

My Rights in the Race

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[0 : 00] Good morning. There we go. Well done for making it again this morning. It's amazing to be here and to see so many people, even though summer is coming, that you've made it here.

But I wanted to ask a question. What are you here for? Maybe you hadn't thought about that. Why did you come this morning? You could have been at the beach. You could have been lying in bed for a little longer.

You could have been hanging out with friends. You could have been in a lot of different places. Why are you here? Now, maybe if I ask that a little more politely, what is it that we are about as a church?

I don't know if you've been to Wong Tai Sin Temple in Kowloon Side. When I first came to Hong Kong, I went to the temple with a friend of mine and we were looking around.

We had a tour guide who took us around. At the end of the tour, around this Taoist temple, we asked the tour guide, we said to him, Okay, do you believe this stuff that you're telling us about?

[1 : 12] And he looked at us and he said, No, not really. And then we kind of got talking. We probed a few more questions. And we said, Well, what do you think you're here for in life?

What is your purpose in life? And I never remember, I never forget, he looked at me and he said, I'm sorry, but I don't have time to think about that kind of thing. I'm just too busy.

Here he was in one of the major religious sites in the whole of Hong Kong. And he was too busy to think about what he was doing and why he was here. And if you think about it, if you run a business and someone comes up to you and says, Why are you doing your business?

What's your business all about? And you say to them, I'm sorry, I'm too busy. I don't have time to think about that. You would think there was a problem. You would think, I don't think that company is going to go very far.

And so when it comes to church, though, it's very interesting how often, if I think about it, I just get into these routines of doing church.

[2 : 22] And I don't really stop to think about, What are we here for? What is it all about? And the Corinthian church had that kind of problem.

Because they had assumed that the answer to that question was based on what the culture had told them. And subconsciously, they had come into the church, bringing all the baggage from their culture around them, thinking that church was there to meet their needs, to meet their social needs, to meet their sexual needs, to meet all the things that they wanted to get out of it.

And they would follow any leader that they thought would give them whatever made them feel great, whatever brought them up in social status, whatever gave them what they felt they wanted. Now, when Paul came to look at the church, he had a few hard things to say to them.

Because he came to say to them, Actually, true spirituality is not about getting everything for yourself.

True spirituality is cross-shaped. It is shaped by Jesus more than anything else. And so last week, we looked at how the cross-shapedness of the gospel means that we lay down our freedoms for our brothers and sisters.

[3 : 44] For those around us. And today, Paul is going to kind of, he's moving on and giving an example from his own life about how he lives out this gospel, which is cross-shaped, which is not about him, but is about Jesus.

It's about following him in all of his life. So we're going to look in a couple of things. We're going to look at a chosen discomfort. We're going to look at a different perspective.

And we're going to look at a different kind of church. So that's where we're going as we look at Paul, as we look into this letter. We're going to see what these things meant. I'm going to just lift this up a little bit.

So, just some background. Paul has founded this church four or five years ago. Okay? And since he's left, some other teachers have come in.

People have come in and have started questioning whether Paul was really very valid as an apostle. And in this passage, they have said a couple of things. They have said, Paul, he can't really be the real deal.

[4 : 47] He can't really be an apostle. He's just pretending to be. Because any apostle, any someone who is worth listening to, any good philosopher, any good intellectual, well, you know, they get paid for what they're worth.

And the market value of a good philosopher, if it's \$10,000 Corinthian dollars an hour, well, that's what you pay them if they're worth it.

But Paul was saying, I'm not charging you anything for my services. So the Corinthians were saying, well, he can't be really very worth it, can he? What kind of apostle, what kind of speaker would ever do that?

And it's not just not charging. He's even doing manual labor. He's working at the side of the road, making tents. He's doing something which is such a low-grade position that anyone who wants to call themselves an apostle, come on.

He's obviously not really a very good one, is he? And so that was one thing that they said about Paul. But then the second thing that they said about Paul was, well, he's not just a very good apostle.

[5 : 58] He's also a hypocrite. He seems to be a bit of a chameleon. Because you see, when he goes to be with the Jews, he's like, oh, I'm not even going to touch any bacon sandwiches around here.

He's going to go to the synagogue. He's going to look like a cool Jew. He's going to do all the nice ritual things that Jews do. But then when he goes to the non-Jews, what does he do?

He's like ordering pork knuckle with extra bacon on top. He's like the most complete opposite from what he was before. And everyone looked at him and they said, don't you have any principles?

Don't you know that an apostle shouldn't be this kind of double-faced person? Paul, apostle, no way.

And now Paul comes in and he's got a few things to say about this. Because if you realize the people he's talking to, these people that he's talking to are the very church that he planted.

[7 : 02] These people have come to faith through him. And he says to them, listen, I'm free. Aren't I an apostle? Listen, if you want to question whether I'm an apostle, remember an apostle is someone who's sent out to proclaim God's word, to bring people to faith.

Well, look, you're the evidence of that. You're the evidence of that. You just look in verse 2 and verse 3. He says, if to others I'm not an apostle, at least I am to you.

For you're the seal of my apostleship. And here Paul again, he's in the dock, being cross-examined by the Corinthians. And he says to them, okay, now I'm going to give you my defense.

Here's my defense. If you are going to examine me at this point. And he starts off by saying, okay, I'm an apostle. Which means you should pay me.

Okay? You should give me the money I deserve. And so he says, basically, first thing, isn't it common sense that if you're a soldier, you don't go and pay to go and fight a war?

[8 : 10] Do you? You don't pay to fight a war. If you're a farmer, isn't it natural that you should get to taste a bit of the crop, a bit of the milk, a bit of the things that you are farming?

Isn't that just natural? Well, it's common sense that you should give me money as an apostle. But it's not just common sense. It's biblical. It's in the Old Testament. The law of Moses says that you should give me money because an ox shouldn't be muzzled, should be able to take from the grain.

That means I'm here giving you spiritual food, materially helping you. You should then provide for me materially. It's not just common sense.

It's biblical. And it's not just Old Testament. Jesus himself commanded it. He says, well, look in verse 14.

In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. So that's pretty clear, isn't it? The fundraising pitch is going pretty well.

[9 : 18] It's common sense. It's biblical. Jesus commanded me. So now, what should be the response at this point? You're thinking, okay, Paul, he's going to do the ask. He's going to say, okay, now give us the dough.

Give us the money. But he doesn't. But he doesn't. He says three times, but we have not made use of any of these rights.

We've not made use of any of them. And then he even says, verse 15, he says, and I'm not asking for any money now.

In fact, I would rather die than you give me money. And you're thinking, okay, Paul, I'm not going to give you any money. Because he's so strong on this point. But if you think about it, it's very strange.

It's very strange. Think about it. Paul is saying, I don't want your money. I deserve your money. You should give me your money. And it will be so much easier if you did give me your money. Because he's had to work two jobs.

[10 : 16] He's had to work as a manual labor, hard work, day and night. And also, he's been planning a church, discipling people, training up leaders. I don't know when he did it.

Maybe he was working late at night. And it could have been so much easier for him. You see, he could have come home and been watching Corinth's Got Talent or something on the TV.

He could have been there, bit of Facebook time. He could have been there going out for a drink with friends. But instead, because he said no to their money, he's now working day and night.

And if you were to think about this, and I think the Corinthians, like most people in Hong Kong, would say, Duh, Paul. That's a bit stupid, isn't it? Like, if someone's offering you a free lunch, you don't refuse.

Right? Are you a bit of a masochist, Paul? And Paul is defending himself to show the Corinthians what makes him tick.

[11 : 21] He says, We've not made use of this right, verse 12. We've not made use of this right, but endure anything, anything, anything, rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

Think about it. What's an obstacle? An obstacle. An obstacle is something that blocks your way from seeing something or getting somewhere. If you're trying to head for the door and Tobin and Erica are in front of you, that's an obstacle.

If you are trying to drive along the road as you get out and a seven-ton elephant stands in front of the road, that's an obstacle. And so Paul is saying, receiving money from you is an obstacle.

And you're thinking, okay, that doesn't sound like a big obstacle to me. I'm quite happy to get that. But you see, Paul's got a different mentality because Paul knows that in Corinth, in the society, people spoke.

People gave philosophical ideas for the money. So you want someone to speak? You hire them. You give them what they're due. And Paul doesn't want to be preaching the gospel and everybody think he's just in it for the money.

[12 : 37] Because the Corinthians might just pay him and think they're just getting another philosopher, a nice bit of intellectual stimulation just to help them.

But that's not Paul's heart. Paul says, I do not want anything to block their vision from seeing the gospel of what I'm trying to say to you. The beauty of Jesus is so amazing that if I take money from you, that anything I do, anything I say, anything I expect, anything I wear, anything that stops you from seeing something of the beauty of Jesus, I'm going to cut it out.

Because the gospel is that important for you. He'll sleep less. He'll miss Corinth's got talent. He'll do anything so that they might see that Jesus is beautiful.

And why does he do it? Well, he says, my boast, if I preach the gospel, well, I just have to preach the gospel. But what's my boast is it's not just preaching the gospel.

I want to embody the gospel so that when you see that Jesus Christ died for you freely as a gift of grace, free gift of grace. And I come to you and I freely give the gospel.

[14 : 00] You begin to see lived out in my life the message that I'm trying to proclaim to you. You see how it works? You see, Paul's thinking is completely different. So think for a minute.

What obstacles stop people from seeing Jesus as attractive? There are many. But what obstacles can there be that we as Christians put in the way which are not gospel obstacles?

They're just preference obstacles. You know, in churches we have many traditions. We have many things which we like to do.

We get comfortable doing. Every social group, you have your own little traditions. And actually, it's very strange if you try and go into a different social group because they've got different norms from you. And you know, it's uncomfortable moving to different venues even.

Some of us struggle with the fact that we move venue because we're not comfortable. Because we want to be comfortable. So we have our traditions. So we have the things, the ways we always do, the language we always speak.

[15 : 14] We have all these things that we're used to. And we're comfortable. We're comfortable with the certain people that we like to be with. All these things. You know, if you're in a community group, you like to be with a certain kind of people. And that's good.

In the gospel, we're free to do those things. But when they become an obstacle, that's what we need to think about.

In a previous church, the church that I was in realized that we were not reaching out to our neighbors and the people in our community well.

And so they decided that they were going to reshape the way church was working so that their small groups would have greater emphasis so that people would be sharing their lives, reaching out into the neighborhoods together.

And after much prayer and discussion, they decided to do this. Now, there's a couple in this group, in this church. They've been in the church for 50 years. And they're a wonderful couple.

[16 : 13] They've been stalwarts of this church for 50 years. And, you know, they're the kind of... I don't know anybody who's actually probably more traditional in some ways than this couple.

Because, just give you one example. For the last 35 years, this couple, twice a year, have gone to the exact...on holiday, to the exact same place, the exact same place within that, eaten in exactly the same restaurants within that place for the last 35 years.

Okay? They don't like change, you might have gathered. So when the church said, the church they've been in for 50 years, we've got to change.

Can you imagine how they felt? Are you sure? But we so like the way we do it like this. We so like the way we can gather together with the people we like.

We so like the way that we have the organ at the back. We so like the way that we do that. But I remember having one conversation with them at the end of the time talking with them. And they said this.

[17 : 21] You know, we don't like what you're trying to tell us to do. We don't want to do it at all. But if it means that people will come to know Christ through this, then we will do it.

Then we will do it. And you know, that couple became one of the most significant couples in the church. Because, you see, they were willing to lay aside the comforts, those things they realized might become an obstacle, even though they wanted it.

That is so Christ-like. Because, you know, Garden of Gethsemane, what does Jesus say? He says, I don't want to go to the cross. I don't like going to the cross. But if it's what you want, Father, I will go to the cross.

That is what Paul is saying. That's true spirituality. Our lives. We, even though we're only nearly five years old, we can still have our own little comforts and things that we don't want to change.

We like it the way it is. And our lives are made up with a wallet full of choices. We can spend our choices as freely as we want to.

[18 : 45] But are there times we will discomfort ourselves? We will do what we don't want to do. Because it will stop people from seeing Jesus.

And we will choose that Jesus is better. That's a chosen discomfort. But the next thing to think about is, there's a different motivation.

Because why actually would you bother to do that? Why would you do that? Paul says, verse 19, he says, Though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.

To the Jews, I became as a Jew in order to win Jews. To those under the law, I might become as one under the law, that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law, I became as one outside the law, that I might win those outside the law.

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. I do it all for the sake of the gospel.

[19 : 58] The people have been saying, you're a chameleon. No principles. Paul is going to say to them, I'm preaching the gospel to people from different backgrounds. To people from different social situations.

And what really, my heart is in this situation, is that there are some things that these groups find acceptable, and some things that these groups don't find acceptable.

But I am willing to flex. I am willing to be adaptable. Because I want to save some people. Why does he say that?

And many people have misused this passage to say, well, basically, I can become like anybody else in society, because I'm going to save them. He's not saying, I become like a gossip to reach the gossips.

He's not saying, I become a stripper to reach the strippers. Okay? He's not saying that. Because actually, what the key thing here is, I do not compromise on the gospel message. I do not compromise on the behavior that I have, which is about ethical and moral purity, holiness before God.

[21 : 07] You see, read chapters 5 to 7. You know that is absolutely true for what Paul says. But he says, for the sake of Christ, I want to save some people.

That's my reason for living. Okay? That's what I'm all about. And if I have preferences, I'll set them aside. If they're not fundamentals to the gospel. If I want to reach out to British people, I will go and eat soggy Brussels sprouts for the gospel.

Okay? If there are people in my CG and there is a newcomer who comes in who's not like me, then I will stop.

I will try and reach out and understand them rather than trying to make them just become like me. Do you see that? That's what we always want to do. We always want to make everybody like us.

But it's the gospel which makes people like Christ. And we flex on those other things. But I think the Corinthians had a problem with this.

[22 : 11] And I think we can all have a problem. I have a problem with this. Because the Corinthians thought that spirituality was about the external benefits for them.

It's about what is in it for me. Okay? Does it make me feel good? Do I like doing it? Does it have long-term career benefits? Okay? If it does, then I will sacrifice for those things.

If it doesn't, then it's weird. Why would I ever discomfort myself? Why would I ever flex in these different situations and adapt myself?

Because I want to be what I want to be. I want to get what I want to get. But Paul has this different lens, this different perspective on the way he sees things.

We've mentioned already, at Watermark, if you see, we have these three banners. Gospel, Community, Mission. When Watermark first planted a group together, they came up with a vision statement and a number of things that was at the heart of this church was to be.

[23 : 16] One of those statements, and if you've read the membership document, you will see this statement in that document. It says this. We, as Watermark, exist for the glory of God and for those who are not here on Sunday.

Those who are not here as part of this church. We exist for our non-members and the glory of God. There's not many social clubs in Hong Kong which exist for non-members.

But we exist for those who are not part of us. Now that's actually quite weird. That's quite weird because we've been talking about these last few weeks.

The church, the image of the church is like a boat. A boat that we're actually, we're not all just individual boats who kind of come together for a nice little dinner together and then sail away on our own journey when we've got refueling or whatever we want.

No, we're actually all in one boat together and everything we do affects everybody else. That was the analogy Tobin used about drilling in the boat. My sin affects you. Everything I do affects other people.

[24 : 27] We're in this together. We're a family. But there's another question we have to ask about this boat. What kind of boat is it that we're in? In the sandbox that we have, that's the vision of the values that really shape us.

It talks about two kinds of boats that we can be in. Are we a cruise ship or are we a lifeboat? Because I think this is a key thing and this is a key part behind the heart of what Paul is saying to the Corinthians.

You see, the Corinthians thought church was like a cruise ship. Some of you may be going on cruises, so you can kind of validate anything that I'm saying. But, you know, they thought it was 24-hour pizza. You know, they thought church was about getting entertainment, a bit of R&R, a bit of rest, relaxation, a bit of entertainment, a good time, refreshment because it's been a hard time at work just to get away from it, an oasis, something which can make me feel good for a little while.

And the problem is their mission was really to have comfort.

The mission is to have comfort. And the thing is, if anything interferes with that mission when you're on the boat, you know, you're going to sit down, you have your steak, your steak is burnt.

[25 : 48] What are you going to do? Okay? You come in, the waiter pours wine over you or something accidentally. What are you going to do? You're going to say, okay, somebody was singing in the shower.

Mrs. Wong was singing in the shower too loudly yesterday. What are you going to do? You're going to complain. You're going to say, I don't deserve this. I paid good money for this.

You're going to say, I want to talk to the manager. I want my money back. It's not fair. This is not what I signed up for. I deserve compensation.

I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I. And you know, you may be lying by the pool, reading a great novel, and you just get to the part where you're going to find out whether the main character is a vampire or not.

And you're just on the edge of your seat. And then suddenly you hear somebody falls over into the sea overboard. And at that point, what do you think?

[26 : 56] You're just in your book. You think, why did they have to fall into the sea now? It's so inconsiderate. Couldn't they drown later?

You're thinking, if you're a little less callous than that, oh dear, I hope somebody saves them. And then maybe you rather guiltily get back to your book.

Because you think it's about a cruise ship. But Paul has a different lens. He says, church is not a cruise ship. It's like a lifeboat.

And in a lifeboat, you're always scanning the sea, looking out for those who are drowning. In a lifeboat, you're going to train yourself to be prepared for when you have to rescue people.

And if you get to the point where you have time to read a book, well, that's a bonus. That's great. You enjoy it. But that's not what you're about. Because when the time comes, you're going to be putting your book down because you know that you're on a mission.

[28 : 04] And your mission is not comfort. Your mission is to save people. And the things which make you uncomfortable, well, you will live with those because you know there's something.

That's part of the job of what you're doing. And I think that's often how we see church. If church is a cruise ship, well, the Bible study doesn't give me enough depth for what I want.

If the music is a little bit off. If suddenly the people change and there's someone who comes in who's a little bit weird, you know, and it just doesn't feel like it felt before. What am I going to do? I'm going to say, oh, I'm going to complain to the manager.

I'm going to maybe move on somewhere else. There are kids who are running up and down. They're disturbing your comfort.

And we think, this is not what I signed up for. We have to move to a different venue. And you think, oh, this is not what I signed up for.

[29 : 09] Because we think we're a cruise ship. And that things will irritate and annoy you and be something which consume you if you think that's what it's about, your comfort.

You know, Toby mentioned it earlier. There's another phrase that the people who, as we started Watermark, one of the phrases was, we want to be a church which lives for something bigger than ourselves.

You know, if you're on a cruise ship and you get to the end of the cruise, no one's there waiting to say, well done for doing the cruise. You know, the only people who get remembered for being on cruises are those who the cruise liner has hit an iceberg.

And the cruise liner has actually begun to sink. And at that point, they needed a lifeboat. Right? But those who are part of lifeboat cruise, when they get to the end of their mission and they get back, you know there are thousands and thousands of people who are grateful and who are waiting for them.

And who say, well done. Because you've been doing something heroic in the kingdom of God. And it's interesting when you go to funerals and you see at the end of people's lives, there's such a difference between those who've lived with a lifeboat mentality and those who've lived with a cruise ship mentality.

[30 : 41] Because at the funeral of those who live with a cruise ship mentality, people are trying to find good things to say about them. But those who live at lifeboat funerals, they just have, you can't stop them talking about them.

Because they've radiated the beauty of Jesus in their lives. So how do we view Watermark? Why are we here?

What do we come for? It's our conviction that our church is to be here in this city. Because around us, there are thousands and thousands of people who are drowning.

Who are drowning in quests to find fulfillment in so many other things. There are people who are drowning in comparison. Drowning in self-promotion.

Drowning in attempts to make themselves be something that they're not. And it's crushing them. And it's killing them. And yet, are we going to be just going back to our book and reading it nicely?

[31 : 48] Even if that book is just the Bible. Because you see, there is so much facade, so much play-acting.

None of us, none of us can save ourselves. And Paul has this lens. And it's the lens that the church needs to live by.

Which is actually, we are free. But we're free to get on a boat.

Which boat are we going to get on? So that's it. Chosen discomfort. Different perspective. Finally. A different kind of church.

You see, how do we actually be this kind of lifeboat church? You see, a lifeboat church, I think, is a church which spends time with people. It's a church which spends time with people.

[32 : 45] You see, Paul says, I endure anything for the sake of the gospel, so that I might not put any obstacle, any obstacle in their way of hearing and understanding the gospel.

How does he know what's an obstacle to the people? How does he know that the weak are weak in a certain area? How does he know these different things?

Well, he knows because he spent time with them. He knows because he spent time getting to know the heartbeat of people. In the city which is filled with so much noise, there are so many people talking and so few people listening.

But Paul has heard the fears of people. He's spent time listening to them. He's heard their hopes. He's heard how they think about other Christians.

He's heard what they despise. He's begun to see what they see. That's why he can adapt. He's not adapting the gospel message, but he's adapting how he shares it with them so that it reaches into their hearts and they can hear it.

[33 : 57] You know, that's like Jesus. You know, Jesus spends time with the religious righteous right and the liberal left. He eats with the Pharisees in one corner and the tax collectors in another.

Jesus knows people intimately. Author Francis Schaeffer once stated if he had one hour to share the gospel with people, he would spend the first 55 minutes asking questions and finding out what was troubling their heart and mind.

And in the last five minutes, he would share something of the truth with them. And he was criticized often for not sharing just the simple gospel with people.

And he replied to them like this. He said, How can you share the gospel with people if you don't really know how to engage with them?

What their issues are? But if we're a cruise ship people, then maybe we'll just get off the boat occasionally and lob a few kind of grenades at them, lob a few things at them, and then run back on to get back to our book.

[35 : 10] Because that's actually more comfortable. Because we can think mission is just doing an outreach event and then it's like, at the end of it, thank goodness I've done mission for the year.

But lifeboat people, they are looking for how to connect with people. It's not always huge projects.

You know, sometimes it can be just as simple as saying hello. I mean, in the lift in Hong Kong, do you know, lifts are amazing things. It's amazing how suddenly, from being normal people, the ceiling and the floor becomes incredibly interesting.

But actually, how many times, what does it mean to begin to get to know people? Have you ever said hello to anybody in a lift? Now that's weird for some people, but for some of you, that may just be the first step you need to take in getting to know people.

Maybe it's going to your guards and actually saying to them, oh, what's going on in your life? Now don't expect necessarily everybody to just pour out their hearts to you. I mean, maybe they will, because relationships take time.

[36 : 19] But we're looking, we're seeing, how can I engage with people? It's little choices every day in the normal things of life.

It doesn't have to be big things, it's just seeing with a different lens the people around you. So who are the people around you that you know who are not Christians?

Who do you really know that you could tell me, I know their heart. I know their desires. I know their fears. Have you spent enough time looking to get to know them?

Because lifeboat people, they spend time with people. Lifeboat people also pray in a different way. Because think about your prayer life. If someone wasn't a Christian and they kind of dropped in and heard you praying, what would they say about God?

Would they think your prayers were all about God helping just you? Or were they all about glorifying Him?

[37 : 26] Think about it. Cruise ship people pray things like, God, I pray that the guy on the lounge chair next to me would move because he smells.

Okay? They pray that the life, that the problems in life would just kind of be smoothed out. That everything would become easy so I can have a blessed life.

That I can be comfortable. But lifeboat people pray for boldness and opportunities and courage because we're fearful and we just struggle to be lifeboat people sometimes.

And in community groups, lifeboat people pray for each other. They pray for each other. We're going over on holiday, some of you. Have you got people praying for you for opportunities when you go on holiday?

Do the people in your community group know the people that you know? Do they pray for them? Do they know what to pray for them? Because if we're in this boat together, we're in it together.

[38 : 36] We're on the mission together. And in Acts, there's an amazing passage. In the book of Acts, the disciples, they're just being thrown in prison.

They're just being flogged. They get released. They come back and they start praying. And do you know what they pray? They don't pray, God, please would you make life much easier for us?

Please would you stop all the persecution of us? Do you know what they pray? They say, God, give us boldness so that we can go back out and start preaching again. And if I think about that and I think, am I a lifeboat person or a cruise ship person?

And if you were to think about that, are you a lifeboat person or a cruise ship person? I think I flip between the two and so often I'm more of a cruise ship person and this message really convicts and challenges me because I like to be comfortable and there are so many things going on.

There's so many busy things. There are so many things that, you know, it's vacation time. There are so many things which wrap up my mind that, you know, I've got to be loving my church family in the boat. I've got to be loving people outside the boat.

[39 : 48] Like, don't I have any time for me? How am I supposed to do all these things? And I think Paul would say, you can't. If you try and do it by yourself, you can't because you're going to be stressed out.

I've got to save them. I've got to save them. I've got to do everything. You won't be able to unless you see this. This is, I think, what gets Paul with this totally different perspective on life.

The only thing that can really change you from being a cruise ship person to a lifeboat person, from us being a cruise ship church to a lifeboat church, is if we see that I was also in that water drowning.

that I was somebody who was drowning in my shame, in my sin, in my selfishness, in my self-focus, being wrapped up in myself.

And I couldn't swim across to the lifeboat and say, it's okay, I can get myself in because I was drowning. I can't do it. I can't do it. And yet, the captain of this lifeboat jumped in, pulled me out, lifted me onto the lifeboat.

[41 : 02] But as he did, the wave hit him and knocked him down, sinking down into the depths of the sea. And as we look and turn around and we are now safe on that lifeboat and you see him there drowning in the sea and you think, that should have been me.

That should have been me. And the gospel message says, he rose again from the dead and he's now the captain of the lifeboat.

And as I'm there on the lifeboat and I see him, what is my response going to be? Am I going to look at him and just say, thanks for what you did, I'm just going to go for tequila now.

Is that what I'm going to say? Thank you now, I can go back and get back to my book or get back to my life or get back to the things which are going to kind of make my life a little bit more comfortable. I think Paul would say, when you see the beauty of Jesus, when you see that the captain of the ship did that for you and if that's true, not just a theory, because I think we all know that as a theory, but if that's true, really true, really true in the depth of my heart, it will transform the way I see everything.

It will transform the way I see the people around me. It will transform the way we see this city. It will transform the way when you go into your workplace, you see the colleagues who you thought were so annoying and irritating before.

[42 : 38] It will transform the way you go into your family and that family members who have hurt you in the past, you begin to see them with a different lens. You see them as people who need the gospel and they need saving because they need to see this captain who is so much greater, who is so much more beautiful, who is so much more glorious than all the other missions that they're going on in their lives.

And that as a church is why God has got us here because he has brought us to see this captain, Jesus. And nobody is more beautiful than him.

And so as we think as a church about planting churches, about multiplying community groups, let me promise you something. When you're on a lifeboat, it can be uncomfortable.

The waves can be rough. But are you willing, because we have an amazing captain, to lay aside our rights, to choose even when it's necessary to be uncomfortable?

Maybe there will be people who have to move to different groups, different locations, and they're the people we loved and it's painful because we want to be with them. But for the sake of the gospel, we will say, we will release you and we will not grumble and complain, but we will say, Father, you have got us here for such a time as this, for this city, for your glory, for your name.

[44 : 13] Let's pray. Father, as I think about even my own life and just the way so often the cruise ship seems so much more attractive because we want to be comfortable.

We want to do things which suit us. But Father, you have called us to something greater than this. You've called us to open our eyes and see the people around us.

Thank you so much for Paul, that Paul's example is an example of someone who imitated Christ. Lord, please, would we see Christ and again and again would we be reminded that that's not just a theory, but that is a life-shaping, life-transforming message of the gospel.

Please, would we be willing to not make use of our rights, of our freedoms, for the sake of the gospel? Show us, Lord, even as we go on vacation, even as we still here in our offices, show us the people around us.

Forgive us where we are wrapped up in just making sure that we're just doing our own thing. But Lord, open our eyes to see you. Open our eyes to see people and let us be a people who really do live for your name and your glory in this city.

[45 : 59] Amen.