

Live Like You're Called // 1 Corinthians 7:10-24

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[0:00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! So 1 Corinthians 7, verse 10. If you'll look there with me. To the married, I give this charge, not I, but the Lord.

For the wife should not separate from her husband. But if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And the husband should not divorce his wife.

To the rest I say, I, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.

For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband.

[1:09] Otherwise, your children would be unclean. But as it is, they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so.

In such cases, a brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband?

Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife? Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned and to which God has called him.

This is my rule in all the churches. Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision.

Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything but keeping the commandments of God.

[2:12] Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. Were you a slave when called? Do not be concerned about it. But if you gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.

For he who is called in the Lord as a slave is a freed man of the Lord. Likewise, he who is free when called is a slave of Christ.

You were bought with a price. Do not become slaves of men. So brothers, in whatever condition each is called, let him remain with God.

This is the word of the Lord. Hallelujah. Please be seated. You know, the story goes that Martin Luther was once approached by a man who had recently become a Christian desiring to serve the Lord.

With his new life, he came to Martin Luther, the reformer, and said, what should I do now that I've come to Christ? Luther asked, well, what is your work now?

[3:24] He said, I'm a shoemaker. Luther responded, then make a good shoe and sell it at a fair price. It's almost a humorous question, or a humorous answer at least.

But this question is quite common among new believers. When I was suddenly converted almost 25 years ago, I quit drinking. I quit smoking weed. I quit listening to garbage.

I quit hanging out with deadbeats. I quit messing around. And I began to ask, what should I do now? Like, what is life all about? What must I do?

And that's what was going on in Corinth in the first century. We've learned about Corinth. Corinth was new, wealthy, and wicked. It was this Roman colony set in the middle of Greece, right in a wonderful location for making money.

It was a land of opportunity, kind of like the American West back in the day. And so, it was drawing all kinds of people into this city. It was a cosmopolitan, prosperous city. And when Paul came, so all these types of people are coming in.

[4:29] When Paul came in and preached the gospel, all kinds of people were getting saved. It was not a southern Bible Belt believing church. No. This was a place where Christianity was unknown.

And so, all these things were going on. Some Jews, some Gentiles, some married, some singles, some rich, some slaves. And as the gospel invaded their lives, they began to say, what should I do now?

If I'm married, should I stay married? I mean, Jesus just claimed my life, you know. I'm his slave.

Should I stay married? If I'm married to an unbeliever, should I stay married to him or her?

If I'm single or a widow, recently widowed, something like that, should I get married? If I'm a Gentile, should I try to become a Jew? Should I observe some of these Old Testament practices and become like a Jew?

If I'm a slave, should I break free? After all, Jesus breaks every chain. Right. But it is the question, isn't it? It's the burning question, if you ask Jesus into your little heart.

[5:35] You know, it's the question, if you've been converted suddenly, how should I live now?

Should I ditch my old friends now? Should I quit my old job for something more important, more valuable, more sacred?

You can hear the, well, what I think about that, by the way I ask that question. Should I quit my old church? Should I transfer to a different school? Should I move away? Should I sell all that I have and give it all away?

What should I do now? Well, the Apostle Paul really gets down to, into the nitty-gritty of our lives, into the details. And he says, in a word, begin living for Christ where you are, for you are now his slave. Begin living for Christ where you are, for you are now his slave.

I'm going to break this out, kind of naturally, the way the text does, the way Paul kind of moves from question to question. The first point is, if you're married, stay married. If you're married, stay married.

You want a directive today? That might be a directive for you. Last week, Gil took up a hard text. A lot of guys told me whether I punted that one off on Gil. You know, it was a hard text. In this text, you know, they were asking about conjugal rights and marriage.

[6:45] In this text, the question's a little bit different. If I'm to glorify God with my body, should I stay married? After all, God purchased my life. Should I stay married?

And Paul says, if you're married, stay married. He says, look down there with me. Verse 10, to the married I give this charge. The wife should not separate from her husband.

Verse 11, and the husband should not divorce his wife. Now, separation and divorce are used synonymously there. Divorce by separation, very common in that Roman colony of Corinth.

But they're used synonymously, this idea of, should I divorce? Because now I'm a believer because he's broken every chain and I belong to him. Should I divorce now? And he says, stay married and don't divorce.

Now, it's very hard to capture how radical this teaching was in Corinth. Sometimes we think divorce is a modern problem. But that is not what was going on in the first century in Corinth.

[7:45] Marriage in this Roman colony was more defined by status and appearance. So you had a wife, you had the trophy wife, you know. You had a wife that gave you some status in the community.

And so when that status was no longer needed or she no longer provided that status, you dropped her. You moved on. Marriage in Corinth more often ended, not in death, but divorce.

Divorce was quick, easy. It was even so among religious people, among Jews. And Jews, you could divorce for almost any reason, even if your wife burned your supper. Literally.

That is a rabbi teaching. Views on marriage and divorce are not much different today. In the sarcastic devil's dictionary, love is defined as a temporary insanity that's curable by marriage. It took a while for some of you to get that. In a similar vein, some of you still haven't. In a similar vein, Woody Allen said there are three rings involved in marriage. The engagement ring, the wedding ring, and the suffer ring.

[8:52] But I think the problem really is a consumer, we have a consumer relationship with marriage. We relate to it like we relate to goods. I was thinking about this the other day.

I was talking to somebody about running shoes. I used to run in Nike Pegasus when I ran quite a bit. You know, they were the right price point. They were comfortable. I'd run in them a little while.

But, you know, and they kind of suited me for a little while.

And I enjoyed running in them. But over time, I found out that the money I saved was the money I was spending in buying shoes more frequently. Because they were falling apart on me faster than other shoes were.

And so, I severed my relationship with Nike Pegasus. Because they were no longer benefiting me.

And, you know, marriage in our culture is really kind of like that.

As long as the pluses outweigh the minuses, I'm going to stay. But if the minuses start outweighing the pluses, well, then I'm done.

[9:50] We enter it and exit it as it suits us. But did you notice that Paul added there, look in verse 10, I, or I give this charge, not I but the Lord.

Did you notice that? Paul is, that's a reference to our Lord Jesus Christ, not a generic reference to God, but to our Lord Jesus Christ. So, even though the Gospels had not been written yet, Paul is referencing teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And it appears he's referencing Mark 10, which we have for you. He says, from the beginning of creation, this is our Lord. God made them male and female, quite obviously referencing Genesis 1.27. Therefore a man, Genesis 2.24, shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife. Two shall become one flesh, though they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. And so, Paul is just referring back to the teaching of Jesus, and the teaching of Jesus is very plain here.

Marriage is to be a lifelong union of one man and one woman. Lifelong. It's not to end in divorce, but in death.

[10:56] So, she's not yours forever. You know, I think that's funny when it pops up in the vows. That's what Paul teaches here. Whoever's married should not divorce because marriage is meant to be lifelong.

But the stunner is not merely that marriage is to be lifelong. Now, that is a stunner. Talk about a ball and chain, being stuck with the same woman for the rest of your life.

They're like, no, I don't like that. But the real stunner that Jesus is underlining is that marriage was not established by man, but by God. That's the thread.

Could you pop back up, Mark 10? That's the thread holding this together. From the beginning, God made man male and female. Therefore, man shall leave his father and mother. They're no longer two, but one.

What? Therefore, God joined together. Let not man separate. So, the miracle is the warm and fuzzy that led you to your special person is really that God was at work doing all that.

[11:57] And so, that's why marriage is to be revered and held in honor among all. So, regardless of whether you're married at 18, 27, or 42, whether you were married in a country church or on the courthouse step, you were not blinded by love.

Your marriage is established by God. It's God who brought you together. And what, therefore, God has joined together, as KJV used to say, or does say, I guess, let not man tear asunder.

I remember a long time ago, Kim and I have been married 19 years. Before we got married, I was aflame with passion. That's how I read this passage.

That's where I was. And we, one of the things, leading up to our wedding, we had a family party back in South Carolina in my hometown. I was the first of my brothers to get married.

And so, everybody came. So, it was this party. And we had family from both sides of the family were there. So, just kind of everybody was there. Some people had not met Kim yet because we dated for a couple months.

[12:59] And so, it was like, okay, we got to meet. We were excited. We want to hear about what's going on. And I remember we were served a plate first, I guess. You know, we were guests of honor or something.

And we were at my aunt's house. I remember kind of walking through the house. You know how it is when you have more people in your house than belong in your house? So, there's just tables everywhere, you know. There's tables in the living room, kitchen, bathrooms, whatever, you know. Get a table. I mean, find a table, set it up, and get some chairs. And that's kind of the way it was. And we kind of went into this old dining room of my aunt's, my aunt's dining room. And we were going in there.

And she had a long table. And at the end of the table was my Uncle Buddy and his wife. My Uncle Buddy, in the end, was married 61 years. But the last 10 years of his marriage, his wife had dementia.

He never hired anybody outside his home to care for her. Some nights, he would change her bed and change her clothing three times a night. And, you know, we were like giddy, like marriage.

[13:57] We can't wait to get married. And we walk in this room. And there's my great uncle serving my great aunt, her dinner. I was like, this is the room we need to be in.

We pulled up our chairs next to them. And we're like, you know, sitting down, you know. You know, meal is not the same when you're feeding someone. And I remember looking up at him and said, Uncle Buddy, how are you doing?

And the man I have great respect for, he said, it's hard. And I said, you know, started blabbing. I felt like, yeah, I respect you so much.

I respect your example. Like, I'm looking at you, feeding your wife. I just, so affected. And he looked at me in the eyes and said, I made a covenant.

That's the best lesson I could have learned about marriage right before I got married. That's what Paul is teaching here. Like, the wonder of your marriage is not your love story, as Taylor Swift's saying.

[15:11] The wonder of your marriage is that God, God did it. God cares so much about you. To find the spouse that you need and deliver them to your doorsteps.

But all this kind of aligns with what Paul's been teaching these past chapter chapters. And sexuality, the fact that you're a male or a female, is not yours to keep or yours to give wherever you feel like it. It was designed to be given away to somebody.

It's either reserved for the Lord or it's reserved for a spouse in marriage. And that's what's going on. So don't divorce. Stay married. Begin living for Christ where you are. Point two, if your spouse is not a believer, stay married if at all possible.

If your spouse is not a believer, stay married if at all possible. You know, so they first ask, if I'm to glorify God with my body, should I stay married? Now they begin to ask, if I'm to glorify God with my body, should I stay married to my unbelieving spouse?

And Paul says, yes, if at all possible. In these verses, he's addressing the rest. Look down there in verse 12. To the rest. So he's referencing, or the rest is used to refer to every other married couple.

[16:25] So in the previous point that I was using, 10 and 11, verses 10 and 11, he's referencing the marriage of two believers. Now he's referencing what we call a mixed marriage. A marriage between, not interracial marriage, but a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever.

And so he said, these commands are addressed to them. To the rest. Notice he says there immediately in verse 12, I not the Lord. To the rest.

Because I, not the Lord. Now some people say, the Apostle Paul is saying, Jesus is authoritative. That's why we pointed that out in verse 10. But I'm just offering suggestions, or you know, good ideas, good advice, life hacks, or something like that.

I don't think that's it at all. It doesn't hold up. Paul commands us throughout this chapter. He's very aware that he's writing scripture. So inspired by the Spirit, he is saying, I'm addressing something Jesus did not address. Something Jesus had not seen.

Because the gospel has invaded in a different way. And now there's mixed marriages because of the gospel's upending force. And so, he teaches us.

[17:31] Look in verse 12. If any brother has a wife who's an unbeliever and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. Verse 13 continues with a reciprocal action. For a husband, don't divorce.

As Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young say, love the one you're with. Though I think they meant a little bit different than that. But how can this be, you know? Think about this contextually.

Like the shock of this, contextually. How can this be? The Bible commands believers not to marry unbelievers. They ought not. They must not. And so, lest we be confused, Paul is not permitting believers to marry unbelievers.

Rather, he's just telling someone what to do if you find yourself in a marriage where you're a believer and they are not. Suddenly, the gospel intervenes. But wait. Didn't we just learn that our bodies are members of Christ?

How can we take the bodies of a member of Christ and unite them to someone who's not of Christ? Think about this. Should light stay married to darkness?

[18:38] Or purity to impurity? Wouldn't darkness and impurity of the unbelieving spouse invade or affect the marriage? Destroy the marriage, the relationship?

This is the way the thinking often goes, you know? If the school is ungodly, get out of school. If the team is ungodly, get off the team. If the marriage is ungodly, get out of the marriage.

But if you keep going like this, the only place you'll find to hide yourself is in your own closet. And so, Paul does something so revolutionary here. So staggering.

Think about the Old Testament laws about cleanness and uncleanness. Paul is, you're not supposed to be around an adulterous woman. And Paul is reinterpreting them in light of the gospel. Paul says, the worry is not that the unclean would make the clean unclean. The staggering thing is that the clean, by the power of the gospel, can make the unclean clean.

[19:42] That's amazing. So he says, the ungodly spouse is made holy by the godly spouse.

Now, if that doesn't shock you, then I don't know what will, you know? I have no tricks. The unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife. And the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband.

Twice repeated there. Now, the idea is not that the unbelieving spouse is transformed. By her husband. Or saved.

The idea is that the unbelieving spouse, the way holiness is used in the Old Testament, the unbelieving spouse is set apart in a way unlike the world.

To receive the influence of the gospel. A front row seat at the effect of the gospel. To receive the witness of the gospel. And so, this unbelieving spouse is made holy in the sense that, because of their believing spouse, they're exposed to the gospel in a way unlike just any other unbeliever, unlike any other home.

[20:55] And then he continues, not only is the unbelieving spouse made holy, but also the children. This is where the Presbyterians go direction. I don't agree and talk about the holiness of that children and back it up with a number of different things for baptizing them or washing them.

Now, I've said before it's a dangerous thing to be born into a Christian home. It's not safe to be born into a Christian home. It's dangerous because Bible reading, praying, and going to church can just become one of the things.

I think it's safe to say that Jesus spends far more time rebuking people who are born into Christian homes than rebuking people who are not.

But, these verses are underlining the tremendous advantage of being born in a Christian home. If you were born into a Christian home, you have God to thank.

You should be filled with tears, overwhelmed, because of the advantage. Even if one spouse is a believer, the advantage is still there.

[22:10] How many first learn of the faith through one of their parents? Yeah, I think when we get to heaven, and we might meet all the greats, you know, meet Augustine and Spurgeon and all these guys.

I think then we'll keep going a little bit further and we'll meet their mom. You know, like, oh, the real hero. I love some of these stories from Spurgeon. He tells a story that his mom would read the scriptures to him, verse by verse, explaining every detail.

Then she would plead with him, how long, you little sinner? She wouldn't say that, but how long would you, yeah, why won't you sin? Hey, Christ, what is going on? And then listen to this. Then she would pray over him. He says, and we have for you, then came a mother's prayer.

So, women, you start praying like this, things might start happening. And some of the words of that prayer, we shall never forget even when our hair is gray. He's talking about he and his other siblings. I remember on one occasion her praying thus, Now, Lord, if my children go on in their sins, it will not be from ignorance that they perish.

And my soul must bear a swift witness against them at the day of judgment if they lay not hold of Christ. Can you imagine overhearing, Mom, pray that out?

[23:26] As Spurgeon says, that thought of a mother bearing swift witness against me pierced my conscience and stirred my heart. How many children would be better off if their parents realized this advantage, this influence?

How many marriages would be saved if a spouse remembered this, held on to this, you know? And today, this morning, you might find yourself in a situation where your spouse is not a believer. If you are, if your spouse is not a believer, perhaps they're not even with you. I'm so grateful you're here. This passage addresses you. I imagine just the divided heart you feel being in a relationship where it is a mixed marriage.

And you're trying to influence your child in one way. And perhaps your spouse is influencing them in a very different way. And these texts are just telling you, stay married if at all possible.

Hold on. Press into this marriage. Stay married for your spouse is good, your children's good, and for your own. But what do you do if the spouse, the unbelieving spouse wants to separate?

[24:35] Verse 15, Paul continues. He's kind of meandering through this wonderful ethical section of Scripture. Verse 15, but if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so.

So, if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. If they want a divorce, let it be so. Now, divorce is forbidden in Scripture, but there are two exceptions biblically.

And this is one of them. It's critical that we understand this teaching because all divorces are caused by sin, but not all divorces are sinful biblically.

They're all caused by sin because it's a product of the fall, but not all divorces are sinful. The first exception is when a spouse commits adultery.

You know, they came to Jesus. You've heard it said that whoever divorces his wife, let him give to her a certificate of divorce. But I say unto you, everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality or adultery, makes her commit adultery.

[25:46] And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. The idea is that if you divorce your spouse because they committed adultery, and you've determined in your heart through prayer and counsel that you're no longer able to stay in this marriage with them, your divorce is not sinful.

It's not a sin to get a divorce in that scenario. The second exception is here. If your unbelieving spouse separates and abandons the marriage, then it's not sinful.

Now, one thing I should add when you're talking about categories like this, if you're in a marriage where your spouse is physically abusive, you should get out of the house and get help and help discern what to do going forward.

There's so much I could say in application here, but those are the two exceptions. Now, there's many invalid grounds for divorce. My spouse isn't a Christian, it's an invalid ground, actually.

We weren't married in church, invalid. I need to get out of this marriage for the sake of my kids.

We're no longer in love. I married the wrong person. We were too young.

[27:02] They've changed too much. Whatever it is, divorcing for any one of those reasons is sinful, and remarrying after a sinful divorce is sinful as well.

I believe that's what Paul is teaching there, and elders believe as well. Look in verse 11. He was talking about the marriage.

If she does divorce, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. He was talking about if she does divorce for an unbiblical reason, she should remain unmarried.

Now, all that said, you don't have to get a divorce. In fact, one of our first bits of counsel with someone in a difficult marital situation is be patient.

I've rarely talked with someone who said, I got my divorce too fast. Most of the time, there's regret. It seems Paul is appealing this way.

[28:02] Look in verse 16. He's appealing for what you do not know. In that moment, you know, you might know. You might feel that you know your spouse is a dirty, rotten scoundrel or something like that. But he says, how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband?

How do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife? The context is stay married to an unbeliever because you do not know what God might do. But there's hope for any hard marriage here.

You know what will happen if you divorce. But you don't know what will happen if you don't. Marriage is hard, but life's hard, you know? Life is pain, princess.

What would happen to you in your marriage if you embrace true forgiveness for those great wrongs? What would happen to you? You threw out that D word and you said, instead, I'm going to devote myself to rebuilding trust.

After those great disappointments and discouragements. What would happen if you took up patience and forbearance for those unresolved differences and disagreements?

[29:04] Perhaps your marriage would be saved. Perhaps your spouse would be saved. Perhaps your children would be saved. It's incredible what Paul is saying here. Don't divorce. Stay married. Begin living for Christ where you are.

Point three, whatever your circumstances are, begin serving Christ there. He kind of goes wide angle lens here and addresses all of us. He's addressed kind of the married and the Lord. Or the two believers who are married. He's addressed a mixed marriage. What should I do? I want to honor God and glorify God with my life. Here he says, if I'm to glorify God with my body, what am I supposed to do now?

How am I to view my present circumstances? How am I to view my current relationships, obligations, and commitments? And he sets out to answer this question. This is the principle. In many ways, it holds the chapter together.

He sets out to answer the question in a way that we wouldn't assume. He begins by reminding them of how the gospel suddenly and surprisingly invaded their life.

[30:00] Seven times in these verses, he uses the word called, referencing God calling them from darkness to light. The whole book begins this way. Paul says, and I think we have it for you, to the church of God that is in court to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all who confess the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Just a few verses later, God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Just a few verses after that, he says, for consider your calling, brothers. Not many are wise according to worldly standards. Not many powerful or noble birth. But here, the references to calling. So it began back in chapter 1. The references to calling just jump off the page here.

You see it immediately in verse 7. Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned them to which the Lord has called them. So what is he doing? Paul is urging them to view their present circumstances in light of the calling of God.

Only let each person lead the life that God has assigned. He's saying your present situation and all the circumstances of it are not random, but providentially arranged.

[31:14] And he's saying, more than that, step further, he's saying your present circumstances do not need to change in order for them to be forgot. What must I do now? What must I do now?

The apostle might say, nothing. In one sense. You don't need to go be a pastor.

You don't need to go be a missionary. Like you don't, there's nothing more high and holy for your life than what God has situated you and called you to do.

So live for him. Begin living for him right where you are. Collect \$200 and pass, go, you know. Begin living for him right there.

Now this is crazy. This is not the way we think. We think the cross before me, the world behind me, everything behind me, I'm leaving it all behind to follow Jesus Christ. That's not the way this, Paul says it in this passage.

[32:13] Not even the way we think about our circumstances. We often think, if I just had a little bit more money, if I just had this job, if I just had this house, if I just had one change in the circumstance, then my spiritual life would be better.

And the apostle Paul says, no. It's not true. What you need is to live for Christ. Now, he takes up two staggering examples to drive home his point.

Two social dividers in the first century. Race and class. He talks about the racial division between Jews and Gentiles. And you saw that when you read that through. Were you circumcised when you were called?

Well, don't remove the mark of circumcision. Don't try to undo it. Were you uncircumcised when you were called? Don't seek out circumcision. You've got to understand how radical this is. This was a present-day debate.

Should those who come to Christ as Gentiles be circumcised? And so he's saying what he said in other places. Circumcision nor uncircumcision count for, they don't count for anything. Only a new creation is what counts.

[33:15] Faith working out through love. The major distinguishing mark between Jews and Gentiles was circumcision. But Paul says it doesn't matter. So that's what the super spiritual people did.

They got circumcised. Well, don't do it. Now, if you were circumcised, then no big deal either. It just felt fascinating. Next, he moves on. This is even more fascinating.

He goes to the class division between slave and free. Was anyone a slave? Let's look at that, actually. Look down there with me in verse 21. He says, were you a slave when called? There's our word.

Call, call, call, call, call. Were you a slave when called? Don't be concerned about it. But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself the opportunity. But he who is called in the Lord is a slave is a freedman of the Lord.

Likewise, he was free when called is a slave. Now, this is radical. One-third of the population of the Roman colony of Corinth in the first century were slaves. A second-third were former slaves.

[34 : 19] That's what freedman means. It's that second-third. So, two-thirds of the audience reading this first letter were either slaves or freedmen.

And Paul says, if you're a slave, forget about it.

You know, don't worry about it. What in the world are you talking about? Think about that.

Don't worry about the fact that you're owned by someone else. Take that in. Don't worry about the obligations you have to render.

Some of them illicit and ungodly and against your will. Don't worry about the abuses you may receive. Paul says, Jesus does not break every chain.

[35 : 17] What is he saying? It's an argument from a greater to the lesser, I believe. The greatest confining circumstance can be turned to Christ.

There's nothing more confining than slavery. And Paul is saying, even slavery cannot prevent you from serving and glorifying Jesus Christ.

That's amazing. And the reason he can say it is what he says next. For he who is called in the Lord is a slave, is a freedman of the Lord.

Likewise, he who is free when called is a slave of Christ. The freedman is a slave of the Lord.

The slave man is a free man in Christ. What he's saying is you might have chains on your hands, but your soul belongs to Christ.

[36 : 27] The change of ownership has occurred in the New Testament. The change of ownership was baptism. Paul said, we know Paul baptized people. Some of the arguments about who we baptized, and they want to be baptized by anybody, whatever.

The change of ownership has occurred. The Holy Spirit has been sent to infill these people, to seal them out as God's people. It doesn't matter whose chains are on them. Because they belong to the Lord.

You are not your own. You're sealed with the Spirit. You belong to Christ. So he's saying, if you're in the most enslaving circumstance, you belong to the Lord. You can serve him there.

Begin living for Christ where you are. You don't need to change your circumstances to live for Christ. When you come to Christ, it is literally Jesus take the wheel. You're saying, I am your servant.

You loose my bonds. I am yours. I'm your property. This goes against the way we think. I'm your property. Place me where you want to place me. Move me where you want to move me.

[37 : 27] Command me what you want me to do. I am your movable property. If it is in chains, in Corinth, then that's where I will be because I belong to you.

Is the greatest problem in your life the fact that you keep taking back the wheel? So, young adults, I don't know if these things coalesce a little bit.

Despite what the commencement speakers say, your future is not limitless. You cannot be everything or whoever you want to be.

The sky is not the limit. Commencement. Years ago, we lived in Knoxville. We used to... We did a lot of work on the campus ministry, so we had students come in and out of our house all the time. And, you know, when they would graduate, I would say, you know, you heard that commencement speech a couple weeks ago. Well, let me give you my commencement speech. And I would say something like this. Things are about to change.

[38 : 30] Next year, you won't go from exciting party to exciting party. No one will clap when you reach a work goal. And no one will give you an award at the end of the year.

Most nights, you'll be exhausted and fall asleep early so that you're ready for tomorrow. Now, when someone asks you in the years to come what you did last week, you won't remember because it

was not that memorable.

And in the end, your life won't be measured by the success you achieved or the income you reached or the applause you enjoyed, but by how faithful you were in mostly small, little things. So, welcome to the rest of your life. Enjoy. Eat your heart out. Now, maybe that's a little bit overboard, but the idea is your life will boil down to this.

God has given you a few things to do with a few people for a few years, and then you're going to pass into eternity. Just a few things to do with a few people, and then you're going to fly into eternity.

[39 : 39] So, how do you find out what you're supposed to do? Apostle Paul would say, start where you are. Start where you are. Do what your hands find to do right now.

If you're married, stay married. If you're in a hard marriage, stop pointing the finger. If you're single, don't put all your hopes in getting married. Live for Christ. If you're a student, receive your studies as God calling from the Lord.

If you're a teacher, throw your heart into the kids. Don't call it in with the same lesson plans. We all know who those teachers are with the same lesson plans. If you're a third shift stocker, stock them up and get ready for the explosion that happens at 8 a.m.

If you're a mom, there may be nothing more spiritual you can do than make PB&Js.; You don't need to lead a Bible study to serve Christ. Keep your eyes on those sticky fingers and smiling mouths before you.

Begin living for Christ where you are. The idea is the gospel is not your sins are forgiven, do what you want. The gospel is your sins are forgiven. You are mine now and wherever you are, live for Christ.

[40 : 42] You know, I remember years ago, 25 years ago, when I came to be a Christian, what shall I do? What shall I do? Over time, it began to settle in serving Christ right where I am.

Don't ask for the title before you do the job. Instead, serve Christ right where you are. You know, when I was converted, everything was meaningless. All is meaningless.

I related to Solomon and Ecclesiastes. Falling asleep thinking, crying myself to sleep. That's not a surprise. But crying myself to sleep thinking, this is the stupidest world.

And then when I came to Christ, like everything was meaningful again. Everything. Talking to a barista was meaningful. The mornings were meaningful.

Lord, give me another day. The Bible, all these things, meaning was everywhere. And that's the way it's supposed to be. So begin living for Christ where you are. For you're now his slave. You belong to him.

[41 : 47] He bought you the price. His very own blood was shed for your soul so that you might live solely and wholly for him. May God help us. Let me pray.

Father in heaven, thank you for these few minutes. Thank you for the opportunity to sit under your word. We enjoy you. We confess you. We love you. We rejoice in serving you with our lives.

Help us, we pray in Christ's name. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com. Amen.