

From The Pulpit Of



Evangelistic Zeal

No. 21
Series: 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

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Nathan Carter

Text

¹⁹ For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. ²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. ²¹ To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. ²² 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. ²³ I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

Introduction

We've been going through the book of 1 Corinthians lately. That's what we do as a church – we just preach through books of the Bible, verse-by-verse, taking the next passage the next week. This is how we let God have the microphone, so to speak.

And as we do we get to cover all kinds of topics! The last couple weeks we've been seeing how the Apostle Paul, Jesus' authorized agent, admonishes believers to stop thinking just of themselves and be willing to sacrifice for the sake of their brothers and sisters. He offers himself as an example of laying down one's rights for others within the church. We've been challenged to live selflessly and put other's needs above our own within the body of Christ. Paul's been focused mostly internally – *inside* the Christian community.

Today we see that same selfless, bend-over-backwards-for-others-mentality being applied primarily to those currently *outside* the church. Paul shares his perspective here on reaching the lost and puts it forward as a model for us in our outreach. Paul has a passion for evangelism, for getting the gospel to those who don't yet believe, in hopes of bringing them also into the church.

We can clearly see this evangelistic zeal at the beginning and end of this short section. Do you see it there in v. 19 – "I have made myself a servant to all, that I might *win* more of them." And then in v. 22 he says essentially the same thing – "I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might *save* some." Win more. Save some. To win is to save, to win over to saving faith in Christ. Christianity is not about coercion, but persuasion. We aren't trying to force anyone to convert; you can't; that's not a real conversion. But make no mistake, Christians are trying to convince not-yet Christians to convert. Proselytizing is a primary concern of Christians. We have a missionary zeal to see more people won over and saved.

We're not just trying to win arguments, but people, as Proverbs 11:30 says, "he who is wise wins souls" (NASB). And we're not just trying to get notches on our belts; it's not a game. We genuinely love and care for the souls we're trying to save. Christianity is not just something that works for us, is part of our culture, and we're content to coexist with other cultures; as long as they leave us alone, we'll leave them alone and pass our heritage on to our kids. NO! We believe that we have universal truth that everyone everywhere needs to hear and believe. Christianity is unashamedly about winning/saving those who don't currently believe and are facing God's judgment.

So, Christian: when is the last time you've shared the gospel with a non-Christian and sought to persuade him or her to repent and believe and come join us? How are your evangelistic efforts going? Do you live with a motivating passion to see God glorified by more and more people coming to confess their sin and fall before him for his gracious gift of forgiveness and righteousness in Christ? Do your actions display that this is a driving desire of yours?

If you're a Christian like me, your evangelism has room to grow. Today's passage gives us lots of help. In short, what we're going to see is just this: **the gospel makes you want to do whatever you can to advance the gospel**. That's a one-sentence summary of the main idea I want to get across – **the gospel makes you want to do whatever you can to advance the gospel**. That's the big idea, but there are several key concepts that will help us in our evangelism in this passage and as we go through it we'll pull them out one-by-one. Are you ready?

First, let's pray...

Remember: You're Free!

The first and probably most important truth we see here in this text that helps a Christian with his or her evangelism is – *Remember you're free!* If you regularly do that, your evangelism will bloom and blossom. We see it there in the beginning of v. 19 where Paul says, "For though I am free from all..." It's an echo of v. 1 that we looked at last week. Paul begins by stating that he is free from all.

Nobody has a binding claim on him. He is not indebted to anyone. He is not obligated. There is no compulsion. He's not laboring under a burden. Paul doesn't *have* to share the gospel with anyone. You don't *have* to share the gospel with anyone. You are completely and totally free!

Why? Because you've been declared irrevocably **RIGHTEOUS** by God in a once-for-all-verdict that is not in any way dependent on your performance – what you've done or what you will do. You're in. You're not auditioning. You're didn't earn your salvation by your efforts and you're not keeping it by your efforts. You're free. You're off that treadmill of self-salvation. That's what it means to be a Christian.

We can't remind ourselves of this too much, because it's so easy to slip back into thinking that my status and acceptance before God and others is dependent on what I'm accomplishing, how many boxes I'm checking in the Christian life. And for many of us the box of sharing the gospel with others turns into this overwhelming stress. When we don't do it, we feel condemned. When we do do it, we feel more justified. But listen: there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1) and you can't ever be

less or more justified. Justification is the gracious crediting of all of Christ's infinite righteousness to your account. You can't subtract or add to that!

And so you're not enslaved to some evangelism quota to prove yourself or to make God happy. He's happy with you, because you're in his beloved Son, plain and simple, nothing more. What a miserable affair to share try to share the gospel (the good news that I've just been explaining) out of some sense that you've *got* to do this. Either it will come across as a drudgery instead of joyful sharing of happy news. Or it will be done with some nail-biting anxiety, because you've got to get it right or get them to accept so that you get credit for it. Isn't that a great irony? To tell people that they don't have to do anything to be saved, all the while thinking that what you're doing in sharing the gospel is somehow part of your salvation? It's contradictory to be acting like you're earning your salvation by telling people they can't earn their salvation.

Stop it! Remember: you're free! Your salvation and other people's salvation doesn't depend on your works. You don't *have* to share the gospel.

But you *get* to! Some people think that resting in your full freedom will result in a lack of evangelism. When actually, it's the opposite. Doing evangelism from a place of freedom is the only sustaining motivation that will keep you from going crazy and will fill you with winsome peace and joy in the process. If you don't know you're free, you will pop like a pressure cooker eventually. I've seen it: some of the people who were most insistent and frenetic about evangelism today publicly deny the gospel. They were not truly believing the gospel themselves, but were trying to prove something. Paul presents a different picture. Paul was filled with a passion for winning lost souls, but it came from a place of freedom. He wasn't forced to evangelize, he was free to evangelize.

How does this work? My favorite illustration of this that I use all the time, you've probably heard me say it, but it's sooo good, is that of Shaun White in the 2010 Winter Olympics. He was the world's greatest snowboarder at the time, nicknamed "The Flying Tomato" for his long, bright red locks blowing in the wind as he soared above the half-pipe. I watched the competition live. The way it worked was that every competitor got two runs and his best score of the two was the one that counted. Shaun White had the top score after the first round. Then all the rest went out and did their second attempt, and nobody was able to top Shaun White. He had the gold medal in the bag with just one run. It was all wrapped up!

So what did he do? Sit back and do nothing? No. He loved to snowboard. It brought him pleasure. So he went out and took his second run. He didn't *have* to. It was a freebie. He was free. He didn't need to perform flawlessly to win. He was already the champion. He just went out and had fun. If he fell down, he could pop back up, dust himself off, and keep going. He was the victor. There was no more need for nerves. He was loose, relaxed. And so what did he do? He attempted a jump that had never been done before in the history of competition – the McTwist 360. Why not?! And guess what? He nailed it! He actually got a higher score on his second run than his first. He was grinning from ear to ear.

Listen, brothers and sisters: the Christian life is like Shaun White's second run. Jesus has already gone out and won the gold medal and imputed it to us. He's lived the absolutely perfect life, then died for our sins, then rose for our justification, and credits us with his victory. We don't have to perform. We are free to fail and fall on our faces. We

can just keep trying crazy things and doing what we were made to – living for God, and telling other people about his amazing grace. We're free!

Let **the gospel be what makes you want to advance the gospel**, not some oppressive sense of guilt or fear of not doing enough. Your guilt has been atoned for. Jesus has done it all. Constantly hearing and re-believing that will be what actually motivates you and frees you up to share that with others.

Be a Servant

That's the most important point. The rest are just little pointers for how to do evangelism. Like – *Be a servant*. Paul says, "For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all." He made himself. It is voluntary, not forced. But out of his freedom, with all of his needs met and secure, he now gets to do whatever he wants to do, and what he wants to do is serve others.

Have you thought about what you'd like to do if you could retire? Let's say you had all your physical needs met. You didn't have to work to survive. So now you have all this free time. What would you like to do? Hire servants to be at your beck and call, fanning you on the beach and putting grapes in your mouth? Or would you like to be able to go help your kids take care of your grandkids? Or take on more responsibilities at church? Sit on a board of a non-profit? Mentor someone. Have more time to pour into relationships for the sake of the gospel? Paul is free, but he makes himself a slave of others, that he might win them to Christ.

And a demeanor, an attitude of servanthood is so helpful in evangelism. This is how we should go about evangelism – *How can I help you? What are your struggles, burdens, needs?* Being truly concerned for others opens them up to hear the message of the gospel. On the other hand, having a haughty air, a cockiness, an aloof, demeaning, better-than attitude... that doesn't usually win people over. If you're doing evangelism from a sense of requirement, to make yourself a 'better Christian' then you're actually serving yourself, instead of them. Remember: there is no such thing as a 'good Christian' or a 'bad Christian'; you're either in Christ or not, there are no gradations. As a Christian, completely free of all, you are in a position to be a humble servant of all, genuinely caring for them, showing interest in them. And this posture will greatly help your evangelism.

Seek More

Point number three we see in this passage about evangelism is – *Seek more*. "For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win *more* of them." I just take from that word "more" an encouragement to set my sights higher. To not aim low. How can I, how can we reach more? Pray for more? Add another name of a non-believer to my prayer list this week? Try more things? Set an extra spot at the dinner table? Strategizing is not bad. We should plan for multiplication as a church, not just maintenance. Invest in others and instill in them an expectation that they will invest in others and have an exponential effect. Seek more.

What a great place to live for God's kingdom is a massive metro area like Chicagoland with 9+ million people. There's always more to reach here. And from here we can reach more around the world. Did you know that in Kyrgyzstan there approximately 4-5 million people who have never even heard the gospel? Kyrgyzstan

has 7 provinces, but they joke that Chicago is the 8th province because there are so many Kyrgyz here. What an exciting opportunity! Let's seek more.

Find Your Primary Identity in Christ

Let's keep going through this text. Look at the first part of v. 20. This is a fascinating statement on a variety of levels. It begins a list of several similar statements that we're going to go through where Paul says, "To this type of people I became as one of them, that I might win them." That's got a lot of missiological implications. But this first one is kind of earth shaking if you really think about what he's saying.

Paul says, "To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews." But pause. "The affirmation is astonishing because Paul was Jewish."¹ Paul himself was a Jew – "circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews" (Ph. 3:5). He grew up eating all the food, celebrating all the holidays, wearing all the clothes, speaking the language and the lingo. Paul was a Jew. So how could he say something like – "To the Jews I became as a Jew." "His ethnic identity as a Jew was... no longer the primary reality in his life; Paul identified himself first and foremost as a Christian."² Isn't that fascinating?

So the fourth principle we see here that helps us in evangelism is – *Find your primary identity in Christ*. Everybody has a culture. It's okay to enjoy your culture – your food, your fashion, your holidays, your culture's way of thinking, sense of humor, etc... But be careful and make sure that you don't idolize your culture or make it your primary identity. If you're a Christian, you have to see your primary identity that transcends and supersedes any other lesser identity as being "in Christ." And therefore that means your primary people throughout history and in the present are those others who have been adopted into Christ's family, even if they are completely different from you culturally. There are a million implications of this.

How does it help with evangelism? Well, it helps you see that even your own people are people who need Christ too. They are a mission field. We should have a burden for our own people for them to admit their need of the gospel (cf. Rom. 9:1-3).

But what if they reject you? What if you are ostracized by your own people? Didn't Jesus say that "a prophet is not without honor except in his hometown (Mt. 13:57) and that sometimes the gospel will turn family members against each other (Mt. 10:35)? Having an identity that is above it all, secure in Christ, is something that will stabilize you when others, even your own family, might disown or be distant from you.

Finding your primary identity in Christ also makes you a versatile missionary, able to inhabit other cultures than just your own with a goal towards winning them also to Christ and bringing them into this multi-ethnic, multi-cultural community called the church.

Be Willing to Make Sacrifices

Along those lines, here's another principle for evangelism – *Be willing to make sacrifices*. Stare at the second part of v. 20. It seems almost redundant. It says – "To those under the law I became as one under the law." *Aren't those under the Law the Jews?* Yes. *So what's the difference?* It seems that the first part was dealing with cultural issues. The second one more explicitly religious ones. Then as now, not all Jews were religious. And there also would have been some God-fearing Gentiles who were

non-Jews ethnically but were seeking to live under Jewish Law. They were moral, but hadn't heard the message of the gospel. They don't just need ethics, they need evangelism. And Paul is saying that he was willing to do whatever it took to help those living under the Law, to understand that they couldn't be justified by works of the Law (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16) and needed the gospel, even sacrificing some of his freedoms.

Paul says, "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." Christians are no longer under the Law, thank God, as a covenant. The Law was put in place to point to Christ. Now he has come and the era of Law is over (Gal. 3:23-26). But Paul was willing to be as one under the Law around those living by the Law, in order to gain a hearing for the gospel and not put an unnecessary obstacle in front of people.

A clear example of this is how Paul circumcised Timothy in Acts 16:1-3. Did Timothy have to be circumcised (a requirement in the OT Law) to be saved through Christ? No (see Acts 15)! So why did he do it? To not present an immediate and unnecessary offense in their ministry in synagogues. Similarly, in Acts 18 we see that Paul took a Nazirite vow, an OT practice. And towards the end of Acts what is Paul doing in the temple in Jerusalem when he gets arrested? Sponsoring some people completing their Nazirite vows there (cf. Acts 22) in order to help James and the Jerusalem church in their ministry to Jews. Paul wasn't under the Law, but he could adapt and be versatile and was willing to participate in some of those OT practices in order to have an audience for the gospel.

What's that look like for us today? We must be willing to sacrifice our freedoms for others. As much as you love bacon, don't bring it to your neighbor's Bar Mitzvah. As a Christian woman you have freedom to sit in the front seat of a taxi if a man is a driver. But when we were in a Muslim country recently visiting some of our missionaries, if the driver was a man, the women sat in the back seat (and on the rare occasions when the driver was a woman, the men sat in the back). You may be left-handed, but in a Hindu home you'll try not to pass the food with your left hand. In all kinds of ways, evangelism is helped by making sacrifices.

Learn Other Cultures

This leads us to our sixth tip for evangelism – *Learn other cultures*. Look at v. 21 – "To those outside the law I became as one outside the law." Here Paul is saying that he learned how to relate to Gentiles. He did things that were way out of his comfort zone or native cultural context. He crossed cultures and went to places and put himself in situations that were totally foreign to him.

This is what's called contextualization. Christianity is not about cultural imperialism. We're not trying to force people to adopt our culture. We're willing to enter into theirs and find connecting points. Study the way Paul preaches in the book of Acts. When he's in synagogues he's using lines of reasoning that would make sense to religious Jews, quoting from their Scriptures. But when he's in Greek places like Athens, he doesn't quote Scripture but their own poets. He uses different points of contact based on observations he's made of their culture.

I heard Tony Merida preach here in Chicago recently. He's a pastor and has a PhD in preaching and has taught it at seminary. He was doing a masterful job of connecting with his audience here, making references to the Cubs and using a Michael

Jordan illustration. But then he mentioned how when he was preaching once in India he noticed how his usual sports metaphors didn't work. But then he spent time watching cricket and learning the game of cricket and when he started talking about their local cricket hero and making gospel connections to something about him, they leaned in and their eyes lit up. That's what we're going to see Paul doing next week in vv. 24-27. He's using sports analogies that connected with the Corinthians, referencing something from the Isthmian games that happened there, the biggest sports event in Corinthian culture.

One person I read asked, "Are Christians cultivating this kind of agility, immersing themselves so deeply in their respective cities that they can see it from the inside? Do they feel the deepest hopes and aspirations of their neighbors? Do they know the questions they're asking and what troubles them about Christianity, and can they speak in ways people can actually understand? Or have Christians become so entrenched in their little Christian enclaves, so detached from their city and culture that they have no clue what its hopes are, so they struggle to articulate truth without the crutch of Christian jargon?"³ Are you trying to learn Chicago? Like a missionary would learn Tokyo? What makes Chicago tick?

And you know: Chicago is not monolithic. There are subcultures? Are you willing to learn? To be stretched? To read books outside of what you normally gravitate towards? Maybe you don't like sports? Can you try so you can talk to your co-worker who does? Maybe you're not in to art, but your neighbor is an actor and so you go to some of James' Garden Open Mic nights and invite your neighbor.

Thanksgiving is coming up. Maybe you're going to be together with family that don't live in the city. Can you try to understand them and talk their language, for the sake of the gospel? Maybe you lean democrat in your politics. Can you try to understand why a republican feels the way they do? And try to share the gospel, instead of arguing politics? Maybe you lean republican. Can you try to understand what motivates someone on the left with love and a genuine desire to see them come to Christ? Do you try to understand and evangelize people who are different than you or do you despise them and post things on Instagram that just alienate them?

Contextualization pushes us more towards friendship evangelism versus just cold-call evangelism that uses a cookie cutter approach. I'm all for learning different tools that can be helpful. And I'll do cold-call evangelism because it's good to talk to strangers about the gospel and it pushes me out of my comfort zone. But what Paul is talking about here fits really well with longer conversations with people you're trying to get to know.

This point about learning other cultures reminds us that while a Christian's chief identity must be being in Christ and that makes culture less important, there is still something to be understood about culture. Russian are different than Rohingya. Englewood is different than Lakeview. There is a place for adapting some. As one person has put it – "As the gospel takes root among different peoples and cultures, its essence will remain the same but its 'look and feel' may be somewhat different."⁴ But the essence must remain the same, which brings us to the next point.

Don't Compromise

Point #7: In your evangelism – *don't compromise*. Contextualization can be taken too far into syncretism. We bend as much as possible, but there are some things that are

not possible to bend on. Look at the parenthetical statement Paul puts in the middle of v. 21 – “To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.” “This means, of course, that there are things he will not do even for the sake of ‘winning’ people for Christ.”⁵ “[H]e would adapt himself to his environment as much as his faith would allow,”⁶ but there were limits. He was not an antinomian. He was not a cultural relativist. He was flexible with certain things, but inflexible with the gospel and the morality that flows from it.

While Christians are not under the Mosaic Law, we do still believe in a moral law, much of which we can see reflected in the Mosaic Law, especially the parts reaffirmed in the NT’s ethical teachings. This is what Paul is referring to as the law of God and the law of Christ.

So when Paul says, “To those outside the law I became as one outside the law,” he’s talking about participating in things that are not necessarily sinful. If I go out with the Dad’s Club at my kids school that’s held at a bar, I’ll have a beer. But I won’t get drunk. He doesn’t mean – “To the pothead, I became a pothead;” or, “To the adulterer, I became an adulterer.” That’s ridiculous. We must be careful in our cultural engagement that we are seeking to win people to Christ and that we don’t get won over by the world.

The parenthesis in v. 21 means that Paul is not a pragmatist who will do anything to draw a crowd. He is principled. Paul is also not a people-pleaser. He is willing to get the pulp beat out of him for preaching the gospel. One person I read said this: “He did not tone down his assault on idolatry to avoid offending idolaters or to curry favor with them. His accommodation has nothing to do with watering down the gospel message, soft-pedaling its ethical demands, or compromising its absolute monotheism. Paul never modified the message of Christ crucified to make it less of a scandal to Jews or less foolish to Greeks.”⁷

Contextualization is not about removing the offense of the gospel. The message that you’re a sinner deserving of hell and the only way to salvation is through faith in Jesus is offensive. There’s no way around it. Contextualization is not about removing the offense of the Cross, but rather about removing other unnecessary offenses so that people can actually hear the offense of the gospel. So in our contextualization, be careful not to compromise. Don’t try to be cool. Don’t cover up aspects of the Bible’s teaching that you think would turn people off. There are dangers here.

Meet People Where They Are

Nevertheless, the next evangelism principle is – *Meet people where they are*. I’m looking at the first part of v. 22. It is a bit difficult to interpret. It says, “To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak.” “Win” in this context has meant convert – to see someone who’s not a Christian become a Christian. But “weak” in ch. 8 was referring to people who were already Christians, but their consciences still needed some calibration. So what is Paul saying here?

He could be broadening the meaning of win and speaking about helping people who have believed the gospel keep believing the gospel. And that’s certain true: we all need to be constantly re-evangelized until we die. He could be using “weak” here like he did back in ch. 1, v. 27; that is, as a category of people who were powerless in the

world's eyes, poor, disenfranchised. And that's certainly true that we adapt not just to culture, but to class. Christianity is for the down-and-out and marginalized too.

I'm going to go with one commentator who suggested that "*the weak* here could refer to pagans who, when they are converted, will belong to the category of the weak."⁸ In other words, people with a personality proclivity to hyper-sensitivity. We must be sensitive to them. These people need a lot of tender, patient attention. They have troubled souls. They take a lot of energy. In our evangelism we need to meet people where they are at. It may take a lot of conversations and working with people that feel like a time drain. We meet them where they are at in order to win them to Christ and bring them into the church that will continue to love them as they grow.

Don't Expect Everyone to Be Saved

I hope this has been helpful for you. Stirring you up and equipping you in your evangelism. Remember: you're free! Be a servant. Seek more. Find your primary identity in Christ. Be willing to sacrifice. Learn other cultures. Don't compromise. Meet people where they're at. Lastly, just notice the last word of v. 22. Paul says, "I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some." He doesn't say, "I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save all." We seek more, but realize it may just be some. So the final evangelism principle is – *Don't expect everyone to be saved.*

This is really freeing. We should not be surprised when we try our best to lovingly serve and seek and sacrifice and contextualize and meet people where they're at with the truth of the gospel and they reject us. The Bible repeatedly sets our expectations that not everyone will respond positively. And so we don't have to freak out – *Oh no! What if I did something wrong? What if I wasn't culturally sensitive enough. What if I didn't find the perfect illustrations that connected with their culture?* We just believe the gospel ourselves again and keep sharing it with whoever we can, knowing that some will be saved.

We can't gauge who they are on the front end. So we share indiscriminately. And we're free from people's opinions of us. We're secure in our identity in Christ. So apparent rejection doesn't really bother us or stop us. We're not surprised that not everyone is saved. And we trust God's sovereignty. **We do whatever we can to advance the gospel.**

Conclusion

Verse 23 provides a good conclusion and summary of Paul's heartbeat that should be every Christian's – "I do it all for the sake of the gospel." "It is the gospel that must drive everything. Paul does 'all things' for its sake, and it is his passion and total preoccupation."⁹ It's not a pressure, but a passion. The gospel is such good news that is simply can't be kept to ourselves. **The gospel makes you want to do whatever you can to advance the gospel.**

"I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings." Paul wants to participate together with others in the gospel blessings. He's not a hoarder. The more the merrier around the table, as far as he's concerned. There's endless food. No need for rations.

Paul wanted whoever he met to know the infinite blessings of being in Jesus together with him. I think of that time when he was on trial before King Agrippa. He was in chains, but his heart was free and happy. What was he doing? He was turning it into an opportunity for evangelism. “And Agrippa said to Paul, ‘In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?’ And Paul said, ‘Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am’” (Acts 26:28-29).

I’ve been talking to the church, to myself and my fellow Christians, but if you’re here today as a guest or an inquisitive outsider, the cat’s out of the bag. It’s no secret. We want you to become one of us. We want you to come in and enjoy these amazing blessings that we experience. We want you to know that the one who created the world and you is the one you’ve been running from. You’ve been sinning against him in all the attempts you’ve made to be happy apart from him. This is sin. And he is just to punish you for your sins and let you go off into eternal misery apart from all good. But he has bent over backwards, gone the extra mile, sent his Son to be a Servant, to become one of us, to meet us where we’re at, and to make the ultimate sacrifice by dying in our place so we could live.

“[W]e are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2Cor. 5:20-21). The ultimate and utterly unique becoming all things to all people that he might save some.

The Lord’s Table

Right now we’re going to eat at the Lord’s Table. It’s where the family of God shares together in the blessings of the gospel. We want you to believe and be baptized and become a member of this or another gospel-preaching church and eat with us. If any of those things haven’t happened yet (belief, baptism, becoming a member), then please don’t come to the Table. But you can believe right now. And if you have, we’d love to talk with you about next steps...

From Our Confession of Faith – “We believe that the great Gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in Him is Justification; that Justification includes the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer’s blood; by virtue of which faith His perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God; that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.”

Benediction

Now may you “[w]alk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Col. 4:5-6).

This sermon was addressed originally to the people at Immanuel Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois, by Pastor Nathan Carter on Sunday morning, November 9, 2025. It is not meant to be a polished essay, but was written to be delivered orally. The mission of Immanuel is to be a multiplying community that enjoys and proclaims the Good News of Christ in the great city of Chicago.

End Notes:

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2018), 190.

² Ibid.

³ Stephen T. Um, *1 Corinthians: The Word of the Cross*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 172.

⁴ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 425.

⁵ Paul Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2018), 408.

⁶ Ciampa and Rosner, 424.

⁷ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 435.

⁸ Schreiner, 193.

⁹ Gardner, 410.