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Father. We thank you for this day, for your mercy and your grace and all the good things you give us that we don't deserve. Father, we thank you that you have brought us together to worship you into hearing your word today. And I pray, Father, that your spirit will teach us and correct us and conform us to the image of your son, that we will glorify you in heaven. In Jesus name we pray.

Amen. All right, good morning. Good evening, everyone, and welcome back to church of the Bible. It's great to be with you all tonight and continue our study through the book of first corinthians. Today we are in chapter nine, just a reminder of where we are are.

Chapter nine is stealing from chapter eight through chapter eleven we are dealing with the issue of christian freedom and love. When Paul began this last chapter in chapter eight, there was an issue with those in Corinth who believed that they had that their freedom triumph, their obligation to love one another. And as a result of that, Paul had to correct them and tell them that it is preferred to sacrifice the freedom that we have in order to love one another. But love is more important than the freedom we experience as christians. So today in chapter nine, Paul is going to give us an example of how to live that out.

This is one of those occasions where Paul doesn't just say how to live or what to do, but he's going to demonstrate it for us in his own life. So this entire chapter, if you read it as a standalone chapter on its own, it kind of doesn't make a lot of sense. In fact, every time I've read this chapter before studying for the series, I've always read it on its own, I guess, and it's never made a lot of sense why it's here. But if we put it into the big picture of christian freedom and love, it will begin to make a lot more sense. And so we should view this entire chapter in response to chapter eight and what he says there.

With that said, he's going to open up his argument today. In verses one and two, Paul says, am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

If I am not an apostle to others, at least I am to you because you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. So Paul is going to begin this, his argument here and his explanation of how to live this out by first setting the stage for himself. The way this is phrased in English is weird. He says, am I not free? Am I not an apostle?

The more I wouldn't say correct, but a more relatable way to phrase this. As he is saying, do I not experience christian freedom? Paul wants to first establish that he has the same freedom as every other christian, whether they are the Christians in Corinth or Philippi or Rome or Jerusalem. He wants to establish, he says, I am a Christian. I have the same freedom that you have.

And then he wants to take it a step further. He says, am I not an apostle? Again, funky phrase. If we get to what he actually means in the original language, he says, do I not have the rights of an apostle?

Throughout this chapter, Paul will describe that apostles, pastors, church leaders, evangelist ministries, have certain rights in the church. And he wants to establish here that he has those same rights as an apostle. Do I not have the rights of an apostle specifically with apostleship, being a pastor, being an evangelist? A missionary comes with a less, as you would, strict definition of who they could be. Pastors can be any christian male who meets the qualifications laid out in one Timothy three.

However, apostles were even more restricted. They specifically had to be somebody who saw the risen Lord, who was an eyewitness to the events that happened, who followed him.

This is laid out in the book of acts when they tried to replace Judas Iscariot. And it's something today that people don't understand. And you have church that claim to have the same structure as the original twelve apostles. Again, one of the strict requirements to be an apostle was an eyewitness of the Lord. And Paul lays that out here.

He says, have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Anyone who remembers the book of acts will remember that Paul, when he was named Saul, was on the road to Damascus when he was blinded by the Lord. And he called out to him and said, saul, why do you persecute me? It is later explained that Paul at some point spent three years with Jesus. He explains it in the third heaven.

But he lays out that he has met right. He has christian freedom, but he also has the rights of an apostle and has met the qualification. And then he says, if anything else at all, that those in Corinth cannot deny his apostleship because they are the seal of it. He has converted so many in Corinth that they are absolute proof of the calling of the apostle Paul. And he lays this out before laying out his defense for two reasons.

One, Judaizers will deny that Paul has the rights of an apostle. Judaizers will claim he's not an apostle, does not have the rights, and has not met the qualifications. However, as Paul will later explain. Today, Paul has rarely accepted aid from the church and has never accepted aid from the church in and there are those who actually do not believe that Paul should do that. So he sets the foundation here that he has rights and freedoms as a Christian, rights and freedoms as an apostle, and that they are the seal, the proof and evidence of his calling.

With that said, the next eleven verses are actually going to focus on the rights of church leaders. And the emphasis here is not that church leaders have these rights, because Paul is not trying to defend that we have the rights, but rather to set the stage for the last half of the chapter where Paul demonstrates his love for us. But let's look here at verses three through seven. He says, my defense to those who examine me is, don't we have the right to eat and drink? Don't we have the right to be accompanied by a believing wife like the other apostles, the Lord's brothers and Cephas?

We're the only Barnabas, and I have no right to refrain from working, who serves as a soldier at his own expense, who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit, who shepherds a flock and does not drink the milk from the flock.

So Paul, he begins to lay out his argument here. And to begin his argument, he establishes, he says, we have the right to eat and drink. Now, when I said we need to view this in light of chapter eight, he is not saying that they have the, he is not arguing for the right to eat and drink meat, sacrifice to idols. But rather his argument is, we are laboring. We are out here working.

We are tilling the soil. We are doing the job that God has given us, and we have a right to eat, to have food, to have substance and providence, and to enjoy our lives as well. Then in verse five, verse five is slightly confusing. Here he says, don't we have the right to be accompanied by a believing wife like the rest of the apostles? Let me tell you what Paul is not saying.

First, Paul is not arguing for the right to get married. He's not arguing that he has that right. That right already exists within the church. Rather, the argument that Paul is making is that church leaders, particularly evangelists, missionaries, who travel and take their spouses with them, their spouses also, they have a right to be accompanied by their spouse. And their spouses have a right to be supported by the church as well.

Well, this whole argument that Paul is making is that the family of God's workers has a right to be supported by the church or churches that they serve right in the case of Paul, he served many, many churches. And then he says, or do Barnabas and I have no right to refrain from working? This is an interesting statement here. The way it's phrased, it sounds like he's saying a right to refrain from working. But it seems like at least in Corinth, they're limiting that only to Paul and to Barnabas.

And Paul's argument, he's nothing. He's not arguing the rights of church leaders only for himself, but he's arguing the right of church leaders across the board. Right. Church leaders experience this right, this privilege from God to be supported in verse seven. And then continuing through the rest of the section, he's going to support this right to receive support, he says, who serves as a soldier at his own expense.

Do we have any soldiers in our military who serve for free? No, our tax dollars pay for it, but they receive pay. They receive housing, they receive food allowance, they receive healthcare, they receive education, they receive or should receive when the government treats them. Right, continued rights even after they retire from the military. He says, who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit?

There ain't no world in which I'm going to plant the garden and cultivate it and watch it grow, bring it to healthy produce, and then sit on the side and starve to death. I'm not going to do that and neither are you. If you planted a vineyard, you would partake of its fruit. And it says, who shepherds a flock and does not drink the milk from the flock? Right?

Even hired shepherds did not shepherd the flock for free. Whether you own the flock and shepherd it yourself or you were hired out, you did it with an expectation of support, of payment or a food or of housing or some other substance to life. And Paul's argument here is that pastors, evangelists, missionaries, apostles, back when there were apostles, enjoyed the same right. We work and deserve to be supported from that. And like I said, his argument here, as we continue going through this, is not to establish the right, but rather, like I said, to demonstrate his own sacrificial love.

We'll see that near the end of the chapter. Let's look at verses eight through twelve. He says, am I saying this from a human perspective? Doesn't the law also say the same thing? For it's written in the law of Moses, do not muzzle an ox while it treads out grain.

Is God really concerned about oxen? Isn't he really saying it for our sake? Yes, it's written for our sake because he who plows out to plow in hope. And. And he who threshes should thresh in hope of sharing the crop.

If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it too much if we reap material benefits from you? If others have this right to receive benefits from you, don't we even more. Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right. Instead, we endure everything so that we will not hinder the gospel of Christ. Alright, let's break this down real quick.

He says, am I making this argument from human logic? Is it human logic that if I go and work, I should also have food on my table? And he says, no, this isn't human logic. This is established from God. If you go and work, you also should eat.

Right? And he uses the ox out in the field. The law of Moses does command. It says, don't muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain. And the rest of his argument here is not to say that God did not care about the oxen.

God cares about if you look at the bow. He cares about all of his creatures. He cares about the birds, the doves, the fish, the cattle. But specifically, Paul is saying there was a higher meaning when God gave that command. And that was to set an example that he who works ought to work in hope of receiving a reward for much of humanity.

That reward is that we have a house to live in, food on the table, the things that we need to live. And he says, if others have the right to receive wages, right, those who plow, those who thresh, those who make tents or mow lawns or working factories, if they have the right to benefit. He says, don't we who have sown spiritual things for you, those whose life is to, is to serve you and to teach you and to shepherd you and guide you. But look what he says here. He says his whole argument, like I said, isn't about the fact that we have this right, but his argument comes right here.

He says, nevertheless, I have not made use of this right. So what Paul is laying out is he saying, I have the right to receive pain. I have the right to receive housing, I have the right to have food and to drink. Nevertheless, while I have this right to receive support from me, he says, I have not taken it. I've not made use of it.

Paul has never charged the church of Corinth. He has never charged any church that he has established or served. There are some churches who have, and we see it in the New Testament, taking up donations to support Paul. But there is no church in which Paul laid as a condition of his service, that they paid him or supported him. Instead, he says, I have endured everything, and let's just be clear what everything is he's endured.

He's gone. He's had to go to work, but he's endured imprisonment, shipwrecks, snakebites, stonings, being tossed off of high walls and cliffs, all sorts of persecutions and. And all these other things. And he says, and I have done it at no cost to you so that the gospel of Christ could go forth. So Paul is laying forth the example of what it's like to sacrifice your rights for the sake of love while he has the right to receive these things, he says, for the sake of the gospel, that you would receive it.

I've not exercised this right.

He's going to continue in the next two verses. So he's laid out the rights, and then he supported that right in a more secular setting. He supported that right with images of farmers, but he's going to support this right also. From the religious side. Look at verses 13 and 14.

He says, don't you know that those who perform the temple services eat the food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the offerings of the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should earn their living by the gospel? Okay, we're going to break this down because there's actually these two verses, a lot of stuff going on. First, Paul never says, because there are pastors out there and missionaries and evangelists even today who do make their living doing this thing. And first, we need to set forth that Paul does not say that it's bad to make their living doing this, only that he has chosen not to.

For the sake of a second, it's necessary to understand that Paul supports this right, because there are those today who believe that any pastor, missionary or evangelist, us, who receives pay is evil and only does it for the pay. So we need to unpack that and say, that's not true. And here is how he supports it. He says, those who perform in the temple, if you look throughout the books of the law, if you look in Leviticus and numbers and deuteronomy, you will notice that the priest in the Old Testament that God set aside to serve in the temple to sacrifice the oxen and the doves and the other, the goats, the other animals, the lambs, they were paid for it, right? And their payment was that they got to eat, partake of all of the food, all the animals that went through the town.

They were also provided homes and land, but also those who served at the altar for the grain offerings, the thanksgiving offerings, they partook of that they had a share in it. And so Paul was setting forth that from the beginning, God has provided through his structure for those that were for him.

He also says that in the same way the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should earn their living by the gospel. There's a lot to unpack in this statement because this is a double edged sword. Jesus said, freely you have received, freely give.

Here. We also see that he is commanded that those who preach earn their living through preaching. So is that a contradiction? And if not, how do you have both sides of this coin? Here's how.

There is no preacher, missionary or evangelist permitted by God to go forth and specifically charge you to receive the gospel. The gospel is free to us at great cost to God. But there is not one of us who has paid to receive the gospel, not one of us who has given money for the precious blood of Jesus Christ to serve us, and not one of us, pastor or otherwise, who has the right to charge others to receive that gift, to go and say, hey, you want the secret to eternal life? It's gonna cost you \$100. 1st but none of us have that right.

However, we also saw that Jesus said in the same few chapters where he said, freely, yeah, receive freely, give. That he has told us to receive from the people that we serve, that he's taught us when we go into a house and they offer food to stay and to eat with them to receive that food. The difference, though, is pastors, evangelists, missionaries, apostles are not to charge for it. Rather, God will put it in the hearts of people to provide. There's a difference.

There's a difference between Christians having the heart to provide for their pastor, pastors or the missionaries that come through and missionaries and pastors come in and saying, I will not do this unless you pay me.

So we need, like I said, we need to unpack that double edged sword. Ministry workers have the right to receive support, but do not have the right to demand support, particularly when preaching to the unsaved. And I would say have no right for support from the unsaved. The next few verses here, Paul is so from verses one through 14, Paul has laid out the rights of ministry workers. And I think he has made a strong case for ministry workers.

And with the exception of one verse where he mentions he did not make use of that rite, he has spent the bulk of his time demonstrating that pastors, ministries, apostles should be paid. However, the rest of this chapter will be the flip side of that coin where Paul says, I have this right, but I want you to see what it looks like to love and to prefer to love people over preferring to exercise your right. So let's look at verses 15 through 18. Paul says, for my part I have used none of these rights, nor have I written these things, that they may be applied in my case. For it would be better for me to die than for anyone to deprive me of my boast.

For if I preach the gospel I have no reason to boast because I am compelled to preach. And woe to me if I do not preach the gospel. But if I do this willingly I have a reward. But if unwillingly I am entrusted with a commission, what then is my reward? To preach the gospel and offer it free of charge and not make full use of my rights in the gospel.

Alright, so unpacking this, Paul begins. He says for my right, and he says for my part, because not every pastor, not every evangelist, not every apostle has not exercised their rights. In fact, most of them back then and even today have received support, have received food, housing, financial support, what? Not for what they do. But Paul says I have not.

And then he clarifies, he says nothing that I have written to you here. Did I write so that you would pay me. Paul does not want them to think that this is a guilt trip. He says this is, this isn't so that you'll start paying me and giving me money and food and housing allowances. Rather, he says, it's to demonstrate to you the sacrifice that I have made.

And he doesn't even do this as a bratzen, as much as an example when he's saying this. But look what he says. He says I would rather die than be deprived of my boast. He says I would rather die than to be paid for what I do. Maybe there's a little bit of pride there, a little bit of stubbornness and hard headedness.

But he explains why he, he says that he is compelled to preach the gospel. He says if I preach I have no reason to boast. He says I cannot boast and be prideful and lift myself up because I go and preach the gospel for I am compelled to, for God has told me to. So he says obeying God does not give him or anyone reason to boast, right to lift themselves up. But what he does say is this.

He says I don't have a choice in whether or not to preach. God has told me to preach, but I do have a choice in whether or not to do it for free. And he says, and that is where he makes his boast, as he does it willingly for free, for no commission.

And he says to him, that is his reward, is that he can offer the gospel free of charge rather than receiving his rights. Let's look at 19 through 23. He says, although I am free from all and I'm not anyone's slave, I have made myself a slave to everyone. In order to win more people to the Jews, I became like a Jew to win Jews to those under the law, like one under the law, law, though I myself am not under the law to win those who are under the law, to those without the law, like one without the law, though I am not without God's law, but under the law of Christ, that I may win those without the law. To the weak, I have become weak, that I may win the weak, I have become all things to all people so that I may by every possible means, save some.

Now, I do all of this because of the gospel, that I may share in the blessings, I think more powerful than the fact that Paul does this for free. More telling is the way he explains himself as Christians, as people in today's culture, we tend to fit into our cliques, our groups, our circle of friends or family, and not stray far from it. And we tend to stay within our comfort zones and not stray far from it. But Paul says that he has sacrificed for the sake of the gospel, for the sake of love. And here's how he says.

He says, I'm free from all. He says, I'm not a slave. I'm not bound to anyone. I'm not owned by anyone. And even then, he says, I have made myself a slave to everyone.

Paul has lowered himself much the way that Christ lowered himself. Granted, there's a big difference between Paul and Christ, namely, that Christ was God, had glory and met that glory and came here. But Paul gave up the life that he had, his riches, his esteem, and he humbled himself as a servant to all people. And he did it with the intent that people would know God. Now, Paul happens to be a Jew, but he says to the Jews around Jews, when I'm surrounded by them, in their cities, with them, I act like a Jew, I live like a Jew.

I do things like this so that I can win them. If you go to a different culture than your culture, especially if you're going to try and bring the gospel of Christ, and you go in there brand new and just completely try to shake up everything and change them or whatnot. You will be rejected. You cannot go somewhere and try to completely change everything about a people and expect them to receive you. So Paul says, I become like them.

I live like them when I'm around them, to a degree. If Paul. When Paul went to Corinth, I can guarantee you he was not sacrificing to idols and practice and bestiality, right? But he becomes like them. He tries to integrate into their society.

He tries to serve them where they are with the intent that they would be saved. Much like we talked about last week, if you're in a room of alcoholics, you are not going to drink alcohol in front of them, not if you love them. And Paul says much in the same way, I become like the people I'm around for the sake of those people. When I'm near jews, I become like a jew. If I'm near those who are.

Who are under the law, I live according to that. When I'm with those who are not under the law. He says, if I'm with weak people, I become weak. He doesn't portray himself as the strong person to the weak, but he portrays himself humbly as another weak person. And he becomes all things to all people for the sake of their salvation.

That is the chief example here from anyone else other than Jesus Christ in what it is to prefer loving people over receiving our rights and freedoms.

What would it look like for us if we could become all things to all people, if we could present ourselves as servants, that Jesus Christ would shine and be glorified? What would it look like not just around us and for us, but what would it look like for the kingdom of God? God, if as christians, we could exemplify that example. Paul doesn't say follow me when he says it. He says, follow me as I follow Christ.

Right? What Paul says is, I'm following Christ, and you should too. He will end tonight. Verses in verses 24 to 27. He says, don't you know that the runners in a stadium or race, but only one receives the prize, run in such a way to win the prize?

Not everyone who competes exercises. So now everyone who competes exercises self control in everything. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable crown. So I do not run like one who runs aimlessly or box like one beat in the air. Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

This passage contains the only command in this chapter, and we'll get to that in a moment. But he says, don't you know that the runners all run the race, but only one receives the price? The Olympics,

right. Many, many people go and compete in each category, in each sport and field. But how many people take home the gold one?

They're all there. They are all running the race, and only one takes on the prize.

The great thing about Christianity is we can all take home the prize, and that prize is eternal life. But the point that Paul is making is those people, they train, they exercise self control over their life. They control what they eat, they control what they do when they sleep, their exercise. They push themselves, they train. And everything they do is to the purpose of that gold medal.

So that when they have done it all, they can take home that one trophy and all that work, all that effort they do, and they take something that will perish at the end of the world.

The one command that Paul has given us to, he says, run. That's the command right there, to run. We are in a race, and that is a race to the kingdom of God. And everyone who crosses that line will be there. But he says, run as to win the prize, as Christians run to obtain that salvation.

And it doesn't come to what we do. However, what we do, the way we live, will show our faith, will show what we have done. And Paul says in that same way, exercise self control over ourselves. It is less important to receive the rights that we have and more important to enter the kingdom of God. So discipline yourself.

He says, run, as in, if that is a trophy and you are the only one who can get it, let run as if that is your purpose in life. Paul tells us another way. Let's turn over to the book of Hebrews, chapter twelve, verses one through three. Paul puts it another way. Here.

He says, therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, he says, lay aside every hindrance. Lay aside every sin that so easily ensnares us and let us run up endurance, the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself that you won't grow weary and give up. So in these three verses, Paul tells us how to run the race.

He says, first, set aside every hindrance, every sin that could stop us. So two things are hindrance and sin. First, the sin. Sin is sin, and we know what? Sin.

Sin. And Paul says, toss it aside. I'm going to tell you now, there is no sin, right? Nothing we can do here that that is worth it, right? That is worth practicing, worth enjoying now over the kingdom of God.

Whatever it is, however enjoyable it is, it's nothing worth it. Paul says, toss it aside. But he also says toss aside any hindrance. Now, this is less clear, right? And the reason it's clear is less clear is sin.

Is clear. Sin is sin. But hindrances what hinders me, what slows me down, what might sidetrack me is different from my, from what will slow you down or sidetrack to you, right? It's not necessarily sinful, right? Drinking is not necessarily sinful.

But for some people, it's a hindrance. For others, it's not. So this is less clear that this isn't something I can stand here behind the pulpit and my camera and tell you what to throw aside. This is something for you to figure out. But Paul said, says, when he explains how to run that risk, if there's anything that weighs you down, that slows you down, that distracts you from the gospel, that distracts you from the prize that we are running after, he says, cast it aside, sinful or not.

It's not worth that. Wait. It's not worth being slowed down or being distracted or getting off track for anything, whether it's sinful or not, throw it aside. And then he says, he says this. He says, run with endurance.

When we went through the Book of Hebrews, I talked about that word endurance, right? That endurance there is, we are running through the pain. We are running through the sorrow. So we are running through this life, and we have our eyes fixated on a single thing. Runners, long distance runners, marathons runners, what they tend to do to endure is they fixate their eyes on a very far away feature.

It could be a mountain peak, it could be a tree, it could be. It could be anything way off in the distance. And they fixate their eyes on it, that they can endure to it. So Paul, when he says run of endurance, he says this, he says, keep your eyes on Jesus. That's how we run up.

Endurance is we keep our eye on Jesus. We are running after him, we are following him. Jesus is the end point, the finish line. And if we fixate our eyes on him, don't look to the left or to the right, we will cross that line. And then he tells us how to keep that endurance, because is it hard?

Is it hard to run through this life when we have trials and pains and sorrows and tribulations, illnesses, all sorts of other things that could be. And it is. And he says this. Consider Jesus. However hard our life is, Jesus left the glory he had.

He came where he was hated by people, rejected, despised, crucified. He. He endured hostility.

And he says he did it for this, for the joy before him, the joy before Christ was us sinners or us defiled people. And for that, he came and did and endured all that. And so Paul says, remember that. When it's hard for you, remember what Jesus endured and did. When you are enduring persecution, remember the persecution that Jesus endured.

When you have sickness, remember that Jesus received his stripes on behalf of us. And he says by doing that, you won't grow weary and give up.

Guys, two things tonight. First, whatever freedoms we experience, whatever rights we have or think we have, it is not worth pushing it if it means we reject love, either one toward another or toward the unsaved. It is better to prefer love. It's better to give up rights, even if that right is payment or food or housing or eating a particular type of food in front of people. It is better to give it up than to reject love for one another.

But second, we are. We are so close. The finish line is coming. The kingdom of God is coming. Jesus is coming soon.

And as Paul encouraged Corinth, I encourage each of you and myself to not become distracted, to. Not. To not let the things of the world that are worthless, to stand between you and Christ, to run that race with endurance. And if you stand here today and you know Christ, I encourage you to fixate your eyes on him. To the rest of you who are not saved, who don't know Jesus yet, who have.

Have never given your life to him, I'm. I'm just going to use Paul's word. We're in a race. And thankfully, we are not in a race that only one of us can win. But we are in a race that you can lose.

And you know it, and you can feel it. You can experience it. You can experience the weight of your sin and your rejection of God. And if you would like to experience the same freedoms that we have and to be one of those who receive that reward at the end, the prize, it begins, first, of denying ourselves with knowing that we are sinners and have sinned against God, and then believing that Jesus is God, that

he walked into this creation that he made and lived and died for us, and rose again the third day, and then confessing him as your lord, your God, and king. And if you are ready to do that, if you believe that right in now and have never asked Jesus into your heart, in our closing prayer, I will invite you to follow along with me and verbalize that to God.

Afterwards, after the closing prayer, we will partake of the Lord's communion, and I invite everyone to stick around and partake of that with us. And then I will see everybody else on Wednesday night at 630, right here to continue our Bible study through the book of Luke. We will be in chapter two this week. Let's pray. Father, I admit that I am a sinner.

I admit that I cannot say myself, that my ways are corrupt. And I believe, Lord Jesus, that you are God who created everything and came here for me. That you endured those persecutions, those sinful people around you at the time, you endured the whippings and the crucifixion and everything for me. And that you rose again, defeat and death. And I confess you as my lord and God, as my savior and king.

And I will follow you. And I ask you for this free and precious gift. Father, I pray that in our lives that we will love one another, that we will express the same love you have for us to each other. And I pray, Lord, that no right or privilege or thing that we conceive in our mind that we deserve will get in the way of that love. And I pray, as we love people like that, that you will be glorified and that people will see you and your glory and come true to you.

And I pray, Father, that you will give each of us the endurance we need to run this race, to cross that finish line and achieve our prize, which is Jesus Christ. In your holy name we pray. Amen.