

1 Corinthians 9:19-27

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[0 : 00] It's one of my favorite movie scenes.

A tour de force of 80s techno pop new age music with a driving bass line written by the great composer Vangelis.

Dun, dun, dun, dun, dun, dun, dun, dun. The screen opens and you see men running along the beach in England as they appear out of the mist and run across the screen with the ocean spray spitting up into their faces, their white running shorts and shirts getting stained with sand.

And so you see the heart of the movie, Chariots of Fire, Oscar winning. Many of you weren't born when it was made. It's worth going back to watch because it's a great story.

It is a great story of two men in their pursuit, their different paths to Olympic gold and to Olympic glory. Eric Liddell, a missionary kid, local Scottish rugby hero, active in ministry and campus mission, preparing to return to China as a missionary.

[1 : 28] He says to his sister, I believe God made me for China, for a purpose, for China. But I also know that God made me fast.

And when I run, I feel his pleasure. And so to live his whole life for the glory of God, he pursued both this Olympic opportunity and his career in missions.

The other main character, Harold Abrams, from a non-Anglo-Saxon family. In fact, he was half Jewish, half Lithuanian, if I remember correctly.

Succeeded at the highest levels at Cambridge University, working to be the best runner in the world, driven by an inner compulsion to overcome the odds.

And as an outsider, climb to the top. Both of these men in their various courses disciplined their lives.

[2 : 28] And this is what you see. Abrams and Liddell running next to each other, both members of the Great Britain Olympic team, training, disciplining themselves, training their body through hard work.

And it's fun to watch how they do it differently. Eric Little's running through the Scottish Highlands, jumping over rocks. And Abrams is training methodically in a modern sports way that was shocking to the day.

But both of them trained themselves and focused for this purpose of being the best runner they could be as they ran their Olympic race.

They denied themselves. They even put some of the relationships that they held most dear on the back burner in order to follow through with the purpose that they had set for themselves, to win the prize.

Friends, this is a great movie partly because the Bible uses a picture of running and running a race to be a part of the Christian life as well. And how we are called in a similar way to live lives of discipline and purpose.

[3 : 44] I was struck by how important this is as I read a news report this week. Yet another well-known pastor removed from ministry, fallen into sin, graciously being loved by his congregation, and yet how devastating it is for him, for his family, for his church to not run the race well, to fail to run to the end, to fail to have the discipline and the focus to keep going.

And so, we asked the question this morning, what does it look like to run the race such as to win the prize?

Maybe you're here visiting and you're wondering, what is this Christianity thing all about? You get a peek in to what it looks like as Christians wrestle with how are we called to live out our life in following Jesus?

And for those of us, as we look at the example of the Apostle Paul and how he talks about his own life in ministry, we will be challenged to think how we also ought to live our lives.

Continuing in our series in 1 Corinthians, we're in section chapters 8 through 10 that is responding to a question about, which is one we don't have, we don't face today, about food offered to idols.

[5 : 13] What do we do with food offered to idols in pagan temples? As Christians, do we eat it? Do we not eat it? Are there context? How do we wrestle with those things? And it seems that for some in the Corinthian church, they had said, we know it's just food.

We know that idols are not really gods at all. So what's the big deal? We can do whatever we want. Paul says, no, running the race is more nuanced than that.

We need to be more careful thinkers about how we respond to these situations. And so, as we come to our passage today, 1 Corinthians chapter 9, starting in verse 19, page 957 in your pew Bibles.

As we come to this, we get Paul talking about how do we run the race so as to win the prize? Let's look at that passage and read it together and then we'll dive in.

1 Corinthians chapter 9, starting verse 19. For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.

[6 : 33] To the Jews, I became as a Jew in order to win Jews. 2 Corinthians 6. 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 may win those outside the law.

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 I do not run aimlessly. I 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. Please pray with me.

Lord, thank you for your word. Thank you that it teaches us, instructs us, and Lord, more than that, that it changes us. That as we read your word by your spirit, Lord, you are able to work in our hearts. Lord, to change our attitudes, to motivate us to action, to instruct us in our belief, and Lord, to encourage our faith and trust in you. God, I pray you would help us this morning.

I pray for your help that my words, Lord, would be useful in your hands, Lord, for all of us. God, we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

[8 : 53] What we see in the Apostle Paul is what God wants for all of us. He wants us to live lives of great gospel flexibility and great gospel focus. And when we run this race, this is how we will run to win the prize that he has us. So gospel flexibility and gospel focus is what we have on tap this morning.

Verses 19 through 23 show us about Paul's flexibility and the flexibility that Christians can have. Verses 24 through 27 talk about the focus. So let's explore those first in order.

So 19 through 23, Paul has just spent, if you were here last week, you remember Pastor Nick preached on this, but Paul has just spent the greater part of chapter 9 talking about his rights, that as a traveling religious teacher and as a minister of the gospel in the kingdom of God, for both cultural and theological reasons, there is a good expectation, even a right that he would have, that the church, the people that he is teaching and encouraging, that they would support him, that they would take care of him financially. And so in verses 1 through 14 of chapter 9, Paul says, this is my right as an apostle for me to ask all of this. And yet, then he says in verses 15 through 18, but I don't take that right. As a matter of fact, I consciously defer that right. I do not want that obligation to be placed on you because I do not want the obligation to you that is entailed in that. I want to be free to proclaim the gospel to you without any burden to you at all so that you would hear the gospel and respond not because of any obligated relationship that we have, but simply because of the message that

I proclaim. This is what Paul has been saying so far. And he's saying, talking about his ministry in the context of trying to address this issue of offering meat to idols and how he has shaped his life and shaped his ministry and shaped his message to live out this calling of preaching the gospel free of charge.

So he says, I have this freedom to avoid obligation. And yet, and yet, look with me at verse 19 again. Though I am free from all, I'm coming to you and I have no obligation per se based on that.

[11 : 41] I have made myself a slave or servant. It's the same word. I've made myself completely obligated. I have surrendered my freedom and my right. For what? I have made myself a servant of all that I may win some of them. Recognize friends that this is a different concern that in chapter that he had in chapter eight. Chapter eight, he was talking about protecting the souls of fellow brothers and sisters who might stumble by the action of eating meat offered to idols. Here he is extending his vision even more than that. Yes, we are going to continue to care for them, but his, his vision is greater than that. He is looking beyond his brothers and sisters and thinking in this world, there are those who have not yet heard and have not yet received the good news of Jesus Christ. And this is Paul's great burning desire that the freedom that I have because of Jesus, I would spend fully and completely that others might also know that great freedom in Christ. This is what it is. Paul says, this is my life. And I put it forth to you as an example that this is the pattern, not just for ministers or pastors, but for all believers to follow in my pattern. And what is the pattern? You see it. It's fascinating to see if you're an English major, did you see that there's a, there's a linguistic pattern here to the X, I became as Y so that I might win X. Do you see that to the Jews? I became a Jew to those under the law. I became as under the law to those not under the law. I became as those not under the law to the week. I became as those under the week. And even the summary statements, verse 22, the second half, I become all things to all people that by all means I may win,

I may save some. This is the pattern. Paul's saying, because I now have this deeper identity in Christ, because I now know that regardless of what else I am, I am first and foremost a Christian because of the gospel work in my life. I have the freedom to be flexible. I have the freedom to go to a person and meet them in every way I can without compromising the gospel itself so that they might understand it.

What did this look like? Think about, for instance, Paul says, to the Jews, I became as a Jew. Well, you know what? Paul was a Jew. Ethnically, he was a Jew. And yet his identity in Christ was so profound that what he said was, though these are my Jewish brothers and sisters, what I'm going to do is I'm going to put myself back under following some of the customs, some of the legal patterns that my Jewish brothers follow that I don't have to follow anymore. That's what he means by saying to those under the law, though I'm not under the law, I become under the law. He's explaining that to say, although I know I don't have to do these things in order to be accepted by God, I do them willingly so that my Jewish brothers and sisters will not be offended.

I will not eat blood with meat in it. I will not travel on the Sabbath. You know, I will not all sorts of, I will not eat shellfish. You know, there are all sorts of different ways in which Paul might have embraced these different things. Say, I won't do those things with my brothers because I don't want to offend them. To those outside the law, to those without law, and for lots of religious people in the world, that would feel like those like crazy pagans out there, those people who are off the hook, living it up. So Paul says, look, to those outside the law, I'll become like them. Not that I'm off the hook with them, right? It's not that I'm embracing everything that they do because I'm still under the law of Christ. I still have to live a life that reflects what God calls me to. But at the end of the day, I'm going to become like them in every way that I can so that they might hear the gospel. What did this look like? Well, it's fascinating to think about some of Paul's examples, right? Here's one of them.

The issue of circumcision. To the Jewish community in the first century, and maybe even today, circumcision is a big deal, right? It's a sign that you're in the covenant. It's a sign that you're a part of the people, right? And so, fascinatingly, Paul had one companion, Timothy, who in Acts 16, Paul had circumcised so that they could continue their ministry among the Jews without offense. So he had Timothy circumcised because he didn't want that to be offensive to his Jewish brothers that Timothy had not done that. But then you turn over to Galatians chapter 2 and you find out Titus, another traveling companion, was not compelled to be circumcised for the same reason. To clarify the gospel among the Jews. Because in the Galatian context, there were people who were saying, you must follow the Jewish law in order to be a true Christian, in order to be saved, in order to be accepted by God. And Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, says, no, the only basis for our salvation is only and exclusively the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. His sufficient death for our sin is the only thing that is necessary. And our faith, which receives this work that God has done for us, is the only thing that makes us acceptable.

[18:27] And so, I won't circumcise Titus so that you will understand the gospel clearly. In the same way that I will circumcise Timothy so that you will hear the gospel clearly and not be offended by these external things. It's fascinating to watch Paul be flexible like that.

We don't like this. We like things to be neat and clean. Well, should he do it? Should he not do it? Do I eat with the Gentiles? Do I not eat with the Gentiles? How do I work these things out? Right? And for Paul, there is this clarity about it. Does it help the gospel become clear?

Does it help the gospel be heard in this circumstance? There are certain places where if I went to preach in a church and I did not wear a tie, people would not listen to me.

They would wonder what kind of backwater yahoo I am that I couldn't get dressed up enough to actually honor God but from the pulpit. There are other places where if I wore this, they would look at me and think, oh wow, I don't know who he is, but he has no idea what my world is like. And they wouldn't give me the time of day to listen. Right? So there's nothing I can wear that will always win. There's nothing that a preacher should always wear when he does ministry. It is contextual.

If I'm a woman working in the Middle East sharing the gospel, I will likely wear a head covering. Unless I learn that that head covering is going to offend, is going to be confused by the people there as a necessary requirement to be accepted by God. If I don't wear this, I can't be accepted by God. Then I might not wear it for the sake of clarifying the gospel.

[20 : 28] In some cases, there's a great illustration one of my seminary professors used where, you know, he's from Canada, his mother's British, and he ministers in America. In lots of places in America, he doesn't drink alcohol because he knows that for some people, that's something that could be a real barrier to them hearing him as a minister of the gospel. Right? And so he doesn't do it in order to not offend people. But he said, but if I hear someone saying, you must not drink alcohol or you cannot be a Christian, he will say, well then pass the port and let's drink together for the sake of clarifying the gospel. Paul's pattern is to be flexible in everything that can be flexible.

Let me give you some categories. How we dress, how we speak, the things that we talk about, the places that we go. There's some deeper ones that are harder when we get into it. Things like how time is spent. If you're in a different culture, people might just stop by your house for the day. In America, that's just unthinkable. In America, you think, I've got a schedule, well I've got to be at the grocery store in 45 minutes and I've got to, you know, and so on and so forth. And we live that way, right? But what does it mean for me to become all things to all people, to my neighbor for whom time works differently than me? How do I do that?

These are some of the ways. Really another funny example. Physical space, right? In some cultures, physical space is like three to four feet. In other cultures, it's 12 to 18 inches. And if you've ever been in one of those cultures where it's 12 to 18 inches, we as a Western Americans particularly, we keep moving backwards in the conversation because we keep finding ourselves invaded.

And our friend that we're trying to have a conversation with, he's trying to build a relationship with us, keeps moving towards us because they want to connect with us and they can't figure out why we're so far away. And honestly, it's really uncomfortable to have a conversation with someone when you're not used to it culturally. But Paul says, I become all things to all people that I might by all means win some. What are the limits of this?

Well, you know, we can't actually become someone else. Great missionary story I heard about a guy who went out, he lived with some more primitive tribe in Southeast Asia for 20 years, lived like them, ate like them, talked like them. He did everything he could to make himself one of them.

[23 : 38] And after 20 years, they're sitting around the fire talking and he's thinking, I think I finally made it. And then someone makes an offhand comment that reveals that, oh no, they know he's an outsider.

They know that he's not a part of them. He, in sadness, asked them, why would you say that? And they looked at him and they said, well, your feet are big. And it was just one of those things where it's like in that culture, as a Westerner, he had big white person feet. And that was, and so we need to recognize there are human limitations. We ought not to have the arrogance of thinking that we can become exactly like someone else, but we can move towards them in every way possible. There are also limits of this. Paul does not say to the sinner, I become as a sinner so that I might win the sinner. Specifically, let's think about what he means in this context.

He's talking about food offered to idols. And what he's going to end up saying in chapter 10 is, you know what? Go to your friend's house, eat the meat. That's fine. But if he says, this is meat offered to an idol, then you can't eat it. Because then you are participating with him in his idolatry. And you are encouraging it by the connection between the meat and the idolatry that your guest is making. And it seems like this is in an evangelistic context. This is in a context where someone, you're in a home of a friend. Think about how offensive that might be. Particularly in a culture where meat was fairly rare. And so you're being served the best food possible.

But Paul says, no. In that case, you have to say, I can't participate with you in that. We're going to preach on that for the next two weeks and unpack it a little more.

But Paul says, there's a limit there. I cannot participate with them in their sin. And in this case, in their idolatry. Even if it's really costly. We might think, well, that's a terrible way to reach someone.

[25 : 52] That's really offensive. You walk in their home, they've invited you in, and what do you do? You just reject their best offering to you. Their most hospitable action. Paul says, yes, but there are gospel limits.

You don't get drunk with the drunkards. You don't lie with the liars. You don't scorn with the scornful. And you don't ostracize with the in crowd. You don't get greedy with the greedy.

And you don't worship with others who worship other gods. Because what cannot change is the reality of the gospel.

It can be shaped. I think Paul shapes his language. Look at his preaching in Acts 13 of Sidian Antioch. And his preaching in Acts 17 to the Greeks and Athenians.

Fascinating how different his approach is. One is through the law and through the Jewish background of the believers. Trying to see Jesus. Trying to present how clearly Jesus is the fulfillment of all the Jewish hopes.

[27 : 01] But to the Greeks and Athens, these aren't the important things. Instead, the connections have to do with an unknown God and the great principles of the world.

But both of them land on Jesus Christ who died on the cross for his sins and rose from the dead for your salvation and for your sanctification. And when the clarity of the gospel is threatened, we cannot be flexible.

So what are the barriers between you and your neighbors? Where are the areas where you just really don't like to connect with your coworkers?

coworkers? How is it hard for you when you go and see your family? What are the things in our culture that you just really wish weren't true?

And what are you holding on to? One of the things that I've realized as we've looked through this is that at the core of our lack of willingness to be adaptable and flexible the way Paul is is well, twofold.

[28 : 25] One is that it comes from us not understanding our fundamental identity in Christ and so we cling to these secondary things, these cultural things, these familial things, these ethnic things, these whatever things, we cling to them as being more important than they ought to be.

But even if that's not true, it's still hard because we're just plain selfish. And by that I mean this, we just think we want our lives to be pretty comfortable and pretty easy.

We don't want to be stretched in the places that we might be stretched by the people that God places in our lives. We feel inadequate to know how to do it really well and so we never try.

we feel awkward in reaching out to someone who's obviously different from us and so we don't. And Paul says to us, no, don't you see, friends, the call of the gospel in our lives is to love and it's to love people who are different than us and it's to engage in the painful, refining process of loving them not selfishly but sacrificially.

How do I die to my comfort zone to reach my friends, my co-workers, my family? Where am I unwilling to do that?

[30 : 01] It's hard. I'll just say it. It's hard to do, right? Because it is awkward. It's facing our incapacity. Here's my one piece of advice for you, my practical pastoral advice.

If we are trying to reach others with the good news of the gospel and we take a stance of being the answer people, I have what you need and I'm going to bring it to you.

When we face these cultural barriers and things, we see them as impediments to a task. That's why it feels awkward and that's why we're not very good at it and why it's not very love-driven actually.

But the thing that I have learned very imperfectly is that when I take on the role of a learner, when I look at someone and I say, you know what? You are obviously different from me and I am different from you.

And gosh, I'm sure that God has done all sorts of great things in your life in His common grace that there are things in your ethnicity and your family and your background and your interests and your personalities that are totally different from mine, totally foreign from mine and I have no idea how to connect with them.

[31 : 19] But rather than being afraid of that, to press into that and to learn. tell me about that. Tell me about football. Why are there 11 guys instead of five?

You know? Why do they keep stopping? I'm used to watching soccer where they keep playing. Why do they keep stopping? Explore the thing that you don't understand.

And if you take on a role of a learner, it actually frees you to be the role of one who loves well because you get to see them as they really are.

And you get to see and God so often opened doors for the gospel through that kind of approach. And when we learn, we're not feeling so defensive.

And when we learn, we're not feeling so protective of ourselves. Paul finishes this section on adaptability by saying, I do it all for the sake of the gospel.

[32 : 21] God's great work in Jesus that it may go forward, that people may participate and know the great blessing of what it is that God has done, that they may receive this truly good news, this life-changing news, and be saved.

And I want them to participate in it and to receive it so that we might rejoice together in it, so that we might share together in its blessings.

Paul's Christianity is never, I'm in, I'm good, I'm done. Paul is, God has given me this and I want you to have it and I want you to have it and I want you to have it because it's the best thing that's ever happened to me.

It's the best news in the whole world. God has done what we can't do for ourselves. Come and see and believe. This is the heart that Paul has.

So having talked about his gospel flexibility that's grounded in his own experience of the gospel, shaped by the clarity of the gospel and driven by this purpose of gospel love for neighbor.

[33 : 36] He then goes on in verse 24, through 27 to give an extended metaphor basically talking about how focused his life is.

He uses athletic metaphors and the Corinthian church would have understood the Corinthian, these metaphors because the, just like the Olympic games happened in other parts of Greece, the Isthmian games happened in the Isthmus, which is the little connection between northern and southern Greece, that Corinth was on.

And so this happened every three years and they would see these games and they would see the runners and the wrestlers and the fighters and they would understand. It was a cultural phenomenon maybe bigger than the Olympics today, more like the Olympics was like 25 years ago for those of you who were alive back then when it was a really big deal and everyone watched.

Nowadays, I think, I don't know. But it's a much, maybe 600 cable channels have dulled the impact of the Olympics. But the Olympics were a big deal and so they are a big deal to that.

And Paul's basic point is compete with discipline so you may win the prize. He's talking about a disciplined or a self-controlled life.

[34 : 57] A life that makes intentional choices to invest in certain things because he has a very clear purpose and he wants to bend every resource in his life towards that purpose.

He says, don't go like a runner who doesn't know which way he's running. You can't win the race if you're running a race that heads this way and you head off that way.

And don't be like a boxer who, rather than landing a punch, just swings at the air and never hits anything. This is not going to bring success.

This is not going to bring you to the goal for which you have trained yourself. Paul says, no, there is a gospel focus here.

The gospel focus is that I might win some and I am going to bend everything in my life to that end. The NBA playoffs are upon us for those of you who are paying attention.

[36 : 11] The Golden State Warriors set a record for the best record ever in the regular season if you haven't noticed. And if you haven't noticed, you ought to pay attention because in about a month and a half, the finals will start and then you'll get to see the actual championship series.

But in this, it's fascinating to have read. I read a great article on Steph Curry who's the all-star leader in many ways of the Golden State team.

Two years ago, they thought he was probably going to be done in his NBA career because he had really bad ankles. And he found a new training regimen that brought in all sorts of different things to shape his body differently.

It had to do with diet. It had to do with certain kinds of exercises. It had... But what he did is he spent his whole time retooling how his body worked so that his ankles would not be so stressed and so that he would be able to have more fitness to do what he's doing, which is shooting the ball really, really well.

And he is shooting the ball really, really well. Like phenomenally well. Like better than anyone ever has in the history of the NBA well.

[37 : 38] But his discipline of his body, of his diet, of his time, he has spent all of his energy shaping his body so that he might be prepared to do this.

And the question is, how do we do that? What does it look like for us to discipline our lives?

And here, discipline means both saying no to bad things, which is kind of the discipline we often think about, but it also means saying yes to the good things that we do for the purpose of living out this calling.

Let me give you a couple of examples of people that I've seen discipline their lives in this way. I think of a guy, when I worked in campus ministry at Cornell, there was a guy there named Izzy.

Izzy showed up on campus, fairly new believer, wanting to grow in Christ, wanting to, and his freshman year he kind of got involved in our campus fellowship and he was growing a lot and it was really exciting to see him understanding the faith more, learning to study the Bible more deeply, and those sorts of things.

[38 : 47] But Izzy was always restless because he thought, I'm on a campus with 15,000 people and I'm spending all my time with Christians and I'm never interacting with people who don't know Jesus.

So at the end of the year, he'd said, I think I'm going to pledge a fraternity. And we sat down, we talked about what that would mean. We talked about some of the boundaries he would have to set, some of the limits, some of the prior commitments he would have to make so that he could be a part of a fraternity without engaging in some of their pretty well-worn traditional sinful practices.

And then he'd have to do some of those things up front to make sure that that would be all right. And he did that and he was accepted. And for the next three years, he was never a part of our campus fellowship as much as many people wished he would because they saw his maturity, they wanted to grow by being around him.

And you know why? Because he was disciplined to spend time with his brothers in the fraternity house. He made it a priority to make sure that his Christian activities didn't pull him away completely completely from being involved in the community that he was a part of.

And he did it for the sake of the gospel. And I can think of one of the guys who he knew was one of his fraternity brothers. I got the privilege of seeing him ten years later.

[40 : 32] And he's a Christian now. He wasn't a Christian back then, but he's a Christian now. It's the fruit of Izzy's commitment, his discipline to say, I'm going to choose to invest my life in a significant way at a cost of not doing other good things so that I might be able to invest in these relationships and walk with Christ.

And it was costly in the fraternity for him to do it in a way that the gospel was clear. That he wasn't simply participating with them in everything they did, but that he was living for Christ among them.

Friends, we have other great examples even in our own church. I can think of a young Yale undergrad who said, how can we live out our calling to reach this city if we're not getting outside the bubble and somehow, somehow, beginning to reach the urban poor in our city?

And so the ministry from Trinity Baptist Church to Columbus House was started a long time ago. Greg said, I don't know what I'm doing but I'm going to do it anyway and figure it out as I go along.

And so many lives have been changed by him and by many who have followed after. there. There's a guy in our church right now who goes to the sauna in the gym every week.

[42 : 04] They call it chapel because he has taken the time to invest in the relationships he's developed. Some of his friends are here today.

Good to see you guys. Good to see you guys. Might not have taken that time in his busy schedule otherwise. But for the sake of the gospel he said, I want to be here.

I want to be present with these guys and see what God might do. It might be picking a particular playground for you to take your kids to.

Maybe it's not your favorite one but it's the one where you know that there are people who go every week at the same time to reach your neighbors. It might be thinking about how you balance your extracurricular activities in college so that they're not all Christian but that you're actually investing in somewhere else.

Not just to build your resume but to reach the lost. It might mean thinking about your family and being more intentional to call them and to connect with them and to be with them on holidays.

[43 : 18] there's so many different ways that this could look. I want to finish by quoting from Hudson Taylor.

Hudson Taylor is one of my heroes. He was a missionary to China back in the 1800s and he was a pioneer in thinking about how to reach people.

Before he went, missionaries from Europe would go to China. they would establish a walled compound where they would dress in European clothing, speak in European languages and invite the Chinese in.

It was about the opposite of becoming all things to all men so that I might win some. Hudson Taylor said that can't be the pattern. He wrote later in a discussion about how to do this well.

He said this, we wish to see Christian Chinese, true Christians but with all true Chinese in every sense of the word. We wish to see churches and Christian Chinese presided over by pastors and officers of their own countrymen worshiping the true God in the land of their fathers, in the costumes of their father, in their own tongue wherein they were born and in the edifices of a thoroughly Chinese style of architecture.

[44 : 43] If we really desire, and this was groundbreaking because they would build western style cathedrals and then expect people to come and understand what it was all about. He goes on, if we really desire to see the Chinese such as we have described, let us as far as possible set before them a correct example.

Let us in everything un sinful become Chinese, that by all things we may save some. Let us adopt their costume, which for him meant shaving the front of his head and wearing a really long ponytail.

It was very un-European. Their costume, acquiring their language, he spoke four different dialects, studying to imitate their habits and approximate to their diet as far as health and constitution will allow.

Let us live in their houses, making no unnecessary alterations in external appearance and only so far modifying internal arrangements as attention to health and efficiency for work absolutely require.

Let the love of Christ constrain you to seek to commend yourself and your message to the Chinese. As becomes the follower of such a master, let there be no reservation.

[46 : 04] Give yourselves up fully and wholly to him whose you are and whom you wish to serve in this work and there can be no disappointment.

The Apostle Paul sets before us a picture of reaching Christ, reaching his world for Christ.

Hudson Taylor followed in that saying, by all things we might win some. And of course friends, the reason why Paul could do this and the reason why Hudson Taylor could do this is because this is what our Savior has done.

Because this isn't just a task to be more strategic in how we reach people. It's not just learning the rules of what we can do and not do so we can try to get through by the skin of our teeth.

But it's following the pattern of our Savior who did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. He who did not count equality with God something to be grasped but humbled himself and taking on human form made himself a servant and he submitted himself even to death on the cross.

[47 : 25] He deferred in love the rights of the Godhead so that he might win us by his identification with us in every way yet without sin so that he might be our substitute and our sacrifice.

He identified with us, he suffered for us and he died in our place so we might be raised with him to new life for all who believe in him. Friends, this is the gospel reward and this is the hope and this is the prize that Paul was pressing on to.

not just his own salvation but that this great savior Jesus would be known and that many, many more would come to know the blessing of salvation in him.

So friends, I leave you with the questions. What is it going to look like for you to run your race? Where are the places and the people that God wants to stretch you to be disciplined?

to reach those who don't yet know Christ? How will you reshape your life to follow in the footsteps of Paul and follow in the footsteps of our savior?

[48 : 42] Let's pray. Jesus, we love you. You have done so much for us. Lord, you have left us not only a model to follow but Lord, you have given us the very life that we need to live it out.

Lord, help us, we pray. Lord, help us to have your heart for those who don't yet know you. Lord, help us to be willing to sacrificially and in a costly manner embrace a pattern of life that is driven by a desire to reach many, to win some.

Lord, we know that ultimately you're the only one who can save us but Lord, we want to be useful to you and so we ask that you would help us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

We have the joy of celebrating this with a baptism this morning. Amen. Amen. Amen.