



Uncommon Sense 1 Corinthians
Wk. 24 You are Free to Win!
By Pastor Jody May 10/05/2025

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 9:19-27 ESV

¹⁹For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. ²²To 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. ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

²⁴Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ²⁵Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

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

Pray

Illustration

There was a famous sports philosopher one time that shaped the course of sports for a decade. He said, "If you aint first, you're last!" - Reese Bobby.



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Everywhere I went in my thirties that's all I heard quoted by my friends as we all spoofed off the movie *Talladega Nights*. In the movie, Ricky Bobby the main heroine, the viewer follows his life as he attempted to adhere to this infamous advice from his father. The movie shows his sinking into depression and self-doubt when he discovered he could not win at everything. Only until the confession of his father that he was not in the right frame of mind, at the time of giving that advice, did Ricky Bobby start accepting a more forgiving but just as challenging motto, "I want to go fast!" No matter who won young Ricky learned to be true to himself and not judge himself by, *if others could beat him*, but to judge himself by the knowledge that he did, *truly give it his all!*

Now it seems ridiculous to generate up that scene for you all, but the reality of it is that Paul says something quite close to it.

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but *only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.*

Let me give you the Greek rendering of that last statement, *if you aint first, your last*. Now if like so many in our world today, if you live thinking that competition is overrated, you are not going to like what was just read. In fact, you might reject this subconsciously before ever trying to take in its true meaning. I know that because most people that read the Bible tend to look over simple commands in scripture. **Friends, Paul just said you run to win!** It is a **command**, an **imperative** in the text, it is a **prescription** by an Apostle, it is **Christ's will** laid out, you read with the intent of taking on what it says. You may not like competition, you may not like hard arduous experiences, but that is the Christian life. There has been a path already laid out for you ([see Eph 1](#)), and you are to live it as Christ prescribes, not as you may want to live it, without concern or urgency, but you live it to win it!

Introduction

What I want to show us today, is that in the command to take life seriously, it goes back to how you decide to live with certain freedoms. That has been the theme for the last two weeks and it will be the same for week 3. Paul wants to



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show us, through his example, that we are called in such a way that we need to see that **there are lives dependent on how we embrace our lives as Christians**. While we are not saved by our works we are saved for good works, and the Lord expects us to compete in a way as to win. Win what!? We will get to that later. But first let me fill you in on how we are going to break this up this morning.

First, we are going to talk about yet another way to exercise your personal freedoms and they all come in the form of denying oneself in one extent or another. First section is: **Denying oneself to help rescue lost souls from the world**. Of which there will be **4 ways to deny yourself** in this competition: **personal freedoms, religious freedoms, social freedoms**, and I got a surprise for number 4. **The second section will be: Disciplining oneself to win your Crown of Righteousness** (Call to Obey). Instead of denying oneself it is an embracing of or a positive action of go and do. It will have two points of support: compete in **order to win** and compete **not to be disqualified**.

MP:

Live your life as if someone's life depends on it!

Denying oneself to help rescue lost souls from the world.

1. Denying one's personal freedoms.

¹⁹For though I am free from all, I have made myself a **servant to all**, that I might **win** more of them.

Ok Paul again starts up with this free thing! It is important to keep that in mind, Paul chooses to live like this even though there are other options! He is free to live this way, and **what gives someone freedom in this life? Jesus right!** It's the message of the gospel. Let's review that quote by our Lord from last week:

John 8:36 ESV

³⁶So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.



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Now, just to further explain these freedoms what is it that Jesus has freed us as Christians to do? Paul spells it out a few months later when he writes his letter to the Galatians. [It is good to know Paul wrote this after tackling the letter to the Corinthians a few months later, we can see he is clarifying what he said, and he is starting to see a pattern with church that are full of Greek thinking gentiles.].

Galatians 5:13-15 ESV

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love serve one another**. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

That is such a rich verse isn't it. Based on our current state of the American church it would do us good as Highlanders that we all should memorize that verse.

We were called (remember that means saved) from something to something. Paul says the freedom we have gained from Jesus and His sacrifice we **don't use that freedom as an opportunity for the flesh**; doing whatever you desire based in physical offers of this world. He says in v.13 you have been freed so that through **love**, not coercion, not guilt, not demand, but out of your love for Christ **SERVE** one another!

Then v.14 is a nod to the **SoM**: "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*", is the restating of **Mat 7:12** "*Do unto others as you would have done unto you*". In the context of the SoM that means lead people to Holiness, to help them live for God, that is how you love your neighbor. **You love God above all by obeying Him, which is shown in how you love others, by caring for their souls.**

Lastly, in v. 15 if you're not busy doing that for others you will be busy **devouring others**, and that puts you at odds with everyone else who will be devouring you. In other words, when you don't love as Christ loved, it automatically sets you in opposition to others, and when you place yourself in



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that company you most likely are having the same type of people not helping you in your pursuit of God.

**Christianity is a team sport, and you win when
you are trying to help others win!**

As we go forward just understand that Christianity is not a singles game, it's not something done with focusing on oneself. If you are doing it alone, if you do it with no one else to be worried about, then you're doing it wrong. Now with Paul's clarification coming from Galatians let's get back to our text.

¹⁹For though I am free from all, I have made myself a **servant to all**, that I might **win** more of them.

Paul's first freedom he's going to **deny** is a personal freedom. Paul has been saved and in that he has been set free from man and their influences, from the devil and his schemes, and from the worldly systems that seek to enslave him. But what he chooses to do, *is he surrenders some **personal freedoms*** so that he may help people that are still enslaved and influenced by those things.

He chooses to become a servant to all, that he might win more of them. That word servant as you guessed by now is *slave* in the Greek, but it is not a slave to the lost to help them do bad. It is a slave to Christ, to lead them to Him. Paul wants to win more, all who are going to be saved will be saved (election), but Paul does not want to be negligent of his duty, he wants those names not to go to another, so it is said of him on judgment day, you were lazy Paul.

Being a servant of all doesn't mean that I must tolerate all their sin either. I can be for someone's good and not agree with their life choices or behaviors. As a matter of fact, when I employ my freedoms for someone's good, I get to say how I will help and not help, what I agree to and what I won't, and how I choose to love them (people who are loved by God get to define what love is). A slave to Christ means I don't give away my holiness, but it does mean I give away stinginess.



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To do this though Paul surrenders some personal freedoms like his time, his energy, his free time, his tent making time, his hobby time, his research time, those things that he likes to do for himself. When you serve others as a slave to Christ, personal freedoms come last, it's not the priority. No one wins by engaging all their personal freedoms, you would miss out on what you were called to, engaging people with the Gospel of Jesus.

When does this start, or where do you learn how to play this game called Christianity? In your own home!

Fathers, husbands, men, you won't ever live in such a way to sacrifice personal freedoms for the lost/spiritual needy until you learn to do it first for those under your care. Instead of waiting on dinner go cook it, instead of complaining about laundry go wash it, instead of demanding your time to: cut grass, workout, read a book, play a video game, piddle in the garage, or any other activity that helps you unwind and relax, go and work in/on your family to discover and help them find ways to relax after their work. Men, learn to surrender your personal freedoms NOT to preserve yourself, that is not your calling, your calling is to sacrifice for your family unto the grave. ([Eph 5:25](#))

Mothers, wives, ladies you won't ever be able to sacrifice your pursuit of freedoms for the hurting of the world until you learn the difference between unproductive empathy and Godly sympathy. Instead of just listening to those in your home emote over life, right down insights, pray, and then bring it up in a follow up conversation to seek a resolution. Instead of busying yourself with the multiple tasks of caregiver in the home, work to instruct those under your care in the art of homemaking & childrearing, for all in your home. Ladies, learn to surrender your personal freedoms for control by the teaching the kids what you do and letting them make mistakes and supporting your husband when he makes command decisions. ([Eph 5:22](#))

We too can be like Paul and put down our personal freedoms, we even have a built-in practice field, the home. We can do this family; Christ is worth it!

2. Denying one's religious freedoms.



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²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.

Alright from here on out we are going to move pretty quickly because we have spent the time to build the foundation for all these points in point one.

Paul shows us an example of giving up a religious freedom so that he might win some, and those here would be his fellow countrymen the Jews. To Paul we must understand that did not mean it would be easy for Paul, just because of a shared heritage, for he has already surrendered up his old way of life, Judaism. Not only that but Paul has been living as a freed man from the works of righteousness for a while now. So, in order to help evangelize them he decides that he has to live in the painful middle between the two worlds.

Paul's plan to plant churches would be to go to a new town, and as always go to the synagogues first. He would work hard at evangelizing his people, not to get them to turn their back on their heritage but to embrace the Messiah they had been waiting for! To do that though he would have to face questions about his belief about the OT. He would be shunned by most Jews as a heretic as he attempted to speak to them. He would be ridiculed, he suffered abuse, and his life was under constant threat all because of Paul's denied his religious freedoms to be free from those in a dead religion and instead chose to live his life among those that hated him.

Family it is a chore, but it is a necessity for us to go back sometimes to those trapped by false religions or false doctrines and for us that means sometimes we surrender our religious freedom earned by Christ to endure the slander of those we used to hang with. Some of us have family that are even in cults, or churches where they preach a social gospel, which is a gospel of works, and it is our call to say something. Notice I didn't say it was your life calling to annoy the same people over and over in your family or friend circle, but it is your duty to make sure that they understand how and why you believe even if it costs you some niceties.

3. Denying one's social freedoms.



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²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.

Then Paul as a Christian goes to the Gentiles, so he is still bearing the weight of his Jewishness but not all its' religiosity, and he lives among those whose morality is not based on God but on pagan ideas. We also see though that his religious freedom has led him away from following the Law of Moses, as a way of life, but he is following something called the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2 ESV

"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

Paul says, I obey the law of Christ and that is to *bear one another's burdens*¹. That is to assume the burdens of those he was not used to. Paul gave up his freedoms not to be bothered, not to be stressed over, those that did not have the discipline he had. You see for someone that was taught to be a Pharisee of Pharisees, Paul upon becoming a Christian, now could use the law as it was intended, to help one live for the Lord. But Paul seeing that his call was to the Gentiles, would live among the newly converted Greeks, and be bombarded with people who had no clue how to live for God!

Sometimes as Christians we can't make our world nice, safe, and free from the taint of the world, if we are ever going to help the lost coming out of the world. Yes, we are first called to see those in the church, but we are also called to witness to those who have no religious background, no concept of morality, and no concept of how to worship our Lord, it is up to us to teach them. Family, I know as the world gets darker, as the world encroaches on your doorstep, BUT our Father has not closed up the door to the Ark yet, the Son has not returned, THEREFORE we are to be offering to the deprived of this world a handout of their bondage.

Until the second coming of our Lord our call is the same as His.

¹ **983** βάρος (*baros*), οὐς (*ous*), τό (*to*): n.neu.; ≡ Str 922; TDNT 1.553–1. LN 22.4 **hardship**, burden (Mt 20:12; Ac 15:28; Gal 6:2; Rev 2:24+); **2.** LN 78.23 **tremendous**, weight, a high point on a scale of extent (2Co 4:17+); **3.** LN 65.56 ἐν βάρει εἰμί (*en barei eimi*), claim importance, formally, I am a burden (1Th 2:7+) James Swanson, [Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)](#) (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).



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Matthew 9:12-13 ESV

¹²But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are **sick**. ¹³Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but **sinners**."

Alright so far to help save lost souls we have denied ourselves personally, religiously, socially and now it is time for the surprise 4th way to deny ourselves!

4. Denying one's Ambitions or Rizz!

²²To 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. ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

Alright who are the weak? The weak are people who are already saved. They are the people in Corinth who were looked down upon by those who boast, those who flaunted their rights, and those who flaunted their Salvation as a byproduct of man's wisdom. These are people who are humble and meek (of which Jesus calls them blessed) and want to learn the right ways to follow God. They were the ones afraid even to have sex anymore because they so wanted to escape the Corinthian mindset and corruption. The weak are people who have experienced the grace of Christ, but they have not embraced the boldness of living for Christ yet. Not in a bad way, but perhaps in an overly cautious way. They are not sure how to live out their Gospel beliefs.

Paul chose to live among the weak so like a physical trainer he could teach them how to use the new spiritual muscle they have. This for the most part is the work of the church. But there are two things we must take into consideration for denial, if we want to do this well.

First for those in your thirties and up. If you have been a Christian for a while, perhaps for you, you have already begun to make new relationships with other Christians which are challenging and exhilarating. You are learning, you are enjoying your intellectual stimulation, and you are coming to appreciate your



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new freedoms for you are learning to practice them. But for us in this room that this describes, never let your hunger for your spiritual ambitions neglect those in this room that actually need your help. Ambition to grow spiritually always goes hand in hand in loving those you may leave behind who can't run as good as you yet. **Who are you helping to figure out what you already know?** (remember the law of Christ)

Now for those of you in your twenties and down. Perhaps for you today you are more interested in who you hang around based on your image and likability. Just so we are on the same page in here **Rizz** means the same as "**Coolness Factor**". So, what happens for younger Christians many times is we don't hang out with people who have less Rizz, not for religious reasons, but for selfish reasons, for Rizz has a math component tied to it. Rizz goes up when you are around those with it, and Rizz goes down when you are around those without it. But again, let me call the youth of the church to maturity and propose to you, that you should be more concerned with being like the one who will forever garner your praise. **Are you willing to surrender your opportunities for Rizz bonus, if it helped another person get to know Jesus?**

[CALL TO OBEY]

Disciplining oneself in order to win your Crown of Righteousness.

1. We compete in order to win!

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ²⁵ Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

²⁶ So I do not run aimlessly;

Paul closes his arguments today on how to deny oneself for the sake of the lost by calling us to live this life as if to win something! He compares it with runners and that is specific to Corinth. Every two years in Corinth they



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participated in the Isthmian Games.² It is kind of like the World games that takes place in between the Olympic games. You should also know they also had music and poetry competitions so yes everything even back then they had *Corinthian's Got Talent!*

Paul compares our life not to a team sport but to the individual sport of running and why would he do that? Because everyone has the responsibility to participate, everyone has their own course to run, and everyone is expected to win their race! That goes back to his teaching on everyone having a specific task to perform ordained by God earlier in Corinthians.

There is a reward set aside for you in Glory, it is an imperishable wreath, that is a crown. To Corinthians this meant a lot, when you won a race in Corinth your crown was made of celery; it was cheap, it would wilt, and no one would ever believe you ever won when you had to throw it out or use it for soup, so the glory doesn't last. **BUT** when you live your life in care of others and their soul's eternal state the crown you receive never diminishes. You will forever be known in eternity by the race you ran here on earth. Pure and simple, people will know forever what type of life you lived for Christ. (Christ Himself commends to us to lay up treasures for us that are eternal Matthew 6:19-20).

Listen the reality is that in heaven there are greater levels of glory, greater levels of prestige, and a closer presence to the King of Glory! Paul calls us to lay aside that which hinders us and get running, so you can receive your portion of the prize!

Right now, some of you need to start training and where do you start? At home!

Take seriously being a father, and you ensure the kids are not just doing HW, but they are learning life skills needed for this world, your wife is being blessed by your sacrifice, and above all you are leading your family in worship of God. Moms engage with the kids not to gain good feelings but to give them

² <https://biblearchaeology.org/research/contemporary-issues/3009-going-for-the-gold-the-apostle-paul-and-the-isthmian-games>



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a sense of purpose in this world by emphasizing training over doing and love your husband in front of them despite his faults. Kids, put the desires of your parents over your own, no matter what, for your call is to honor them! For everyone that IS the law of Christ, bearing each other's burdens. **You want the crown, then it requires all of us to sacrifice in our training.**

2. We compete not to be disqualified!

²⁶ ...; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

Ok so boxing was also one of the Isthmian games as well. Boxing though is a lot different than MMA, it is different than wrestling, because the rules are more enforced, unforgiving, and you will get disqualified if you break them. You can't use your legs for striking, there is not taking someone to the ground, you can't hit below the belt or on the back. So, boxing as you're doing it, and getting pummeled in the process, requires you to keep thinking even as you are doing, and strategize what your opponent's weakness is while protecting yours.

So, as we compete for our unperishable crown we need to compete in such a way not to get disqualified or do something that takes us out of the game.

We don't give in to pressures of those we are trying to influence for God. If we have people in our lives that our over religious or false religious, we don't give into their demands, we don't take cheap shots and call them names, we don't only argue online and forget our manners, we speak face to face with those we care about and we always argue in love. (Doug Wilson in the YT show).

When we spar with unconverted(lawless) people, we don't argue with human philosophies you use the scripture, that is the only type of gloves you are to use. If you go off the basis of *love is love*, or that what you believe in uncaring/*not tolerant*, you are swinging at the air as Paul says, for you are not hitting anything. Instead explain all your arguments, reasons, and beliefs by



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using the Bible, for it is the only thing that can make your opponent defenseless.

Scripture provides knockouts and it is the only thing you are allowed to beat some sense back into your enemies. If they bale out that's ok, they get disqualified, and when God is ready, He will call them back to the ring. Everything we find in the Bible is the most caring news anyone can ever find, God so love the world that He gave His only begotten Son...

When loving the weak, make sure you teach them how to throw the punches. So, **who is there in your life that you are teaching the ropes to?** Everyone in this room should have somebody they are practicing/sparring with in helping them to live for Jesus.

Family it is my prayer and my hope that you have learned this lesson today.

MP:

Live your life as if someone's life depended on it!

May we all strive towards our crown together, may we all help each other live for the sake of others, because yes lives are on the line...

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, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."²⁵In 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."²⁶For 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. The Lord spent His life in service to His Father on our behalf so that He may save His lost sheep. He was fueled by His passion for God's goodness and lived out a zeal that should have been lived out by us. Instead, we now benefit from His tireless work which brings us back home and trains us for our own works of righteousness. 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. The Lord as payment for His tireless work on our behalf was rewarded with our treason. As the parable taught us, we persecuted and killed His prophets, and when the Father sent the Son, we killed Him too. Instead though, of His Father's wrath, we received the Grace and Mercy we did not deserve and we were rewarded with eternal covenantal love. 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 11 Paragraph 2 Justification.

Faith that receives and rests on Christ and his righteousness is the only instrument of justification.⁶ Yet it does not occur by itself in the person justified, but it is always accompanied by every other saving grace. It is not a dead faith but works through love.⁷

6 Romans 3:28. 7 Galatians 5:6; James 2:17, 22, 26. 22. 1 Timothy 3:23. 1 Corinthians 9:6-14

[OFFERING+LAST SONG]

[BENEDICTION]



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Go in the name of the Father, who sent His only Son, to work for us as His humble servant, making a way in which we too will get a crown.

Go in the name of the Son, that lived in perfected humility earning all the benefits of resurrected life and bequeathing those rights to His people.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, that opens our eyes to the law of Christ, to bear the burdens of others, now go and compete to win!



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