



Message Transcript

Your Role in the Gospel

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Well, good morning. Thanks for choosing to worship with us today. And just let me add my invitation to our Christmas services next week as well as our first Tuesday on January 2. Both are going to be here before we know it and look forward to celebrating with you there as well. Let's go before the Lord and let's pray.

Let's prepare our hearts to hear his living and active word this morning. So, Jesus, we just come before your throne, and we just thank you that you didn't abandon us and you didn't leave us. You gave us your word and give us revelation about who you are. And through your holy spirit, Lord, your word is able to convict us, to penetrate both soul and spirits, joints and marrow, and judge the attitudes and intentions of our hearts. So, Lord, we invite you to do that right now.

And, Lord, we want to give you praise for what you are going to accomplish during our time here today. And, Lord, in advance, we just tell you that you are glorious. We praise you, we honor you, and we worship you. And now we're ready to hear from you and all God's people who are ready to hear from him, agreed with me by saying amen. I encourage you to open your bibles this morning to one corinthians, chapter seven.

First Corinthians, chapter seven. We're going to begin in verse 17. And as we get there, really what I'm going to talk to you about today is your role in the gospel. Like, what part do you play and how does that work itself out? And it's really interesting because as you read through one corinthians, chapter seven, which is predominantly about our status on being single or being married or being widowed or being divorced or whatever it would be, Paul is going to nestle in here these words that we should remain as we are.

Now, we took a look at that last week, I believe it was in verse eight, where Paul said to the widows and the unmarried, it's good for you to remain as you are. Three times we're going to see that here and then two more times. So six times in these 40 verses, you hear this word, remain, remain, remain, and so on. And so when you hear Paul, sometimes you're like, man, what a killjoy. I mean, why do I have to stay where I'm at?

I mean, I got vision, I got dreams. Why can't I just roam around and do whatever I want? And this is what he wants to talk to us about today is the role that we play when it comes to the gospel. And if we understand the gospel and the role that God

wants us to play, it brings us the greatest amount of joy. And so if you turn your bible to one corinthians, chapter seven, verses 17 through 24, I'll read those eight verses while you follow along, and then we'll unpack them together.

I'm going to take a look at four things today, four things today that reveal how you should live and what your role in the gospel looks like. Here's what Paul says starting in verse 17. Only as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each in this manner, let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches. Was any man called when he was already circumcised?

He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called an uncircumcision?
He is not to be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing. An uncircumcision is nothing.

But what matters is keeping the commandments of God. Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it. But if you are able also to become free, rather do that for he who was called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman.

Likewise, he who was called while free is Christ's slave. You were bought with a price. Do not become slaves of men, brethren. Each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called. Now, as we look at this, we're really pointing out, as we talk about your role in the gospel, there's really one main overarching point, and it's this that we're called to live our lives wholeheartedly for God.

You're called to live your life wholeheartedly for God. Number one, with the hand you were dealt at the time of your calling. Live your life wholeheartedly for God, with the hand you were dealt at the time of your calling. Notice, verse 17. It says, only your version may read.

Nevertheless, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each in this manner, let him walk now. Walk as we read. People will talk in church sometimes. How's your walk with Jesus? Our walk is just a way of saying, living our life with Christ.

That's our walk. And it says this as God has assigned you, as each one was called. Called means when you were saved. Okay, for those of you who are believers

here, remember what it was like the moment you were saved. Do you remember where you were when you confessed Jesus Christ as your lord and truly meant it?

Remember what that was like. That's your calling. Okay? That's when God called you to himself. When God rescued you from the dominion of darkness and brought you into the kingdom of his beloved son, that's your calling.

And when you were called, he assigned to you certain things. I mean, he called you out of things and placed you into things, like he gave you his holy spirit. But when he saved you, he knew exactly where you were when he saved you. And there's certain gifts he bestowed upon you and gave to you. And there's certain life circumstances that you're in.

And he knew all about those when he saved you. And he's saying in your situation at the moment that you're called to salvation, live wholeheartedly for God presently. In other words, don't wait until you get into different circumstances. Don't wait until you get into different seasons. Don't wait until you're a different age.

Right now, if you're saved presently, serve God wholeheartedly in the circumstances that you're in. That's the thrust of the whole passage. And it's really interesting that he nestles it in between singles and marrieds and widows and everyone else. And he's been telling us this why? Because no matter who you are and no matter what your status is, what matters is your devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ in everything.

So live your life wholeheartedly for him with the hand you were dealt. Cause so often we wanna look around, we wish we were dealt a different deck of cards. We wish we had a different life circumstance and we were in different places. And God's like, no, right now, with where you're at, you can live wholeheartedly for me. I mean, we see the same thing in verses 20 and 24.

If you drop your eyes down, he says in verse 20, each man must remain in that condition in which he was called. And in verse 24, brethren or brothers and sisters, each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called. I mean, he's basically saying all over again, wholeheartedly live your life for Christ and his gospel right now. You'll see at the end of verse 17 he says, and so I direct in all the churches.

What's Paul saying?

Everywhere I go, I tell the church that once you're saved, you belong to God. And whatever circumstance you find yourself in, you are able to give full allegiance to God in whatever circumstance that's in. So give God full worship right now. That's what he's saying. Don't wait for another opportunity.

Don't wait for a different day don't wait until you get out of your circumstances to glorify God. Worship him now. Presently, that's the thrust of everything Paul's trying to teach, and we see it all the time. We need to be taught this today, too, because much like in the first century, it's the same way today. Single people will say, well, when I'm married, then I'll worship the Lord.

And married people will say, man, if I was only single again and didn't have all these responsibilities, then I'd serve the Lord. And young people are saying, well, when I grow up and I finish college, then I'll serve the Lord. And maybe when I get a certain job or maybe when I get more money, I'll serve the Lord. I mean, there's, you know, Denver's probably not the best place. When I move away from where I got saved

from, then I'll be in a certain kind of geography.

And once I get there, then I can really serve the Lord. And the enemy tricks our mind. And here's what he tells us. He says, go ahead and worship the Lord and worship him with everything you have tomorrow. Just don't do it now.

And Paul's teaching the church just the opposite. Worship God presently now, with everything you have in the circumstance that you're in, especially if it's a circumstance you don't want to be in, that's the best time to worship him, right? That's what Paul's telling the church. Because the first century Christians were much like our 21st century Christians. If all the circumstances were different, then I'd be able to worship God better.

And he's like, no, no, no. You can worship God presently, right now, with everything you have, regardless of what job or education or anything else that you have. That's a very similar statement to what he was teaching in different places. There's two verses I quote often from this pulpit that you may want to write down. If you can commit them to memory, they're really good to have.

One is two corinthians, chapter five, and verse 17, 2nd corinthians 5:17. It says, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Behold, all things have passed away, and now all things have been made new. The old has gone. The new has come.

Why? Because when you're called or when you're saved, God does a recreative work in your life from the inside out. You're no longer the same person you used to be. Your past is completely forgiven. Everything is washed away.

Behold, everything in your life has been made new, you're something fundamentally different. And what you're able to do now because you're a new creation is worship God wholeheartedly. It means you can worship him and enjoy him and really know him because he indwells you. The second verse I tell you is Galatians 2:20. Galatians 2:20.

Paul says, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me, the life I live in the body I live by faith in the son of God who loved me

and gave himself for me. What's he saying? When I repented of my sin, I died to myself. I had been dead, but now I've been made alive by the gospel.

Jesus dwells in me through the third person of the Trinity, the holy Spirit. He now resides in me, and the life that I live now is not my life anymore. It's Christ's life living through me. And that's how I live, and that's how I live presently. And that's what he was telling all the churches.

And he's like, everywhere I go, I tell all the churches, once you've come to Christ, don't wait. Start now. Worship God and give him your wholehearted devotion, no matter what your situation is. Why? Because you were dead, and now you're alive.

You were lost and you're now found. You were an enemy of the cross of Christ, and now you're his friend, and that's what he's saying. And so in here, like, if you're new to church and if you've never given your life to Christ and you don't even know what that means, I'm glad you're here today. Before this message gets over, I'll explain to you how you personally can have an individual relationship with the God of the universe, right? But for those of us who have been called God, says this, if you're truly

a believer, serve God wholeheartedly.

Now, in your circumstances. Now, can I tell you why this is hard? Because for many of us, we don't like our circumstances. Often we don't like our circumstances. Often we wish our circumstances were different.

Wish I made more money. Wish I lived in that house. Wish I lived in this part of the city. Wish I had this status. Wish I had this group of friends.

Wish I was over there. Wish I had that. Once I have that, then God could use me. I'll give you an example from my own life. I started walking with the Lord about my fourth year in college.

I had been saved for three years. Previous to that, I started walking with the Lord my fourth year in college, and I knew now that I was walking with the Lord. I mean, not only was things going well for me, but God was going to bless me because

isn't that what God does? God blesses us. Isn't it true?

God always does what we want him to do? No. Okay. No. That's the exact answer.

At least seven of you got that right. Okay? He doesn't. But I thought he did. And so here was my prayer request, like, lord, okay, I'm on the football team.

So when you make me the starting quarterback and I take Illinois to the Rose bowl and we win the national championship, I'll be willing to get on tv for you. And when they interview me to find out how awesome I am, before I talk about me, I will say, I just want to thank my lord and savior Jesus Christ. And I thought I was making God a really good deal, you know? I mean, national television for God. I mean, how awesome is that?

Now, as things went on, it not only didn't work out that way, but in the spring, before my final season, a new coaching staff came in, and here's what they told me.

Hey, we've got to build for the future. And you're not only not going to start, but we can't even get you around the ball. We want you to be our scout team quarterback. I'm like, I'll be a fifth year senior.

No, there's no way I'm doing that. I'm out. I'm out. And I remember going home to my apartment and for like two weeks, just being furious with the Lord. Like, I can't believe you put me through this.

And for five years I did all this stuff and there's no return on my investment and I'm done. And I was kind of to the place, too, where I knew God was calling me into ministry. I'm like, fine, I'll just quit the team and I'll do ministry. That's what I'll do. Fine, I'll do that for you, God, I hate it, but I'll do it right.

And when I finally got quiet enough to hear, here's what I heard the Lord say. I'm not asking you to quit the team. I'm just wondering if you'll be my servant on the team. Ever know when God talks to you that he has you? And I remember spouting out to God immediately in my prayer, like, God, that will be embarrassing and humiliating.

And he said, oh, I know what it feels like to be humiliated. And embarrassed. I'll be right with you. So I went back in my fifth year as a senior at the University of Illinois. I ran the scout team.

But do you know what happened as a result of doing that? I had so many people come up to me and say, hey, why are you still on the team? If I was treated that way, I would have quit a long time ago. And you know what I said? It's because of Jesus Christ.

And he's the only reason I'm here, or I would have quit, too. And let me tell you about who he is. Do you know I led more people to Christ in that season of my life than about any other time? I started leading a Bible study. I never led a Bible study in my life.

And you know how I led it? The campus crusade for Christ. People would give me the devotion, and I would tell them, okay, what do I do? Like, what do I read and

what questions do I ask? And they'd say, read this.

Ask these questions. I'm like, okay, I'll do it. And so we'd gather, and then people would ask me questions back. And oftentimes my response was, yeah, I don't know that, but I'll find out by next week. And then I go back and say, they asked this, and I didn't know anything about this.

What do you say to that? And they'd tell me the answer. And then I go back, and that's how I was leading a huge Bible study. And even then, I wasn't seeing God's hand at work because I was still thinking that, hey, this football thing didn't work out the way I needed. I mean, some 30 years later, almost as I look back, I'm like, thank God he did that in my life, because I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing now if he hadn't taken that stuff away from me.

And what I saw as a curse in my life and as a bad situation was actually a blessing. Do you know, my senior year, they invited all of us by position in to talk to the biggest donors. They have this quarterback club they do every single week. And I got up and they asked everybody to kind of just share your name. And God put on my

heart.

No, no, share your testimony. And so I got up there and said, here's. Let me tell you guys why you don't know me. And I started sharing my whole story. And, dude, people were bawling listening to my story as I shared the gospel.

And here's what I found. God is more often able to use our pain in the gospel than our prosperity. Okay? So if you're going through hard times right now and you're saying, I wish I was out of this, it very well may be that you're going through that hard time. Because in this hard time is what God's going to use in your life to make the gospel look so glorious.

Amen. That's what he's saying. You can use your life for God. Now, you don't need to get out of your circumstances. Remain in him.

Remain in him. Remain in him. Now, can I give you a couple caveats to that just so that you understand what I'm talking about? I mean, there can be situations when

you come to Christ that you need to get out of, just so you know. I mean, anything that promotes evil, anything that promotes sin, anything that participates in sin, you need to get out of that.

So, for instance, if you came to Christ here at harvest and you've been a drug dealer, Paul's not saying, remain in the situation you're in. Just keep selling drugs for the Lord. That's not what he's saying. What he's saying is God's gifted you in certain ways, probably with administration and management and sales, that maybe you can steward in other ways now for the glory of God. Right.

Or perhaps you heard in my message last week, like, listen, I'm telling you to remain in a situation does not mean married people. That if you're getting abused in your marriage and you're getting beat up every single night, it doesn't mean, well, I'm just taking a beating for the Lord. Heck, no. You come talk to us and we will help you and we will get you in a safe place until that stuff is taken care of. Cause you're not called to remain in abuse.

You understand what I'm saying? We're talking about our circumstances, the

ones that we're trying to get out cause we're uncomfortable with. Paul says, no, no, just settle in. If you're single, settle in. If you're married, settle in.

Just be comfortable giving God glory today with where you are. And here's why. Let me tell you why. Because you only get a one day contract with life. Did you know that?

There's no guarantee any of us get to be here tomorrow. There's no guarantee we got today. And that's all we get. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

What? Today, worship him presently. Give God wholehearted devotion with everything you have. So it's not the question of are you saved? The question is, if you are saved, does God have your wholehearted devotion to him today?

Because again, the enemy will say, no problem. I want you to worship God, too.

Just do it tomorrow. And when you wake up tomorrow, you know what he's gonna say.
I want you to worship God.

Just do it tomorrow. And pretty soon, weeks and months and years go by, and we're not worshiping the Lord. Wholeheartedly worship him now, you're not lacking anything for what you need to worship God right now. He's giving you everything you need for life and godliness right now. That's what he's saying.

And so some of us just need to make a stand for Jesus in our current circumstances, or make a stand for Jesus by not being involved in sin or evil anymore and standing for Jesus in a new and fresh way right now. Live your life wholeheartedly for God. That's what Paul's telling him with the hand you are dealt at the time of your calling. How about this one? Live your life wholeheartedly for God.

Number two, regardless of your religious or irreligious heritage at the time of your conversion. In other words, regardless of whether you come from a very religious background or you have no religious background at all, give God wholehearted devotion. Okay. Notice what he says in verse 18. Was any man called when he was

already circumcised?

He's not to become uncircumcised. He has not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called an uncircumcision? He's not to be circumcised. Why?

Because circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. But what matters is keeping the commandments of God. Now, circumcision doesn't get a lot of talk in the 21st century in the church. And here's why. I mean, circumcision was a big deal in the first century church, and let me tell you why.

Because circumcision was an outward sign of keeping the covenant of God in the Jewish nation. And when the church got established because Jesus was Jewish and the church started with Jews, guess what happened? Everything was fine until what? The church started going to the Gentiles, the non Jews. Now, you have people in church that have been steeped in tradition for all these years in the old covenant that says, this is what you do to keep the law.

And a bunch of people who have just come to Christ saying, we love that Jesus died for us and rose from the dead, and we know nothing about your Jewish traditions. And both these people are in the same room, and the Jewish people are saying, yeah, we buy that you're saved, but you're not, like, living it to the full. If you're really going to keep the law, then you need to get circumcised too, and then it'll be a good thing. So you got this going on with people that have this religious background, with people that have this irreligious background, and they can't seem to make things work. And what Paul is saying is that the outward sign on your flesh means nothing, that an outward change doesn't mean anything.

What matters is keeping the commandments of God. What matters is faith in Jesus Christ. What matters is that you love the Lord. That's what unites us together as a church. Notice what Paul says.

He wrote an entire book, really about the same topic to the Galatians, because in that region, they were dealing with this all the time. And when Paul writes to them, he tells them, hey, quit trying to tell everybody to keep all these Jewish rules. Christ died. He shed his blood. He was raised to life.

It's a new covenant. You don't have to change anything outwardly to be welcomed in the family of God. Notice what he says in Galatians five. Five. He says, for we, through the spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything but faith working through love, or faith expressing itself through love. What means anything in the church? Here's all it means. I have faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of my sin, and I've confessed him as Lord, and that is now being expressed in my life, in my love for God, and in my love for other people. That's all that matters.

The outside doesn't matter. Your religious heritage doesn't matter. If you came from a religious background, that's a good heritage. If you came from an irreligious background, that's a good heritage. I mean, God's going to use whatever heritage you have for his glory.

And here's what I find in church. After nearly 25 years of doing ministry, whatever your background is, you wish you would have come from the other one. That tends to

be what it is, right? I mean, some of you that grew up in very religious environments, do not apologize for that. Do not apologize for that.

Some of you that grew up in very irreligious environments, do not apologize for that. It is the circumstance or the curriculum that God had for your life. Here's what I call both groups to do repent of your sins and then move forward and love God and love other people. And that's how he brings us together. See, religious people, those of you that grew up religious, you have a hard time sometimes because some of you think that there wasn't really that many bad things that God had to save you from.

I mean, I've gone to church my whole life, and I've sang these songs and I've gone to groups, and I went to the youth group, and then I went to the high school group and the twenties group, and I've always kind of done what God wants. And from the time I was seven, I got saved. And I really don't have a colorful testimony. As a matter of fact, I really don't even have a testimony. I was one of those kids.

I grew up going to church since the time I was four, since I can remember. And I went to a lutheran grade school from kindergarten through 8th grade. So, you know, I

memorized scripture. I have the whole Luther small catechism memorized. I mean, that was my background.

But I wasn't saved. I was just a churchgoer that really thought if I were to die today, I'm going to heaven. Of course I'm going to heaven. I mean, I'm better than most of people I know. I mean, that was my testimony, right?

So when I go to young life camp at the age of 18 and really realize that I'm a sinner in need of the grace of God, and I confess Jesus Christ as my personal lord and savior, and he comes into my life and he totally saves me. And I know that I'm different on the inside out. I just don't really realize what's taken place because nobody ever really taught me that. And I get to that great theological institution of the University of Illinois, and I start looking for ministries, and I go to a ministry where they started doing these things called testimonies. I'd never seen one before.

I'd never heard of a testimony before. But here's what I've gathered after three weeks. I mean, I'm paraphrasing the three weeks of testimonies that I heard. They went something like this, man, I came to school down here and I was just sleeping

around. I was getting drunk every night.

We were doing drugs. Oh my gosh, it was so much fun. We were just partying like crazy. And then this guy came and shared the gospel with me, and I realized I was going to hell. So I trusted Jesus.

And now, you know, now I go to this meeting and stuff, and it's good. It's good. Kind of fun. That was kind of like the testimony. Now, about four weeks in, they found out I played football, and they said, you need to give your testimony.

And I remember thinking, I don't have one. And I never went back to the ministry. Cause my thought was, as I was sitting there listening to all these people, I didn't think I was spiritual enough. I thought, this is true. I thought, I need to go beef up my testimony.

So I have one. And you laugh. But for three years, that was probably the biggest painful three years of my life, because I was trying to see, like, maybe God could save

me from these things and was trying to run with certain crowds and doing different things. So I got 1ft in the world and I got 1ft with God. And I'm totally confused and hating it.

Let me tell you something. If you come from a religious environment where you trusted God at a young age, praise God for that. That's a testimony. The testimony is not your situation. The testimony is what God did in your situation.

The sooner he moved in your life, the more praise, glory and honor you can give to God. Don't apologize for your religious heritage. I mean, when I pray for my kids, let me tell you how I don't pray for my kids. Dear God, I hope one day that as we grow and invest in them, that they're walking with you until they leave our house. And then I hope they run wild for a period of time until they're so disgusted with themselves and so wounded and hurt that they really understand how awesome you are.

I've never prayed that. I pray by God's grace that my kids would grow in a church where they would really know Jesus Christ, see him, own him in such a way that they would only know what it looks like to walk with Jesus Christ for their whole

life. Right? Isn't that what we pray? And so here's the problem.

Religious people, okay, listen to me. And I don't know why I did this last night, too. I'm walking over here for all the religious people. You're religious people, too. Okay, so I'll come over here.

So the point is, sometimes religious people, they have a hard time being authentic and vulnerable with other people because they think, you know, I should have known better about this. I was told this from the time I was four, and I still did it, and I was religious. And so when we get in a group, I'll give you some general things about what happened in my past. But there's no way I'm telling you the real deal. Cause I should have known better.

And I'm still living with a guilt and shame. I got great news for you today. You've already been forgiven for all that. So you might as well glorify God for what he's forgiven you from. There's no need.

You need to hide your little religious secrets and be all fake because you were religious, okay? Just be real. And I'm not saying you air your dirty laundry with everybody like, hello, I'm Jeff, and let me tell you my ten biggest sins. That's not what I'm talking about. But there are situations where sometimes you hold back because you think to yourself, if I share this, they'll judge me.

Religious people, we do it all the time. If I share this, they'll judge me because they'll say, well, you think you talk about being a Christian when you're 18 and you live like that after? I don't. Who cares what other people think? How about we care about what Jesus thinks?

And how about we share a story in such a way that say, God, you saved me from all my sin, and you've saved me from this sense, and I praise you, God, that you're the God of my life, and I'm walking with you. Okay? But irreligious people have the same problem, because irreligious people never feel like they fit in at church. Because in some ways, they're more authentic. Because the way in which they came to Christ, we know their whole background and whole story and what they were saved out of.

And so we'll say stuff like this. Well, welcome, welcome. We're so glad that you're here. But sometimes irreligious people feel like. But I can't really share my whole story because you guys are, like, churchy people.

You've never even been exposed to this stuff before. Right? I mean, so if I'm in a group and you're, you know, I know the depth of my depravity, and you're talking about that, you know, you got a little snarky with your spouse this week, and I'm like, big WHOOP. I. You know, I shot drugs for 40 years, so I really don't feel like I connect with you right now.

Both are sin. But I want to tell you something about irreligious people. Irreligious people have a hard time in a church because they feel like they can't truly be themselves and can't truly share their story about what Christ did. Because they're going to be judged by religious people who think they did it better their whole life. You see the problem?

See, that was what was going on in the church in the first century. You know, circumcision or uncircumcision. You're keeping the law. You're not keeping the law. Are you really in or are you not in?

Here's how you're really in. If you believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord who died for your sins and rose from the dead, and you've confessed him as your lord and savior, you're in. And all your sin in your past is forgiven. So you don't need to hide it or hold it back and say anything other than by the grace of God. I am what I am.

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Right? That's what he's saying. He's telling the church, be real and authentic and worship God presently, regardless of your circumstances.

You've already been saved from all these things. That's why I love our church. I mean, I love our church because we got people of all backgrounds. I mean, we got people that are super wealthy and we've got people that are homeless. We got people that have had abortions.

We have people that have been raped. We got people that have committed murder of infidelity, porn. We've had suicide attempts, fear, anxiety, doubt, discouragement, depression, people that have been bankrupt. I mean, we got it all. I mean, and you wonder, well, where are those people?

Just turn your head to the right or left? They're all around you, right? People that have that scar in their life that says, I know God's forgiven me of this, but I could never tell anybody else that God has forgiven me of this because it would make me feel bad. Let me tell you something. That's shame.

Quit holding onto it. You're forgiven. You're free. You're free in Christ to be all that he wants you to be right now. And you're welcome here because Jesus Christ welcomes you here.

Amen. That's what he's saying to the church in Corinth. Your religious heritage is good. Your irreligious heritage is what God called you out of. It's good.

You don't need to apologize for it. What we're promoting is the blood of Jesus that saves us from all of our sin. Circumcision or uncircumcision means nothing. Religious heritage or irreligious heritage means nothing. What matters is faith expressing itself through love.

It's keeping the commandments of God. It's being obedient to Christ from this moment on, starting today. That's what it means. So live your life wholeheartedly for God. Live it with the hand you were dealt.

Live it regardless of your heritage. How about this one? Live it without trying to change your social status. Live wholeheartedly for God without trying to change your social status. Notice what he says in one corinthians chapter seven, starting in verse 21.

He says this, were you called while a slave? In other words, were you saved while you're a slave? Do not worry about it. But if you're able also to become free,

rather do that for he who was called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freed man.

Likewise, he who was called while free is Christ's slave.

Now, a lot of times people read the Bible and they'll say stuff like this in a cursory reading. Well, the Bible promotes slavery, and the Bible promotes slavery. Let me tell you what the Bible does not promote. It does not promote slavery, okay? The Bible never promotes slavery, ever.

What Paul's talking about here, he's talking to a group of people, and in the church, about two thirds of the New Testament world would have been slaves. Two thirds of the people listening to this message are slaves. And he's saying, I want to tell you something. You don't need to be freed from your slavery in order to serve Christ to the full, because if you are a slave, everything's just changed. You're actually now Christ's freed man, okay?

And if you've been free and you're not a slave, and now you've been slave, but now you've been saved, you're no longer free. You're Christ's slave. In other words, the gospel of Jesus Christ levels the entire playing field for us to worship Christ

wholeheartedly. Now, why does Paul put this in there? Because we as a group of christians, we tend to want to picket everything and tell everybody what we're against and, you know, have all this stuff, hey, we need to change the whole world.

Paul understood this and Jesus understood this, that the way the world needs to change is internally through the heart, not outwardly, through what we change politically or anything like that. I mean, the change that needs to happen is if everybody in the world would meet Jesus Christ and confess him as their lord and savior, everything would change, right? And so Paul's like, I'm not sitting here trying to make a big thing about getting rid of slavery, although I think it's wrong. And if you can get your free from slavery, it's a good thing. But I want to tell you this.

Even if you are a slave and that's the circumstance you're in, you can glorify Jesus Christ to the full as a slave. But I want you to know something. You no longer see yourself as a slave because you're Christ's slave, which means that you are a freed man or you are a freed woman under him. Right? Let me draw it a little closer to home for you.

Some of you that are employed, okay? And you have a boss when you get saved, you no longer have that boss anymore. He or she is no longer your boss. Jesus Christ, the king of the universe, is your boss, right? So that's your boss.

And so now you serve your earthly boss and love him or her in a way that Jesus would if he was living his life in and through you. Does that make sense? I mean, if you're married, when you get saved, here's what happens. You're no longer looking to your spouse to meet all of your needs. What do you do?

I'm looking to Jesus Christ to meet all my needs. And I'm looking to my spouse as someone to with the love of Christ. If Jesus were living his life in and through me, do you see what happens? Like, everything's changed. Jesus Christ is the Lord now.

Nobody else is. And that's why he makes it really clear when he goes down in verse 23 when he says, you were bought with a price. Do not become slaves of men. Do not become slaves of men. Why?

Because we can get tripped up by becoming slaves of other people. How do you become a slave of another person? When you care more about what they think than about what God thinks, you become a slave to them. Okay, now let me read you from the proverbs. It's a very familiar proverb.

It's proverbs. Chapter 29. Proverbs 29 and verse 25. Proverbs 29 and verse 25 says this. The fear of man brings a snare.

It means when you're afraid of what other people are going to think about you or how other people are going to respond to you or what they're going to do to you, it brings a snare. But he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted. It means if you give your allegiance to. I care about what they're going to think about me. I care about how they feel about me, rather than I care about what Jesus thinks about me and what he feels about me.

It's a snare, and you become a slave to the people that you're thinking about, well, if I do this, she's going to act like that. And if I do this, he's going to act like this.

And I can't share this because then they would talk about me like that. If you live your life like that, you are not free. You're a slave.

When you can live your life free and say, this is who I am in Christ. And I'm not really that concerned with how you feel, although I am human and I appreciate affirmation and it hurts my feelings if you say bad things about me. And I get all that. But at the end of the day, I care more about how Jesus feels about me and receiving his love from him than I do about being concerned about how you might feel about me. Right?

That's what it means to be truly free. And this is what Paul's telling the church. I mean, this is what it is. And why is this important? Let me tell you why.

This life that you're living, this is the dress rehearsal of everything that's to come. James 4:14 says that life is a vapor. It goes fast. Now, this is hard for me to explain to those of you under the age of 20, because I can explain it to you, but you don't believe me. And that's okay.

I didn't believe it either. But your life is going to go so fast that one day you'll be my age and you won't think that you're old and it's going to happen, like tomorrow, right? I mean, this was like the first birthday year that I had where I wasn't looking backwards thinking, man, look at how far I've come. I was looking forward thinking how much time I got left. But I'm looking at my kids who are ten, eight and four and they're getting ready to celebrate Christmas.

And I'm thinking about, I remember what it was like to be ten, eight and four and getting ready to celebrate Christmas. And it feels like last week, what happened? Life's a vapor. You only get so often to worship the Lord. Worship him now, presently, worship him now.

With everything you have. You only get one chance. There's no guarantee of tomorrow. There is a guarantee of right now. So worship him now.

Give him your best now. Why? Because one day, every single one of you will stand before the glory of God in all of his holiness, exposing everything about you. And

if you're not covered with his blood, it's going to be a horrible day. But even if you are covered in his blood, won't it be much better to appear before Jesus, knowing that daily you are pursuing him, worshiping him, honoring him, looking forward to the day that you would meet him, eagerly awaiting his return, so that when he returns, you're like, yes, I used to have a friend that used to make a joke and say, man, that guy's so spiritual.

Jesus is probably going to come back during his quiet time, you know? And don't we wish it was always like that? I mean, do you live your life in such a way that if Jesus came back at any moment, at any time, you'd be glad to see him, that your eyes would be fixed upon him? See here becomes a real big question as we study this text. Is this what is in your life?

If you're a believer in Christ? What is it in your life that is getting in the way of you giving wholehearted undevotion to Jesus Christ right now? What's that thing? If you made a statement like this, Jesus, you could have everything in my life, and I would give you everything except for what's the, that that's hindering your worship of Christ. That's the thing that needs to be turned over to the Lord so that he either can put it back together and hand it back to you or take it away.

Because here's what Christ wants more than anything else, your wholehearted undevotion, wholehearted, unashamed devotion to him. And why? Because the Bible tells us when you delight in the Lord, he'll give you the desires of your heart. I mean, there's nothing more exciting than being in a place where you can worship the Lord, Lord, and experience his delight in you. Nothing.

Nothing but nothing. This is not Paul being a killjoy. Hey, just sit in the corner until Jesus gets back. You can't do anything. No, this is Paul saying right now where you are, you are able to worship the God of the universe, who is living and active, who is working among you, who wants to do great and mighty things in and through you.

And as he does that, he's going to open a whole world of possibilities that you didn't even know existed. That's who our God is. Give them your best. And why do we do this? Let me give you point number four.

We live wholeheartedly for God. We're fully engaged in the gospel because of

this final point, because you were bought with a price. Verse 23 says, you were bought with a price. Do not become slaves of men. What does it mean to be bought with a price?

I mean, think about the things that you've bought. Think about the things that you purchased. Think about some of the things that you purchased that have actually cost a little more time and a little more money for you to get. And think about how you care about those things. And those things aren't even your things.

I mean, you're gonna die someday and they're gonna be somebody else's things. I mean, you're just a manager of those things for right now, but think about the things that have cost you something to purchase. Jesus Christ bought you. If you are a Christian, he bought you. You say, well, how did he do that?

Well, I'll tell you how he did it. God the father sent his own son. And here's how he purchased you. He purchased you with the life of his only begotten son. That's how he's purchased you.

I mean, you think that's a big deal? It's a huge deal. The God of the universe purchased you with his blood. The God of the universe purchased you and you belong to him. And since you've been purchased, you're not your own.

I mean, we look at our life and we hear these things about singleness and marriage and where our job is and all this stuff, and we're like, I don't like that. I want to be this. I want to be that. Here's what Jesus would say. Hey, listen.

Listen up. Jesus says, I spent my whole eternity choosing how I was going to put out salvation, and I chose you in me before the foundation of the world. And I gave you life when you were dead, and I gave you hope when you had despair. And I poured my life into you. I gave you everything you needed for life and godliness.

What on your schedule today is more important than giving me glory? That's what he would say. Now, often when we share our stories, and often we do give testimonies because I believe in testimonies. But testimonies are God's work in us. And so it's

okay to give a testimony as to, hey, here's my life before I met Christ.

And this is when I confess Jesus as my lord and savior. Hopefully when you say that, there's a little more excitement than in some testimonies I've heard, and hopefully you can tell since I've come to Christ, I'm even more excited about that. I mean, that's the idea, if you're really living with the eternal true God of the universe. But here's what I would tell you. What Paul is saying is we don't start our story early enough.

I mean, we started our story at conversion, because that's when God opened our eyes to be able to see who he was. But can I tell you, salvation history started long before that. Do you know when salvation history started? It started before the foundation of the world. I mean, ephesians three tells us that once we're saved, God gives us revelation from his word to look backwards to see.

Hey, when did this whole thing come about? And in Ephesians one three, I'll show you a couple verses. Paul says, blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. In other words, if you're saved, you've been given every spiritual blessing you could

ever possibly have. It's already yours in Christ, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before him.

Okay, so I look at it, and in the summer of 1989, I confess Jesus Christ as my personal lord and savior. Here's what he did at the moment, and here's what he's been doing since. And that's my testimony. But here's God's testimony. Hey, Jeff.

Before the foundation of the world, before I even said, let there be, here's what I decided. Father, son and Holy Spirit, we decided we wanted you, and we decided we were going to purchase you. And so I decided, before the world was even created, Jesus said, I decided I would come for you, live for you, die for you, and that while you were still a sinner, I would do all that. 2000 years before you were even born, I would do all that. And I made sure that I would reveal myself to you by my grace, and I would purchase you with my blood.

And you're mine. And not only are you mine and I'm growing you, but one day, Jeff, I'm going to present you faultless before my father with great exceeding joy. And it's already a done deal because I said it was going to happen, and I'm your God.

That's salvation. Isn't that awesome?

See, I've been bought with. With a price. I'm not my own. I didn't choose God.

God chose me.

Now, if you're sitting here today and say, well, I don't know if he chose me, how do I know if I'm chosen? Hey, this is the beauty of the gospel. Here's how you can know that. You can know that. You can know that.

You can know that you're chosen. See, when Jesus Christ came, he came for the whole world, for God. So loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him, well, who's the chosen? Whoever believes in him, well, I want to be chosen. Then you need to believe in him.

Whoever believes in him has everlasting life. Whoever believes in him. Do you believe in him? I'm not asking if you believe about him. I'm not asking if you believe he came and died on a cross and rose from the dead.

I'm not asking if you believe facts because the devil believes all those things. I'm asking with those facts that you believe. Have you confessed Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life? Tell me when that happens. Tell me when your allegiance shifted.

Tell me when you said in your own heart, I'm not living for me anymore. I'm living for Jesus. I want to put my sin on rewind. I want God to forgive it all. I don't want to do anything with this anymore.

And I want to live wholeheartedly for Jesus. When did that happen in your life? Because I know there's several of you come to harvest every single week, and many of you who probably have never given your life to Christ, who think you're saved because you're a good person, who think you're saved because you read the Bible, who think you saved because you hear a pastor that preaches the word. But here's how you know that. You know that you know.

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord? When have you placed your faith and trust in him? When did you see your need for forgiveness? When did you call out to him? And I want to tell you something, when you do, God shows up huge.

And once you're his, then we read the Bible and we read it backwards, saying, wow, that was his plan all the way from the beginning. He always had me in mind. I want to tell you this from the authority of God's word. He loves you. He loves you, he loves you, he loves you.

And there's nothing that you've ever done that God could not forgive. Did you hear what I said? There's nothing but nothing but nothing you've ever done that God could not forgive. As a matter of fact, he demonstrated it by dying on a cross. And when he was dying on a cross, he knew every sin you were ever going to sin and said, that's why I'm here.

I'm here on purpose to die for you, because I love you. Would you believe that I did that for you? Would you place your faith and trust in me? See, some of you need to do that today and others of you have said, I've done that. I've trusted Jesus.

He definitely is my lord. Here's my question for you then. Are you giving God wholehearted allegiance? Is there anything in your life that takes the place of Jesus? Anything you enjoy more than Jesus?

Anything that gets your allegiance more than Jesus? Because if there is, his statement to you today would be, hey, would you repent of that? And would you let me be the Lord of everything in your life, not just some of it. You were bought with a price. You are not your own.

You belong to the king of the universe. And he loves you. He loves you. He loves you. He loves you.

So the way I want to end is twofold. I want to pray here in a minute. I want to give you the opportunity, if you've never trusted Christ, to trust Christ and to say, hey, listen, I've heard the facts, but I don't know there's ever been a time in my life where Jesus Christ has been my lord, and I want him to be the Lord of my life, and I want him

to be the Lord of my life right now. And there's others of you who are here who would say, there's no doubt Jesus Christ is the Lord of my life. But as I'm listening to this message today, I realize I've been uncomfortable about my circumstances and where I'm at and how I'm to remain.

And there's ways. I'm not giving Jesus full allegiance or devotion. And God, I just want to repent of that right now. And from this moment on, I want to give you full allegiance. And so we'll spend a minute or so in prayer, and then what I'm going to do is I'm going to open it up.

And what we're going to do and what we're going to do is so awesome, is what we're going to celebrate together is the Lord's supper. It's the body and blood of Christ. It's what brings us together. Regardless of our background, regardless of our story, we come because of the body and blood of Jesus. You know, on the night that Jesus was betrayed, he took bread, and when he given thanks, he broke, and he passed it to his disciples and said, take and eat.

This is my body that's given for you and for many. For what? For the forgiveness

of sins. And after supper, he took the cup and he said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it, and often as you eat it, in remembrance of me.

So what we're going to do is we're going to do communion, but we're going to do it a little different today. After we pray and I get you up, you're welcome to come to the Lord's table anywhere. There's a couple tables here, a couple on the side. There's four tables in the back. And you can go at your own leisure, and you can take it whenever you want.

But what we're going to do first is prepare our hearts, because anybody can come take the meal who has truly repented of his or her sins and trusted Jesus Christ as Lord. So why don't you bow your heads and close your eyes with me now let's just pray. Lord Jesus, we just give you praise. And, Lord, in this moment, in this special moment, we just pray that you would do a work. Lord, there's some of us who are here, whether we're from religious or irreligious backgrounds, that would say, I don't know that I've ever personally called upon you and given you my life.

And, Lord, there's some religious people here today that say, well, I can't do that because then my parents would look at me and think that I wasn't being obedient to them for the last 20 years. And I just can't do that because then my church would think I was being fake. And, Lord, you're calling some religious people home to you today. Lord, give them the strength to repent of their sin and come trust you. We're talking about eternity here.

And, Lord, there's some irreligious people here who are saying, I don't even belong in this place. I don't understand a thing. But, Jesus, if you can forgive me, I need to give my life to you. I don't care what side you come from. Here's how you would pray today.

Jesus, I admit to you that I'm a sinner, and I don't stand righteous in front of you. But I believe that you came for me, that you lived a perfect life, that you died for me on the cross, and that you rose from the dead. And right now, Jesus, in this place I repent of my sin. And I confess you as my personal lord and savior right here and right now. And, Lord, for the work that you're doing in the lives that are responding to the gospel, Lord, fill them afresh with your holy spirit.

Let them know that they belong to you. And then, Lord, for some of us, we're in here and we say, I've done that. I've prayed that I know Jesus is my lord. But, Lord, there's something that they heard today that said, hey, Jesus doesn't have my full allegiance. Jesus showed you what's getting in the way.

Would you confess that to him right now? Would you repent of that? Not just say, yeah, that's what it is, but I'm gonna keep doing it. But for those that would say, yeah, that's what it is. And I don't want to do that anymore.

I don't even know how to stop. Lord, that's yours.

And so, Lord, we just give you praise, we give you glory. We give you honor, Lord. Prepare our hearts, Lord. Anyone here who's confessed Jesus Christ as Lord is welcome to take this meal, Lord. We trust you for that.

And so, Lord, during the singing of this song, as we come forward and we take this meal, Lord, throughout this church, we just pray that you'd be glorified and you'd be honored. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen.