

1 Corinthians 9 | Rights Defended, Rights Deferred, Gospel Spread

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[0:00] The sermon text for today is 1 Corinthians 9.

! At the conclusion of the reading, I will declare, this is the word of the Lord! And the church, in joyful response to his revelation given to us, will together say, thanks be to God.

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship 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. This is my defense to those who would examine me.

Do we not have the right to eat and drink? Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?

[1:00] Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? Do I say these things on human authority?

Does not the law say the same? For it is written in the law of Moses, You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain. Is it for the oxen that God is concerned?

Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake because the plowmen should plow in hope, and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

[2:08] But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting.

For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward.

But if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became a Jew in order to win Jews.

To those under the law I became as one under the law, though not being myself under the law, that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law, not being outside the law of God, but under the law of Christ, that I might win those outside the law.

[3:19] To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel that I may share with them in its blessings.

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things.

They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So do not run aimlessly. Do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

This is the word of the Lord. Let me pray for us again.

Lord, please help us this morning. Your word is good. Your hand in our lives is good. And your majesty is good. We ask you this morning that you once again, through the preaching of your word, that you would show yourself so that we leave here a changed people.

[4:36] Changed by the power of your spirit. Changed by your wonderful word. And changed by the one we need to be changed by. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Good morning, Shoreline. A story from another pastor to open us. He says, I once had a friend who worked for a campus Christian ministry while attending a church there where I was a member.

He would always slip in right after the hymns, sit there for the sermon, and then he would leave. I asked him one day why he didn't come and stay for the whole service. Well, he said, I don't get anything out of the rest of it.

Have you ever thought about joining the church? This pastor responded. He thought that was an answer. He said, why would I join the church? If I join them, they would just slow me down spiritually.

So the pastor asked, have you ever considered that maybe God wants you to link arms with those other people? And that perhaps, even though you might slow down a little bit, you might help to speed them up.

[5:41] And that possibly that's part of God's plan for how we're supposed to live as Christians together. Perhaps God cares more than just you or me as individuals, but maybe he also cares about the whole church together.

This story and Paul's words here in 1 Corinthians 9 are beautiful pictures of the Christian life. There are so many rites that we enjoy as Christians.

We are free to slip in and slip out. There are certainly rites that we enjoy as Christians. We are so free in Christ to do so many things. Yet Paul and this pastor here, but especially Paul as a leader in the early church, he doesn't only defend the rites that he has, but he also explains why it can be so important to defer those rites for the sake of someone else.

So what does this mean for us to voluntarily lay down our rites for the good of others? To know that you have a certain claim on rights and yet to defer them for the good of someone else, to slow down your progress so that someone else can catch up.

Think about this. Putting aside your individual or your family preferences so that the church thrives. Start thinking, what does this mean for our lives?

[7:00] Does it make us squirm in our seat at the thought of it? Have we maybe been doing this for years and the weight of it is sitting heavy with us? What sort of heart willingly does these things without grumbling or complaining?

And maybe what needs to change in our lives so that we are willing to be like Paul here? What does the church look like when the fruit of this is lived out?

Let's dig into our text today and see what Paul, God's word, and the Holy Spirit have to say about these questions. So as Mike's been preaching through, Paul's first letter to Corinthians has been this letter of correction in love to the church.

There are all sorts of messed up things taking place. We've seen infighting, selfishness, snobbery, sexual immorality, and so many other things taking place in the church.

The very people whom God has brought together by the blood of his son are now being divided by sin, by the brokenness of this world.

[8:02] And Paul is writing into it to correct what's going on. Kevin, I don't have the clicker if you could progress through. All right.

So here in 1 Corinthians 9, we see Paul laying out the pattern of his life, which is in accord with everything he's been teaching on in the earlier parts of 1 Corinthians. Paul so far is the real deal.

Paul is a man who preaches one thing and Paul is a man who... Start that again. Paul is the real deal. Paul is not a man who preaches one thing and lives out something differently.

Paul does not prescribe for others what he does not prescribe for himself. We'll see it as we walk through this passage that Paul actually lives out this to a very high degree. So, and he does that so that the gospel and Jesus is all held in right regard.

Paul starts with his resume, his highlight reel, if you will. The freest of free men, a big A apostle, an eyewitness of Jesus, a soul count so high that puts him straight into the hall of fame.

[9:07] Paul is saying that if anyone has the right to flex spiritually and claim free in Christ for his own gain, it's Paul. Paul continues on to say, for food or drink, I'm free to choose whatever I want.

Married or single, I'm free to choose. To take a wage for my work or to not take a wage, I'm free to choose. He says, do only the singles who travel around preaching the gospel have to work for their living?

Or do they have the right to ask for a wage so that they can be unhindered and uninterrupted as they do their work? Progress the next one. Next one again.

Then Paul, surely looking at his audience, maybe some of them who have brought up his wages as an issue, he says, hey, you there in the back, when you serve as a soldier, do you volunteer or do you take a wage from the government?

Hmm. How about you in the front? You have this big, beautiful vineyard. Do you ever drink wine made from your vineyard? How about you off to the left? You who work on your farm. Do you enjoy the fresh eggs, the milk, the meat from your work?

[10:20] And right, the rhetorical answer to that is yes, of course they do. That's right and proper when you put the work in. You as a laborer get to enjoy the figurative and sometimes the literal fruit of your labor.

And then to strengthen this argument, Paul says that this isn't just practical lived out wisdom. This isn't just Paul speaking here. We see it from the very beginning of scripture.

Don't muzzle the ox. Don't stop feeding and letting your farm animals drink if you want them to keep producing for you. He then goes on to make the point. That whole muzzle the ox thing, it surely helps the ox.

But that's not the point. The point is for us to get food for our nourishment. To achieve our basic needs, don't hold back from your ox. Don't be skimpy on their needs and then your needs will be met.

So, Paul takes these examples. He said, hey, if we've labored among you to preach the gospel, to ensure that the word is preached, to ensure the church is moving toward health, then all these things give him the right to ask for a fair wage for the work that he's done.

[11:36] If the ox, right, if the farm animals have the right to basic needs, how much more does a person, how much more does Paul, who has this exceptional resume, have the right to ask for basic needs for those that he's labored for and those that he's labored with?

So far, Paul spent all this time explaining and defending his rights. It's so very clear. He's argued from his experience, from the Old Testament, how all the apostles have these rights to do, these rights, because they're free in Christ.

But then in verse 12, he turns everything upside down. This is where it gets beautiful. He says, nevertheless, regardless of everything I just laid out, I have not made use of this right.

But guess what he says? He says, we have endured anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel. The true and good news of Jesus Christ saving a rebel people from their sin and saving them into eternal life and glory with God.

Paul's refusal to money here seems strange. He just spent all this time defending it, and then he says, no, I'm going to put it aside. It's like Billy Graham moonlighting at McDonald's during a crusade.

[12:55] This also sounds a whole lot like 2 Corinthians 8, verse 9, where Paul says, So what is Paul doing here?

Paul is incarnating Jesus in his deferring of rights. That word incarnating, right? It means to take on some of the nature of Jesus.

And though Paul could never do this perfectly, none of us can. What Paul is doing is showing those around him Jesus, right?

Through his lifestyle, which is aligned in Paul, his head and his heart and his deeds. Paul is coming down to their level.

Our level. He's sacrificially giving up what is his so that we and they might be brought in, just like Jesus did for his people.

[14:00] Paul's very clear priority is that he put Jesus in the gospel at the forefront of his life, far and above any other need that he might have.

Even those that he has a very clear right to, like a wage. So now, in deferring his rights to wages for those in the church, he's left without anybody to pay for his basic rights.

Right? He's a beggar. So what does Paul do? To provide for himself, Paul takes up the role of tent making. We see this in Acts 18, 1 through 4.

I'll give everyone a second to turn there if they're turning. In Acts 18, verses 1 through 4, it says, After this, Paul left Athens.

He went to Corinth, and he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome.

[15:02] So Paul went to go see them. And because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and he worked, for they were tent makers by trade. And then he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade the Jews and the Greeks.

So we see there very clearly, Paul's priority was to go to the synagogue and preach on the Sabbath to the Jews. But to make a wage, he also took up this side trade of tent making.

To help us understand what Paul, taking on the task of tent making, means in its historical context, Paul Miller, in his book, explains the following.

Paul Miller says, During their teaching, they would bring up this person's name, they would sit privately and counsel them and give them their wisdom.

But Paul here is no mere traveling teacher. Paul is highly educated. Paul is an upper class Jewish scholar and a Roman citizen.

[16:11] Paul is the guy who can rub shoulders with anyone in society at any level. And this is all the more reason for Paul to attach himself to a wealthy patron. He can provide for his needs by coming alongside someone wealthy who can house him and feed him.

But not only does Paul not participate in this patronage system, he does something that no Roman elite would do. He works with his hands.

Manual labor was beneath the upper classes. Remember, the physical was considered impure. The Roman orator, Cicero, he referred to craftsmen, petty shopkeepers, and all that filth in the city.

He called their work degrading. He said, The very wages of a laborer are the badges of slavery. So, with that as the background, tent making is not just a side job for Paul.

By doing it, Paul is degrading himself. Right? Instead of reaching up for protection, for food, for housing, to a wealthy patron, Paul descends into all that filth.

[17:21] Why does he do this? Why? Why? He does it for love. Love for the lost. Love for the weak. And then Paul goes back in verse 14.

He starts to reemphasize all his rights. Now he's referring back to the Old Testament for an example of what he's talking about. He says, Hey, do you remember those in the temple who used to serve and do the Lord's work?

These highly important people? They also benefited from the sacrificial system. And this wasn't a mistake, right? This was God's plan to provide for those people. A beautiful way that God provided for those people.

God created this system in the Old Testament. And for those who do the work of the Lord in the New Testament, they continue the use of this principle. There's a continuation of it.

And again, after Paul's thorough defense of his rights now from the Old Testament, and even from Jesus' words where he's quoting Matthew 10.10, Paul says, I have never used these rights.

[18:23] And his reason for writing to them at this point, it isn't to change course. He's not asking for a paycheck for them. What is Paul

doing? He's actually doubling down. He says, I would rather die than to have anyone take away my ground of boasting.

That phrase there. So what is this ground of boasting that Paul's talking about? So Paul keeps going to explain. He says, If I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting.

Right? Because it's just necessary for me to preach the gospel. Like the sun rising in the morning, Paul's just doing what he's made to do now. So, Paul goes one step further.

He says, Hey, even woe to me if I don't preach the gospel. Right? He's been called to this task. So that whether he does it out of compulsion, or whether Paul does it out of joy, it is the task he's been called to, and Paul needs to fulfill this.

So that's not what Paul's talking about in his grounds for boasting. So let's keep digging in and see what he says. In verse 16, the reward of boasting he talks about is clear here.

[19:31] He says, It's preaching the gospel free of charge. His deferring of the right to accept payment and doing it free for everyone is his grounds for boasting.

His clear love in word and deed towards others. His reward is incarnating Jesus in front of others. Going down low that ladder that we just talked about.

So that Jesus can get glory. So Paul starts with this clear defense of his right to be paid to preach the gospel. And he knows the normal inclination, if for someone who's struggling, is to start climbing up that ladder.

Start scratching at what you have rights for. Oh, I need this. I need this. You start climbing back up. But Paul says, No. No, that's not where I'm going. He doesn't rise above discomfort and suffering. But he instead goes down. What some people perceive as failure instead of success, Paul goes right down into that failure.

[20:35] He goes low and begins to defer these rights. And he associates with the low. So if we go back to that chart, Kevin, with the J on there. This chart here is super helpful for me to understand what's going on here.

What the Corinthians are seeing is Paul. Paul is this highly academic, intellectual man. And he has all these rights. He's a strong person. But Paul says, I need to be Jesus.

And when I do that, I move from strength to weakness. So everyone's seeing Paul do this on this side. And Paul says, Oh, no. Something much bigger is going on than you can even imagine.

So he starts to lay out what Paul Miller calls this J curve. So Paul is this high and exalted elite teacher. And he goes down to be a tent maker.

He goes down. He gives up his rights for wages, for all these things. And it looks like he's failing. He's going down. But the beautiful thing is what happens on the other side. What is the result?

[21:35] What happens after he goes down? The J curve says a new community believing in Jesus is produced. Something way better than Paul as an individual thriving.

A community built around Jesus thriving. The inclusion of outsiders who would have never had a chance to rise up at all are now included into God's family.

That is what Paul is getting after. That is why Paul puts aside all the rights of things that he has in his life. To see others join the most beautiful community ever.

He says, I'm free from all. Yet I've made myself a servant to all. So that I might win more of them. More of them is Paul's goal.

Right? His deferring of his rights has a purpose. It's not just so he can say he did it. It's not just being a masochist. Enduring pain and suffering just for the sake of it. No, it's so the spread of the gospel is maximized.

[22:35] So that more might come to find their greatest treasure in Jesus. And be reconciled to the one true God. That is Paul's reward. That is what Paul is boasting of.

And that's what Paul is boasting in. So verses 20 through 22. Paul starts laying out how he's been doing this. With the Jewish people already. Right?

Paul was living as the Jews lived. Adopting certain practices. Probably ones that he was very familiar with. Growing up in the Jewish religion. So that he could gain an audience with them.

Paul was willing to bend and be flexible. On certain non-essential things in his life. So that he could preach the gospel to Jewish people. And to the weak.

Paul does the same thing. To all people. Paul does the same thing. If you read more about Paul. You know how much of a staunch defender he was of the gospel.

[23:32] Of Christian living. Of ethics and morals. And yet we see Paul being flexible and moving here. So that others might hear the gospel. So what does this tell us about Paul?

It tells us he not only spent time with people. But he got to know them. He got to know their practices. Their day-to-day routines. But he didn't just learn about them.

He didn't just observe them from the outside. He lived with them. He became like them. Why? Because his regard was for the gospel message to go out.

Far above and beyond any of his personal preferences. Think about your food choices. Your morning routines. Your recreation time. Your language. Right?

All of that. Paul was willing to be flexible. With all people around him. Never, ever, ever compromising on gospel living.

[24:29] But always in faith. Doing whatever he could. To win more and more and more to Christ. One example of this we see in Paul and Timothy's life.

To explain how far they would go to put this into practice. We go back to the book of Acts in chapter 16 verses 1 through 5. Acts 16, 1 through 5 says, Paul also came to Derbe and to Lystra.

And there was a disciple there named Timothy. The son of a Jewish woman who was a believer.

But his father was a Greek. Timothy was well spoken of by their brothers at Lystra and Iconium.

Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him. So he took Timothy and he circumcised him. Because of the Jews who were in those places. For they all knew that his father was a Greek.

As they went on their way through the cities. They delivered to them for observance to the.

Observance to the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. And then listen to this.

[25:30] So the churches were strengthened in their faith. And they increased in numbers daily. This is how important it was for Paul and Timothy to be regarded by the Jews.

So that they could gain an audience. And we see at the end of the passage. Whereby this living of deferring of rights. Proved to strengthen the church.

And increase their number daily. What a witness this is. Right? I love how verse 23 ties in so closely with this. Paul tells us. Why does he do this?

He does it all for the sake of the gospel. So that. Right? So that. He may share with them in its blessings. Do we see division in the church like Paul did?

Do you want the gospel to spread more and more? Do you have a heart for missions? Do you want to see a healthy church be strengthened? And then plant other healthy churches?

[26:28] Paul's answer to these things is interesting. Paul doesn't say. Hey let's start a program. Let's start a men's or a women's study. Let's start a Sunday school class.

Start a campus ministry. Serve the homeless. Take a spiritual gifting test. Paul doesn't say any of that. What does Paul say? He says the solution starts. It might end with those things.

Those things are good. But Paul says it starts with individuals. Living out the calling on their life. To be little Christ in the world. Right? Descending down the J curve.

Which is willingly and voluntarily subjecting themselves to pain and suffering. Right? So that others. So that the church can flourish. It's the J curve we saw before.

Sharing in the blessings with the church. Just like we see in verse 23. It's the thing that fuels Paul deferring of his rights. Why would a man descend down?

[27:25] Because he sees others flourish. It's the vision of God's church flourishing. Right? The church is the one for whom God has sent his son for. The ones who have been purchased by the blood of Christ.

This is what gives Paul the heart to serve. Rather than be served. By doing this. Right? Paul was distinguishing Christianity as something new and upside down.

From anything anybody had ever seen. My witness to this. Right? I was saved back in 2010. It's an amazing story. God gets all the glory from it. And from those very first days of being a Christian. Right? I've been blessed by being a member of churches. Where I see the same thing lived out. The J curve. In a million little ways. Right? First for that Trinity Baptist in New Haven.

Men and women. Many of them here today. Right? Entirely different backgrounds as me. They didn't grow up around me. The way I grew up. But what did they do?

[28:23] They desired for my good and my growth. And what happened? I grew. Some of them even had to use crayons to draw what the gospel was for me. But they did that.

They came down to my level. Which was very low. Trust me. It was very low. Others at Trinity. They have names after. They have letters after their names.

I don't know what many of those letters mean. But that was never a barrier to those people.

Coming. Discipling me. Having relationships with me. And here at Shoreline.

Right? We're almost 10 years in. I've witnessed that over and over and over here. The conversations that have taken place in this room. The people of high esteem in society.

And the people of low esteem. There is no barrier. Right? It is beautiful. It is mind-blowing when we think about it. Right? If it weren't for the gospel. How many of us here would have conversations with people in this room?

[29:20] Not many. But now. There's these deep things we share. We can glory in them for all eternity. Together. Forever. That two-way blessing that Paul was talking about in verse 23.

Both Paul from this high place blessing and being blessed by coming down. But also sharing this blessing. Right? This blessing is two ways. It's not just Paul blessing them.

It's Paul being blessed by them. Oh, it's beautiful. And this confounds the world. Right? It captivates many to come and see. And it should drive us to also go and tell.

Like Mike talked about last week. If there's anyone here today who's not a child of God. Right? If this whole church and Jesus thing is not your norm.

But at the same time you're looking around and you're saying. This is more than a social club that just meets on Sunday. Something else is going on. Please grab somebody next to you. Please ask them a couple questions.

[30:22] Why do you go here? Why do you keep coming back? And lean in and listen to those answers. It will be so beneficial for you. Oh, it's beautiful.

So let's go back to our last section here. Verses 24 through 27 make up the end of chapter 9. Paul here acknowledges at the end. At the end. This going low.

This depriving yourself of your own rights. This self-control. This self-denial. This delayed gratification. It's hard work. Paul does not want to lie about that.

And Paul's life has not been easy ever since he came to Christ. Being faithful to God's call on his life has not been health, wealth, and prosperity. And we should not expect the same.

Paul knows his words will be met with questions like this. Do you know what this means for me? Do you know what this means for my lifestyle if I actually do this? Paul wants his reward.

[31:20] And he knows it means hard work to go and do it. So to explain this to the Corinthians, Paul brings a few illustrations to light. The runner and the boxer. Right?

The emphasis here is on this physical exertion that it takes to become all things to all people. The Olympian Games, right? They started back up in the late 1800s.

But they were going on back then. And also something called the Isthmian Games, which I just learned about. These took place about 10 miles from Corinth. So this whole audience watching what was going on here, surely familiar with what it meant for these Olympic sports to take place. They knew what it meant to win one of these games. The fame, all that that came with winning. So no illustration here could be more intelligible for them to be an exhortation to self-denial, to push hard.

Right? The runner trains with a purpose. And he knows that a winner in a race receives a prize. So that runner needs to be disciplined in all aspects of his life. You don't get to win a running race with lazy training and a poor diet.

[32:26] I've tried. Doesn't work. The person who starts the race but doesn't finish, they don't win. The one who runs the race and exerts himself all the way to the end, they must deny comfort and push to win.

And the boxer's the same story. Right? You don't just win a boxing match in Olympian, in the Olympics, just by beating the air. You need to train and train and eat.

You need to have an opponent in front of you. You need to knock them down and knock them out. Boxing the air will not do it. And Paul's saying, I didn't just run aimlessly. I did not just beat the air. And the crazy thing was, the people who won these games, they didn't win any monetary prize. They got a wreath made of three things were possible.

Olive branches, celery, or pine boughs. Right? You got a bunch of fame and you got no money and you got this wreath that would perish and go away.

[33:26] Right? We laugh at it. But Paul says, why are we so much more who struggle and fight for something imperishable? Something that will last for all eternity. Why are we not fighting like they did?

Why are we not striving, leaning in, so that our reward, our prize, is something more beautiful than anyone could ever imagine? So, Paul finishes in verse 27 here.

He says, he does this, I discipline my body and keep it under control. And then he says this, Last, after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified.

Paul is clearly saying, there is some aspect to this call in his life that has to do with his body. And if he fails at doing this, then he's disqualified. Right?

There's a long history in the church of misinterpretation of this verse. That says, punishing one's own body is a mean of spiritual discipline. We don't recommend that.

[34:29] We think that's a poor interpretation of what's going on here. But when you look at the metaphors of running and boxing, right? The athletics is the context of what Paul is getting at here. We see Paul's striving and effort is toward a goal.

And just like the athletes in the Olympic and Isthmian Games of ancient times, all these athletes knew the rules. And the ones at the Isthmian Games would go into this room with the judge and take an oath to follow all the rules for the games.

And Paul is saying the same thing here. This calling on his life as a follower of Jesus was all by grace. Paul says it over and over and over.

No works could ever bring Paul to Jesus. All by grace of God. But now, since he has been called, he's required to take no shortcuts. He's required to bring glory to God by living in obedience to his word.

And not doing this would disqualify him from receiving the prize. Just like the athlete competing. Taking a shortcut in a race, immediate disqualification.

[35:36] Paul is warning himself here, right? And he's letting the Corinthian church in on that warning. He says, if you do not see discipline in my life, then I'm out.

I'm not living in accordance with my calling on my life. And something is wrong. Paul's multiple warnings he has given the Corinthians in this letter.

Go for Paul as well. Warnings like these that we see in next week's chapter in chapter 10 are clear statements that the Christian life is full of joy and blessing.

But it's also not a life to be taken lightly. Yeah. This call for Paul to turn down a wage in order that he might preach with no obligation.

That call is not for all of us, though. We are not to mimic Paul and defer wages for whatever we're doing. That was Paul's wisdom issue on how to preach the gospel more and more.

[36:35] What is not an option for us is that the Christian life is one of dying constantly. Dying for the sake of others. The call to deny yourself, to take up your cross and follow the Lord from Luke 9.23, that's not optional in the Christian life.

But, but, that seems hard. But the promise that comes along with that is a beautiful one. The promise of eternal life. Life with God, a reward more valuable than everything in this world, is what awaits on the other side of that.

So, we finish today's sermon by asking ourselves, does our life look like this high performance athlete striving towards the goal of looking like Jesus?

Incarnating the Lord for others. Building up the body in sacrificial love. Is that what our life looks like? Are we pushing hard for the gospel to ensure that those whom God has put in our lives, that they're hearing the word of God?

Right? These are the fantastic things to think about after service. Right? Think about them this week. And I encourage you to do it with somebody else. These are wisdom issues for us when we start doing these calculations of what we're willing to give up.

[37:52] What we're willing to give into. To help us do that, let me finish with a few lines from Puritan Thomas Watson. Thomas Watson writes this.

He says, He was poor that he might make us rich. He was born of a virgin that we might be born of God. He took our flesh that he might give us his spirit.

He lay in the manger that we may lie in paradise. He came down from heaven that he might bring us to heaven.

The ancient of days should be born. That he who thunders in the heavens should cry in the cradle. That a virgin should conceive. That Christ should be made of a woman and of that woman which himself made.

That the branch should bear the vine. That the mother should be the younger than the child she bear. And that the child in the womb bigger than the mother. That the human nature should not be God, yet one with God.

[39:00] Let us come and worship. Let me pray. Let me pray.