

# Love Wins

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Preacher: Josh Johnston

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     So now let's turn to our Bible reading. So if everyone could grab their Bibles, and we're going to turn to 1 Corinthians again. That's on page 956, so if you can grab a Bible near you, the Red Book, and turn to page 956, we'll read together.

Now this is quite a long reading for this evening. We're going to be reading and thinking about 1 Corinthians chapter 8 all the way through to chapter 11. So I'll summarize some of it for us. We'll read all of chapter 8 and then little bits of the rest.

So do please be following along loosely. Beginning in chapter 8 verse 1. Now, concerning food offered to idols, we knew that all of us possess knowledge.

This knowledge pops up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knew something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.

Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we knew that an idol has no real existence, and that there is a new God but one. For although there may be so-called gods in heaven and on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom we are all things and through whom we exist.

[ 1 : 3 0 ]     However, not all possess this knowledge, but some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience being weak is defiled.

Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols?

And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.

Therefore, if food make my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. And Paul continues in chapter 9 to lay out and defend the various rights that he has as an apostle.

[ 2 : 3 9 ]     But he says in verse 12, Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything, rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

And down to verse 19, For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. He says, 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, that I might win those under the law. And the same for Gentiles outside the law in 21, and in 22 for the weak.

And in chapter 10, he continues with a warning about presumption, thinking that they might be too strong to give in to idolatry. And then he picks up again this theme of foods to idols in verse 23.

So let's flip over to chapter 10, verse 23. All things are lawful, but not all things are hopeful. All things are lawful, but not all things build up.

[ 3 : 47 ] Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, without raising any question in the ground of consciousness. For the earth is the Lord's in the fullness thereof.

If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner, and you're disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you, without raising any question on the ground of consciousness. But, if someone says to you, This has been offered in sacrifice, then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of consciousness.

I do not mean your consciousness, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

So, whatever you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks, or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone, in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. This is God's word, and we're thankful to him for giving it to us.

[ 5 : 12 ] Please do turn again to page 956, 1 Corinthians chapter 8. I grew up as a young child, on all sorts of puzzles and games, that involved pens and paper, no high-tech gadgets, or anything like that.

One of them was dot to dot, or join the dots. It was simple, you had to look for the dot, with a little number one beside it, you put your pencil on it, and traced it to number two, three, four, all the way to the end.

And once you'd finished, this random collection of dots, would end up looking like, Donald Duck, or Scooby-Doo, or whatever it would be.

A collection of dots, ending up looking like something. The same line, passed the whole way through, to give us a full picture. And in 1 Corinthians, Paul is drawing a picture, that has the same line throughout.

At every turn in this letter, we find the absolute importance, of the cross of Christ, and Paul's pattern of ministry, that is so completely shaped by it.

[ 6 : 24 ] Throughout the letter, we see a contrast between, Paul's ministry, his gospel, and that of the Corinthians, who are abandoning it. The Corinthians have begun, to move on from Paul, they become spiritual kings.

They were now wise, honoured, and powerful. They were gifted, with spiritual looking gifts. They now lived, with the great victory, of resurrection.

Or so they thought. All this, in contrast to Paul, who was prepared, to look weak, foolish, and be disregarded. He wasn't impressive, in how he preached.

He focused, simply on the cross of Christ. Paul's ministry, was marked by the cross of Christ, and its sufferings now, with the anticipation, of resurrection, and glory to come.

And this line, runs through the whole letter. It can be traced, from chapter to chapter, from issue to issue. It cannot be escaped. And it results, in all manner of differences, between the Corinthian church, and others, that would have followed Paul.

[ 7 : 32 ] Corinth thought of tears, of Christians, the special, the gifted, and the rest. They were divided. They didn't love one another.

And the central issue, played out last week, as we saw Paul, begin to unpick, their view of sex. This week, we see the next problem. And there's a pattern, that emerges, as we move through this letter.

In 7-1, in 8-1, and in 12-1, Paul begins, with the words, now concerning. And he brings up, a particular issue. So today's, is food, offered to idols.

He brings up the issue. Then he uses, phrases, that the Corinthians, would have used, there are inverted commas. And then Paul, moves on to correct. Their understanding.

So he states the issue. He uses the words, that they use about it. And then he corrects, their misunderstanding. That's what Paul's doing, in this section.

[ 8 : 33 ] For food, sacrifice to idols. For us, it seems like an alien issue. We don't really, head to the butchers, thinking, where did this meat come from? And what God, does it sacrifice to? However, the principles, that play out, in this issue, are important.

And they are, again shaped, by the cross, and the pattern of ministry, that flew from Paul. As we see in 11.1. The imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

There are three battlegrounds, in this issue. Three choices, that are brought to the surface. We see in chapter 8, a church must be more concerned, a church must be more concerned, with love, than knowledge.

In chapter 9, a church must be more concerned, with ministry, than its rights and privileges. And in chapter 10, we see that a church, must be more concerned, with faithfulness, in the Christian life, than being free, to do what it wants.

So firstly, a church must be concerned, with love, more than knowledge. Chapter 8. That means, that knowing things, are right, and making everybody, know that, at the expense of love, and care for one another, is not an option.

[ 9 : 43 ] Winning arguments, is not more important, than the care of the souls, of your church family. The presenting issue here, is food, offered to idols, and much of the meat, and corn, would have been sacrificed, to idols, and people would have, made it at the temple, or bought it, in the marketplace.

So food, offered to idols, is a surface issue, but underneath that, Paul wants to deal, with some of the issues. And in verse 1, we see that the Corinthians, have been saying, all of us, possess knowledge.

We can eat any food, because we possess knowledge. We are wise, our theology, is robust enough, to tell us, that idols are not real gods. God is still God, and the meat, still belongs to him.

That's really, what they're saying, in verse 4. And knowledge, is a big, and repeating idea, for the Corinthians. It's something, they see as being, a particular kind, of spiritual gift, that sets them apart, as superior, to other Christians.

Idols aren't real, food sacrificed, to other gods, is just food. There's no such thing, as other gods. So they might, proudly say, to their weaker brothers, or their brothers, that they think, are weaker.

[ 11 : 00 ] Oh, don't you know, that you're free to eat that? We're kings with God. Everything is God's. All cows, all pigs, all sheep, all chickens, belong to God. Just because they've been, sacrificed to idols, that doesn't mean, we can't eat them.

So tuck in, to a juicy fillet steak, but to properly honour God, make sure you have it rare. You don't want to waste, his good creation, with a well done one. As wise, knowing Christians, we have all the freedom, to do this.

It doesn't sound, too outrageous, does it? There is truth to that. God is God, and he's the only God. And I love that I'm a Christian, because I can have a beck and roll.

But a greater issue, is tied up in all of this. How do we then interact, with the rest of the church? How things affect others, in the church, and others who hear the gospel, is much more important.

So Paul says, verse one, knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Knowledge can fill someone, full of hot air, but love builds up the church.

[ 12 : 11 ] knowledge. Paul moves further, if anyone thinks, that he has knowledge, he doesn't know, what he needs to know. Paul's already made clear, that human wisdom, has been turned upside down, in chapter one.

What this world knows, as wise, has been made foolish, by God. God's way of working, to rescue people, is through the cross, which looks stupid, to the world.

Paul says, much more important, is to love God. Because when someone, loves God, then there is a knowing. Then knowledge, is important. But it's that God, knows us.

Love of God, is much more important, than profound knowledge. And that's something, the Corinthians, are starting to forget. And more than that, verse seven, also remember, that not all of us, possess this knowledge.

Not all of your brothers, are so confident, in their theology. There are some, who do not have, the spiritual knowledge, which you claim to have. And what is happening, is that some, genuine Christians, are being led astray, into idolatry.

[ 13 : 19 ] Some, who have been saved, from idol worship, in the temple, into the church, are being tempted back, to their old life. Because these, knowledgeable Corinthians, will eat their meat, no matter what.

Verse seven, some, through former association, with idols, eat food, as really offered, to an idol. And their conscience, being weak, is defiled. The issue, is not the food.

The issue, is the impact, on believers. Certain Corinthians, think they're superior, because they eat the food. They think, that feeling to eat, means one is inferior. They're not, knowledgeable enough.

They think, that feeling to eat the meat, proves a lack, of good theology. The food, does not mean, any such thing. Verse eight, we are no better off, or worse off, for eating the food, or not.

Food, does not commend us, to God. Having the theology, to know, that the food, is okay to eat, brings the responsibility, to love, your brothers, and sisters.

[ 14 : 24 ] That's the issue here. It's what others, think, when they see, eating, that's important. Verse nine, take care, to not be a stumbling block, to a brother, because verse 10, if the knowledgeable, are seen to eat, then won't the weak, be tempted to eat.

So verse 11, all that your knowledge, has done in the end, is destroy a brother. Verse 12, therefore, your knowledge, has caused you, to sin against, both a brother, and Christ.

knowledge, puffs up, but love, builds up. Paul is clear. His pattern of ministry, is to be followed.

Verse 13, the cross shaped, pattern of ministry, is to deny yourself, for a brother, if it stops him, from stumbling. The Corinthians, would no doubt, have looked at Paul, and thought, how can he possibly, be a real apostle?

He changes, what he does. He doesn't have integrity, he changes his mind. With some people he eats, with some he doesn't. Paul knows what is true, but for the sake, of these weaker brothers, he changes to help them.

[ 15 : 38 ] How can he do this, and know the truth? That's what the Corinthians, would have been asking. We are kings in Christ. It is their own feeling, that means they won't eat this meat.

Why would we change, what we do for the sake of them? These weak, these weak people, who are barely Christian. No, no, we must be consistent. Our theology tells us, that we can eat this meat, so we will eat this meat.

But Paul is consistent. Paul's consistency, leads him to do, whatever he can, for the weak, that they may not stumble. because he's saying, that love wins, over knowledge.

Our brothers and sisters, are much more important, than me eating meat. People are much more important, than winning arguments. Our brothers and sisters, spiritual well-being, is much more important, than any of us, insisting, that our superior knowledge, have its way.

If we think, we're right, about a little issue, is it worth, crushing a brother, to get our way. Paul says, he will gladly, be a vegetarian, if it meant, that Christians around him, would be clear on the gospel.

[ 16 : 54 ] Or if it meant, that pagans around him, would listen to the gospel, and believe, and have life. Paul anticipates, how the Corinthians, thought about this. And so he moves on, in chapter 9, to respond.

And really, what he says there is, a church must be, more concerned, with ministry, than with its rights, and privileges. A church must be, more concerned, with ministry, than its own rights, and privileges.

Paul can hear, the voices circling, in Corinth. He knows they're, already thinking, they're above him. So he moves on, in chapter 9, to defend his rights, to defend, his rights as an apostle.

His ministry, though, he makes clear, is much more important, than his rights. He says, am I not free? Am I not an apostle? They question it.

But of course he is, and the Corinthians, ought to know that. They were planted, by Paul. They are, verse 2, the seal, of his apostleship. This church, only exists, because Paul, preached the gospel.

[ 18 : 02 ] And that's key. Paul is an apostle. He had authority, but most important, was that his pattern, of ministry, was exemplary, as an apostle. So following Paul, as an apostle, means following Jesus.

So does he have, the right to drink? Of course he does. Does he have, the right to eat? Yes, of course. Does he have, the right to take a wife? Yes, he does. Does he have, the right to work, for a living?

Yes, he does. Does he have, the right to claim, living expenses, off the Corinthians, for preaching to them? Yes, he does. That's what he's saying, at the start of chapter 9. Paul is making clear, that these rights, these, he clearly has, these rights, and in verses, 6 to 15, focuses on money.

Paul has labored, amongst the Corinthians, he worked hard, he's preached to them, and it is right, that those who serve the Lord, in that way, have their needs, looked after. Paying them is normal.

They need to live. It shouldn't be an awkward thing, to talk about paying preachers, and looking after them. Paul isn't shy about it. Paul makes it absolutely clear, that that is his right.

[ 19 : 15 ] After all, verse 9, even the ox, is provided for in its work. And he says, isn't that for our benefit? Verse 11, if we have sown, spiritual things amongst you, is it too much, to reap material things, from you?

Of course not. Paul is entitled, to be cared for materially, by the Corinthians. A laborer deserves his wages. But, this isn't his point.

All he is doing, is establishing his right, to say that he can claim it, often if he wants. But he makes clear, in verse 12, I won't make use of that.

Why? Because Paul does not want, to put any obstacle, in the way of the gospel. Corinth was a city, that loved orators, that loved speakers, and preachers, and people who could speak publicly, with eloquence, and wit, and charm.

And the custom was, that as they came into Corinth, they would start to preach, and speak, and lecture, and do all these things, and the patrons of the city, would begin to pay them. Paul didn't take up, his right to be paid.

[ 20 : 30 ] Instead, chapter 4, verse 12, he labored, with his own hands. How could Paul, be an apostle? How could he tell us, what to do, when he has to build, tents with his hands?

He couldn't be very spiritual, he couldn't be very wise. That's what the voices, in Corinth, would be thinking. But in spite of, verse 14, in spite of the fact, that God commanded, those who proclaim the gospel, should get their living, by the gospel, Paul doesn't make use of it.

He doesn't want their money, he refuses their money, in the interest, of making the gospel, clearer. Paul is flexible, in how he does ministry, for the sake of those, in front of him.

He is free, to eat and drink, he is free, to eat meat, that has been sacrificed, to an idol. He is free, to claim money, to live on, from the Corinthians. But he doesn't do things, that muddy the gospel, for people.

He subordinates, he subordinates his rights, to his calling. Verse 19, for though I am free, from all, I have made myself, a servant to all, that I might win more.

[ 21 : 41 ] To the point, that he will not take money, if it hinders, to the point, that he will not eat meat, if it hinders the gospel. Look at verses 20 to 22.

He uses three examples, of his flexibility. To the Jews, I become, as a Jew, to win Jews. To the Gentiles, those outside the law, I become, as one of them, that he might win Gentiles.

In verse 22, to the weak, that's those, that the Corinthians, thought of as weak. The ones that the Corinthians, looked down on, for not having knowledge.

To the weak, Paul became weak. To win the weak. Paul will be flexible, within his rights, and freedoms, for how it will best, serve, gospel ministry.

The Corinthians, loved preachers, so as Paul preached, he did it in a way, that they didn't like. Preaching was what, he was going to do, but because they loved preachers, he did it in a way, that they didn't like.

[ 22 : 44 ] He wasn't eloquent, he wasn't impressive. He obsessed, with the message, of Christ crucified. Even when he's doing, something that the people, in front of him love, if it makes the gospel, clearer to them, he'll do it in a way, that they don't like.

Paul is flexible, for the benefit, of the gospel. Because he needed, to make the gospel clearer, he wasn't just, another preacher.

He wasn't, just coming with, another message. He was Christ's apostle, with Christ's message, of the cross. And he was following, Christ's pattern. So he didn't take money, because he wanted, to make the gospel clearer.

And for the weak, he does, what is weak looking? If taking up, his freedom, to have a bacon cheeseburger, meant that others, would think, that that is normal, and end up, back eating at the temple, worshipping a false god, to their destruction, Paul says, I will never, eat a bacon cheeseburger, even if the thought of it, has me salivating, at the mile.

Because, no steak, no burger, no amount of money, compares to verse 23, sharing with brothers, and sisters, in the blessing, of the gospel. And that blessing, that gospel, that's worth it, in the end, has a prize.

[ 24 : 11 ] Verses 24 to 27. The denial of things now, so that we can keep on running. The discipline, of loving our brothers now, means that, we aren't like a box, we're just beating the air.

There is an imperishable prize, that awaits us. All these other athletes, compete for a prize, that will fade away. But, Paul does what he does, because he knows, that in the end, his prize, will not be taken from him, will not rot.

It will be imperishable. Paul wants to get there. And he knows, that selfishly hindering others, from getting there, will mean that he too, will be disqualified. Verse 27.

As a church, we must be more concerned, with ministry, with the growth, of the gospel, in people's lives, than our own rights, and freedoms. That is costly.

Paul had to build tents, alongside, doing gospel ministry, so that it would be clearer, for those around him. He turned down a salary, so that the gospel, would be clearer.

[ 25 : 17 ] It's costly. It cost him having meat. But it is a pattern, that follows the cross, of our Lord Jesus. And finally, he finishes off the argument, in chapter 10.

By saying, a church must be more concerned, with faithfulness, in the Christian life, than in exercising freedom. Freedom is not necessarily, a good thing.

It's often celebrated, and heralded, as one of the great privileges, one of the great aims, of Western society. Freedom is tied up, with all of the sexuality issues, that are here today. We are told, that we ought to have, the freedom, to be who we want to be, and to love, who we want to love.

Freedom is not, the great end. It is certainly not, what Christians ought, to crave. What would happen, to a young child, who is given, complete freedom?

Would it be, burns from the fire? Would it be, walking in front of a car? Freedom is not, intrinsically, a good thing. Unrestrained freedom, can be a dangerous thing, as sinful hearts, take over.

[ 26 : 25 ] And if flexibility, is needed, to not hinder the gospel, then that flexibility, needs to be restrained, by a commitment, to faithfulness, and not freedom. Because thinking, we are strong enough, to skirt the line, of our freedom, will lead to a great fall.

Paul is clear, a church, that wants to be, faithful to God, and fruitful, in building his kingdom, will be a church, that takes honouring Jesus, more seriously, than enjoying, all that we could have.

It means, no compromising, our moral standing, to achieve, what we want. Paul begins, chapter 10, with an illustration, from Moses' time. The Israelites, who had been rescued, from slavery in Egypt, who had been brought, through the Red Sea, who had received, manna in the desert.

These Israelites, had begun to, begun to take liberties. Thinking, that they were blessed. Thinking, that once an Israelite, always an Israelite, they began, to do things, that dishonoured God.

They became, idolaters, verse 7. They sat down, to eat and drink, and rose up to play. They built, a golden calf, and they committed, sexual sin. And in their, in the end, their complacency, their presumption, led to their destruction.

[ 27 : 41 ] They thought, that they were blessed, and special, just like the Corinthians, did. After all, the Corinthians, had the blessing, of the gift of knowledge, and all sorts, of other spiritual gifts.

But they needed, to be careful, that that knowledge, didn't lead, to their destruction, because of presumption. Verse 12, that anyone, who thinks he stands, take heed, lest he fall.

Don't think, you're too strong, to be overcome, by sin. Paul in chapter 10, sides with the weak. He says, flee from idolatry. Don't put yourself, in the place, where you might be, tempted to fall.

To give in, to what can destroy you. Don't think, that because you're, clear on the gospel, because you go, to the throne, because you've been, a Christian, for a long time, don't think, that these things, mean you can't, be tempted away.

That's what the warning, is written down for, in verse 11. These things, were written down, for our instruction. Don't think, you're stronger, than the Israelites were. Consistently, presuming, that you will be okay, in the face of temptation, will lead, to your destruction.

[ 29 : 00 ] Freedom, at what cost? Paul, Paul sides, with the weak. And whilst, in chapter 8, Paul doesn't, explicitly disagree, that they could not, eat in the idol temple.

In chapter 10, he makes clear, that they should flee. The Corinthians, can look down, all they wanted, at the weak. But Paul's, on the side of the weak.

And the right thing, to do is run away, from things, that can destroy you. Because, whilst, whilst there is only one God, he says, there are demons.

And as we really do, participate, in some sense, with Christ, in communion, verse 16. As we really do, participate, with him, with the bread and wine.

So, in verses 20 and 21, we must, be careful, not to participate, with demons. We can eat at the, we cannot eat, at the table of Christ, and eat at the table of demons.

[ 30 : 01 ] There is an enemy, out there, that would love, to destroy us. And if we play around, with him, he will. So, whilst the Corinthians, say all things are lawful, not all things are hopeful, rather, our focus should be, on what is best, for our neighbours, and not ourselves, verse 24.

That, is the pattern, of the cross. So, eat food, from the market, that's fine. All food, belongs to God. We're free, to do that.

If a pagan, invites you for dinner, and feeds you meat, sacrificed to an idol, eat it. That's fine. God is God, and the meat is his. But where the line, is drawn, is important.

The conclusion, of these, the conclusion, of these chapters, is that what others, think about what we do, is important. That's not something, we're often comfortable with. What other people, think about what we do, is important.

We have responsibility, for the consciences, of others. That's what Paul, is saying in verse 28. For the non-Christian, we don't want to create, unnecessary obstacles, to tell them about Jesus.

[ 31 : 16 ] Out for dinner, with non-Christians, is the best thing to do, to insist upon saying grace, before you eat? Or is that an obstacle? Paul's conclusion, to these three chapters, is eat and drink, to the glory of God.

Do everything, to his glory. Just as Paul does, follow his lead. Be flexible, for the sake of others. Paul does, anything he can, even to his own disadvantage, that some may be saved.

That the gospel, might be clearer. He says, be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. So how do we tie, all this together? We don't have the problem, of food sacrifice, to idols.

We don't have to watch, how we eat our meat, because of what others, around us will think. But the principle, is that we ought, to be flexible, in order to make, the gospel clear. It means we are, to prioritize the gospel, over our own rights, and wants.

It means that as a church, we should be most concerned, with how the gospel, will be building others up, and drawing others to Jesus. So some examples, of things that may be affected, by this principle.

[ 32 : 33 ] Alcohol. If there are Christians, around us, who are recovering alcoholics, then making the gospel, clearer for them, will not be drinking at all.

If we have one round, for lunch or for dinner, don't have the wine, on the table. We wouldn't want, to lead them into destruction. But equally, it may be important, in some settings, for a minister, to be seen, with a bottle of wine, in a shopping trolley, to make the gospel, clearer.

For Christians, are free to drink. We have, freedom in Christ. But as long as, there aren't people around, who will see that, and be led, back to an addiction, that might destroy them.

What we do with food, can be similar. If we're having people, to lunch, and there happens to be, a vegetarian there, do we insist, so much on our freedoms, to eat meat, that we have a church environment, that says, vegetarians, aren't really welcome here.

Learn your theology, decide that you should, eat meat. You're free to do that. Or equally, you have some vegetarians, going for dinner, that aren't Christians, and you insist, on feeding them meat, and make them feel, a little bit silly, for being a vegetarian.

[ 33 : 55 ] Are you creating, an unnecessary obstacle, for them hearing, about Jesus? Paul says, glorify God, by how you eat and drink. With our freedom, we may be happy, to watch all sorts of films, and TV programs, but whilst the odd sex, seen here or there, may not seem, like a big deal to you, will it cause a brother, to spiral back, into a pattern, of watching things, that will ruin him, and his faith?

Or do you presume, that you're stronger, than you really are? How we spend time, with girlfriends, with boyfriends, if we plan to go on trips, all the time, thinking that we won't, fall into bed, we'll be okay, maybe even foolishly, thinking that, will a younger brother, see us doing that, and think, that's okay, we can do that too, and end up, having a great fall?

Paul is saying, that what other people, think about what we are doing, matters, we need to be wary, of other people's consciences, there's nothing wrong, with having money, but if we spend it, in a way, that causes weaker brothers, to make choices, that will harm them, then we must be careful, having plenty of money, if we decide, that we're going to go on holiday, lots of weekends, and miss church, then we may cause, a weaker brother, to prioritise, being able to do that too, to work longer hours, to make more money, to be away from church, more, freedom, at what cost, underlying this principle, is that the gospel, is the most important thing, Paul is saying, that he will forego, all manner of things, all manner of benefits, now, if it means, that some will be saved, and the gospel will be clearer, because love of God, and love of others, are primary, so let us be a church, that desires people, coming to know Jesus, above anything else, it is okay, to be uncomfortable, for others, to hear the gospel, maybe, maybe the church youth group, will become, less appealing, as riding on Christians, pour in, but what an opportunity, to teach our children, a pattern of ministry, shaped after Paul, it's okay, to be uncomfortable, to let other people, hear about Jesus,

Paul models flexibility, for the benefit of the gospel, he knew loving God, and being known by him, is the best thing, for himself, and for others, he was consistently, inconsistent, for the gospel, he was a chameleon, for Christ, over the things, that he could be flexible with, do I need to get money, from them, no, do I have to eat meat, no, will it serve the gospel, if I refuse these things, then I'll do them, our hope, is real, it is not, like a boxer, beating the air, we can look forward, to a prize, that is imperishable, and denying ourselves now, looking forward to glory later, is the pattern, that we follow, when we follow Paul, the cross now, is resurrection to come, being a loving church, is being known, and loved by God, now, and forever, let's be a church, that follows Paul's pattern, of ministry, that will give up, anything, that's possible, that others may come, to know the Lord Jesus, that our brothers and sisters, might be built up, because we know, there's a prize waiting for us, that is imperishable, and cannot be snatched away, let's pray,

Father, we thank you, that you have spoken to us, clearly in your word, that you've given us, the Lord Jesus, as a rescuer, as the means, by which we can be reconciled, to you, and known by you, but also, that in, the pattern of his life, and death, we have a model, to follow, that it's okay, that it's worth, being uncomfortable now, because we knew, we knew, what is to come, so shape us, by the sure, and certain knowledge, of the resurrection, to come, that we would be, so enthralled, by our life, with you forever, by all the glory, that's going to come, that we would, that we would give out, all of our comforts, here and now, for the sake of the gospel, that we would love, one another in, in our church, as much as we can, that we would be, truly united in mission, that more and more, may hear the Lord Jesus, and the gospel, be made clearer, and clearer, for we pray, in Jesus name,

[ 39 : 26 ]    Amen. Amen.