



Uncommon Sense 1 Corinthians
Wk. 23 The Freedom to Deny Oneself
By Pastor Jody May 09/28/2025

1 Corinthians 1:25 - For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Uncommon Sense - *"God's Wisdom over man's pride through a Flawed Church."*

[CALL TO HEAR]

1 Corinthians 9:1-17 ESV

Paul Surrenders His Rights

9 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? **2** If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

3 This is my defense to those who would examine me. **4** Do we not have the right to eat and drink? **5** Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? **6** Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? **7** Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

8 Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? **9** For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? **10** Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. **11** If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? **12** If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more?

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. **13** Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? **14** In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

15 But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting. **16** For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! **17** For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. **18** What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.



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**Pastor - "People of God, this is the Word of God."
People - "Thanks be to God."**

Pray

Illustration

[Super Market Sweep!](#) There was this game show that gets rebirthed every other decade, and in this show you played hangman trivia, with items you can find in any supermarket answering questions about cost, effectiveness, and popularity. If at the end of a round you had the most points you were awarded cash and you got to run through the store like a madman and throw as much in your cart as you wanted, collecting bonus items, along the way. It was a go for it all type of game show that got to our basic root desires of use your freedom to the maximum advantage to get whatever you want!

This contest showed what is in the heart of every blue-blooded American. You live in the land of opportunity, you live in a land where the prescription for citizenship is the right to pursue happiness, and for some reason that adds up in our heads to **do what you want until someone tells you to stop!** That underneath desire is seen everywhere in culture, it doesn't matter your upbringings, it doesn't matter your culture of background, it doesn't matter what your IQ is, where there is no moral higher power regulating immediate self-gratification impulses, **you will indulge until it becomes hurtful, or you are forcibly stopped** by someone else. Crime statistics tell me that, substance abuse statistics tell me that, divorce statistics tell me that, abortion statistics tell me that, government overreach statistics tell me that (like FBI Director indictments), and the [State of Theology Survey 2025](#) tell me that.¹ We as a people, and this is why we are in such desperate need of the Gospel, are controlled not by what we should not do (the moral teachings of God's law), but by what we believe we are free to do, which is defined by doing what we want until we hit a wall or someone confronts us and makes us stop.

Introduction

¹ <https://thestateoftheology.com> - 64% believe we are born innocent in the eyes of God & 53% believe we sin a little but basically everyone is good.



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God knows this and one of the reasons we are so 'Hell Bent' on self-satiation through personal freedoms is that for the most part we are trying to escape the feelings of indentured servanthood. When people are living as a slave to the world, you will find yourself always trying to escape what you are in. One of the ways in which the person does this is to live in such a way that declares *"I'm free to do whatever I want!"*, which they will try to show by their actions. All that behavior has ever shown anyone is that you are a slave to this world, its' vices, and demonic control. You can't escape the world by indulging in what it has to offer that just increases the number of chains you are bound with.

Paul has already addressed this with the Corinthians, they were all slaves at one time, whether as actual physical slaves in this world, or slaves to their fleshly desires. Paul wanted them to know they were no longer a slave to their desires nor the desires of others.

1 Cor 7:22-24 ESV

²² For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. ²³ You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. ²⁴ So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.

No matter what state you were in when saved/called Paul says, you were made a bondservant, a slave to Christ. That is how you are set free; freedom comes through the purchasing of your life by the blood of Christ securing your freedom from the world by removing the wages of sin. Christ our Lord told us Himself the conditions of our Salvation.

John 8:34-36 ESV

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.



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The Son has always been and will always be free from this world and only in Him can you and I remain free from this world and that nagging sense that I need to engage in everything that makes me feel good! Only by embracing one's servanthood to Christ will I ever be free from the feeling I am missing something, that I must achieve happiness through experimentation of personal freedoms. That thought that only if I could _____, you fill in the blank.

True Freedom only comes from True Salvation in a True Lord that you have Truly bent a knee to.

To be free from enslavement a Christian must practice their freedom in Christ, and that freedom comes with a specific opportunity to be embraced.

MP:

Let the Freedoms we exercise always be in advance of the Gospel.

You want to be free? Jesus wants you free! He saved you to be freed up, and the way to do that is serve Him, in the advancement of the Gospel!

Today through the text we will visit **three freedoms** that Paul uses as an example from his life. These **freedoms/rights** God had set aside for Paul to use as an Apostle. What Paul establishes through the evaluation of these freedoms is that he has rights, just like everyone else, but that he denies his rights/freedoms so that the Gospel may advance! He sees that his servanthood to Christ comes with not absolute freedom to pursue whatever he wants, even when it comes to his rights given by God, but that for the sake of the Gospel, he is free to choose not to indulge in humanistic desires or even needs. His freedom in Christ gives him the ability to deny himself even when he has every right to claim it!

1. Exercise your freedom to surrender your rights for the Gospel.

Paul Surrenders His Rights

¹Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? ²If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am



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to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. ³This is my defense to those who would examine me. ⁴Do we not have the right to eat and drink? ⁵Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? ⁶Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?

Paul, according to v.3, has people questioning (*those who would examine him*) his Apostleship and do you know why they question him? **Because he does not assume his rights like other people.** He is not a man that is used to making his needs known, in fact most of you know he is a tent maker by trade and would rather not ask for his own personal needs, we will get to why later. But the problem is that was considered weak by the Corinthians according to Greek thought, and our thoughts are the same here in America, it means **you are strong only when you stand up for yourself and demand your rights!**

Paul is like I am free like you because I too am a Christian (1), and I have seen the Lord, so yep, I am an Apostle (2) so, I got rights just like every other Apostle. Let's look at who gave Paul his rights, so you and I understand it is not just an assumed thing.

Luke 10:7 - And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the **laborer deserves his wages.**

Matthew 10:9-10 - ⁹Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, ¹⁰no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the **laborer deserves his food.**

The Lord Jesus sees it as a proper and a God-given assumption, **that God's people take care of those that preach the word**, especially an Apostle! This we also see became standard practice for the Apostles in the first century world, as Paul commented on later.

1 Thes 2:6-7 ESV

⁶Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we **could have made demands as apostles** of Christ. ⁷But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.



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Paul is like you know and I know I can, but I don't, demand some form of provision. The point is I realize it is my right to take from you what is owed (**don't mistake kindness for weakness**). I should be paid by you and/or at least fed by you (4), that means I should be taken care of by you, I should be able to have a wife which means family and you should pay for that too. This all leads us to the conclusion the reason Paul has not taken these rights, because he does know about them, is because **he has chosen not to**. Paul is not operating as the world does, he doesn't see complaining and demanding as a demonstration of strength, it is the foolishness and weakness of men.

Family you and I both know we have seen some of the weakest people around these last 15 years (thanks to social media) and you and I know that the people that scream the most are the ones that scream about rights! Strength is not found in the one who cries out - *I should have that, or I deserve this, or why can't I have what you have?!* (btw those are the usually the same people that lift their voices in praise when people get shot). Strength is not defined by, *they who scream the loudest*, but true strength is shown in **the denial of self-rights so that others may gain**. We don't see that (chivalry) much anymore, please don't take lessons from our modern politicians, modern media, and modern influencers, remember they are paid to complain about/for others! ☹️ Instead, take a lesson from our Lord!

Philippians 2:3-8 ESV

³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he **humbled himself by becoming obedient** to the point of death, even death on a cross.

True strength embraces humility and doesn't demand rights.

True strength embraces not just one's own interests but the interests of others.



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True strength embraces the humility of Christ, who humbled Himself by becoming obedient unto death.

**We have the Freedom to exercise Christ-like strength
in True Gospel Humility.**

The point is, that for many in Corinth if Paul was to exercise his Apostolic rights upfront then what difference would he have appeared to the slaves that were being saved in Corinth? If Paul practiced his rights, how would he have looked different than the other temple priests that were always demanding their payments in Corinth. Paul has come and has done all his work for free not demanding a penny because in his mind it was better to forgo his rights rather than demand them for the sake of the Gospel. That is not weakness family, that is a quiet strength that would help Paul walk of his own volition, towards his death awaiting him in Rome.

Family don't lose the point of this just because you are not an apostle, but there is a specific design by God here, we are to see.

**We have freedom to exercise quiet obedience
to earn the chance to be heard.**

Have you ever wondered why the church has lost its' ability to be a testimony to a lost world in this day and age? Because we act just like everyone else and demand our rights instead of eating insults, instead of eating unfairness, or even perceived slights, because **we want what's ours more than we want the Gospel proclaimed**. And yet the only way to change culture is to create opportunities so that people will stop and listen when you tell them why you forgo your rights. (Erika Kirk should not be the only person on this planet that can say the words, "I forgive you.")

Family, are you ready to exercise your freedoms yet so you may display the Gospel?

2. Exercise your freedom to surrender your dues from the Gospel.



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⁷Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

⁸Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same?

⁹For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned?

These are a few verses that keep stating the same things but from different points of views.

You wouldn't expect a soldier to pay for his own food or lodging when it is you who he is protecting. Neither does the farmer plant a vineyard or raise a flock without partaking of the fruit of his labor. BTW I just need to throw this in, just because it is a current state of mind for those that like to do much of the complaining in our modern culture, socialism/communism says yes, you turn all your work over to the state first because there is no private ownership or rights, and then it gets redistributed because common concern for the laborer doesn't matter, the state gets to determine who deserves it. Be careful what you vote for in the future family. Because the state loves to reward those it finds most useful and usually the laborer and God fearer is low man on the totem pole. It's not a fair system.

Then again Paul goes, *well wouldn't you know it*, he goes to the OT again!?! You know if I didn't know better, I would start being suspicious that Paul believes the OT is important for the NT Christian. Almost like the same moral law of the OT elect, Israel, applies to all believers for all of time. I have lost count now how often he goes to the OT to decipher moral behavior and lifestyle ethics and that's just in this one letter.

Deuteronomy 25:4 ESV

⁴"You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain.

Now that is an OT civic law that is applied to a NT situation. That doesn't mean we are all required to live under Jewish Civic Law what that means is that the morality in the Civic Law is applicable for our Moral choices. How do you know that PJ? Well, he says so in the next few verses.

¹⁰**Does He not certainly speak for our sake?** It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of



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sharing in the crop. ¹¹If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? ^{12a}If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more?

There it is, the Civic/Judicial Law points to the morality we are to follow. The law shows that when one uses the duty of another you should take care of that person as well. In the same way Paul says it is ok to expect material compensation for work. The Work of the Kingdom is funded by the sweat of her saints, and the world also models how the Kingdom was designed to function.

The Gospel frees you take care of those that take care of you.

Now as simple as that is to see, here's what Paul says about that understood truth.

^{12b} 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. ¹³Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? ¹⁴In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

Paul says 'we' (Barnabas and I) have not made use of that right because we did not again want it as an obstacle. **We did not want you to think we were doing this for a paycheck nor to gain social sway.** But what Paul is also saying now that you know the truth, that even the temples in Corinth again reflect how it should be with God's church. He's like, you know that's how it works, you pay the priest for the work, he shares in what you bring to the temple, in the same way the preacher, the *proclaimer of the Gospel*, is to earn their living by your sharing.

Galatians 6:6 ESV

⁶Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.



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Now I would be negligent if I went any further and did not amen this, not because I want more \$ from you family, but I am calling my family to the same things Paul is calling his family to. You are now aware of the morality of the law, in this case, it has been revealed to you as it was to the Corinthians, that God expects you to take care of the man that **proclaims the Gospel**, so now you share that culpability. So, if you find yourself one day in a new church, hopefully because you were forced to move being heartbroken ever to leave us ☺, but that man who would be your new pastor, who is giving his life for the full work of the Gospel, you should give to him a fair share of what you are taking in. That is sharing in your harvest with the man that is helping you be spiritually fruitful.

Because here is what I also know like Paul, being a pastor/preacher you surely will sacrifice for the work you do, for you are called to emulate Christ to others. As well, you should and will have to sacrifice, because God's Gospel is too important to hold hostage to a paycheck, it is too beautiful not to show it to a fellow believer nor the lost, and the maker of it commands me in all seasons of life to give the bread that will never stop coming forth always ready and able to fill His people. I am culpable if I don't give it, it is my freedom to go without, even if I don't get what Jesus says people should give.

Family, let me just say a final word in this because I do love you and I know that you just like me, will be judged on whether you were obedient to your calling or not. Just like I will be judged on how hard I work at giving you the Gospel, you will be in part judged on how well you shared in that burden of dispensing the Gospel. Let me just say, there will be times in our lives where we can't give an offering and the elders and I know that, but we also know that if you are going to base your giving off **how you feel**, when money is tight in your home, it will probably never feel right.

If this ministry is helping you to be spiritually fruitful in your home, then hear the morality and command we find in God's Word, in accordance with the liberty of your conscience. Perhaps today you need to make giving more of a priority instead of a secondary gesture, based on claiming the right you have to be cheerful in your giving. Yes, the Lord loves a cheerful giver, but you should also know the Lord loves it when we are cheerful and obedient about



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giving to His causes of Gospel advancement over our own comforts sometimes.

Sometimes the freedom we need to exercise is not that I don't have to give, it is the freedom to give even when it is uncomfortable because that is when I grow in faith, I practice obedience, and I demonstrate a love of the Gospel over the love of self.

3. Exercise your freedom to boast in the rewards of serving Christ.

¹⁵ But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting.

So, here we see heart of the person that is truly freed from this world, that has been set free by Christ, they are more concerned about being able **to boast**. *Now PJ I thought Paul had an issue with those in Corinth who liked to boast? You are so right! Yes, Paul is using that word to get the reader's attention to show people who are prideful what they should be boasting in!*

¹⁶ For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

That "Woe to Me" is quoting Jesus when he use to tell the other Pharisees, of which Paul used to be one, you will be dammed by your faulty beliefs and sin. Paul says yeah, I will get that too, for Jesus told me I MUST PREACH the Gospel, in Acts 9:15; he was chosen to preach Jesus and to suffer for his name. Paul doesn't have a choice it is a command to preach for Jesus, he can't boast about getting to preach he had no choice.

¹⁷ For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship.

So, Paul removes any association with him doing this for worldly gain, yet he still has a stewardship he must manage of dispensing the Gospel.



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¹⁸ What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may **present the gospel free of charge**, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

Paul gets to why he can boast. He is able to offer the Gospel, free of charge, free of debt, free of any man-made assumption, free of any perceived compulsion to give, free from praise or commendation, that's what he gets to boast in. Now what makes that so impressive? You know I thought about that this past week and remembered reading this with you last week.

Genesis 14:20-23 ESV

And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. ²¹And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself." ²²But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, ²³that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.'

Abraham declares the Gospel, *Salvation came from God who is the most High and possessor of all*, therefore, I don't need anything from you! Just like Abraham, Paul declares to the Corinthians I will not take anything from you so I can boast in the Gospel alone, the one who gives it alone, the one who saves you without help, the one that does not require a sacrifice from you but who gave you a sacrifice freely with humility, that saved you by His strong right arm alone, without your help, the Lord Jesus. THEREFORE, you will not give me anything so you can't ever say you had anything to do with your SALVATION! That is what I will boast in, in freedom from feeling like I have to demand anything from you, I exercise **my right to boast in Christ**, what He has already done, knowing He will provide what I need here and, in the future, to accomplish all His plans and He alone will get glory for Saving anyone!

Family if you really want to start breaking free from this world, if you want to put a damper on the devil's day and a smile on the Lord's face, stop demanding you get your way all the time, stop trying to pursue your personal happiness all the time, and stop trying to go the path of least resistance.

Kick up some dust like Abraham and make war against this culture. Go make some bold moves like Paul and stand up to some intellectual bullies. Go and



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suffer in humility like Christ in obedience to the Father. Then when an opportunity presents itself to get what's coming to you, give it back to God in spades, boast in His name, and give Him the glory, deny your rights for compensation/recognition/vindication and drop this world like a bad habit because it can't make you happy anyways! Want to be free from this world **BOAST IN CHRIST ALONE**, you are absolutely free to do that ALL DAY LONG! And see is that doesn't fuel you all the way to your final destination as it did for Paul.

MP:

Let the Freedoms we exercise always be in advance of the Gospel.

[CALL TO OBEY]

1. Practice the Freedom of surrendering your rights by looking after the interests of others.

Philippians 2:3-4

³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

I think about what keeps my mind off of making bad moves with my liberties and endangering someone's conscious or faith, or getting upset when I don't get what I think I deserve. It's when I lose myself in concern and care over other people. That is how I practice my freedom in Christ. I am free to practice humility by caring more about my brothers and sisters in this room, that's a freedom that keeps on giving.

2. Practice the Freedom of surrendering what you are due by giving to God His dues first.

You may think you never have much to give in way of funding ministry, but perhaps instead of shooting for a high percentage, how about just start with 1%. You know what that does? It is usually a doable number for all, and it will make not content after a while because living with Christ in us will cause you



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to desire to be a happy contributing to ministry. Giving something always gets the ball rolling towards an obedient and faithful life of sacrificial giving, and that displays the Gospel to you is more important than one's comforts. Work towards repetitive and systematic giving starting low and your desire for that will grow as you grow in Christ.

3. Practice the Freedom of Boasting in Christ instead of complaining to Him.

Look we all have things we are not happy about in life, but have we ever stopped to think about the things we are not happy about is perhaps we are **expecting the wrong things out of life**? Perhaps you were expecting to be loved, to be healthy, to be wealthy and instead you got the opposite of those things. Those are all things that the world says you need to have in order to be happy, but the scripture says that if you are saved you have all you need for eternal life and that begins with eternal contentment. Praise God in the middle of your strife and use the opportunities to complain to make much of His blessings and the knowledge that pain is fleeting, life is short, riches are fading, but the Kingdom of God is eternal, and you got in by Grace!

Family, would you pray with me please and ask our God to help us express our freedoms in Christ, to make much of Him, so that we spend our days proclaiming the Fame of Jesus for the sake of the Gospel.

Prayer

Communion

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 ESV

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.



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Today when you eat of the bread remember the life of Jesus which was lived for us. Jesus instead of operating out of His freedoms and rights as Lord/King He chose to humble Himself. He put on flesh for us, lived in an imperfect world of our making, and lived the cursed life that we earned, all so that we could achieve a blessing we could never get by our hands. Praise be to Him for His commitment to the Father!

Today when you drink the juice remember the cost of our sin displayed by His blood for the new covenant. That humility He chose took Him to the cross to be sacrificed by His own volition. He chose to take our punishment on the cross, to absorb the wrath of God, so we could be set free from the penalty of sin. Praise be to Him for His wonderful love!

[CONFESSION OF FAITH]

* The Congregation will stand

Elder – **“Christians, what do we believe?”** Congregation – recites:

LBCF 1689 Chapter 26.10 "Of the Church" - The Duties of Pastors and Members

The duty of pastors is to constantly serve Christ's churches with the ministry of the word and prayer. They must watch over the souls of their church members as people who will give an account to Christ. 19 The churches they minister to have the responsibility not only to give them full respect, but also to share with them all of their good things according to their ability. 20 Churches should do this so pastors can live comfortably and not be entangled in secular affairs 21 and so they can also show hospitality to others. 22 This duty of churches is required both by the law of nature and by the explicit command of our Lord Jesus, who has ordained that those who preach the Gospel should earn their living from the Gospel 23

19. Acts 6:4; Hebrews 13:17

20. 1 Timothy 5:17-18; Galatians 6:6-7



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21. 2 Timothy 2:4

22. 1 Timothy 3:2

23. 1 Corinthians 9:6-14

[OFFERING+LAST SONG]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, who freely gave to us the precious gift of His Son, so we could be restored to our relationship with Him.

Go in the name of the Son, that freely gave up His rights to be loved, embrace our sins, and delivered eternal liberty by His sacrifice.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, that opens our eyes to our freedom, empowering our service to our King, now go and BOAST in a Savior who lives.



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