

Review and Rights

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 October 2023

Preacher: Ray Sweet

- [0 : 0 0] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweep from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. You can always check us out at FCCGreensburg.com or on the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.
- But hey, thank you so much for tuning in today. And I just pray that God will use his word today in your life to grow you and strengthen you as you seek to live for Jesus in everything you do.
- Now, do you remember when you were in elementary school and it was the first day back after that long summer break? Do you remember spending a little extra time picking out the perfect new outfit?
- Usually for me it was from Kmart and even new shoes. And so you'd start that new year off in style. Do you remember even the nerves a little bit, meeting your new teacher for the first time, even praying that you'd have certain friends in your classroom?
- And do you remember how the teacher always crushed the excitement in the first days by saying, OK, kids, it's time to review a little bit what you learned last year to see where you are.
- [1 : 0 7] So they would put some kind of test in front of you. For my generation, it was usually a Scantron. And they would assure us that we had nothing to worry about because this was not going to be counted towards a grade.
- They just wanted to evaluate where we were. And usually they'd look at me after they graded it and they would say, son, not only are you not ready for fifth grade, but I don't know how you pass the fourth.
- And I would say, well, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. No, I'm just kidding. I wasn't a Christian then, but I would usually say, please just let me stay. I'll try real hard. I promise. I'm just having some fun there.
- But we're going to take a lesson from those teachers and do a little review. And since today marks the halfway point in this series in the book of 1 Corinthians, I want to walk through where we've been so far in just a little more detail than we normally do.
- And we'll let that kind of propel us forward into our passage today. And if you're maybe listening for the first time, I hope after this review, you'll feel like you've been with us for all six weeks of this series.
- [2 : 1 6] But let me set the stage for this book. The reason the Holy Spirit inspires Paul to write this letter in the first place is because there's some bad reports about the divisiveness, sexual immorality, and abusive behaviors permeating the church in Corinth.
- And to put this book into a couple sentences, Paul loves them enough to call them to unity as they seek holiness in Christ. Because true spiritual freedom is when we live and walk in the power of Christ, letting that example shine brightly into a lost world.
- But instead, Paul is glaring at this church that doesn't look much different than the wicked culture around them. This church he planted through much persecution just five years earlier and yet they're still on a spiritual baby bottle when they should be eating solid spiritual food at this point.

They should be growing in Christ daily, being transformed as children of God. And you know what? The same thing's true for you and me. And in chapter 1, Paul starts off not by doing what I might have wanted to do by judo chopping them in the throat, but instead he lovingly reminds them of their position, their identity in Christ.

That the chains of sin were broken. So why in the world are you going to go back and put chains back on when you've experienced freedom? And then he even talks about the purpose they've been given through spiritual gifts to be used to magnify Christ and edify the church.

[3 : 52] And then in the second part of chapter 1, all the way through chapter 2, Paul talks about what true godly wisdom looks like and that it comes with the heart and the attitude of Jesus and it comes from the Holy Spirit.

And as 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17 says, all scripture is God-breathed. We know the Holy Spirit inspired every piece of it and it's useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

Why? So that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. And then in chapters 3 and 4, Paul goes to the root and he deals with the biggest issue and that's leadership.

Because a church will never outgrow its leadership for more than a season before the dysfunction takes it back. And Paul, in this passage, brings the hammer.

And he basically says, listen, you've got to stop doing two things. Number one, making your favorite pastor into an idol, almost worshiping them like they're God. And number two, stop bashing the spiritual leaders that aren't your choice.

[5 : 09] Yes, appreciate them, show them respect. But any good leader is committed to being a servant and a steward of what God has entrusted to them.

A servant who in humility loves and leads the precious body of Christ. A faithful steward who manages well their life and their ministry for the glory of God.

And you know, one thing we talked about is that you and I both are leaders in some capacity in our lives, whatever that may look like. So be a servant leader and be a faithful steward.

And then we see a couple passages in chapters 5 and 6 that we've not had the chance to talk about. Now, I need to preface this a little bit. I love my job, probably like you, not every second of it, because there are hard things in what I do, just like in what you do.

But I still stand in awe that I get the privilege to preach God's word every week. I'm thankful that the Lord would give me spiritual gifts to shepherd the flock and lead us in our vision with excellence alongside our great staff and elders.

[6 : 17] But any pastor, any elder that you talk to who's done this for a little while will tell you that there are times where you're going to face something that causes you just to shake your head and say, are we really dealing with this in the church?

I mean, is this really happening among believers? And chapter 5 is one of those moments where Paul calls out a man having an affair with his father's wife, his stepmother.

At least it better be his stepmother and not his mother. And he's proud of it. And Paul says this is the stuff that even unbelievers don't usually do. And he calls the church to healthy spiritual discipline so that this type of behavior doesn't spread.

Repentance needs to happen here. And he even goes on in chapter 6 to deal with believers in the church suing each other before ungodly judges and how awful of a witness that is to a lost world.

And then in the second part of chapter 6, things got heavy, didn't they? Things got personal real fast. And last week we talked about this topic of sexual immorality. We talked about God's perfect parameters for marriage and sexual intimacy and how anything outside of his design is counterfeit.

[7 : 38] It's from Satan. And it will harm us, control us, and keep us from God's perfect purposes for our lives. See, God is that Father who loves us enough to set those parameters, those boundaries in place.

Think about how you are with your children. In place to protect our hearts from where they don't need to go because you'll wind up in chains being controlled by the flesh and by the world.

And then in chapter 7, we see Paul deal with issues involved in married and single life. And in a world where divorce is so rampant, he encourages them to stay faithful to their spouses.

In a world where singleness is looked down upon as a weakness, Paul essentially says, listen, I see it the other way around. You're not less than because you're not married. There's nothing wrong with you because you're not married.

There's nothing wrong with getting married either, of course. But what a blessing when someone can stay single and use their life like Paul did, 100% devoted to the Lord.

[8 : 44] So here's the big picture through seven chapters. This church is a mess. They are divided. There's ugly stuff happening that doesn't look like Jesus at all.

And yet Paul says that's not who you are any longer. You have been washed white by the blood of Jesus. And the answer to this division is for each of them to live sincerely for him.

Because any time you see a church dividing, a church feuding, it's usually because the people are being disobedient to the word of God in some form or fashion.

Or maybe they're more concerned about their own will being done than what should happen. God's will being done. See, selfishness is in control instead of humility.

And it's so easy to fall into that trap. I know that I can do the same thing sometimes. And that brings us to chapter 8. And this is where we see Paul having come himself from a Jewish tradition of ceremonial washings and rituals and festivals.

[9 : 47] And even where the religious leaders have perverted the faith over the centuries. And basically, it's now all about following hundreds of man-made rules and rituals.

And they're missing what it's all about. That intimate relationship with the God of the universe that calls us to live for him. And Paul spends chapter 8 talking about a culture that was known to sacrifice meat to pagan gods.

And whether it was right as a Christian to eat it or to not eat it. And he kind of cuts through it all and says, listen, food is food. What matters is who you are worshiping with your life.

Don't major in the minors. Man, I've met so many people who like to major in the minors. Focus on every little minute detail and cause all kinds of division over these minors.

And then in chapter 9, and if you want to go ahead and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 9 with me. Apparently, some people in this Corinthian church have kind of been trash-talking, bad-mouthing, however you want to put it.

[10 : 57] Bad-mouthing Paul pretty good. False allegations, jealousy, just straight-up lies. Just division and drama that doesn't need to happen. And Paul addresses it by talking about the freedom he has in Christ.

His right to eat or drink what he wants. His right to take a believing wife if he so chooses. His right to take a paycheck for all the work he's done for the kingdom of God. And yet he has chosen to forego many of those things due to his own convictions for the sake of the gospel.

And now we come to our passage in 1 Corinthians 9.19. And if you're a person who enjoys taking notes, you can always go to the YouVersion, Y-O-U-Version Bible app.

It's free to download. You can always download that for free. And you can go to the menu. Once you get to the menu, hit Events. Then hit First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana.

And then you'll be able to see our outline. But let me give you the first part of this sentence. When you understand your position. When you understand your position.

[12 : 06] And let me ask you this very practical question. Do you understand fully your position in Christ? You may ask, well, what does that exactly mean, right? Do you understand then your identity in Christ?

Who the Lord says you are once you believe, once you repent, once you confess, once you are baptized into Jesus. Because what was happening in this Corinthian church was happening because they didn't understand beyond just head knowledge their position in Christ.

It hadn't gone from the brain to the heart, which then will come out in your daily walk. So look with me at 1 Corinthians 9, verse 19. Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says, Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible.

So let's focus on that first part. Though I am free and belong to no one. That phrase outside of this context could sound a little cocky. Could sound a little arrogant.

And yet that's not Paul's heart at all. He's saying, listen, in Christ I am free from the chains of sin and I belong to Jesus. So no other person will control me because I belong to him.

[13 : 23] See, your position, if you are in Christ, is one of freedom to live for Jesus. And it does not depend on others and your circumstances.

You are not bound by their opinion of you or their view of what success in your life should look like. You know, I remember when I was 18 years old.

First year of college. I actually went to IUPUI Columbus right before I came to know Christ. I was extremely insecure as a shy young man.

I thought my worth was determined by a girlfriend or by a job or success or by my vehicle or how other people viewed me. And I'll tell you what, it's exhausting.

But I'll never forget walking into a Campus Crusades for Christ, now called CRU, a CRU Bible study, and slowly starting to have my world just absolutely turned upside down or probably right side up.

[14 : 23] Slowly starting to learn what Jesus did for me. And when the day came that I repented of my sins and I surrendered my life to Jesus, I was baptized into him, everything changed.

And while I am still a work in progress, and that big word sanctification, which just means looking more like Jesus every day, that process, I'm still a work in progress every day.

And that's going to be until the day I die. But I'll never forget some of the instant transformation that happened in my life. I stood a little taller. I smiled a little wider.

I loved a little easier. And I was walking in a freedom that I had never known before. Because the bondage I was in because of my sin, and I didn't even realize I had it.

But it was now broken. And now I belong to the King of Kings. And as I have grown one day at a time in my relationship with my Savior for well over 20 years now, I've learned that true freedom comes when you know that you are loved by Jesus enough that he died on the cross in your place.

[15 : 34] See, true freedom comes when you realize that you have been made in the image of Almighty God. You've been chosen by the one who spoke and creation sprang into existence.

The one who knit you together in your mother's womb has called you to be his disciple. That every ugly sin that you and I have ever committed and will continue to battle has been forgiven by the blood of Jesus.

And if you're a child of God, you stand spotless before his throne. That you have been redeemed. That you have been adopted. That you are a citizen of heaven. And no matter what anyone here on this earth does to you, says about you, thinks about you, they can't steal your joy and your hope that will then extend into eternity with Christ.

And when you understand your position in the Lord, that's when you'll walk in freedom. So let me share just a few Bible passages that speak into your position in Christ.

1 John 3, verse 1, it says, See what great love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God.

[16 : 47] And that is what we are, he says. And then 2 Corinthians 5, 17. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come.

The old is gone, baby. I added the baby part. The new is here. And then 1 Peter 2, 9 shares even more. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession.

That you may do what? Declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. You know, there's a reason Paul could say he was free and he belonged to no man.

And it's because he belonged to the Lord. He knew who he was because of whose he was. And even though life will still have its ups and its downs, this is not heaven.

This is a fallen world. You'll still have your ups and your downs. The flesh will still need to be crucified every day. The world will try to impose its false wisdom on you. And Satan will still come like a roaring lion looking to devour you.

[17 : 52] And yet, you don't need to fear. You don't need to be afraid. You don't need to run after the things of this world. Why? Because you, child of God, are secure in Christ.

And you are free to walk in his power and his peace every single day. That's called child of God confidence.

Okay? And that leads me to be able to share the rest of our sentence. So here's what I want you to see today. When you understand your position in Christ, it changes your purpose in life.

See, get that filled in for me if you got your outline pulled up. And now look back with me here to 1 Corinthians 9. And let's start again in verse 19. And let's read this whole passage through verse 23.

Here's what Paul says. Though I am free and I belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible.

[18 : 53] Now these next few sentences are going to be a little confusing. So stay with me. Okay? Paul uses some run-ons. He's just got that in him. Okay? So he says, To the Jews I became like a Jew to win the Jews.

To those under the law I became like one under the law, though I myself am not under the law, so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law.

He says, Though I am not free from God's law, but am under Christ's law, so as to win those not having the law. To the weak, he says, I became weak to win the weak.

I have become all things to all people, so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings.

Has anyone here that's listening to my voice noticed how obsessed with our rights, and I'm doing this in quotations right now, our rights we've become as a society?

[19 : 51] And I'm not against people having rights, because otherwise a lot of unhealthy stuff happens. So I'm not anti-rights. I mean, it's a good thing, and Christianity has given more rights to people than anything.

But don't mishear me here, okay? I think some take it to extremes, and everything is about rights. And it's morphed into this entitlement mentality, where if you don't not only honor what I think are my rights, but if you don't celebrate and champion my rights with me, then you're being hateful.

And you're a bigot, and you're this, and you're that. And this is a dangerous path that we've been traveling down for a while as a society. According to Exodus chapter 21, under the Mosaic law, every Hebrew who was enslaved by another Hebrew, not that they're agreeing with slavery, but it's just something that happened in their culture, every Hebrew enslaved by another Hebrew had to be offered their freedom every six years.

But if he loved his master and preferred to remain in that household, he could become a permanent slave, and his ear would be pierced as a sign of his voluntary enslavement.

And by the way, this enslavement would have looked a lot different than slavery as we think of it. And in one sense, instead of demanding his rights, like we often see in very unhealthy ways, Paul is willing to be like a slave who gives up his rights, gives up his freedoms, so that others may know the amazing grace of Jesus.

[21 : 21] And here we see some examples. Paul, having previously been a Pharisee, a teacher of the law, under the Jewish faith, he's saying, listen, I don't have to participate in the old customs and washings and rituals that I used to do all the time.

I don't have to participate because Christ has fulfilled the law. I'm not bound by those things any longer. But if it doesn't contradict my faith in Christ, I don't mind participating, because I'm going to become like a Jew to open doors to tell them about the love of Christ that can set them free.

We even see him give other examples about non-Jewish people called Gentiles, that would be most of us listening, or even those who are weak. Paul says, I'm going to become like them, walk a mile in their shoes, so that he may have the opportunity to live out his purpose and tell them the gospel story.

See, Paul puts it like this. I have become all things to all people, so that by all possible means, I might save some. I remember in Bible college reading about a missionary to China a few hundred years ago, so at least two to three hundred years ago.

And this missionary did the unthinkable. In those days, missionaries kept their Western world styles. They would not conform to the quote-unquote heathen, as they called them, and they just tried to share Jesus with people.

[22 : 45] But it really didn't work very well. Why? Because they weren't receptive. Why? Because these people were nothing like them, and they were just strangers. But this guy kind of changed the game.

He taught future missionaries so many lessons. This guy immersed himself in the culture. He dressed just like them. He ate like them. He cut his hair to look like them.

He lived among them, loving them, meeting practical needs, and for years was one of them. And they began to accept him into their culture. And because of that, they started to listen to his voice.

He became all things to all people by all means to save some. And God began to open doors, and thousands upon thousands of people came to know Jesus, and many churches were started in China.

Could you imagine, like Paul, being so secure in your position in Christ? Could you imagine being so immersed in your relationship and your identity in Jesus that you don't need to impress others, that his joy and his peace exudes from you?

[23 : 52] You don't mind being called weird or Jesus freak or whatever? Could you imagine walking in such freedom that you don't feel the need to live up to other people's standards, but instead, Lord, your will be done in my life?

And be that free that you can give it up and say these words that Paul spoke when he said, I have made myself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible.

Man, that's hashtag faith goals right there, okay? And now let's apply that to the church. What's one of the reasons this Corinthian church, and many that you and I have probably seen, what's one reason of probably several why they were so divisive?

Because they were only worried about their own selfish rights. And yet what happens when a body of believers starts having this same attitude as the Apostle Paul, where we're keeping the main thing the main thing, and we're loving others sacrificially.

What happens when we set aside our rights? What happens is those dumb arguments start to fade. The selfish demands start to quiet down, and a church with a heart to glorify the Lord emerges and starts winning a lost world all around them.

[25 : 10] But when you understand your position in Christ, I'm telling you, it changes your purpose. Now I got to tell you, I love my last name.

If you didn't catch it, my name is Ray Sweet. And over the years, I've had a few people say, look, it's Ray Sauer! And they would try to make up different things to make fun of my last name, and I'd laugh and say, good try.

But listen, I love my last name. I'm good with it. But there's one name in history that I would possibly swap with my name, and this guy was a missionary.

In fact, I just bought an autobiography of this guy, and I'm really looking forward to reading about his mission that God called him to do. But his name was C.T. Studd.

Isn't that a cool name? C.T. Studd. And he once made this statement. He said, some want to live within the sound of a church or a chapel bell. He said, but I, I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.

[26 : 13] What he means is, it is a privilege to be used by God with lost people all around you who are heading headlong into hell and have no idea that they are.

What a joy it is to be able to stand there, right there, and pull them out and introduce them to Jesus. See, when does a church experience the power of unity that this whole book of 1 Corinthians is all about?

It's when we become slaves to righteousness and slaves to winning others to the Lord. Pray with me. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for these words of life that you have shared with us today.

As we have kind of reviewed and walked through these, these first nine chapters of 1 Corinthians, preparing us for some big chapters ahead. And as we've also talked about our rights, that we get a little carried away in our culture with rights, calling rights things that really aren't rights at all.

But Father, how refreshing it can be. When we know who we are in you, when we know our identity, when we know our position in Christ, it will change our purpose.

[27 : 35] And we don't mind, like the Apostle Paul says, being a slave to righteousness and a slave to others so that I, by all means, may win some to Jesus Christ.

Christ, you've given us an incredible purpose as your church. You've given us a purpose to tell others the life-saving gospel of Jesus Christ, that he came to this earth, lived a perfect, sinless life, was mistreated, beaten, spit on, maligned, and then forced to carry his cross where he was nailed to it, his hands and his feet.

And then he died on that cross to set each of us free, to take our place, our sins upon his shoulders so that when we, by faith, surrender our lives to the Lordship of Christ, we will be made as white as snow.

Father, we rejoice in that. We thank you for your amazing grace. And I pray if there's anyone listening to my voice who doesn't know your grace, that today will be a day of salvation for them.

So Father, thank you for the hope and the freedom and the position that we have in Christ that calls us to this great purpose to share your love.

[29 : 00] We give you praise, Jesus. And we pray this in your precious and your holy name, the name above all other names, the name of Jesus. Amen and amen.

Hey, let me share real quick. If you have any faith questions, if you want to talk about giving your life to the Lord, you can do this. You can call us in the office, First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana, 812-812-663-8488.

Or you can email me at ray at FCCgreensburg.com. Hey, God bless you. And I hope you have a fantastic week.