must be born again. And let me tell you something. If you're sitting here today and you're like, I don't have that experience. I don't have that experience. Let me tell you right now, you can have it right in your seat.

If you recognize in this moment that you're a sinner, you recognize this moment that you're on your way to hell, but that God loved you so much, he sent his son Jesus, who died in your place for all your sins, who rose from the dead. And you say right now in your place, Lord, I'm done with sin and I'm all in with you. I confess you as my lord and savior in this moment. He will save you in this place. Isn't that great news?

And in him is hope and joy and blessing and peace and grace and mercy and forgiveness. And the list goes on and on and on and on. And this is why Paul is saying

I've relinquished my right to be compensated by you because all I care about is that you know Jesus. How about you? Have you relinquished the right in your life as a person who believes in Jesus, to be compensated, to be accoladed, to be appreciated, all for the sake of telling other people about who the savior is.

See, that's what Paul says. Paul said that's what I do. My reward is in Christ. Now, if we're going to relinquish our rights for compensation, let me tell you a second relinquishment you can do. Engaging in gospel ministry requires you relinquish your rights.

Check this out. Clustering with those like you. Clustering with those like you. Because of a willingness to do anything shy of sinning, to see the lost saved, you can relinquish your right to clustering with those like you. Notice what Paul says?

I mean, this is so awesome. He says in verse 19, for though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all so that I may win more. What's Paul's heart? Paul's heart is seeing more and more people one to Jesus Christ. Now, Paul wrote two thirds of the New Testament.

He understood theology as well as anybody. He knew that God was the one that did all the saving work. He's the one that goes on to write about that. Paul knows that he didn't save anybody. I know that I don't save anybody.

Jesus Christ does all the work. But guess what? Here's what Paul also understood. We're his instruments of how he gets the message out. We are the instruments of his grace.

We are God's plan a. That's how he predominantly gets the message out. And yes, I know there are examples of people who have seen visions. And yes, I know there's examples of supernatural things. They're not the norm.

And even people that have visions and supernatural things, what do they start looking for after they have one? A Christian that can explain to them what they saw in their vision. Who's this Jesus that I saw? Right. Here's the deal.

You're his plan a. Will you relinquish your rights to cluster with those like you?
Paul says, although I'm free from everybody, I can hang out with whomever I want, I can do whatever I want. I've become a slave to all people. In other words, I'm willing to serve every single person that I meet.

I know I'm not better than anybody that I meet. I know I'm not better than the person that's waiting on me at the restaurant. And I know I'm not better than the person at the checkout line. And I know I'm not better than the person on my block. And I know I'm not better than anybody.

As a matter of fact, I see myself as a servant to them, so that in my serving them, they might come to know who Jesus is. I've relinquished my rights to cluster with those like me. Now notice who he hung out with. He says this verse 20. To the jews I became as a jew so that I might win jews to those who are under the law, as under the law, though not being myself under the law, so that I might win those who are under the law.

To those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God, but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak. That I might win. The weak. I have become all things to all men, so that by all means save some.

You see that? I mean, who's he hanging out with? I mean, Paul was born a Jew. He understood the Jewish culture. But once he came to know Jesus Christ, here's what he understood.

I'm freed up from all of those traditions that I was mired in for so many years. I don't have to celebrate these festivals anymore. I don't have these dietary restrictions anymore. I can eat shrimp and pork, praise the Lord to the glory of God, and that's okay. But when I'm with Jews, I relinquish my rights to live the way I know I can live for the sake of Jews.

And even though I myself am not under the law, I become like those under the law. So that because of my heart for seeing Jewish people saved, I might save some.

Or what about the ones that are without the law? I mean, people that don't know anything about God, people that aren't even living without the law. He said, I become like them.

But notice what Paul says. But I'm not one without the law. I'm still under the law of Christ. Here's what he's saying. When I'm hanging around people that don't know God, and I'm trying to witness about God, I don't sin to get them into the kingdom.

You never need to sin to get people into the kingdom. As a matter of fact, it doesn't work. Don't believe the lie that, hey, I'll hang out with these sinners over here. I'll act like them, hang out with them, and then they'll think I'm, like a cool Christian, and then they'll come to Christ. No, here's what they'll think.

They'll think there's no difference between them and you, and they'll never do anything Paul says, hey, hung out with jews. Hung out with pagans. What does he also say to the weak? I become weak. Well, who are the weak?

Those are those in the church that are just kind of toddlers in Christ. They're just kind of growing up. And Paul's already told us how he exercises and doesn't exercise certain liberties for the sake of those who are growing in Christ, that even though he might be free to do certain things, he doesn't do it if it's going to become something that a toddler Christian gets sidetracked by. What's Paul saying? I do everything that I can to get around every certain kind of people so that by all means, I may win some more to Christ.

You know what it tells me about Paul? He's hanging out with a lot of different kinds of people. And you know what we tend to do as Christians? We cluster with those who are like us, we cluster with those who are like us. I mean, think about it.

I mean, for me, I can't say now that I'm a Christian. Well, I kind of like people in their mid forties that have three kids under the age of ten that enjoy talking about sports and theology, and that's my peeps, and that's who I hang out with. Those days are long gone, right? Can I tell you something? I mean, here's the application.

Look at your hand for a minute and take a look at your skin color. Okay? When was the time this week that you hung out with somebody for the sake of the gospel that had a different color skin on their hand than you? Okay, here's another one. How about this?

How about this? When was the time this week that you hung out with somebody from the opposite political party that voted differently than you because you love Jesus more than you love your political values? How about that? Because, boy, would I hate to arrive on the throne and tell Jesus I couldn't hang out with them. They were of the wrong political party and they didn't vote for the right president.

And Jesus said to me, hey, last time I looked, it was a monarchy and I'm in charge. I mean, do you get what I'm saying? Cause some of us, we get so caught up in our stuff that hinders us from loving people that are far from God because we think our values are more important than them. What did Paul say? I've given up all my rights.

If you're standing here today, you say, I might have been Republican before, but

I'm not Republican anymore. I'm a servant of the most high God. I might have been a Democrat, but I'm not that anymore. I'm a servant of the most high God. Hey, it might have been for me that I was all into sports, but not anymore.

I'm hanging out with all different kinds of people. I mean, can I just tell you? Over the last 25 years, there's so many times where I'm in a meeting or I'm talking to somebody or counseling somebody or eating dinner at somebody's house where I have, like, an inward chuckle a little bit thinking back to what my life was like before I met Christ and being reminded of the fact probably wouldn't be here now if I wasn't a Christian and certainly wouldn't be enjoying this like I am now, now that I'm a Christian. Has that ever happened to you? See, the kingdom of God is not for a certain socioeconomic group.

It's not for rich people, and it's not for poor people. And the kingdom of God is not for black people or white people or asian people or hispanic people. The kingdom of God is for all people who will confess Jesus Christ as their personal lord and savior. And that's who's all here. And for those of you who are saying, it ain't me, I'm cool with everybody.

Then why are you bothered by whose small group we put you in? Well, I'm cool with everybody. I just don't want to be in that small group with those people. Well, they don't want to be with you either. And here's why it happens.

Because our small groups are not geared for affinity. We don't put all the football players here and all the skiers here and all the people that like basket weaving here and all this different stuff so that we can be best buddies. We put people in groups that love joy, Jesus, that are willing to honor Jesus, to help people grow in Jesus, so you can be the fullness of Jesus in your life. And if you don't learn how to do that, you're immature in your faith and you're losing out on what God wants you to grow in. God wants you to be able to serve all people at all times.

And if your passion is the gospel, that's exactly what will happen. So let me ask you this question. What's the driver in your life? What drives your life? Now, before you think too hyper spiritually, let me ask you this question.

Yesterday, all day long and this morning, what did you think about? What were

you focused on? What did you spend your money on? What did you have your conversations about? What did you put in your calendar that'll tell you where your focus is.

Those are your drivers. Now, there's a lot of things that can be our driver. Money could be a driver. Success could be a driver. Family could be a driver.

Our kids could be a driver. Cub scouts, skiing, sports. I mean, any number of things could be a driver. Let me tell you this. If the gospel of Jesus Christ and exalting him and sharing him with others is not your driver, you're off.

You're off. Like, I'll meet people. I love my children. I do. They know I do.

I know that I do. But some people love their kids. And here's what they'll say, hey, my kid's going to be the next all star soccer player. And so we can't really give time to the Lord because for the next twelve years, we have to travel around every single week to seven different states to do soccer so that my son or daughter can

become the best soccer player of all time. And here's what I would say to that.

Who cares? Who cares? No, you don't understand, Pastor Jeff. They're super gifted. God gave them a gift for soccer.

Let me tell you something. If they're that gifted in soccer, God will accelerate their gift. And if God has really called you against your will to do all that traveling, then all your traveling should be for this one reason and one reason only, that with everybody you meet and with everywhere you go, your purpose in doing it is to share the gospel and the glory of Christ with everybody that you're around, not so that your kid becomes an all star. I know I'm stepping on toes, and I love that, by the way, because we put things in our life that are important, that are good, that we put a higher than Jesus. And let me tell you something.

I'm telling you this because you are all going to stand before the glory of Christ to give an account for your life. And God gifted every single one of you who's a Christian to serve him to the full. And as your pastor, I would want you to be able to walk forward. Cause you'll do it individually. I won't be there with you.

I won't be able to be off to the side vouching and say, you know, he actually did a really good job. I don't get to be there. It's just you and Jesus giving an account for your attitude, behavior, your mind, emotions, and your will for how you aligned all your stuff for him. How you doing on that? What's getting in the way?

And see, the message is important because it calls all of us to a place of repentance. Because don't you understand how complacent we can get in our lives? Don't you understand how apathetic we can get? And let me tell you this. One of the reasons that many Christians get sick and tired of going to church is cause they're no longer engaged in the gospel.

They see the gospel as a past tense event, which it is. There's a time in your life when you trusted Christ, I get that, where you were saved, and I believe it's a future tense event when you're gonna be glorified. So that's true. It's future. But for most christians, that's where they live.

I got saved. One day I'm going to heaven. What about now? You want to enjoy the glory of God now? Be engaged in the gospel love Jesus so much that you can't keep it in.

You got to tell other people, and telling other people that you wouldn't, wouldn't otherwise hang around with if you weren't a Christian. I mean, think about this. We believe this theologically. Many of you do, but we have a hard time believing it. Practically, the only people that are in heaven are those who understand sin, who understand God's judgment, who believe Jesus Christ is the one and only payment, and who have repented of their sins and trusted Christ.

That's it. I mean, studies that I've read, four different studies, show about seven to 9% of our population in America actually believes that. So think about that for a second. If you really believe that, it means about 90% of the people that you're going to meet today on a daily basis are on their way to hell. 90% of the people that you're gonna meet outside these walls are on their way to help.

Do you care? God cares. God cares, and you're his instrument. And he's telling you I care. And I put you in situations with people that don't know me because I want you to be a living, breathing example of what it looks like and be unapologetic about telling people about who I am.

Some of you that are introverts, it doesn't mean that you have to boldly proclaim by shouting, because you can't do that anyway. It means if you're an introvert, you live out your christian life as an introvert. But even introverts can whisper, and even introverts can go deep with one person and tell them, here's what I believe about Jesus, and can be bold in that. Okay. That's what he's talking about.

So what drives your life? Is it Jesus? If not, today's a great opportunity to repent and say, God, I need your help. I need to put the gospel of Jesus Christ back on the forefront of what I'm doing for your sake. And if that's not enough, Paul goes on to give a final thing that you want to relinquish your rights to, and that's this.

The third thing. Relinquish your rights to complacency, because the need for a disciplined life that stays focused on Christ. Relinquish your rights to complacency.

Now, I'm not saying that you have a right to be complacent, but here's what tends to happen in church. I know I'm saved no matter what.

I'm going to heaven. And if you're saved. Let me just confirm if you've truly trusted in Jesus, no one can snatch you out of his hand. You are going to heaven. That's a fact.

But it's not a fact that would breed complacency. It's a fact that would breed engagement. It's a fact because you've done this, Jesus. What can I then turn around and do for you? Notice what Paul says.

Some of my favorite passages in the New Testament where he talks like a coach. This first verse, well, first of all, verse 23, notice what he says. It sums up everything we've been talking about. I do all things for the sake of the gospel so that I may become a fellow partaker of it. All things.

Hey, Paul, why are you doing that? Because of the gospel. Hey, Paul, why are

you doing that? Because of the gospel. Hey, Paul, why are you moving over there?

Because of the gospel. Hey, Paul, why did you say it to that person? Because of the go. Everything you see me do is because of the gospel. That's what he's saying.

I'm not complacent. I'm engaged. I'm all in. And notice what he says. Now, this next verse is hard for us in our culture to understand, so I'll explain it to you.

It says, do you not know that those who run a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Do you not know that those who run a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Now you look at me with blank stares. I know it's hard for you to understand. In Paul's days, there was actually a winner and a loser.

It just wasn't participation awards for everybody all around. He was saying that when everybody runs, one's going to be crowned champion and one's going to be crowned, you know, one's going to be second place or third place, okay? It's like next

week during the Super bowl, there's going to be one team that's crowned the winner and the champion, and there's going to be another team. Although having a very good season and being one of the best teams, here's what they are. They're a loser, okay?

And that might hurt their pride, but that's fact. And here's what Paul says about that run in such a way that you may win. Here's why. You run as if you're giving your best effort for the gospel and you run as if you're giving your best effort for the gospel. He doesn't say, look around at all the other runners and compare, well, I'm kind of keeping up with so and so at this pace.

No. You run in such a way to win. And the beauty of the gospel is this, that if you'll take everything that God invested in you and you'll invest it back in him, that's a winner. It doesn't matter how much he gave you. He may have given you a little.

I mean, the woman that had two small copper coins worth less than a penny, she wasn't given much, but guess what? She put it all in. And I guarantee you she's on God's hall of fame team in heaven. Promise you that. She's a global all star in the kingdom.

So it's not about how much you give compared to somebody else. It's how much has God given to you that you steward back to him. That becomes a question. Run in such a way to win. Run in such a way that when you stand before Jesus, he hear these words from him.

Well done, good and faithful servant. You gave me your all. You are fully engaged in the ministry that I called you to do. He says everyone who competes in the games exercises self control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one.

I mean, when you won a race in the first century, you got like a pine wreath or some wreath made of branches that go around your head. I mean, it faded. Peter tells us that we're going to be given a crown in heaven that won't spoil, perish or fade. An inheritance that's kept for us. I mean, next week somebody's going to get a Super bowl trophy and some team's going to get all these rings.

And here's what I would say. So what, compared to what I'm getting on the other side, that ain't nothing. If you had a choice between six or seven Super bowl rings or the glory of Christ in your life, what are you picking? I'm taking Jesus. I'm taking the crown of righteousness, right?

That's what he's saying. He goes, what we're living for are eternal rewards, okay? He goes, therefore, here's what he says. He sums it up. I run in such a way as not without aim.

I box in a way as not beating the air, but I discipline my body and make it a slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself may not be disqualified. Here's what he says metaphorically. When I run with Jesus, I see where the finish line is, and I'm not going off track. I'm going right for that finish line as hard as I can. Hebrews twelve.

It says, therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. I mean, metaphorically, picture it like a race where there's a ticker tape, a finish line, and when you go across that line, you

want to be going full speed. You don't want to be pulling up lame at the finish. You don't want to be crawling across, you don't want other people picking you up. You want to be sprinting through that thing all the way until you see Jesus Christ face to face.

And Paul says, that's what I do. Mature Christians, let me explain something to you mature Christians, those who are growing in Christ. It's not just getting rid of your sin as you continue to grow with Christ, here's what God's going to say. In order for you to stay focused on where you're going, here's some hindrances in your, your life that are keeping you from being your best. They're not sinful things.

I'm not mad at you about those things, but it's hindering your best ability to run the race. Watching ESPN is not wrong. But watching for 8 hours a day, let me tell you something. God didn't put you on the earth to watch ESPN for 8 hours a day. He's not up in heaven saying, way to get caught up on sports.

Way to play your ps four for 12 hours last night. God put you on this earth to engage in gospel ministry. And while certain things may not be sinful, as you grow in

your faith, God will have you relinquish certain things that aren't sinful so you can stay focused. Paul said, that's how I run. He goes, when I box, metaphorically, he goes, I don't just beat the air.

He goes, I'm not doing tae bo. He goes, I'm focused about where I'm going to land that punch. I know what I'm doing. I have intentionality. I know what the Lord wants me to do.

And he goes, I'm doing this in such a way that when I preach the gospel, I myself may not be disqualified. Now, what's he talking about? Paul knows no matter what happens, he's going to heaven. What's he talking about? He says, what a tragedy it would be for me.

Paul says, if in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and in calling other people to be engaged in gospel ministry and in trying to do it myself, that I myself don't live out what Christ has lived in me, that I myself am sidelined because I'm not walking my talk. Preachers, future preachers, nothing's worse I've ever seen in a church than some pastor that over time loses his integrity, that loses his credibility, that at one point in

time was seeking the Lord's face, but now is seeking what God is doing and gets disqualified even though he loves Jesus, even though he's getting saved and now can no longer serve in gospel ministry because he wasn't walking his talk. And nothing's more tragic in the church than seeing people that genuinely love Jesus, that aren't walking their talk. God wants us to walk our talk. Walking our talk doesn't mean I get it right every time.

Walking our talk means when I don't get it right, I'm confessing to Jesus I didn't get it right this time. And, God, I need your help. And, God, I'm not aligned here, and I'm not focused. I mean, you think about world class athletes like olympians or professional athletes. I mean, how much time do they spend focused on their craft?

I mean, most don't go around eating chicken nuggets every day and then show up on the weekends for another event. Or if they do, they don't last long in their sport. I mean, most are dedicated and focused to the amount of sleep, the amount of intentionality to their bodily training, to what they're doing, to engaging their minds, to making sure they get sharper and sharper and sharper. Paul is saying the gospel ministry is better than that. And the gospel ministry requires more focus, and the gospel ministry is more important.

And if you're going to be engaged in that, that's what we need to be engaged in. And so, as we end our service today, that's what I want to talk about. Because didn't Paul say two Timothy four seven eight? Did he finish that way? I have fought the good fight.

I have finished the race. I have kept the faith, and now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day. How awesome is that? What are you living for? You living for God's hall of fame or this hall of fame?

See, you're on God's team, and you can be an all star on God's team. And the way you become an all star on God's team is just by being engaged in his ministry. And so the way I wanted to end our service today is just by giving an opportunity to respond for everybody in here. Because there's some of you, you've never had that experience where you've been born again, it sounds kind of funny, but today God's been calling on your heart, and you realize you're a sinner and God's wrath is on you. And you know, Jesus died for you.

And right now, God's calling you to repent of your sins and confess him as your lord and savior. So we'll give you an opportunity to do that. And for a lot of you in here today, you say, I know I'm a Christian. I can tell you when that was. I can tell you when that date was or about that time.

I remember when God came into my life. But as you've heard this message today, God's been showing you something in your life that's either a hindrance or God's been showing you an area where you're off and you're focused. And here's what God wants you to do. He's wanting you to repent of that so that you can give God your best in going forward. Because guess what?

God's never done using us. He always wants to continue to build us up, and that's in the gospel, too. And so we're going to spend some time praying, and then we're going to take the Lord's supper together. So what I'm going to do now is pray. Our ushers, after I pray, will pass out the elements of the Lord's supper, representing his body and representing his blood.

And we're going to use that as a time of prayer. So hold on to the elements as they come by, and then I'll come up and we will take these elements together. But let's bow our heads. Let's pray together first. Lord, we want to use this time as a time of prayer.

Lord, when your gospel message is preached, it calls for response.

There are some of you here today who, if you were to die today, you would die in your sins and you would hear the words, depart from me, you evildoer, I never knew you. And during this message today, you know that God has been calling you to repent of your sin and to completely confess Jesus as Lord and to trust him for your salvation. And before we pray, if that's you, would you just kind of extend a little hand up in the air so I can see that you. Yes, yes. Several of you.

Yep, yep. Today is your day. And so we're just going to pray it's not a magic prayer. It's just confessing the attitude of your heart for what God's doing in your life. So here's how you can pray.

Dear Jesus, I know that I'm a sinner.

I believe your wrath is on me.

But this morning, I believe that Jesus Christ came and died for my sins. That he took my punishment for me, and that he rose from the dead. That he conquered death. Right now, God, I want to repent or turn from my sin. And I want to confess you as my personal lord and savior.

Lord, for those who prayed that prayer, I pray right now. You would fill them afresh with your holy spirit, that you would connect them to people in our church that genuinely know and love you, that can help them to grow.

And now, for those of you who know Christ, as you're hearing the message

today, and God was speaking to your hearts, if there's. How many of you would say, yeah, there's at least one thing that God's been speaking to me that's out of align, and I need to confess that before him. Would you just put your hand up in the air, please? Not putting your hand up is saying, God and I are perfect. There's nothing out of line in my life.

I get that. So, Lord, you see our hearts. You see how they're before you. Lord, some of the things that people are raising their hand for is sin. Lord, if they are, we just confess them before you right now.

Lord, some people raising their hand, there's just a hindrance in their life. It's not even necessarily sinful. It's just hindering them from being their best for you. And so, Lord, we just confess to you. Hey, we can't change this.

But we need your help to change this. So, Lord, help us. And now, Lord, as the elements are distributed, as we hold what represents the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in our hands, Lord, let us be prayerful. Let us hear the words of the this song. And let us know, Lord, that you go before us.

We give you all the praise Jesus name. Amen.