

The Cost Of Loving The Lost

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[0:00] Sitro to come up here and my friends, he is one of my heroes.! As he's walked in faith, he has a powerful story.

! I wish he, sometimes I'm almost tempted to just let him go ahead and speak and share about his testimony. But they've asked me to share, so I've asked him to just greet you and share a little bit about his ministry.

Well, I bring greetings from Uganda. My congregation back home and my wife sends greetings to you all. And I'm grateful that I'm here this evening, together with the other missionaries.

I'm so grateful to meet them all. He has told you my names are not easy for me to pronounce in your accent. But I found a brother here, Bob, so I like calling myself Bob.

So that one is easier. Well, I am married to one wife, Sarah. And I'm also a pastor of a church in a Muslim community.

[1:06] I started it some nine years back. And God has been gracious to us that we have been able to start more as six churches. So I oversee seven churches.

And I'm also the leader of the pastors in our district. We have districts in Uganda. And each district will have a lead of the pastors, like the pastor of those pastors.

And I look young and my age. But I am among the few pastors in Uganda that have gone to the seminary. So because of that, they elected me to be their leader.

And in our district, we have 350 churches. So those are the pastors I lead. I also teach in the Bible school.

We have a Bible school where Doug and Sheil teach also. So I am very grateful to partner with them and to come here and see the people that support Doug and support Sheil to come and do a great work in Uganda.

[2:13] And I really appreciate you so much. And may God bless you. Thank you. I want to take us to running off of your theme, loving the lost to Christ.

What do you think? Is that a good theme? Well, of course, you're in church, right? The answer is always yes and Jesus, right? No matter what you ask. But is that a good theme? You think so? Well, sometimes we look at that and we hear messages and we think, okay, it means I must suffer for the Lord, right?

You heard all these missionaries, Brother Tom and Brother Waleed, suffer for the Lord up here, right? They got up here and said, oh, it's so hard ministering for Christ.

Is that what they said? Maybe you're sleeping. I don't know how you could sleep through them up here sharing about the joy of the Lord. It isn't wonderful.

[3:24] Look at what God is doing. This is amazing. And we're just part of his work in this way. I mean, is that exciting or what? Huh? Seeing God work in Romania to reach out to the world.

It's amazing when people realize Acts chapter 1, right? When you receive money like the U.S., then you can be missionaries, right? When you receive a, you can build a building, then you can be missionaries, right?

Sometimes we've given that message of missions, haven't we? Okay. But they're over there just sharing the truth. When you receive the Holy Spirit. How many people here have the Holy Spirit? Some amins. A few people like this. Are you afraid? How many people have the Holy Spirit? Yeah. If you're born again, you have the Holy Spirit. And you're excited about the Lord, I trust, because he's worked greatly in your life.

But now, if you get a message, though, there's joy in the song, Joy in Serving Jesus, right? Sometimes we sing, there's joy in serving Jesus.

[4:28] That's not the message you got today, tonight. There is joy. Loving the lost to Christ. Do we really believe that? It's a good theme.

Good message. And I'll be the first one to confess that yesterday I didn't. I felt convicted about that as I prepared the message.

Why? Because I forgot. I forgot something. You know, if you open up 1 Corinthians chapter 9, we have it read there. It's right in your bulletin as well. You can open up that way. But, you know, the Corinthian church, Paul is writing to them.

And he, right in the beginning in chapter 1, talks about all that they have and the amazing truth of being born again in Christ. What it means to be changed and to start eternal life at the new birth. And he talks about in chapter 1, starting in verse 4, I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given to you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him, in all speech, in all knowledge, even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end.

[5:48] What an amazing passage truth here as he rehearses what it means to be born again.

You are not only changed individually, but you become part of the family of God, united and be part of God's work here on earth to be in fellowship with Jesus. You know, what he has started, he's going to complete in your life.

It's such a wonderful truth. And then the letter goes on, doesn't it? About problems in this church. In fact, I do rejoice in the Corinthians having trouble, having problems.

Now, today it might be more politically correct to say they had issues, right? So that you don't have to say problems like troubles. You have issues, and that's something you just deal with on the side there.

It may be quiet. But you know what? God is very honest about even his people have problems. And this church had problems. And I am thankful that they had problems when they did, so Paul could write to them so I could know how to handle my problems.

[7:02] Because life is full of problems. Yes, it's wonderful to be born again, to trust in Jesus, but we know that we still live in a sinful world with a lot of sinful habits, even in our own life, that we still get tempted and pulled away and forget about who we are in Christ Jesus.

But as we remember this, you know, these problems do have a solution. They do have a way of addressing these problems in Christ Jesus.

And Paul goes through, and I almost see this, if we want to put it maybe in modern-day terms, is really Paul is writing here under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, much like the Corinthians got a virus that was affecting their operating system, my friends.

Now, it sounds like I'm a computer whiz, right? No, when my computer gets a virus, and Brother Tom, you talked about your computers, I think you need to give up on Apple. Now, some of you might hate me for saying that, but all that Apple juice, you know?

I'm a PC man, only because I've never learned how to operate an Apple. Anyways, I understand a little bit, okay? You know, for me, when my computer gets a virus, I seem to help it crash.

[8:18] I don't know why, but they have this thing called an antivirus program, right? Supposedly, the program knows what the computer's supposed to do, and it recognizes when it's listening to the wrong thinking advice or program, right?

That's gone into it. And it's supposed to take that wrong thinking. Now you know I'm not a computer whiz, right? But take that wrong thinking, and it's supposed to quarantine it.

It keeps telling me that. It quarantined something. It got rid of it so that the computer could operate right, correctly. Well, you read through Corinthians. I get that exact message that they've got this virus.

They've become self-absorbed in themselves. Like, my situation is so significant, and what's going on in my life is all that matters. And my thinking is all that matters.

And what happened is, is Paul's correcting their thinking throughout this whole letter. He's bringing them into right thinking. He's trying to isolate the wrong thinking, the wrong attitude that has led them to the wrong actions, to ignore certain things that they were supposed to pay attention to, and to bring into focus the things that they needed to pay attention to, to get rid of that virus that is leading them astray, that is upsetting the whole operating system, so that the world itself could not even see Christ in the church.

[9:50] So the world itself was having a hard time understanding what it meant to be born again. Paul is rehearsing through many, many problems. By the time we get to chapter 9, he's still addressing this thinking.

What are you thinking about? How can I lead you into recognizing what is the truth? How can you really, truly function properly to represent Christ to the world?

What is our whole purpose? What will bring us satisfaction? They were trying to satisfy themselves. They were trying to bring about their own joy and forgetting the whole purpose of why God had saved them and brought them together.

As he talks about this, he talks about right in verse 1, that certainly to be born again, to be in Christ, means that we are free.

We're freed from sin, the power of sin in our lives. We are able to walk now in the Spirit. We have a freedom to enjoy life because we are alive.

[10:57] Unlike anything we've experienced before, when we come to Christ, we have been delivered to be able to start thinking right, start obeying Christ and following him.

And you know, many times Jesus says, follow me. Paul says, follow me. A little bit later on, follow me as I follow Christ. Why? It's because that's the best thing for us. We've been made to be into the image of Christ and to follow him.

I'm free to do that. In fact, I'm an apostle. He even has authority in churches. I'm free, but by the time we get down to verse 15, he knows who he is.

He knows what he can do. But he said, but my purpose is not to satisfy myself. If I focus upon that, I will miss the whole point of what Christ is doing in my life.

He starts, he says, but I have made no use of any of these things or rights in my life. Nor am I writing these things to secure any provision.

[12:06] I'm not trying to convince you to do anything for me. Instead, he wants to lead us in our thinking. How can you enjoy life? What is the prize of being a believer in Christ?

What is the joy and satisfaction of being a believer in Christ? It's fitting into God's purpose and letting God show you what true joy is all about.

The Corinthian church needed to hear some of this, all of this, but you and I, I think, need to reflect on this. Verse 19, I'm going to skip around here just for time's sake.

For though I am free from all, this is what it read for us, though I have an opportunity to do many, many things in Christ, now I am a believer in Christ and I can live under the law of Christ, but I can do many, many things.

God has saved me. He is guaranteed to work in my life, which, by the way, means he's guaranteeing that he's going to convict us of sin. He's going to make our life miserable, so we repent if necessary.

[13:15] He's going to convince us of truth so that we can live in that truth and enjoy him, not only now, but forever, preparing for us to be able to be with him forever. But he says, you know, I am freed from all, but I've made myself a servant of all.

Now, there's many things, if we're honest, in the scriptures that if we really read it for like it is, does not seem to make sense at first. I am free to be what?

To be a slave. How does that work? Especially in America. Slave? You know, Paul is writing in a Jewish context.

If you go back to Exodus chapter 21, Paul knew very much the Old Testament, and I think he's drawing a little bit off of this image here, okay, that if you got in debt, ooh, that covers a lot of us, right?

But if you get in debt in a way that you cannot pay, okay, where you have problems, you could basically be brought into slavery for six years as a Jew to another Jew, where you had to work and be a slave to pay back that debt that you could not pay any other way.

[14:37] But the law of God, the Mosaic law, limited just, it could only be six years maximum until the debt was paid in a maximum of six years unless, unless you loved your master after six years.

And there's also a passage there talking about if the master gives you a wife and whatnot, but it definitely says if you love your master, you can choose to become a permanent slave.

And that, you might have heard about, you could take your ear and pierce it, okay, puncture it. A lot of people would be interesting telling them about that, right?

Have a punctured ear means you're a permanent slave. But for them, if you got your ear pierced, that means you were dedicating yourself voluntarily, submitting and choosing to be a slave to this master for the rest of your life.

You could do that, but it was your choice, not the master's choice. And what was it based on? What did I say it was based on? Class? Love. Love your master.

[15 : 49] You chose because you loved your master. Do you see a little parallel here? What Paul is saying? I have chosen here to be a permanent slave.

Okay? Now, later on, he clarifies here is a slave of all men does not mean that he is listening to all men and obeying them, but he is under the law of Christ.

Okay? You see that? We've already read that in verse 21. Okay? It's not that he is outside the law of God, but under the law of Christ.

He wants to clarify this. Whatever he's talking about, he has, he's under the law of Christ, but because he has loved Christ, he's voluntarily become a slave of Christ.

He is now a servant of all men. Why? He wants to serve Christ. We're talking about, yes, we are called to loving the loss to Christ, but there's going to be a cost involved if you really get involved.

[16 : 55] Brother Walid referred to that, the price that we have to pay. Everything has a cost, right? Even in Burger King, they used to say, have it your way. Who paid the bill?

It wasn't Burger King. Okay? Everything has a cost. Now the question is, Paul, the Holy Spirit is very honest. There's a cost involved. If you really want to be loving the loss to Christ, you're going to have to pay a price.

But that's not his focus upon this passage. He includes that information in, as we're going to just read a little bit later here. He includes the information in, but he is asking not just the price that needs to be paid, what he's focused upon is, what prize is in store for me?

If I serve Christ, if I voluntarily love my master to be a slave to him, the law of Christ, and serve all mankind, because Christ loves mankind, he gave himself for it, he left heaven above, he came down, even while we were yet sinners, to die in our place, so that we could be offered eternal life in him, we could be made back into the image of Christ, which Adam lost in the garden, as he sinned against God and lost that pure image of God that he's created in.

But Christ has offered to restore that to us, the image of Christ to make us into his image, and now we get to serve him. What does he want from us? It's to become a part of his plan.

[18 : 23] To do what? To reach the world. Part of his plan to reach, as we heard, Columbus, Ohio. And who knows where, if we reach Columbus, Ohio, your ministry here, you've already heard, is going international, is going all around the world, because you're investing in God's plan and purposes.

Notice what he's talking about here. Yeah, there's a cost involved, but I have made myself a servant to all, that, with the purpose, I might win more of them.

I want to be part of something greater here than just myself, than just my comfort.

I appreciate the music here that's been chosen for this conference. Have you gotten some of the, the words of the music here? I even wrote some down, if I could ever find my paper here.

Well, have you noticed one of the, the men singing about, it's not for our comfort. Have you noticed how that, that word comfort, you're supposed to hold out a little bit to gain attention for?

[19 : 34] Okay, it's not about our comfort level. Christ is more interested in our character than our comfort. He's more interested in us being part of his plan than him serving us and making us comfortable in life.

Paul says, I have a purpose in mind here. I have made myself a servant to all that I might win more of them. I want to be part of God's plan. How? To the Jews, I became as a Jew.

Paul knew that he was free from the law of Moses, now being under the law of Christ, but he said, you know, to the Jew, I want to gain a hearing for the Jew. That was his countrymen.

That was his family, his extended family. I don't know about you, but sometimes very hard to reach into my family with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

My father and mother still have not yet trusted in Christ. I'm praying for them. They're in their 80s, but they still have breath. They still have hope. Maybe they'll trust Christ.

[20 : 32] Cheryl's parents as well. I have some brothers in their family that need to trust in Christ, but man, they know all about me, right? They saw me grow up.

They see my imperfections. And when I share the gospel of Jesus Christ with them, I know at times they're thinking about the past when I wrestled my brother to the ground and beat him to a pulp because he was smaller than me.

And he's talking about the love of Christ. You know, and some of my, and families, sometimes it takes a lot of work, doesn't it?

Go back into the old life, remembering of the old life, visiting with them, and you're tempted to say the same kind of things, to react the same ways.

Paul says, though, to the Jew, I want to go back into that to give up my rights to what? What does he want to do for the Jew?

[21 : 38] To win them. To gain them for Christ. And he says, to those under the law. Now that sounds to me like Jews, right?

But it also sounds like, and remember, who were really promoting the law? The Pharisees, the Judaizers. They were a certain group of Jews that really caused Paul a lot of problems.

If anybody was his enemies, that would be those under the law, promoting the law, criticizing, trying to tear Paul down. Attacking his character. What did he say? To those under the law, I'll become as under the law.

I'm going to give up my rights. I am going to try to do all I can to become a person that they could listen to. I'm going to love them and try to get involved in their life.

Why? Not because he likes to suffer. Everywhere Paul went, where did he go first? He was a teacher of the law.

[22 : 43] He could get a hearing. It was something that he was actually invited to stand up if they didn't know he was Paul or heard about Paul. They would invite him to stand up and share a word, brother.

Teach us. Because he was a teacher of the law before he came to Christ. But what happened every time he went to the synagogue and shared from the word of God the Old Testament how Jesus was Messiah, you know what happened to him, right?

Right? They loved him, right? They said, oh, this is wonderful. Please come back. Yeah. They served him kosher food and welcomed him into their home, right?

Because he was a teacher of the law? No. They kept throwing him out of town. He kept getting in trouble.

You know, you think the guy would have learned? You think, huh? Don't go into the synagogue next time. You're going to get run out of town. But you know, it didn't matter to Paul whether he got run out of town or not.

[23 : 56] What he wanted to do was gain a hearing for the gospel of Christ. And he trusted the results to God. He went to the Jews because that was his countrymen.

He was connected with them. He became as a Jew. I tell you the truth, I would rather play a sport than watch it on TV.

I hate sitting down kind of watching something but, you know, for some reason when my father and mother, when my father retired, they got involved in watching sports.

So I had, I still to this day have to look to see what the Red Sox are doing. I have no interest in it.

You're not going to tell them, are you?

Well, they know really I'm not a big fan in that way but if I want to talk to my dad and mom, if it's baseball season, you find out what the Red Sox are doing because that's what they want to start talking about.

[24 : 57] And I think about this passage, to the Jew, I become as a Jew. You know, someone had asked me, what fan are you? What football? You know I'm talking about American football, brother.

What football team do you root for? And I say, whatever living room I'm in, that's what fan I'm about.

I love watching the fans, by the way. I love going to a house where someone's excited about their team and watching them play.

But, you know, if I have to learn about what they're interested in, why? So I can gain a relationship with them.

but the purpose is not to enjoy football. The purpose is not to enjoy baseball. The purpose is I want to be interested in what they're interested in so that I might have an opportunity to have that relationship continue to what?

I don't have the cost even really in my vision. The cost is something I pay in order to get the prize, gain a hearing for the gospel of Christ.

[26:02] He says to those who are not under the law, you know, those we have, the Jews, they are like family to him.

They are his countrymen. That is who he, he's been placed there by God so he's going to accept that he has an opportunity here to become like them, not to violate the law of Christ, not to do whatever they're doing.

You know, this doesn't mean if my, if my family members have a gathering and everybody gets drunk, I need to get drunk so I can witness to them about Jesus Christ.

Some people interpret this this way. He says, no, I'm under the law of Christ, but I do what I can to have that relationship, build that relationship.

There's a cost involved. I have to give of myself. I have to put aside my rights, the things that I want to do, so what?

[27:00] Because there's a prize involved. I might win some to the Lord. He doesn't, he knows it's not guaranteed that his investment is always going to produce my family members coming to Christ, my enemies stopping attacking me and coming to Christ.

In fact, actually, if we love our enemies, there's just as much chance they take advantage and attack us all the more. But what is that?

And what's the worst thing that can do happen if your enemies attack you? What's the worst thing, Waleed? Not the worst thing, he wouldn't say the worst thing. What we would think in the flesh, what would be the worst thing to do?

They'd kill him. What would that do? Promote him to heaven? Boy, you poor thing. Huh? Do you think he's worried about going to the presence of Christ?

His wife's going to miss him. But really, are we focused properly? I do what I can. Why? Because there's a prize involved to serve Christ and the worst thing they can do in their minds is bring me the greatest prize is to be with Christ.

[28:19] What costs are we really involved here? A minor investment so that God might use that. But now he talks about those outside the law is he must as well extend himself to strangers.

Now Paul was a trained Jewish teacher. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. This was a big stretch for Paul. Even though we think of him as the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul had to make a lot of adjustments here to go and to even talk to the Gentiles.

He was trained that that was just not something you did to be religious. But he knew there was a cost if he really wanted to love the lost of Christ.

To those that are outside the law, he became as one outside the law. He ate the things he had to eat in order to gain a hearing for opportunity to share the gospel of Christ with those that were outside the law, the Gentiles.

He had to do what was uncomfortable. He had to do what was stretching him. He had to go into the unknown. And from what I see, this is a very loving church and I praise God for that.

[29:47] It seems like people that come in here, you greet them well. But I talked to some people even in our home church and they watch, especially my wife, a new person comes in and I have to watch it.

She wants to be outside the pew. If I'm on the outside and she's on the inside, I just, after the service of the amen, I just kind of sometimes go like this so she can shoot out to meet all the people.

Or otherwise she'd knock me over. She would. Okay? She just, now, she didn't necessarily do that all the time. She had to learn how to do that, to be friendly.

And I had some men and ladies come up to me and say, how does Cheryl do that? I wish they had said, how does Doug do that? But they said, how does Cheryl do that?

How does that? She has a prize in mind. Go see what God will do as she reaches out and welcomes people in and loves them and just shows them that they are welcomed here and they want to come back and be under the preaching of the gospel and to find out if they're saved.

[30:55] And she's amazing how to find out from people all this information. She's wonderful at that. Those outside the law, strangers.

How do we treat strangers? Are we really willing to learn about them? And it's necessary to learn about them. You know, I was thinking about we're coming up to a four-way stop here and for some

reason, one person in that car went like this and I knew where I was.

I'm in Columbus, Ohio, so I knew that meant, okay, we were to go first, right? When I grew up just outside of Boston, Massachusetts, and you know, if you drive in a certain part of town, especially Irish town or even Chinatown, if you come to a four-way stop and someone goes like this to you, what that really means is step on the gas if you want to go because I'm on my way, okay?

And if you don't go fast, they'll be honking their horn at you and going around you. It means a little bit different, doesn't it? You've got to get to know the rules in Boston, too.

You come to a light, if it's just about to turn, if you look over here and you see people coming that way, that means you're responsible to miss them, okay?

[32 : 16] Literally, it's the rules of the road, okay? There was two men that had an accident and a policeman came. I was in back, so I had to wait for him. I'm listening to him.

And this one person said, he had a red light. So that means he's guilty, right? He's the one that ran the red light and he caused the accident, right?

Oh, you don't think so? No? Well, the other man was saying, but he saw me coming. And the police officer said, is that true? He said, well, yeah, I looked over and he said, well, why did you go?

He said, he had a red light. I had a green light, but you saw him coming. This is the police officer.

You saw him coming and you still went to the intersection? You got to learn the rules of the road, by the way, in Boston, okay?

You got to learn what is accepted, what isn't. How do you talk to people there outside the law? Paul said, I had to invest in learning how to talk to a Gentile. It's different than talking to a Jew.

[33 : 20] Why? Not because he wanted to, not because he was proud of being cross-culturally sensitive, it's because he had a purpose in mind, a goal in mind. I want to pay the price so that I might win the prize of being part of God's plan to build a family of God here upon earth and eventually we're going to all be together as the bride of Christ in heaven rejoicing together and I want brothers and sisters there that I've been involved in their life, that I've had a part, that I've shared the gospel with them, that I could have the joy of seeing a new birth in people, that I might win, even the weak.

Who are the weak? If you look in scripture, the weak are always the people who have some kind of limitations. It doesn't mean necessarily that they're immature or young believers or even foolish believers.

Think about even Daniel. He had to make a choice to limit himself not to eat certain foods and it never says because it would lead him into sin or it would be sinful, it's just because he didn't know if he had sinned or not by eating the king's food, so he limited himself.

Paul said, I am weak. Why? In the flesh, he was limited. He had certain illnesses that limited him, okay, in certain ways. We don't know what the thorn in the flesh was.

We don't know, did that mean he couldn't preach for three hours? Like in, well, it wasn't Sudan, it was Egypt. But we don't know exactly what it was. He must have been able to preach, right?

[34 : 58] They fell asleep on him and fell out the window. He preached a long time. But there were some limitations that he said, I'm weak. So he said, but to those that have certain limitations, I'll abide by those limitations.

I'll become weak. He talks about food offered to idols. I'd rather not eat anything, any meat, than has my brother to stumble. There's a cost if we really want to love the loss to Christ.

But you know, Paul said, what's the cost? It's a minor thing to pay because of the goal in mind. You know, he didn't even, I don't read anything about sacrifice here.

Instead, he talks about comparing to running the race. Okay, he talks about the boxer. You know, I've never met a runner that is a good runner that loves to run, that stays home watching TV, eating popcorn.

Huh? What do they do? They run. They get involved. Because, I don't know, for some reason, sometimes they say, practice brings them joy.

[36 : 17] I don't know how it brings them joy, but it does. And I've watched some people go from to all of a sudden, a little bit of practice, a little giving up certain other things, saying no to certain things, what?

So they could say yes to getting in shape so they could run and feel the exhilaration of running, of training. Why? To win a prize. He said, he's talking here to Corinth, the Corinthians, and they had the Isthmus games, and they knew what it was to have runners run and get the prize.

And I don't know what exactly, they got this pine wreath, and that probably was not as exciting. Who knows, maybe they got, you know, the pay to advertise for the chariot builders, or you know, maybe they got free meat at the market or something, because they were the fastest runner in the world. But as far as they were concerned, they won the race, and only won one. One person could win. They didn't even have the silver and the bronze medal. They just had the prize.

And these people would compete. But their prize was just for six months until the next games came, or a year, and then someone else would be there to beat them, right?

[37 : 38] You know, he says, but they are motivated, why? To win a prize. They don't worry about the cost. Do you hear anything about sacrifice in this passage? No?

No, but they have a cost involved. What? Because they think it's going to be worth it. They have a focus in mind. And Paul says, you know, he had talked about all these problems the Corinthian church was having.

Why? Because they became so self-absorbed in themselves. They were worrying about what mattered to them. What could make themselves more comfortable. They got content.

They got, no, they really weren't content. They were just satisfied with where they were. Okay, we're saved. Ah. Without realizing, hey, we're saved.

Now we have an opportunity to become a part of a greater plan than just us. Collectively together we can come and we can see God use us and become part of something greater than just me.

[38 : 48] God's plan to win the world to Christ. To get to know people. To be involved in their life. It's going to take work. It's going to take a cost.

Become as a Jew. To become as a Gentile. It took work for Paul. It didn't just happen. He had to be purposeful.

But as he did, that some might come. I become all things to all people that by all means I might see some saved.

God work in and through me. Do you remember the last time God did that? Worked in your life?

There is nothing like, you know, just this week, Cheryl had the privilege to lead a new gal to Christ. Cheryl said actually it was like she was holding the basket waiting for the apple to drop. God had already prepared this gal and she was just there to deliver the message. That's what we're always doing.

[39 : 59] We're just there to deliver the message. God opens the eyes. He saves people but he uses us for some reason. He's decided he wants to use us. Sometimes I, in my limited thinking, I think, God, why didn't you just, as soon as you saved me, you take me up to heaven.

I was perfect, right, in Christ. I confessed my sin. I confessed myself a sinner. Christ made me perfect in him. Nope. He had other plans in mind.

He wanted to let me become involved in his plan of winning others to the Lord, of serving others, of teaching others, of showing them the truth that God has had, that God has shared with us.

Excuse me. I become all things to all men, all people, that by all means, I might save some. Now, Paul knew it was God's work, but he also knew that God wanted to involve him in his work.

Wow. God wants to use you in his work. As we love God, we will love our neighbor.

[41 : 07] Is that not the two greatest commandments? Love God, Matthew 22, Jesus answered. What's the greatest commandment? Love God. And in like manner, love our neighbor as ourself.

Why? Because God loves your neighbor. Are we willing to pay a small price, give up our rights, say, okay, Jesus, you already, you gave up yours, you came down from heaven, you died in my place, you became sin for me, that I might receive your righteousness, you have made me a new creature in Christ.

Now, why would we not invest in eternity? Now, think about that. If I offered you an investment that I guaranteed you, okay, if you invest some money right now, okay, and you have to leave that in for 10 years, now, I'm not a financial wizard, so forgive me if I use the wrong terms, but you're going to give me investment, I guarantee you in one or two years, it's going to gain lots of money, you're going to feel really great, but you can't touch it for 10 years because I know at 10 years, it's going to disappear.

All the money is going to be gone, it's going to fail. Now, how many people would give me money for that kind of investment? Huh? But how about if I offered you instead an investment for 10 years that you won't see results maybe right away, but I guarantee you, and I will show you that I have the money in the bank, I guarantee you that in 10 years, it will multiply 10 times over.

Now, you may not see it right away, but in 10 years, if it doesn't do that, I will give you the money personally. In 10 years, it will be 10 times as much or more.

[43 : 10] Which would you choose? A? Well, if you are willing for A, I'll take it right now, okay? I'll sign any paper you want, all right?

How about B? And you know, that's what Paul's talking about is an investment in B. He said, I'm willing to invest in eternity.

To give up my rights for right now because I know there's an eternity waiting for me. That if I give up certain rights right now, God's going to use me in his plan.

So I get joy right now of seeing someone come to Christ. I started talking about Cheryl this week leading a gal to Christ. She came home and, you know, she's a beautiful woman, but boy, the joy in her face just made her even prettier.

She was just glowing. We have a new sister in Christ. I hope we never lose that awe of the new birth.

[44 : 18] Okay? A new sister in Christ. A prize for Christ. We get to be part of enjoying it. Paul says, I become all things.

all people. Still under the law of Christ, but that by all means, I might win some.

Guaranteed, God's going to work if we use his word, his way. Now, the runner invests in running and ends up learning to enjoy running.

Somehow, the boxer learns to enjoy being beat up by somebody else and beating up on him. They do that. He says, isn't that a wonderful illustration of disciplining yourself to say, it's worth it, what I'm going to do, and so I'm going to continue on for Christ's sake.

There's a cost to loving the lost to Christ. What Paul emphasizes is, don't focus on the cost. Think about the prize. Think about the prize.

[45 : 24] Even your enemies. And what can they really do to you? Even the stranger. Will you go up? Will you get to know them?

With the opportunity to share Christ? Even the weak, who you might first say, I just don't understand them. Well, it'll take some work.

Start to understand them so that you might come alongside them and share Christ, that they too might know the freedom that you have in Christ Jesus to walk in the spirit.

Just for myself, that I too might, at the end, hear, well done, thou good and faithful servant. There's a cost to serve Christ.

But you know, some people have actually said to Cheryl and I, thank you for sacrificing for Christ to go to Africa. I really don't understand that. It's no sacrifice.

[46 : 31] God has called me to this ministry. And I'll tell you, I struggle with, do I pray for an empty seat next to me in the plane or someone to talk to about the Lord? I really struggle about that.

I confess, sometimes I play for an empty role so I can lay down and sleep on those 13-hour flights. But then I trust God.

If he wants me to sleep, he'll give me an empty role, okay? Why? Because who knows if I'll make the end of that flight. That's what he said. Even so, come Lord Jesus!

Jesus! Well, are we focused upon the prize? Then the cost really doesn't matter.

We will be loving the lost to Christ as we love God above all. Let's pray. Father, I know it's your word that's powerful.

[47 : 30] I know your word is to change lives. And I just am loving these people here. I'm learning to love the new ones.

They just have a heart for you. Even choosing this theme, this conference, supporting these brothers that have shared about their ministry.

They obviously want you to be part of your work. But I pray that this will be just a reminder to us, a stimulus not to give up, not to just focus upon the circumstances, focus upon ourselves and the discomfort, but to keep our focus upon you, to be that living sacrifice, not just as a one-time giving ourselves over to you, but a constant living with an attitude of serving you, and a focus upon the prize of being a servant of the Most High God, of seeing you work even through us with all our limitations and all our problems, but to use us to bring others to you, that one day as we stand together, unified as we are.

We will all the more have joy to say we are part of your plan and purpose for all ages. We have been a part and have taken the opportunity to see you work even through us, and that that joy will

be never-ending.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here. Thank you for your word. I pray that you will use it and that you'll dismiss any of my words that got in your way from these dear people, but that they would hear from you and follow holy after, for Jesus' sake.

[49:27] Amen.