

**November 18, 2009**  
**Vision Series – Reach Your World**

Alright good morning. I'm glad you are here today because today we come to the final step in process God is giving us for living life in Christ. Again for ten weeks God has been showing us from His Word what it means and what it will take for us to live in the vision He has given our church family – the reason for our existence – to be moving people to life in Christ one step at a time together. So what are those steps?

And what we began to see last Sunday was that we cannot stop with the first steps. **The first steps of worshipping Jesus – of learning truth – of building community only make sense and continue to be the realities of our lives when they are connected to the MISSION of Jesus – when we live missionally.**

And we saw that we do that because God told us to. The last thing Jesus told us on this planet before he was taken back up into heaven where he sits enthroned forever right now was what?

**Matthew 28:19** – *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,…”*

And what you see when you really get into that verse and what Jesus was saying is that if you just translate the Greek right into English word for word in that verse, it literally just says ‘going.’ It doesn't say ‘therefore go’ – he just says ‘going.’ It is a participle not a command there. Jesus says ‘going’ and then the imperative command comes in when he says – ‘make disciples.’ **The last command from Jesus to you and me is that AS WE GO about our lives, you and I, we are to be disciple makers.**

And that's where the problem comes in. Right there – because the fact is that most people never do that. Most of us never take that step. And that's not just my analysis of that – that's from Jesus. In **Matthew 9:37** Jesus says *“the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.”* Jesus looks out and says there are lot of souls that need to come to me but the people that are willing to harvest those souls – there aren't many of us. **Most believers NEVER cross that line into becoming what Jesus commanded.**

The vast majority of believers worship God, right? I mean if you're a believer and you don't like to worship God something's wrong with you. It's great – it's fun – it's amazing and fills our spirits. Everyone loves to worship God.

And next to that you've got learn truth. And church that's been going on since the Protestant Reformation. Ever since Martin Luther got fed up and said no thank you we're going to read the Bible for ourselves, not just you and nailed up his 95 theses and it all broke out and everybody started knowing about God themselves. Most believers are into that.

And building community – though it is just now starting to really grow in the body of Christ – everybody loves that – to be known and to know and to do life together. It's great and most of us want that.

But for most people according to Jesus is stops right there. And for so many of us in this room today, we never cross that step and as we are going seek to make disciples of all nations.

Well how do you know? How do you know if you are – if you've crossed that line into the mission of Jesus and you're living it out? I think it is an easy question today. Ask yourself this question. **What are the names – what are the faces – who are the lives of the people that are growing in Christ – that are maturing in Christ – or that are coming to Christ by the Holy Spirit's influence through YOUR LIFE?**

Ask yourself that question and that's how you know. Charles Spurgeon said “We want laborers, not loiterers. We need men on fire and I beseech you to ask God to send them. The harvest can never be reaped by men who will not labor.” And that's where we were last week. So turn back to 1 Corinthians chapter 9 and let's pick up there.

Last week we left off where Paul was saying everything I do I do for the sake of the gospel. I do all things for the sake of the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ. And we'll pick up in the next verse – **1 Corinthians 9 verse 24-27.**

TEXT

Last week we looked at the absolute urgency that drove Paul's use of his life to reach those who are far from Jesus. At the end of our time we prayed and begged God to break our hearts – to remind us what we are saved from – to give us the same sense of urgency and brokenness.

And I've been praying for you all week that God has been stirring your heart with that truth. That God would not let that message leave your hearts and minds. And here's the reason why we started there and why I've been praying that for you this week. Because if a brokenness for those who are far from God – if the sense of urgency did not begin to register in you last Sunday and this week, then the level and the extent that Paul is going to call us to and the Word is going to call us to actually walk out of here and to reach the people in our lives with – if that brokenness has not set in, this week is going to be laughable to you. The level the Word says we go to to reach people – you're going to go 'awww – I can't do that' and you're going to leave and go eat and your life will just be the same.

So let's look at this and maybe God will begin to change us through this. **Verse 24** again – *“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.”*

My whole life I've read that verse out of context. I've always thought that he is talking about our salvation. That when he says run in such a way to get the prize, he is talking about his – about our individual salvation. But he's not. **The prize he is talking about is the salvation of OTHERS – the winning of the LOST.** We see that because of last week.

The word he used over and over in verses 19-23 last week was what? Win – win. To the Jews I became like a Jew to win the Jews. He keeps talking about winning and then two verses later he starts talking about he prize. So if you're going to win a prize and previously you've been talking about winning the lost, then obviously the lost are the prize. The prize is those who are far from God

So keep that in mind and read the text again. *“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.”*

Here's the point. Lots of Christians are running the race of life but what **the scripture is saying here is that though lots of Christians are running the race of life, not many believers, not many followers of Christ are running to be winners of SOULS.** Lots of people running, not many running to win.

And Paul says look- if we're going to run – run to win. The Bible is saying there ought never to be a believer who doesn't live their life the way that Jesus lived his life. The Jesus who said I have come to seek and to save those who are lost. Who said if I've got all these sheep and one of them wanders off, I'm leaving these and going after that one. **There ought never to be a believer that is running the race of life and does it apart from a passionate PURSUIT of those who are far from God.**

And in the next verse is where it gets laughable apart from the brokenness of that lifestyle. Here's the level he says we are to go to for that. **Verse 25.** *“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.”*

He starts talking about crowns there and literally the word in Greek means 'wreath.' That's important for context today. See everyone reading this in Corinth would have known exactly what Paul was talking about. See there were in Corinth some games called the Isthmus Games – kind of the sister games to the Olympic games - held right there in Corinth. So everyone knew he was talking about these athletes who compete in the Isthmus Games.

And what he says is everyone who competes goes into **strict training**. That phrase **literally is that they exercise SELF-CONTROL in everything**. It is a word that means **self control – self rule – self direction**. And the analogy is to the guys in these games who take **EVERYTHING in their lives every day – what they eat, what they drink, what they do, how they spend every second of their day – they harness it for a single moment, a single PURPOSE**.

Now you may be sitting there thinking – uh uh. No one does that. Paul's wrong here. There's no way people take every moment of their lives and direct it and all they do for one purpose.

And here's my question, ever hear of a guy named Michael Phelps? Won a few gold medals not too long ago – like 14 over his career. You know when he was out there creaming everything that swims, there were a lot of articles written about his training regimen.

One of the articles I heard a friend talking about explains that Bowman – that's Michael Phelps's coach - actually started training Phelps when he was 11 years old. He pushed Phelps to swim 50 miles each week.

In case you're not a mathematician like me – that's a little over 7 miles a day. 7 miles a day. I don't drive 7 miles a day. That's 231 laps - a day.

And according to his coach, kids that age are able to increase the size of their hearts and lungs in ways that are no longer possible later on.

So they start working when the kid is 11 – they start working on his heart – they start working on his lungs – to build him up for this goal of a piece of gold. It says that Phelps would train 5 hours a day for 7 days a week – without any rest day. It says that Bowman admitted that he has trained the star to the extent that Phelps has little energy left at the end of the day for anything other than to eat and sleep. And it says that Phelps also makes the choice to swim on his birthdays and Christmas. And listen to this – that he probably has missed some of the things he should have enjoyed at this age, but he has probably gained much more than he ever missed.

Paul says these guys practice self control in *everything* they do. And obviously obviously the Bible calls us to rest more than that – but the analogy stands. And what the Bible is saying is that with the self control and self rule and self direction and urgency and single-mindedness that Michael Phelps pursues a swimming pool is the single-mindedness that we need to pursue those who are far from God. **God is showing us the SINGLE-MINDEDNESS with which we are to pursue those who are far from God.**

Now look at that verse again and see why we are to do that.

*“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.”*

These guys who compete in the Isthmus Games do it to receive a crown, a wreath, that will not last – literally that is perishable. Phelps did all that for a piece of gold this big to put around his neck – a reward of limited value that at the end of the day is going to be burnt up.

But Paul says we are to be running that race with that single-mindedness and effort and intensity and urgency – verse 25 – to get a crown that will last forever – that is imperishable. We run that race to win that which is eternal – the soul of man is eternal. If Phelps would do all that for a reward that will not last, how much more should we give of our lives for a prize that is forever – and by the way – for which Jesus Christ died for? That's what this verse is saying. **We run that race with that level of effort for the prize that lasts FOREVER, the eternal soul of man, and for which Jesus died.**

See I told you that if you aren't broken – if that urgency isn't there from what God showed us last week, then you'll just look at that and go – well, I can't do that. That's why I prayed for you all week. Because a lot of us sitting in this room today claim the name of Christ and you love God and you just read this and think, man, I'm just not there. I see the value of the human soul – I get the urgency we need to have- but I'm just not there. So what do we do when that's you today? Paul tells us in the

next verse. **Verse 26.** *“Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”*

Step one he says if you are struggling with this – **the first thing we need to do when we realize we aren’t there is to start running as not without AIM. He says what I do when I feel that way is I reorient my priorities. I redirect my aim toward the goal of winning the lost.** That’s step one – that’s real simple – reorient my aim.

When you get up in the morning and your feet hit the floor, a lot of the time our aim is whatever I’ve got going on in the day. Got to do this or that – reports and school and projects and whatever – and Paul says you need to redirect your aim. You don’t just get up in the morning and let your feet hit the floor so you can go to work and make a living and support your family – that’s important but Paul says don’t run without aim. Here’s what you do – you go to work for the sake of the gospel.

Yeah you do it to make a living but you make a living for the sake of the gospel. You get up and you got to school in the morning – and the primary reason is that I’m doing it for the sake of the proclamation of the good news that Jesus has come. Doesn’t that sound like more fun anyway?

Put it on your mirror if you have to – for the sake of the gospel. Remember – you get up – your redirect your aim- oh yeah – I’m up today for a reason. That will begin to change things. You don’t run without aim – he says you don’t fight like you’re fighting the air – beating up nothing.

But he gives even more. He says there will be days when we’ll look at the deal on the mirror and go I don’t feel like it for the sake of the gospel today. And the next verse tells us what to do those moments. **Verse 27:** *“No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”*

The word there for **“beat my body”** depending on what version you are reading from may say “I buffet my body.” And if you see that like I do – your brain naturally sees that word and says “buffet my body – yes – this is the verse I’ve been waiting for – this is something I know I can do for Jesus – buffet my body for the sake of the gospel!” No just kidding – that’s just a bad preacher joke – but what it literally means there – to beat my body, to buffet my body – **it literally means in the Greek – to give yourself a BLACK EYE.**

What he’s saying here is there are days when the passion is not there – when I don’t feel it. And he says on those days – I don’t let myself get away from the urgency of what I’m doing – so on the days I don’t feel it, I beat my body – I make it my slave. There are days when I don’t feel like getting in the pool and swimming 7 miles but I have to get in the game Paul says. I have to. So I beat my body.

He’s saying I don’t let my emotions – what I feel like determine my life. No, **for the sake of the gospel – I SACRIFICE – I suffer – I risk – till it hurts for the proclamation of the good news of Jesus.**

And it would be easy to sit back and think, yeah that’s all nice to say and for Paul to write, but come on, for real? The reason Paul could write it is because Paul lived it before and as and after he wrote it. Listen to **2 Corinthians 11:24-27**

Paul says for the sake of the gospel I have labored – he says *“Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.*

*Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea.”*

*He says for the sake of the gospel “I have been constantly on the move. (for the sake of the gospel) I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers.*

*(for the sake of the lost – for the urgency of the mission – for the sake of the good news) I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.”*

**For the sake of the gospel I redirect the AIM of my life – for the sake of the gospel I beat my body and make it my slave – for the sake of the gospel I run to WIN.**

And because of that, listen, because he lived that way – a way that in the back of our minds we think we could never live. Because he lived that way – for the sake of Jesus – he was able to say something of vast implication – he was able to say something that is very hard for many of us to say today.

In **1 Corinthians 15:16-19** – listen to this. *“For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.”*

He says if the dead are not raised, then we...are...of all men...most...to be pitied.

What he’s saying here is that Christians are to live and labor and risk and sacrifice in such a way that we should be able to say that if the resurrection were not true – that if it never happened – that it was a hoax - we’ve lived our lives in such a way that we are to be pitied among all men.

If you found out that the resurrection were not true – think about this are you listening? Now you couldn’t convince me of that – but if you found out today the resurrection weren’t true – if you found out today that it was a hoax, can you honestly say that you’ve given up so much – you’ve risked so much – you’ve suffered so much for the sake of the gospel that you’d be pitied among all men?

For crying out loud Michael Phelps did it for a swimming pool – swimming 5 hours a day 7 days a week to get a piece of gold. And if we were to find out that he did all that since the time he was 11 years old and that the Olympic games were never going to be held, that it was just a myth, this thing he was going after – that it didn’t really exist. We would shake our heads and say that pour guy – I can’t believe he did that.

Would your non-believing friends look at you and shake their heads and say that pour guy – that pour girl – I can’t believe what he gave up for Jesus.

If the answer is no. If you would say ‘honestly Brett that my life looks so similar to the world’s that if the resurrection didn’t happen not a single person would look at me and shake their heads.’ Here’s my question church – why not?

Just let the question rest on you for a second. Why not?

Because here’s the reason, Christian, why it is so important today that you get to the bottom of that question. It is so important because the resurrection is true! Folks the resurrection is true! **Jesus DID rise from the grave. Jesus IS alive. So when are our lives going to begin to reflect it?**

See what God has shown us today and last week is the last step of life in Christ - the 4<sup>th</sup> step of moving and doing life in Christ – and that step we’ve seen is that **if we are going to move people to life in Christ one step at time together**, I have got to reach my world for the gospel and **you must REACH YOUR WORLD for the gospel.**

Everything we have seen in the past two weeks – everything we’ve seen in verse 19-27 of 1 Corinthians 9 – boils down to this step of life in Christ: reach your world.

And we know now that “reach” doesn’t mean handing out a tract on the corner or leaving a “God loves you” coin for the waitress. It doesn’t mean arguing about creation vs evolution or picketing an

abortion doctor. It doesn't even mean just going through some rote presentation of the facts of the gospel to someone whether you know them or not.

**To reach your world means for the sake of the gospel I make myself a slave to everyone in my life.** I submit my needs – my wants – my whatever to theirs – **I seek to understand** – to empathize – to meet them where they are- **to live with them in a way that earns me a chance as many times as I can to SPEAK JESUS into their lives.**

**And it is “your world” because it is YOU.** It's not me – not the staff - not the people on the pews next to you – but you – your world. If you claim the name of Jesus – **if he has called you to himself he has called you to his MISSION and there is NO PART of where you do life every single day that he doesn't want you to be there for that mission.**

And that's why **it is reach your “world” - because that covers EVERYONE.** Your world is your life - but your world is this planet. So **we've got to live with an eye to what we see every day – but with a heart that knows not only YOUR world needs Jesus but THE world needs Jesus.** And when God puts a chance to reach into the bigger world, we need to be able to see it and respond.

See when we get this vision – as basic as it may have seemed - when we really begin to live to make disciples – to be disciples –to move people to life in Christ one step at a time together - through these steps – it is going to ask of you – to require of you - to expect of you more than we have ever actually asked and expected and required. And in those moments when your flesh starts feeling like sitting on the sidelines I want you to remember – Jesus is alive – and He has called us to Himself – to life in Christ for a reason - and **there is NOTHING we could ever give or ever do – nothing we could ever sacrifice or suffer - in the name of Jesus that is not for an imperishable reward.** The very reward for which Jesus died.

Worship Jesus  
Learn Truth  
Build Community  
And Reach Your World.

Let's pray.