

Liberty that Serves
A Study Through 1 Corinthians
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Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 9:1-18
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Please open your Bibles this morning to 1 Corinthians nine. If that is a passage unfamiliar to you and you are using a pew Bible, you will find that on page 845. And I would encourage all of you to have a copy of the Scriptures open there in front of you that you can see with your own eyes as well as hear with your ears the Word of God as we read.

1 Corinthians nine. Please follow along as I read the first 18 verses.

Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that

any man should make my glorying void. For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.¹

When we began to look at this particular section, Paul actually began in chapter eight, we noted that love seeks to build up others while pride exercises its knowledge and freedom at the expense of others. In chapter nine Paul is in a most unusual position of having to defend his apostleship. That ought to make us stand at full attention. How could a church founded by Paul, blessed with the personal ministries of men like Peter and Apollos grow so spiritually arrogant that they would actually call into question his apostolic authority? This is not like the Bereans who wisely compared Paul's teaching according to the Scriptures. Rather, this is a group of people, highly educated, finely trained, who have grown so astonishingly arrogant that they compare the life and ministry of Paul to their own standards and to their own personal preferences.

That is a point worthy of our consideration. I wonder if we this morning are evaluating and comparing the lives and ministries of others against the holy Scriptures or if it is possible that we are evaluating and comparing the lives and ministries of others against nothing more than our own experience and our own personal preferences.

The tell tale sign often comes down to what we do with Christian liberty.

Now, if you go back to the beginning of this chapter with me I want you to know at the outset that I do not intend to preach word by word or even phrase by phrase. I want you to see the big picture because there is a lengthy argument that Paul has underway where it is not even about defending his apostolic authority—although that is a particular point he will make in this section. He is teaching the people of God how they ought to view and exercise their personal liberties.

Paul, as he begins to argue in verses one and following, possesses the full rights of an apostle and he is laying out his case. He is making, in the formal sense of this term, an apology.

Notice in verse four he speaks of his apostolic right to eat and to drink. He uses a little word there that will be repeated often in this passage. The word is “power.”

“Have we not power to eat and to drink?”²

That is not the power of physical strength. It is the power of right, the power of privilege. He is saying, “I have the apostolic power, the right or the privilege to eat and drink.”

¹ 1 Corinthians 9:1-18.

² 1 Corinthians 9:4.

In all likelihood the Gentile believers considered Paul, as a Jew, to be bound to the Mosaic law concerning eating and drinking. Paul was stating emphatically that he has ever right and freedom to eat meat offered to idols. That is the particular point brought forward in chapter eight.

One author writes, “Yet, he refuses to press the right because he desires to further the caus of the gospel.”

And that point of furthering the cause of the gospel will be the central focus that I want us to go to during this time together.

Number two, Paul says, “I have an apostolic right to a believing wife.” Look at verse five.

“Have we not power...” Or, again, the power of right or privilege, “to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?”³

Apparently, the fact that he was not exercising this right to have a believing wife in ministry was a point of contention for some. Not that they were contending with Paul, but using it to say, “See, he must not be an apostle. He doesn’t exercise his right to eat and drink whatever he knows he is free to eat before the Lord. And he didn’t take a wife.”

It is amazing thinking that they would argue in this way, but nonetheless, Paul is saying, “I have a right to a believing wife.”

You think for just a moment and consider the burden that wives of such servants of Christ suffered. We know that the wives of these other apostles bore a unique burden. Perhaps none would have borne the burden that Paul in marriage would have borne. If you think of 2 Corinthians 11 verses 23 through 29, imagine a wife experiencing these first hand or even vicariously through her husband. There Paul reminds us that he was imprisoned multiple times, beaten to the point of death multiple times, shipwrecked, in the midst of riots and stonings. And then he even talks about he physical hardships he endured, sleeplessness, hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure, he says.

The life of an apostle was not the glamorous travel and speaking opportunities and love offerings and fabulous church fellowships that many people would have thought in that day. And for every one of those burdens that Paul himself shouldered, had he been in a covenant relationship with a wife, she would have borne that.

Because of what he endured, he chose not to exercise that liberty.

Number three, an apostle has a right to financial support. And he takes great time with this in verses six through 14. And I want to touch on the five major points that Paul

³ 1 Corinthians 9:5.

brings forward here. If you look at... and let me just note this in passing. In verse six when he says, "Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?"⁴

One author noted, very interestingly to me, that Barnabas was a wealthy land owner. So he has kind of at one end of the financial spectrum. Here is Paul at the other. And though he says, "I know how to have a lot and I know how to get along with very little," his life was not characterized by great wealth. And maybe Paul chooses two ends of the spectrum to make the same point that regardless of one's status financially, these things are true.

And it may have been one of those back door points to make to the Corinthians, some of whom might have been saying, "Well, you know, that Barnabas guy is independently wealthy. I don't know why he would need an offering, need support."

Well, Paul doesn't allow for that.

The first point that he makes in verses seven and eight is that there is a general business principle at work.

"Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?"⁵

A general business principle unfolds and he takes three very common vocations and said, "Which of these three works and doesn't reap some benefit from his work?"

Number two, there is a scriptural principle in verses nine, 10 and 11. He says very plainly, "It is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?"⁶

And the point is, well, yes, he does. The righteous man regards the life of his beast. God has concern even for those beasts of burden who shoulder loads for our benefit. But Paul goes on from there to say, "Or saith he it altogether for our sakes?"⁷

And that is the point. It is for our sakes. It doesn't stop just with oxen. Oxen are not more important than people. Who would say that?

We can think of a few people in our day and age who might say that animals are more important than people. I saw a sign just over the weekend that said, "Dogs are people, too."

You know, they are not. And we have a dog. We love our dog. I love it sometimes more than at others, but do you know what? It is getting colder now. That dog is not about to

⁴ 1 Corinthians 9:6.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 9:7.

⁶ 1 Corinthians 9:9.

⁷ 1 Corinthians 9:10.

come sleep in the house. I feel no obligation to provide bedding in my house where it can suck up my heat. I will make sure it is well provided for, change out the little insulation that we have in the house and make sure that she is well fed and provided for, but she is not people. And I know I have offended some of you.

You say, “Well, you have never seen my little poochie.”

I know. And I know your animal is very dear to your heart and that is ok. But do you know, let’s make sure we are straight on this. And this is theology. People are created in the image of God as wonderful and loving and beautiful as that little animal of yours is, he or she is not created in the image of God. That means, at best, they are at second place and there is a big gap there. All right?

But the Scriptures show us that God himself cares for the animal life that he has put on this planet and so do righteous people. Paul is reminding people that there is a scriptural principle at place here. This is written for our sakes. We ought to make some application beyond the truth of the Old Testament that you don’t muzzle the ox that treads out your corn.

Number three. Verse 12 tells us it was a common practice.

Paul says, “If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather?”⁸

Others were receiving that support. As partakers they had a share, a rightful claim in this matter.

Number four. It is an Old Testament pattern. Look at verse 13.

“Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?”⁹

Clearly an Old Testament pattern. Part of God’s design in the whole sacrificial system is that when people brought those animals into the tabernacle or into the temple, there were priests whose sole job it was to help the people with that sacrifice. And then as part of their remuneration, take a portion of that meat.

That would have been a dream position for me to have had the finest cuts of steak every day. Wow.

But nobody begrudged them that. They knew it was part of God’s design. So it is a common practice. It is an Old Testament pattern.

Finally, number five, look at verse 14.

⁸ 1 Corinthians 9:12.

⁹ 1 Corinthians 9:13.

“Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”¹⁰

It is appointed or ordered by Christ himself. So five major points that Paul brings forward here saying, “I have a right to financial support. I have a right as an apostle to eat and drink those things that are within the boundaries of Scriptural teaching. I have a right to a believing wife. I have a right to financial support.”

But now look at what he does. And I want to piece some things together starting in verse 12 and then we will go to verse 15, 16, 17 and 18. And though Paul possess the full rights of an apostle, I want you to see that Paul does not make full use of his rights for one very important reason, the sake of the gospel. He has full rights, but he doesn’t exercise full rights.

You could even express it this way. He exercises his liberty not to exercise all his liberties.

Did I just confuse you in that? That is the mark of maturity with Christian liberty.

Now, look with me, first of all, at verse 12. Paul gives up his right so there will be no hindrance to the gospel.

He writes, “If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power [or right or privilege]; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.”¹¹

That word “hinder” we know means to impede progress. But there is a beautiful word picture that one author notes here that I think will be very helpful for us. The word hindrance is a military term that connotes breaking up a road to impede the advance of pursuing army or enemy. Breaking up a road to impede the advance of a pursuing enemy. This was astoundingly illustrated for us just yesterday. Some of you may not even be aware of this.

I noticed in just scanning some of the headlines on the internet last evening that in [?] Quebec, an overpass collapsed onto Route 19, an unbelievable accident, huge slabs of concrete and several vehicles plunged onto a busy highway just yesterday after that overpass collapsed and crushed at least two cars beneath it. There were multiple injuries. They had not even figured out the death toll as of last night.

And while in the grand scheme of global catastrophes that we have seen, this would not be one of the largest ones, it is still a devastating accident for that community.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 9:14.

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 9:12.

Furthermore, because there are tons and tons of concrete that now block that highway, a major connecting artery, people and their businesses and schools and such, is shut down. It is a hindrance.

And Paul remains intent on keeping the gospel highway open.

Now notice in the second place in verses 15 and 16 that while Paul gives up his rights so there will be no hindrance, he also explains here that he gives up his rights so there will be no haughtiness, no pride.

Look at verse 15 with me.

“But I have used....” There is our idea again. We saw that in verse 12 where he said, “I have not used this power.” Now he says in verse 15, “I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me.”¹²

Let me make sure you understand that little zinger that he puts in there. He is making a case that he has a right to receive financial support. And it would be very easy for some of them to conclude that he is just trying to solicit more financial support.

Well, he blows that away right in the middle of this verse and says, “That is not why I am writing. I am not making these points so that it should be done unto me.”

Look at this next phrase. “For it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”¹³

Skip to verse 18.

“What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.”¹⁴

Many amazing thoughts here, but it becomes evident as you meditate upon these passages, these particular verses, that Paul is giving up his rights so there will be no haughtiness as he preaches it. It is not about Paul. It is not about building his reputation. It is not about building his earthly financial fortune. He preaches the gospel for the joy of offering something to those who need it.

Go back to verse 15 and look at this particular phrase with me. The end of verse 15 he says, “For it were better for me to die, than...”¹⁵

¹² 1 Corinthians 9:15.

¹³ 1 Corinthians 9:15-16.

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:18.

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 9:15.

And let me recast this so you get the full force of this. Paul is saying—and some of the English translations reflect this—“I would rather die than be deprived of...” And what is his answer? “I would rather die than being deprived of the right to eat good meat.”

That is not what he says.

“I would rather die than being deprived of the right to take a believing wife.”

That is not what he says.

“I would rather die than be deprived of the financial remuneration that ought to be mine as an apostle.”

That is not at all what he says, is it?

If you look at this passage you see him saying, “It were better for me to die. I would rather die than be deprived of the ground of boasting.” And you continue carrying that forward and you recognize that what he is speaking of is this opportunity to preach the gospel without any hindrance.

How different that attitude is than what many believers demonstrate today. I wonder, dear friend, what is so important to you, so precious that if you were to fill in that blank you would recognize in comparison that Paul is a very immature, carnal expression.

Paul gives up his rights so there will be no haughtiness.

Number three, Paul gives up his rights so there will be faithful stewardship as he preaches the gospel. And when I use that word “stewardship” I do not mean in reference to money, dollars and cents, shekels, denari. I am not speaking of currency. We are speaking of a stewardship entrusted to him.

Notice what he says in verse 17.

“For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will...”¹⁶

And there is a strong contrast here. I can do it without compulsion or I can do it under compulsion.

But notice what he says. “A dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.”¹⁷

That word “dispensation” refers to management of a household, a stewardship. It is the same idea that we heard so wonderfully preached here in this facility just a few weeks back when Dr. Paul Chew spoke from Luke 16 verses one and two.

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 9:17.

¹⁷ Ibid.

You will remember that story that Jesus used to teach his disciples. He said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management for you can no longer be manager or steward.’”

When Paul speaks of his stewardship, there are two other passages that give us an idea of how he viewed his life and ministry.

Ephesians three verse two. He says, “Assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you.”

In Colossians 1:25 he says, “I became a minister of the church,” is the context, “I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you to make the Word of God fully known.”

Even back in 1 Corinthians four verse one, in the midst of that terrible controversy that was rolling and raging in the Church at Corinth where you have the party of Paul and the party of Peter and the party of Apollos and the party of Jesus Christ, people who should not be opposed one to another, but nonetheless, but who look at each other even as enemies at some point, so embroiled in this party politics that they have lost sight of the most important thing.

There in chapter four verse one Paul says, “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

Paul says, “I am a manager. I am not the company owner. I am not the power broker in this ministry setting. I serve Jesus Christ.”

And his desire is to be faithful. You see, here even in this passage Paul returns to this very idea to set the Corinthians straight in their thinking and concludes his defense by saying, “Now, I abuse not my power, that is my right or privilege in the gospel.”

The problem with championing Christian liberty rather than the gospel is that everyone loses sight of the stewardship God has entrusted to us. Our rights are like the over passes and interchanges spanning the superhighway of the gospel. They are not destinations in themselves.

But many believers want to make Christian liberty a destination in and of itself. It is not.

Let me illustrate it this way. I took our children away for three days. Kristen took advantage of the time to go to Atlanta to be with her sister, a special birthday celebration and things. And the kids and I left town.

But let’s say that if you came to me after the service and said, “Hey, where did you go for your getaway?”

What if I answered in this very unusual way? I said, “Hey, we traveled to the exit 54 overpass. We checked into the Microtel, ate at Waffle House and gassed up at the BP. What a three days.”

You would say, “That is very odd. Maybe he misunderstood the question. No. I said, where did you go for your little get away?”

I said, “We went to the exit 54 overpass.”

You would probably find an elder or deacon right after the service and say, “You know, I think he needs a little more time off. He is not well.”

You see, all of those locations are designed primarily to help people get somewhere. You have every right to stay at the Microtel, to eat at Waffle House, to gas up at BP. But I certainly hope that your life has more to it than those things as ends in and of themselves.

Our Christian liberties are not final stops. What I eat, what I drink, its only consequence is in what it actually allows me to accomplish for Christ and his gospel.

Marriage? Larger issues to be considered than my personal happiness and fulfillment.

Remuneration? Even in ministry there is something more important at stake than negotiating the best ministry contract.

We absolutely have rights to sleep, eat and fill up at any of these places. We absolutely have rights in our faith. But why would we make such a big deal out of those things?

We make a big deal out of those things, I fear, because our lives have lost focus on the greater purpose. And isn't that Paul's point for the Corinthians and us? Isn't there a greater purpose for our existence than finding and exercising Christian liberty? Are our lives so pitiful that all we can do is sit around defending our rights to theological preferences? Are our lives so purposeless that all we can do is to continually defend personal opinion and nuance? Has our existence become like the Corinthian church so spiritually educated that we have the audacity to criticize those who like Paul wield a mighty gospel authority only they wield it in a way that we deem inferior? Who are we?

We are far more like Corinth than any of us would ever want to admit. And one of the tell tale signs is that many of us spend far more time championing our Christian liberty than we do the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And even by way of further contrast, very few modern champions of Christian liberty seem to be championing the kind of liberties that Paul was. Eating and drinking with reference to food offered to idols or included in some other form of false religion?

When was the last time you heard teenagers discussing the liberty to take a wife or to

remain single? Taking financial support from the church or ministering for free? I haven't heard that one lately.

And many of us say under the auspices of Christian liberty, "Well, I think I have the liberty to listen to whatever kind of music I deem. I have the liberty to drink whatever I want. I have the liberty to attire my body as I want."

And, you know, very often those are not so much discussions of Christian liberty, but they are a revelation of untrained hearts and consciences, untrained consciences, not liberated consciences.

Let me go back to my illustration. Let's say that after the service you come and you say, "Where did you go for those three days?"

And in answer to your question about where the children and I went I began to speak to you of cool autumn temperatures and the smell of wood smoke in the air and the intermittent rain showers and thunder claps of Thursday afternoon giving way to a brilliant azure sky, the star lit heavens and the sound of pine sap exploding in warm camp fires and screech owls calling softly late into the night. You would know that we had had an experience worth talking about and you would press me until I revealed to you exactly where we spent those three days and two nights in the mountains.

And if you were to ask me how to get there, I wouldn't bother to tell you that along the way there are multiple exits and multiple overpasses and you can stop and stay, you can eat, you can even fill up your car with gas in a number of those places. But they are only tools to help you get to the really good place. And that is the kind of contrast that I want to draw between the type of Christianity that brags and boasts in its liberty versus the kind of Christianity that brags and boasts in the Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel.

We should be people who continually explore the cavernous depths of God's grace, not just our Christian liberties, who study intently the heights of our Lord's mercies, who like Charles Wesley think and ponder and rehearse gospel truths and how they practically and personally impact our souls so that we from our hearts take flight with hymnody worthy of what you have sung this morning.

Has it ever occurred to you that there are not great hymns of Christian liberty? I sign the mighty right given by God to eat and drink what I want. I would love for someone to correct my thinking, but as I have tried to think through hymn texts that I am aware of, I can't think of one that rehearses our freedom to eat and drink meat offered to idols.

Why? Because that is not really the great substance of our faith, is it? But we sing the mighty power of God that made the mountains rise and spread the flowing seas abroad and built the lofty skies. We sing the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day, the moon shines full at his command and all the stars obey.

We take up texts like Charles Wesley has given us and say, “And can it be that I should gain what?” Freedom to eat and drink meat offered to idols? No. We say, “An interest in the Savior’s blood. Died he for me?”

Pause there and contemplate what it means that this great Savior died for me who caused his pain, for me who him to death pursued. Amazing love. How can it be that thou my God should die for me?

It was not the song to top of the Corinthian heart or in the forefront of their mouths. The song that characterized their lives was the song of arrogance and smug spirituality.

Beloved, as long as we love our liberties more than we love the gospel, we will not take flight in that kind of worship. We will not take flight in the kind of humble service and stewardship that characterized Paul’s life. We will be largely ineffective and immobilized in the work that God has called us to do.

Our Savior calls us to a love that edifies and a liberty that serves. And, oh, that we like Paul could say as he did at the end of verse 18, “[I have made these choices] that I abuse not my power in the gospel.”¹⁸

When was the last time you gave up anything to promote the gospel of the glory of Christ? When was the last time, being a believer, actually inconvenienced you?

And, you know, Paul doesn’t look at it as a great matter of suffering. Oh, there is suffering involved. I mean, I am sure as you walk by some of those meat markets his mouth salivated a little bit. But that is small stuff to give up temporarily. Whatever feast table the Lord spreads before us in heaven is going to make the memory of the best stuff here on earth fade very quickly.

But what was the joy of Paul’s heart? And you have the feeling that he just is burning a little hot because these people have actually taken his decision not to exercise those three particular liberties and turned it back on him to question his apostolic authority and his real commitment to ministry. But that is the very thing that compelled him to give up those rights and say, “I have those rights, but I am not exercising them.”

Why? Because of the gospel.

Some of you this morning are so bent on protecting and defending and championing your rights that you have forgotten the purpose God gave you those rights. And what you were doing spiritually is as outrageous as if I stood here this morning and tried to persuade all of you to take your next vacation to the overpass at exit 54.

There is good stuff there.

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 9:18.

What is preeminently important to you this morning? Love that edifies, liberty that serves, personal agenda, making a name for yourself?

Beloved, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is not only good news for wretched sinners like us, it remains the central focus and passion of every committed disciple. And we say because Jesus Christ has done all of this for me, how can I not serve him, be devoted to him, be faithful in his call upon my life. And if that means giving up even legitimate liberties, I will do it in a heartbeat.

May God give us this kind of heart.

Would you bow your heads and close your eyes with me, please?

Some of you have abused your rights. You have exercised a liberty to the spiritual hurt of a family member or friend. And all the while you have exercised it with that kind of carelessness, you have developed a heart that has grown prouder and more arrogant. And this morning through the Word the Lord put his finger right on that point of sinful pride and said, "That's you."

Have you repented of that arrogance, of that rebellion and sin? If not, you need to do it now. And as you repent of that kind of selfishness, you also need to confess obediently committing yourself to the path God has laid out for you. And you need to say, "Lord, God, I have sinned against you and sinned against others. But help me now to be a man or a woman. Help me to be a teenager who looks not for ways to exercise my liberties, but who keeps the gospel preeminently important."

And, young person, that may mean you give up privileges that every other teenager enjoys.

Adult, that may mean that you lay aside something that you may have enjoyed for a long time so that you can be more prepared to speak on Christ's behalf. It may mean that you inconvenience yourself. That is small suffering in comparison to what there is to be gained.

Has your liberty become a hindrance? Has it become a point of haughtiness? Or are you using your liberty as a faithful steward?

Dear friend, if the Lord has convicted your heart of sin, of indifference, of rebellion, even of fear, will you consecrate yourself to serving him and to letting his gospel message and gospel work be preeminent? Will you do that?

I give you a moment here of silence. Will you pray quietly? Search your own heart. Listen to the Spirit of God. Do all that he is asking you to do.

Pray for just a moment please.

Father in heaven, forgive us for abusing our true Christian liberties and give us the heart that Christ longs to see where we gladly and quickly and tenderly give up even what may be precious to us in order to be faithful stewards of the gospel.

I pray that you would give husbands and wives and parents and children and students, grandparent and grandchildren, whatever relationship we might establish here, humanly speaking, give each of us the grace to love in a way that we build up and to exercise liberty faithfully.

Will you help us, Father, as we begin a new week? We have no other hope but you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.