

1 Corinthians 9

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[0 : 00] We're in 1 Corinthians chapter 9. Before we, well, if you're physically able and desire to do so, I'm going to ask you to join with me as we stand together. We'll read the entire chapter. We're going to look at the entire chapter of 1 Corinthians chapter 9.

As we've just made our way up to this point in the book of 1 Corinthians. So let's read the Word of God with one another. Paul says, Am I not free? Am I not an apostle?

Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

My defense to those who examine me is this. Do we not have a right to eat and drink? Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?

Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it?

[1 : 00] Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the law also say these things? For it is written in the law of Moses, You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.

God is not concerned about oxen, is he? Or is he speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written because the plowman ought to plow in hope and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops.

If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share their right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we do not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case. For it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one.

[2 : 13] 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 not to make full use of my right in the gospel. For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.

To the Jews, I became as a Jew, so that I may 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 I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

[3 : 13] Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things.

They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore, I run in such a way as not without aim. I box in such a way as not beating the air. But I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for this day. God's so thankful for the opportunity we have to gather together as a church body. Lord, we're thankful for the privilege it is of reading your word.

And Lord, now as we take time just to be still, we ask that you would speak to us through the power and presence of your spirit. Lord, may the words that are proclaimed not be the thoughts or the opinions of man, but may it be the very word of God that penetrates to the very depth of our being.

And Lord, as you speak to us, we pray that you would do a great work in us for your glory and yours alone. Would you shape and conform us to become more like you in all our things?

[4 : 21] And we ask it in Christ's name. Amen. You may be seated. We have come to the portion in the book of 1 Corinthians, chapters 8, 9, 10, and the first verse of 11, in which Paul is answering really one specific question.

And the one specific question is kind of posed at the beginning of the 8th chapter, when Paul says, Now concerning meat that has been sacrificed to idols.

Concerning meat that has been offered up to idols. And last week, we began to look at this reality, how the people in the city of Corinth had one of two places in which they could buy their meat, either from the open market or they could get it at a cheaper price.

They could get it from the idolatrous temples because the animal had already been offered as a sacrifice. The meat was still edible. It was still there. But the raging question in the believer's mind is, Is I'm free or am I free to buy the meat at a discount price, even though it has already laid on the altar of an idol?

And Paul begins to answer these questions, not really with the freedoms of the individual, but with a concern for others. And we began looking at how in these three chapters, now he ends it in the 11th chapter, I believe, the first verse, where he says, Be imitators as me as I also imitate Christ.

[5 : 43] I think that's the conclusion to the answer because the second verse in the 11th chapter gives another question. But really the question is not, Can I do it? The question is, Should I do it?

And not should I do it for my own personal welfare, but should I do it in light of those around me? And it is living with a concern for others. And how we ought to be motivated to live with a concern for others.

In the 8th chapter, Paul shows us that great motivation. The motivation that if we do anything which causes the weaker to stumble, then we have sinned against Christ.

That if any of our actions, any of our decisions, any of our so-called freedoms, any of our freedoms in Christ, causes another to stumble, then we have not just sinned against that individual, rather we have sinned against Christ because that individual is a person for whom Christ has died.

And we have the risk, Paul says, essentially, that by sinning against that individual, though we are free, we render that individual useless for the sake of the kingdom.

[6 : 49] Because what he has seen in us has caused him to stumble so much that he will be really useless from that point on. So we begin to have this great motivation.

It's not just a desire to fulfill a personal need or a personal concern. It is really living with a concern for others. In the ninth chapter, Paul is going to give us a living, breathing application to that principle.

And the application he gives is himself. This is why, when he closes this portion with the first verse in the eleventh chapter, he says, Be imitators of me as I also imitate Christ.

Now, it is not always fitting to give an illustration that is one of your own self. But Paul had no other person to point to as it pertained to the city of Corinth, someone that they were intimately aware with, someone that they knew in such a manner other than himself, to illustrate the point that he has just declared.

That you ought to live with a concern for others. And then he shows himself as an example of living with a concern for others.

[7 : 54] But we see in the ninth chapter, the worth of the gospel. The worth of the gospel. Are the personal decisions and personal sacrifices, and really living with a concern for others, is the gospel worth.

And he declares through his own life, the worthiness of the gospel. And he tells us three things. I don't always tell you how many points I have, but I have three.

He tells us three ways that the gospel is worthy. What it is worthy of, and how we should live our lives committed to it. We see them, first of all, that the gospel is worthy of our sacrificial living.

The gospel is worthy of our sacrificial living. Paul puts forward his own life. And he declares to them, Am I not an apostle? Am I not free?

Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? I love how many Bible commentators say, Here in one simple sentence, Paul declares everything that is fitting, and everything that is necessary for the apostleship of Jesus Christ.

[9 : 04] Am I not free? And have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? He had a personal encounter. Not only in Damascus row, we know that Acts chapter 9, he tells it five different times throughout the book of Acts, that he had this encounter with Christ on Damascus row, while he was still breathing threats.

We also know there's three years of silence, that we don't know much of what happened with Paul, other than he declares that he was taught of the Lord in the wilderness. He had this encounter with Christ.

All the signs of an apostle were seen through him. All the necessary means of the apostleship were declared in him. And Paul asked the church at Corinth, Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? And he said, If there's nothing else that declares my worthiness, or my rights to be declared an apostle, you are the testimony.

See, the work that happened in Corinth was a supernatural work, because people would come to Christ, and come to faith, and the birth of the church at Corinth was a magnificent thing. And Paul begins to declare how God has used him through the power of Jesus Christ, and the establishment of the church.

And he's not doing this to puff himself up. He's doing this because this bears a responsibility to the church. Because then he says, If these things are so, and he says, Then do I not have the authority, or the right, now the authority, that word can kind of scare us a little bit, but it just means to have the right to expect something.

[10 : 24] He said, Do I not have the authority and the right to expect, since I have imparted to you spiritual things, should I not receive from you material things? And he begins to make these statements here.

And this is a hard passage for pastors to preach, just to be honest with you. It shouldn't be, but it is. Because he begins to make this declaration. By the way, this is something I became very convicted of early in the ministry.

There were times where I began to move around and do things, and what should I do, and should I not do. By the way, there's no such thing as a part-time pastor. All pastors are full-time, whether or not that is reflected or not.

And they all have the same command, and we see it here in the text, because it says in verse 14, So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. That's a directive, right?

In just about every one of the letters, Paul writes to the church, as it concerns to the way the church works, and the way church operates, this is a repeated refrain, that those who labor among the people should expect that this is how God has called them, this is what God has appointed them to do, that their expectation is that they would give their efforts, their energy, and their time to the church, and that the church would honor them and respect them and do this.

[11 : 37] The church does a fantastic job. It's not a message about that, right? It's not a message about, oh, War Trace Baptist, you need to pay your pastor. That's not what this message is about. But Paul is declaring here this reality. By the way, Paul does, because you're going to say, oh, what Paul says, he didn't do that.

He did it so he could be free. Read the rest of your New Testament, because Paul does take payment from other churches. That he is being supported by other churches so that he can offer free work among the church of Corinth.

And we understand that. Paul does receive those things. It's not contradictory in any means. But he is here speaking to one church in one location. He's given a great application. Because the city of Corinth was a prospering city.

The city of Corinth was a wealthy city. The churches that we find supporting Paul are the churches that are from not so prosperous of cities, not so well off to do as you can. They're sacrificially supporting them.

Yet Paul here, because of this church, we're speaking about rights. Do you have the right? Can I eat meat? Do I have the right to eat meat? Paul says, I can give you the greatest example. I have the right to expect payment from the churches that I labor among.

[12 : 43] He says, but I don't. I don't. Why? Because just like the city of Corinth was a prosperous city, it was also a city with much demonic activity.

It was a dark city. It was a city that desperately needed to be reached for Christ. It was a city that had deep inroads of the occult, or inroads of the occult, and all these other practices.

And then Paul goes on, he gives all the authority, all the rights, and all these things. But then he says in verse 12, and this is what's astounding, if others share the right over you, do we not more?

So here's the thing. It wasn't that the church at Corinth wasn't supporting anyone. They were supporting others. They just weren't supporting Paul. Because see, all their wise men and all their great eloquent speakers.

Remember, we opened this letter speaking about how they were divided as a church because there were some people who leaned more towards this pastor and more towards this pastor. And they were supporting everybody else, but they had forgot about Paul, the one who had planted them and established them.

[13 : 42] They had forgot about Paul who had labored among them, who had really led them in the things of the gospel. Paul says, it's not that. He says, nevertheless, we did not use this right because it's sacrificial living, right?

The question is, do I have a right to eat meat from the temple? And Paul says, well, do I have a right to expect material things from you? The answer is, yeah, you can, you can do that. But he says, but I didn't, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

He says, the gospel is worthy of sacrificial living. Paul says, I'm laying that right and that authority aside because I know that if I was to require that or if I was to move forward in this thing that I am free to expect, that it would hinder the gospel among some in the city of Corinth.

And I'm willing to deny myself that right because there are people who need to hear the gospel. He says, now, I'm not writing these things so that you will do it. He doesn't want to make any mistake about it.

He's not trying to kind of come around the back door and surprise me. He says, I don't want you to do this. I don't want you to begin paying me. He said, I'm just using myself as an illustration. The reason I am not requiring or declaring that I get everything that I can get is because it is more beneficial that I sacrifice so that others can come to Christ.

[15 : 00] Now, the declaration to that is, or the application of that really is, what do we see in our personal lives that we deem worthy of sacrificing so that others may hear the gospel?

I mean, if you speak of the business side of the church as a pastor, it's one of the things I constantly think about. Even if it applies to my own pay, my own things, you know, where does that stop?

Where do we say, oh, well, this is better over here and we should do it in a different manner over there. I'm getting feedback, brothers. I don't know, either maybe I need to quit talking or I need to back away from the microphone.

I don't know, either one of the two. It's okay. But Paul declares that he is not using these things. He's not writing them so that they would be done in his case, but it would be better for me to die than to have any man boast or make my boast an empty one.

For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of for I'm 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.

[16 : 05] And I agree with Dr. Adrian Rogers on this. Adrian Rogers in the past said it this way. He said, I have preached for pay, I have preached for free, and I have paid to preach. And he said, and they're all the same.

You know why? Because woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. If today, every church decided not to ever pay Billy Joe Calvert again to ever be the pastor, I would still preach.

Because that's my responsibility. Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. He says, he's been entrusted with this. So this was not a shame game. What this was, this was Paul using himself as an illustration that the sacrificial living is worth it because the gospel must not be hindered.

And he declares this to this church. He says, I am not requiring every freedom that is mine to be taken so that it's not hindered among you. So what, how does it pertain to your meat?

Maybe we don't need to declare that, well, if I'm free to eat it, I'm going to go get it. Or if I'm free to do this, I should do it. Maybe we ought to look and see, do these freedoms cause the gospel to be hindered among anyone?

[17 : 14] And if so, I have to reconcile in my mind that it is worthy of my sacrifice. It is worthy of my sacrifice because if not, then I'm declaring that the gospel is not worth that.

I'm saying my rights are greater than the gospel, which, by the way, is never true. So we see the sacrificial living. The second thing we see is that the gospel is worthy of our surrendered intentionality.

our surrendered intentionality. A very familiar set of verses to us. He says, in verse 17, for if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward, but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me.

So he's speaking of his stewardship here then. He says, what then is my reward? That when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. Here it is in verse 19.

Look at this surrender. For though I am free from all men, and Christ has set you free, you are free indeed, right? Paul declared that he had the blood of no man on his hands.

[18 : 20] Paul says he's free from all men's blood because he has not failed to proclaim the gospel. For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all. Wow.

Why? So that I may win more. He says, I'm free from all men. But I've made myself a slave to all. That's surrender, right? So that I may win more.

Now, we've got to notice in this portion of scripture what Paul does not say. Paul does not say that he expects everyone that he declares the gospel to come to Christ. He does not expect all to come to Christ, right?

Now, he's moving forward in that because he says over and over again that he has made himself a slave to all so that there may be more. And later on, he says, so that he may win some.

He never declares he's going to win all. But what he says is the surrender. And I'm going to surrender myself intentionally to be a slave to all men because some of them are going to come to Christ. And it's worth my surrender.

[19 : 20] He says, to the Jews, I became a Jew so that I might win Jews. To those who are under the law is under the law. And not being myself under the law so that I might win those who are under the law. To those without the law is without the law.

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. Now we notice what Paul does not do.

Paul does not change the gospel according to the situation. He merely changes the presentation of the gospel according to the situation. The gospel never changes.

The gospel is that Jesus Christ was born in a perfect birth of the Virgin Mary. Sinless from conception, sinless in nature and sinless in habit and practice. Right?

Perfect. Lived a perfect example before men. He is God Emmanuel in the flesh throughout among us. He died a substitutionary perfect death on the cross of Calvary. He literally died.

[20 : 15] I mean, He literally died. He quit breathing. He gave up His spirit. Into your hands I commit to my spirits. He was dead and buried and laid in a borrowed tomb for three days laid in a tomb.

On the third day He walked out of that tomb literally alive. The birth, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ never changed. But your presentation of it ought to change.

Why? Because though the gospel has application to all men, it speaks differently to all people in all circumstances in all places. And Paul says, I live in such a manner that I'm going to surrender my personal likings, I'm going to surrender my personal leanings, I'm going to surrender these things, and I'm going to live intentionally according to those who are around me at the moment.

Friend, if you are around someone who knows nothing about the Bible whatsoever, oh, they don't know anything, well, you don't need to start with the book of Matthew and declaring Jesus Christ.

If they don't know anything about Scripture, if they've never opened the book, if they've never read anything at all, you need to start with the very existence of God. You need to go back to Genesis 1-1, in the beginning, God.

[21 : 29] They need to know that there is a God that they answer to. They need to know that the God that they answer to is a God of holy expectations who declare, be holy as I am holy. They need to know the God who gave man the opportunity and man failed miserably in that opportunity because until they know their failures, they'll never know they need a Savior.

But if someone already knows that, maybe they're walking around in guilt and shame because of the very depth of their being. They know they're not right. There are none righteous, no, not one. They've tried religion, they've tried practice, the reality of man's sin as something that resonates within their being.

Then my friend, if they already know it, then introduce them to the Savior, Jesus Christ. Take them to the book of Romans. Maybe they've heard the gospel. Maybe they know all about the gospel.

Maybe they know this Jesus. And maybe they think this Jesus is the Savior for some. But maybe they don't know that they know that they know that they've been saved. And then take them to 1 John. Because in the Bible, the book of 1 John, the theme is that you may know these things that are so.

If they're struggling with insurance, take them to 1 John. What I'm saying is become all things to all people. The gospel does not change, but the people around you do. And you need to be willing to surrender your personal favoritism.

[22 : 44] You need to be willing to surrender. I mean, if it was me, we would start in Genesis 1 every time. If it was me, we would hang out in the Old Testament for a while. If it was me, because the more I read the Old Testament, the more in love with Jesus I become.

And if it was me, then I would go from Genesis to Romans. But maybe that's not what they need. Because see, Paul says, I've become all things to all men that I may win some.

Which means sometimes we have to become something that we don't really like. Maybe it makes us uncomfortable. I'm not saying that you have to change your standing as a believer because he said, as those under the law, it's under the law.

Though not under the law myself, but free from Christ. As those without the law, it's without the law. Not living, you know, hypocritically, not living sinfully, but I'm going to meet them where they're at. Oh, we tell people, well, if you'll just come to church and hear the preacher, maybe you'll meet the Savior.

What if we went to the people and met them where they're at and introduced them to the Savior? Maybe if we surrendered our lives for intentional living and we began to look around and say, there's people there, there's people there, there's people there, and I know that, and I know that, and I know that.

[23 : 52] Each one of you, this is why the Bible says, and it blows me away when Jesus is meeting with his disciples there in the last few hours and we have them recorded for us in John 13, really, it really begins 14, 15, and 16 before you get to the high priestly prayer of John 17.

Jesus makes this wonderful declaration. It blows my mind. He says, greater works than I have done, you will do. That does not mean greater in scope. You're not going to die and pay the price of all men, but it means greater in reach because Jesus knew the reality that he had limited himself to a small geographical region for the entirety of his life.

And in that small geographical region, he had concentrated his efforts, he had imparted himself to these few individuals, 11 of them. You say, well, there was 12. Well, there was, but one of them was the son of perdition and Satan had his way with him, right?

He had entrusted himself to these people and that he knew that those 11, and then we have 12 and Matthias takes his place, that they're going to be expanded out and they will go, literally, if you read church history, they go so much further than Jesus ever did geographically.

And then we get to reach people and reach people and reach people. And when we gather together in this one locale, this one room and I look around it, we do greater as individuals than we ever do as we're just here together together because each and every one of you have the opportunity to be around more people than I could ever be around.

[25 : 04] Different people, people that would never hang around me that would hang around you, people that you know how to speak into their situations, I don't know how to speak into their situation. This is all about what I'm going to am I going to surrender my freedoms to live intentionally to those that I'm around.

He said, it's worth it. The gospel is worth it because you have the opportunity. What a wonderful opportunity it is. And you must capitalize those opportunities.

But the only way you do it is living with intentionality. Living a surrendered life to reach some. The third thing that he tells us the gospel is worthy of, the gospel is worthy of our steadfast devotion.

Number three, our steadfast devotion. He says, in verse 23, I do all things for the sake of the gospel so that I may become a fellow partaker of it. He says, everything I do is for the sake of the gospel.

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run? But only one receives the prowess. Run in such a way that you may win. Now, maybe it's not this way in your house.

[26 : 15] But around the Calvert house, we believe being competitive is not a sin. We think that if you keep score, it matters. Even if the scoreboard is not on, if you're keeping score in your head, it matters.

You say, Pastor, that's a little hardcore. No. We want to do everything we do in such a way, maybe sinfully at times, that we may win. Because I don't, want to lose.

That's just the way it is. I mean, checkers can get out of hand sometimes. We had to ban board games for a while when our kids were young because it just got out of hand. It got out of control.

Because if anybody's moving ahead and anybody's scoring, we want to do it in such a way that we may win. And that's not saying maybe games aren't your thing. Maybe sports aren't your thing. But what you do, you ought to do is unto the Lord, right?

And you ought to have as your ambition and your desire to do it to the best that you could for the Lord. Not for your own benefit, not so that your name may be put upon some marquee. But if you're going to do it, do it as unto the Lord.

[27 : 17] I believe that with all of my heart, with all of my soul, with all of my being. You say, what about recreational enjoyment? Well, I mean, yeah, I enjoy recreations a lot more when I'm winning. I do.

You know? I played sport yesterday. I didn't win very much. It wasn't very enjoyable. I woke up this morning and I was sore. And the whole time I woke up thinking I was sore, I was like, and I've lost. Now, if I had won, I could be walking around the house going, but it was worth it because I won, right?

Now, I gave it the best of my abilities, but my abilities are decreasing the more my age increases, I've realized. But I was trying to win with all of my being. I wanted to win. Why?

Because do all that you do as unto the Lord. Competitiveness only becomes sinful when we allow it to consume us and it all becomes about us, right?

And we understand this. We want to do things to the best of our ability. And Paul even says here that everyone who competes in the games does it. They're all running. But you want to run in such a way that you may win.

[28 : 17] Now, the application to the city of Corinth was very intentional because they had the games there, right? Not the Olympic games. They had the Isthmian games that were there. They happened in Corinth in the city and they were very celebrated games that would take place, but there's some application that you need to see here in just a moment that I want you to pay real close attention to.

But Paul says to run in such a way that you may win, there's some things you must do. He says everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They do it then to receive a perishable wreath, but we're an imperishable one.

He says, so if you're going to run, if you're going to be in these games, you have to exercise self-control. That's a word we don't like a whole lot because it puts responsibility on us, but we're talking about the worth of the gospel, right? You have to exercise self-control. They do it just to receive a perishable wreath, but we're an imperishable one.

He says, therefore, I'll run in such a way as not without aim. So understand this. If we're going to live with this steadfast devotion, we need to know what the end result is. He says, I'm not running as without aim.

Right? He's pressing on towards the prize set before him. He says, I run. It's not without aim. My box is not boxing. I'm beating the air. He says, I have someone I'm hitting. I have something I'm wrestling against. I'm doing it with some intentionality.

[29 : 28] He says, but I discipline my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified. Again, he's applying this personal freedom. He says, there are some things that I could do, but I'm not going to do it.

And I'm going to set my body in check. And I'm going to discipline my body in such a way that I may win because I don't want to proclaim something that I have no part of. He makes this bold declaration that we ought to have steadfast devotion because the gospel is worthy of it.

Because this is the reality. To compete in the games that came to Corinth, you had to be of the right demographic. You had to be of the right people group. The games were not open to all. You could only be your lineage and your ancestors had to be the same segment of people.

Right? So you had to belong to this group of people. And once you got to those games, you were there and you were observed for a number of days and they would watch you and they would watch you and they would watch you. And if you started cutting corners and if you started maybe slacking a little bit on your discipline and you started eating things you shouldn't eat, then they would disqualify you because even though you were of the right race, though you were of the right nationality, you weren't doing things the right way so you became disqualified.

Only those who devoted themselves to the competing of the games were allowed to compete when it came time. Then they would do it. Now it wasn't open to all. The application is pretty simple.

[30 : 42] This only belongs to the believers. The believers in Jesus Christ who have the right family have been called to enter into the race. I don't believe we can be disqualified but we can be set aside. We may still be a part of the race but we can't run the race because we're the right ethnicity there, so to say.

We're the right demographic. We're the right people because we're the family of God. We've accepted Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior but He looks around and He observes us and He watches us and wants to see how we are in our devotion to the race that He has put before us.

The Bible says in the book of Hebrews chapter 12 that we run with endurance the race that is set before us. Right? Same wording there. The easiest way that I have found not to run the race is to not really be devoted to the discipline that it takes to run a race and then you become disqualified.

that means you've been set aside. You're still the right family. You're just not allowed to compete. Paul says, I want to discipline myself in such a manner that I get to run that race and I'm running that I may win.

And the beautiful thing about running in that race is it's not just one of us who receives a crown. We all receive a crown of those who finish well. It says the gospel is worthy of that steadfast devotion. Now we say all this because the reason the gospel is worthy of these things, the gospel is worthy of our sacrificial living.

[31 : 57] It's worthy of our surrendered intentionality. It's worthy of our steadfast devotion. The reason the gospel is worthy of all these things is because the gospel is the person of Jesus Christ. You say, well, the gospel means good news.

Well, what's better news than Jesus Christ? So the gospel is the truth. Jesus said He is the truth. So the gospel is the way into the kingdom of heaven when Jesus is the way.

Well, the gospel is that which gives light to men walking in their darkness. Jesus also said He was the light. So the question is not is the gospel worthy of it? The question is is Jesus Christ worthy of these things in our daily life?

Not that we have the freedom to do whatever we want to do, but is He worthy of our sacrificial living? Our surrendered intentionality that Jesus, we want to live surrendered and be intentional about those around us and our steadfast devotion because if He's not, then what kind of Savior is He?

He's worthy of it. And before we ever get to that though, we have to come to the reality that He is our Savior because we don't run in that race until we're part of that family.

[33 : 07] So I don't know where you're at today. I don't know if you've thought, well, I don't know if the gospel is worthy of that. Well, let me introduce you to the person of Jesus Christ. and once you meet Him, you'll find out just how much the gospel is worth.

You say, well, I know Jesus Christ. He's my Lord and Savior. I've accepted Him many years ago or not too long ago and I've given my life. I'm trusting Him for all eternity. I know one day I will be in glory because of the price He's paid for me. Great.

And that is awesome. If you think about what He has laid up for you, what He's got in store for you, but what about what you're doing today? What about what you're doing today? does the actions you take today reflect the worthiness of the Savior you proclaim?

Because if not, if not, then why would the world ever believe us? Let's pray. Lord, I thank You for this day.

I thank You for Your faithfulness to us, Your goodness towards us. God, for the mercy and the grace that You pour out upon us even though we are so undeserving. Lord, we thank You for reconciliation through the blood of Jesus Christ.

[34 : 13] And God, I pray right now You would speak to our hearts and minds and Lord, that our lives would live as a reflection of the worthiness of the gospel. That it would live as Paul says that others may know.

That our lives would be a reflection of that reality and that it would display and declare to others the greatness of Christ and the worthiness of the gospel.

And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[37 : 38] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.