

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Hurry Up & Slow Down

PART

4

TITLE

Protecting Margins

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 9:24-27



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Well, it is great to see all of you. I hope you've had a great week. If you're new with us, we're thrilled that you have joined us. I cannot think, I cannot think of a response that is more fitting to Jesus Christ rising from the dead and believing upon him than to seek to spend the rest of our life introducing other people to Jesus Christ, and to grow them up to love and worship him. It is the reason that we exist. It's what we want to do as a church family.

If you are new here with us, or if you're wondering sort of what your next step is, is we created a simple path. It's not perfect, but we believe that if everybody walks the path, and this is what will take place, is that it will lead you to the best possibility of you introducing somebody to Jesus Christ and to grow them up to love and worship him.

So, we want to be able to help you on that path, which is why we're showing these videos and making this effort. But, we also know that to come to a class like that, or to do any of those things, to actually connect with Christ and with people and to grow in truth and love and to serve with your gifts and to take the gospel and to go somewhere with it, whether it's your neighbor or the nations, it takes time and time is a precious commodity. We all know that that is true.

Last week, I said that the time of our life is sort of like a train that is stuck in low gear. It's always moving and yet it's so big. It's so sizeable that you can't stop it. You can't stand in front of it. But the good thing is this, is that if you can build in enough margins in your own personal life to get in front of that train, then you will have enough space to be able to divert that train into different paths, into different priorities.

So, what we're really looking at this month, is how do we not only understand God's will and have enough margin in our life, but what we want to look at here is how do we even protect those margins? How do we hurry up so that we can slow down somehow life? This is true for every single one of us, life seems to feel more, well, it seems faster. It feels a little bit more reckless when our margins are thin. When we're late, it seems like everything is happening a little bit faster. When we're unnecessarily busy, it seems like everything in the world is happening faster.

When our margins are thin, we simply don't have enough space to adjust to things that we didn't plan. It creates crisis within our life, which is why it is so critically important for us to look at what God would say today about how do we protect those margins in our life so that we can continue to stay and direct that time to stay ahead and to direct our time into areas of priority.

You see, every single one of us, we understand margins and we also understand and enjoy when people seek to help us protect those margins in life. You're driving down this road, you would be appreciative of people who sought to care about the margins of life. If you would make a wrong turn, right, you could die. Maybe it's likely that you would on a road like this. And so, what do they do? They say, "You know what, if you're in this lane, you're going to be safe. There's margin in the lane." So they draw lines on either side of the lane as margins, right?

Now, I don't know if this road does, but a lot of roads, you know that if you get outside of that lane, there's another lane. If you get to outside of that lane, you're almost to the edge of the road, there's a little rumble strip. So, it's just a reminder to say, "Hey, you're running out of margins here". And, in a place like this, they even put up guardrails.

So, the question that I have for you is this, is all the priorities of your life and all the margins of your life, is what are the guardrails that you can put up in your life to protect those margins so that you can stay in front of the train, that is the time of your life? So that you can direct it into areas of priority, which will lead you to get to the place in your life where you can look yourself in the mirror and say, "I am not ashamed to be you."

Let me pray for that. Father, we come before you this morning asking that you would do a great thing in our life. So much more than I can do personally. I pray, Father, that you would speak through weakness and that you would create within our hearts a sense of urgency to be able to see that all the time is running out. That whether we spend eight hours sleeping or whether we spent eight hours living and doing and joining and participating and worshiping and singing and that we've spent eight hours of our allotment of time. So, God, I pray that you would create within us this morning a wisdom to the way that we would live our life. That we would live for the greatest mission in the world, the only mission worth living and dying for. So, would you help us to see this morning? Not only the truthfulness of your word, but which help us to see the glory of your son and in seeing the glory of your son and the truthfulness of your word, that it would change the rest of our life. I pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen.

So in your Bible, I would love for you to turn with me to first Corinthians chapter nine. We're going to start reading in a moment in verse 24. This is a four week series and this happens to be the fourth sermon in the series called Hurry Up and Slow Down. For some of you, this is the first time that you've been here. So, I want to show you why these things are up here. What we've looked at over these last several weeks are a few key truths in life, okay? Psalm 90 we looked at first, tells us that we're going to die. Now none of us need to know Psalm 90 to know that that's true. It's sort of self evident.

But, Psalm 90 echoes that and tells us that each one of our days has been ordained before one came to be. That you and I, we need to recognize and see and count and number our days so that we would have a heart of wisdom, because every single one of us, we were born with an allotment that you cannot adjust. God has ordained how many? And for some of us, your jar, this is your life. It's a really small jar. He's ordained 42 years, for some maybe it's 76 years, for some 96 years. I don't know what it is.

But, the thing is is we only have so much time and we can fill our lives with a lot of different things. So, we've looked over the last few weeks that there's different levels of priority in the things that we can put into our life. There's things like in this jar, they're the big rocks. These are normally significant responsibilities, significant relationships with God and with people that we care about most. These are the things that we say, "If I could choose my own legacy, it would be basically these things." This is the big thing in my life. We want to be able to get as many of these into our life as possible.

Then, there's things like these marbles which are still important and significant. They're things like hobbies. There's nothing wrong with a hobby. In fact, it's really good to have one, because sometimes you really need to decompress in life and to spend a little bit of time doing something that isn't the greatest value, but it's still value. Reading is a great hobby maybe to, I don't know what it is, tennis, or... like there's still health and value in things that are not the greatest importance in life. Yet, they're still really good for us.

And then, there's things that really like these little beebees, they fill up our days. They're all kinds of minutes where we look back and these are the things that make us ask the question, if we invest a lot of them, is where did all the time go? There's really nothing to show for them. They're just there. We know if we've invested time in the big rocks because we typically have healthy relationships. If we economize on this jar for this jar, we typically get to the end of our life and say, "I wish I had a mulligan. I wish I could do it over again."

The thing is, for every single one of us, there's more things to do on earth that can fit into a single life. There's more possibilities, there's more relationships, there's more hobbies, there's more insignificant things that you can possibly accomplish with your lifetime. See, we all ask the question, "Well, what should go in first?" So, we looked and God says, Seek first me. Seek a relationship with me first."

This is the value of placing God into our life first. It's that not only does he satisfy our soul and keep us from chasing a million empty paths, looking for satisfaction that it can't deliver. Not only is that the case, but here's the thing. When God is in our heart, he informs the rest of the rocks that should be coming in. He gives us wisdom. He helps us to understand as well so that we can redeem the time and things that are the most profitable to our life.

So, this is what we've been talking about, is that as we understand God's will for our life, when he's there and he's showing us what happens is he opens up our eyes to a mission that is worth living and dying for. That's where we get the first Corinthians. Paul was writing a real church, like we're a real church in Raleigh, where there's a real church in a city called Corinth. What he says in chapter nine, is that he's been investing so much of his time following God's mission for his life and for all of our lives.

That mission is to introduce people to Jesus Christ and to grow them up to love and worship him. It's to help people know that Jesus Christ died on a cross for our sin. That he wants to forgive us and will forgive us, and if we trust him that he rose from the dead, he'll take away all of our sin. He cares so much that people know about this, that he's spending all of his time seeking to be creative, to adjust the way that he would even live his life. Not to be a hypocrite, but to say, "You know what, if I'm spending time with you, you may have certain issues, certain problems. You may have a certain historical background that I can be sensitive about so that when I share the gospel with you, it may be it's the same gospel, but I may share it just a little bit differently with you than I would with you. So, I need to spend the time to understand who each of you are."

Well, that takes time. He says, "But, this is what I'm doing, is I'm taking pains in order to identify with different people in the world because everyone in the world is created in the image of God and worthy of knowing about the savior of the world." This is what he says then. Verse 24, in response to this, he says, "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. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly and I do not box as one beating the air, but I discipline my body and keep it under control lest after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified."

Now, the city of Corinth hosted the Isthmian Games, sort of like the Olympics, every two years. So, you can imagine that if Raleigh was the host of the Olympics every two years, that the people who lived in Raleigh would become keenly familiar with athletics and training and self-discipline. We would know names of champions and we would also know the names of people who shame themselves and were disqualified for cheating. Paul knew that the people who were living in Corinth and who he was writing to, that they had a keen familiarity with athletics.

So what he does, is he leans on their knowledge of sports in order to teach us a really important lesson. That lesson is this, is that if you want to avoid shaming Christ and disqualifying your own life, then we must listen to God and pursue a lifestyle that is typically seen in champion athletes. He's not telling us to be a champion athlete, unless you're really good at something, right? That's not his point. It's the look at how a champion athlete lives and disciplines themselves and to say, "Now if he would do that or if she would do that for that prize, then what would I do to live for a mission that is worth my life and my death?"

We want to listen to God. What does God say? On the text, he says three things. First, God urges us to run with the intent to win. He urges us to run or to live, to live our life with the intent to win. He says, "Do you not know that in a race, all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? Run that you may obtain it." Now I like to run. I've liked to run my whole life. In high school and college, I ran a lot. So, when I got a little older, I was 36 I believe, and I'm 46 so 10 years ago, I said, "You know what, I've always said I wanted to run a marathon. I'm going to run a marathon."

So, I enlisted in the Charlotte Marathon and said, "Now I need to train. I paid the money and now I need to get ready for it." I started training and I trained pretty hard for it. I get there and I'm thinking, "I've never been to a marathon. I've never seen one other than in the Olympics." What I did in Charlotte, it didn't look anything like the Olympics. I get there and I was so surprised to see something. That is that there was a lot of people who dressed up as clowns, as competitors, right?

So it was really very festive and there was really nothing wrong with it. People were having a great time with it. I love this picture, because you can tell that the guy next to the guy who's a clown, he's like, "Are you serious? I trained all this time and I'm running next to a clown. This is like the worst of all." Now here's the deal, right? At a marathon, it really is... Like if you've never been to a race like that, it's really festive. People dress up as all kinds of things because in a marathon where there's really no significant prize, sometimes to win is to finish or to have a good time or to raise money.

So, it's not a big deal. But, how fitting would it be... I believe it's this summer's the next Olympic games in the hundred meter dash, right next to the lane five and all of a sudden one of the athletes comes out dressed as a clown. We would make a conclusion that this person is not taking this privilege and this opportunity seriously, wouldn't we? We would say, "You don't understand. You're squandering an opportunity right now. Clearly your head is not where it needs to be to wear a clown outfit to run in the hundred meter dash."

Well, Paul's point is simply this, we're not running the hundred meter dash. We are running for the glory of Jesus Christ. We're running for the souls of people that will spend forever in heaven or hell. How in the world could it ever be fitting for somebody to look at our life and say they're a bunch of clowns. That they're living without any sense of urgency. So, Paul would have us ask a question and here's the question. Would anybody who observed your life for a week or a month, every part of your life, if somebody had the opportunity to observe you, would they conclude at the end of that time that you believe that you were in a race to glorify Jesus Christ by loving people and sharing the gospel and that you intended to win that race?

This is his point. Run to obtain it. Do you intend to win? Now, when he says only one receives the prize, he's not saying that only one Christian wins the race and make sure it's you and so push everybody out of the way. That's not what he's saying because one of the rules of the Christian race is to help others finish. What he's saying to us is this, live the way champions run. Live the way champions train.

How did champions run and train? Well, they run to the finish. When they're training, they're asking the right questions. They're not just asking questions, they're asking the right questions. They're not asking, "Do I have to train every day? Is it okay if I have three desserts after every lunch and every dinner? Is that in the rules? It's in the rules." No. What are they asking? "What is going to actually bring about peak performance? The lowest possible time, the fastest speed."

Many times, as Christians, this is where we get off base. He says so many of us, we ask the questions, the things of morality. Well, what's wrong with it? I'm freeing Christ. The question, if we want to truly run like a champion is, "Is this going to help me run fast? Who cares if it's in the rule book?" I mean, if it's in the rule book, follow it, right? But, if you can do something in life, it doesn't mean you should do something in life because the Bible doesn't forbid it. Because, the Bible tells us to run fast. Champions, they run light. That's why Hebrews says, "Let us lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

Look at your life and say, "You know what, I could run a marathon with a backpack of bricks but I don't have to. I could live the Christian life with all kinds of encumbrances, but I don't have to." Another thing that champions do, which is really interesting, you wouldn't expect it at first glance, and that is that they train together. Champions don't want to always be the best. They want to be pushed. I mean, I could run against a bunch of one-year-olds and feel great at the end of every single day, but I wouldn't get any faster.

So, champions what they do, whether it's swimming or boxing or running or whatever it is they do, they find the best people who are doing the same thing. Those people help each other and push each other. And so it is with a Christian. Hebrews chapter 12 says, "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." You see, Christians train together, they pray together, they sing together, they push each other, they carry each other, and they remind each other something really important, and that is that Jesus Christ already ran for us.

What I hope that you see before I get to the application is this, is that all these things are your guardrails. To have people around us is a guardrail for our margins. To ask the right questions is a guardrail for our margins. So, let me encourage you though, with something really important because it's human nature to take something that's a really good thing and to distort it just a little bit. And, if you distort something just a little bit, it can turn into a really bad thing. So let me encourage you to run as those who have been rescued, not as one who is trying to be rescued.

There's a big difference here. You hear the word run with intensity, run with the intent to win. You can look all around the world and you can see all kinds of people who are running a really, really, really hard. Many of them are even running really hard with Jesus in mind. You can find people all around the world who are seeking to run so hard in order to earn favor with God, in order to try to get to the place where God becomes our own.

One of our mission teams that goes down South Costa Rica and there's a beautiful Basilica there. It's called Lady of the Angels and once a year, you can look online, you can see all this, but once a year the inhabitants, they go in order to worship and pray to God for a miracle and to earn favor with God. These pilgrims, they basically come and they travel eight miles. They start at a base of a volcano and then they come to this Basilica. Many people, in order to try to earn favor with God and to make God their own, they'd travel all eight miles on their knees.

You can see a picture right here of a lady who doing this. When you look at this lady, what I hope that you can see when you look at this lady is intent to win. She's not doing this out of hate. Jesus is in her view. Yet, what's so crazy is Jesus already ran and he already crawled and he already bled and he already died for her, but she doesn't know that. You see, Paul's running that he encourages us to do is the running that he talks about in Philippians 3:12. He says, "I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Jesus has died for me. I have trusted him. He's already, I'm in a relationship with him. I have favor with God because he's given me favor."

It's all grace. It starts with God. He comes to us, he runs to us. Our running then, as Christians, is not to get Jesus. It's the overflow of having Jesus and wanting other people to be able to hear about Jesus, so that they can be forgiven of their sin. You know when I look at that... I look at that young lady's face, and I think, "Does she know? Does she know that she doesn't have to walk eight miles on her knees to please God?" And the answer is, "No, she doesn't know", which is why she does it. Which is why Paul is calling us to go tell her.

It's why we have to put up margins in our life, so that we can redirect our time towards things of greatest importance on this earth while we're here. So, I urge you to run out of an overflow of knowing Jesus. If you don't know Jesus, you trust him today. He'll forgive you for all your sin. Admit that you need a savior, believe in him, confess him as Lord, and he will save you from your sin. What I hope that you can see Christians, those of us who love Jesus, who know, who've been made, who's been made right by God, what I hope you can see is this, our intensity is supposed to be absolutely colored with and joy and hope. Oh, we run hard and we work hard and we look like a champion. Yet, we have rest in our heart because Jesus has done all the work. So, let me encourage you to run with the intent to win.

Second, God urges us to run with the end in mind. He tells us to run with the end in mind. In a race, he says, "Only one receives the prize." The point is there is a prize. There is incentive. This is something that humanity has always loved. We've always been able to find an extra gear when somebody puts a prize in front of us. Have you ever noticed that? "You do this, I'll give you a sandwich." "Well, okay. Now I'll do it." Right? "If there's no sandwich, I'm not going to do it." If there is a sandwich, if there's a medal, if there's a reef, if there's something that's there that can be had that I want, then somehow we find a gear that is really motivational to us.

It's an amazing thing. Why don't you to just consider for a moment, Michael Phelps. Michael Phelps, the swimmer, one of the most amazing athletes probably in the history of the world. Fastest swimmer, 23 Olympic gold medals, okay. That's getting it done. You can look online, you can see what he ate for most of those years, 12,000 calories a day. Took hours to just consume that much food. It was just so much food. He had to eat that much, so that he wouldn't shrill up to nothing because he swim between four and six hours a day. Lifted weights like his entire life was bent on something. What was that something? Well, when he was eight years old, he wrote in his journal and this is his journal entry. Look at the very top. This is Michael's goals. I would like to make the Olympics. You see it?

So, a goal that was set in front of him and then even has some times for various things when he was eight years old of goals that were set before him, but he puts something in front of him. He says, "You know what, now that's a prize." Now, here's Paul's point. If an athlete like Michael Phelps can find motivation, crazy motivation for a prize that that athlete even knows is perishable, then imagine the motivation that could be generated in the heart of a Christian who took Jesus serious, when Jesus says, "I will give you an imperishable prize that will last forever, that will never go away, that will never be distorted."

I want to encourage us as a congregation to be a people that every single day we think about a particular day. You say, "What day is that?" It's this day. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one of us may receive what is due for what we have done in the body, whether it's good or evil. I want you to think about that for a second. I know this is something we don't like to think about, because for whatever reason it's scary. But, one day we're going to stand in front of the greatest person, who loved in the greatest ways, and directed all of his greatness and his love towards you. Isn't that amazing?

One day, you're going to stand in front of him and you're going to give an account for everything that you've ever done. There will be nobody there with you. You should think about that day, because when you started thinking about that day, it's sort of like putting the Olympics in front of you. It motivates eating and exercising and swimming. Well, you put that day and you've put the day... Just here's a prize. Jesus Christ looks at you one day and he says, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Can you imagine? What would you do to hear that? Which sin would you stop? What relationships would you build? What investments would you make?

I would encourage you to think about it. He tells us, “Think about it. Think about the imperishable prize and run hard after that prize.” So let me encourage you to consider the return on our investments of time. It’s kind of a wordy way to say it, but I would encourage you to think about the return or the final value of where you’re spending your time, the little investments of time. I want to encourage you with just a few things that you can do, okay? This has helped me. This isn’t biblical, okay? This is just extra, okay? This is just something, you just take it as an old man sharing his thoughts, okay?

The first thing I would encourage you to do is stop making to-do list and make a to-be list. “One day I want to be this.” If you don’t know what that means, this is what you do, okay? Sit down and say, “One day I’m going to be in a casket and people are going to say stuff. What do I want them to say?” Now, you’re not writing their script, right? Just read this. No, that’s not what I mean. No. Write down the kind of person that you would want to become. That if they didn’t see the paper, they would stand up one day and say, “You know what’s true about that person?” And they would actually stumble upon something you wanted to become. For 20 years, this has not changed for me, except a few names.

I said 20 years ago, “I want to love the Lord with all my heart, soul, and mind. I want to love and cherish Tabitha’s as Christ loves his church. I want to love train, just as Caleb and set to live for the glory of Christ. I want to honor and care for my extended family. I want to lead, feed and shepherd Providence for faithfulness and humility. I want to make disciples that make disciples. I want to be a faithful steward of my body, finances, time and friendship.”

See, when you have something like this, and then what I do is every six months I go back in blue ink... Well, I’m not going to read you, and say “Over these next six months, I think I’m going to try to do this, in order to lean towards the things that I want to become.” So, maybe this might be helpful to you. Just make a little list of this is who I want to become. You say, “Well, I’m already old.” This is the first day of the rest of your life, right? So start now.

And then, here’s the second thing. Share it with somebody. Share it with somebody. Say, “I want you to see something.” And then, if you are really bold, this is what you say, “I want to ask you, if you ever see my life moving in directions and paths that would take me away from this, would you please come and tell me? I invite you to come and tell me.” Then, consider just a few other things as it relates to longterm investments, okay? Now, those of you who don’t like notes, this is going to be frustrating to you, okay? Because they’re longer sentences and we’re not going to spend too much time on them, okay? So it’s hard.

First thing, the reward grows when we invest small amounts of time in godly priorities. Okay? If you go to the gym frequently instead of sporadically, if we play with our kids every single day for five minutes, if we save a little bit of money every day, if we spend time with the Lord, a little bit of time every day, if we invest in a neighbor who doesn’t know the Lord just a little bit every day, what happens is over time there’s a cumulative effect that takes place and there’s a bigger reward.

Second, the cost grows when we neglect small amounts of time in godly priorities. What does this mean? It means if I don't go exercise and I get motivated one day and say, "I've not gone in four months, but today I'm going to the gym. I'm going to work out for five hours to make up for all of those times." There's a tremendous amount of costs with very little pay out. We say, "You know, I have not played ball. I have not played catch with my kids, and so today we're going to the park and we're going to throw the ball until our arms fall off." We think that is... No, it's not. Five minutes a day, there's going to be greater payout and things are priority, than if you say, "You know what, I'm going to do at one time." Which is why, spouses who never communicate and try to make it up with one big trip at the end of the year, there's a big problem.

Now it gets to the fourth or the third and it's this, is the crisis grows when we invest small amounts of time and ungodly priorities. In other words, if we take all those little five minute increments and we look at pornography every day for five minutes, there's an enormous crisis. If we lie to our spouse, a little lie every day for 10 years, there's an enormous crisis. So, think about compound interest when it comes to your time and priorities, because there is a reward, there is a cost, and there is a crisis.

So, he urges us to run with the intent to win and with the end in mind. The last thing is he urges us to run with self-control. Self-control, even in a world of all kinds of surprises like unexpected traffic or unexpected sickness or uninspected diagnoses, there is nothing that threatens our margins as much as our inability to control the appetites and desires of our heart.

In other words, when you had a plan and suddenly your heart wanted something different and that heart, it wanted something that was reckless or sinful, more time in your life has been wasted chasing urgent desires in a fallen heart than all the traffic jams that you've sat in combined. Which is why he says every athlete exercises self-control. So what's self-control? We should define this. Self-control is the ability to control urgent desires for the sake of important ones.

So, you may have an important desire. I want to be healthy, be physically healthy. But then it's urgent. I just ate something and I want my third dessert. I have to say, "Am I going to allow urgent desires to supersede important desires?" If so, we throw away our self-control. If we say "No, I want my important desires to reign", and this is how this lives. This is how it works all the time. The heart of people all around the world says something like, even Christians, "You know what, I want to look at pornography or something sensual." He had an important desire to say, "You know what? I don't want to objectify somebody and I don't want to recategorize beauty in my own heart and mind." There's urgent and there's important. A self-controlled person will tell themselves no to urgent desires for important desires.

That's why it's good to go to the store knowing what you want before you find out everything you didn't know existed, right? You show up and there's... "I have important desires. There's important priorities in my life", but all of a sudden they're like, "Hey, I didn't know that existed." Now, all of a sudden I want it. Once I want it, it becomes urgent, and we routinely mistake urgency for importance.

So, let me encourage you. Proverbs 25:28 says that a man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls, which represents a disaster. Able to be attacked. So what does Paul say? He says, “You know what, I’m not going to run aimlessly. I’m not going to box as though I’m boxing the air. No. Instead, I’m going to discipline my body and keep it under control.” So, he compares self-discipline to boxing, where he’s swinging and he’s not just missing and hitting the air. He’s actually connecting. What is he connecting on? He’s connecting on every impulse that his fallen heart would ask for, that would disqualify his witness and shame his Lord.

Let me encourage you to devote your first few moments of the day yielding yourself to Christ, because self-control is a fruit of the Holy spirit, and the fruit of the Holy spirit is born when we’re yielded to Christ. Let me encourage you to say no to yourself. Maybe even just for practice, just to build up the stamina of saying no to yourself, so that when something of significance comes is that you have a little bit of track record of saying no to yourself when it matters. Let me encourage you to make decisions in advance. Making decisions in advance is such an aspect of self-control that we struggle with so much.

Let me just give you an example of this, okay? I’m not done it perfectly, but this is an effort. I’ve found over time that I’m so much better and more helpful to people if I’ve spent time with Jesus first. A lot of people, they can meet and when they want to meet, when they can meet is before work. So, that makes an early meeting. If I am better with people when I spend time with Jesus and somebody wants to meet at 6:30 in the morning before they have to go to work, sometimes it’s the best thing for me to do, and so I do. I like to get up early. But, what I have to do, is I have to make an advance decision. What that means is this, if someone says 6:30, I have to not just say, “You know what, I’m not doing anything at 6:30.”

What do I have to do? I have to back up and say, “Well, if I need to spend time with Jesus to be any good in that moment, then what time do I need to wake up?” And if I have to wake up at that time, what am I doing the night before? Have we already made a commitment the night before, that’s actually going to keep me up later to where I’ll be not only exhausted and have no time with the Lord and have no feeling of the Holy spirit when I spend time with this person anyway. It’s going to be a waste of their time and mine. So, we have to think holistically and make decisions in advance about how we’re going to take care of our time.

Let me encourage you to deny yourself for a mission that is worth your life. The only kind of life that is worth your precious, limited days is a life following Jesus. Jesus looked at us and said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself. Take up his cross and follow me.” Friends, if you’ve never trusted Christ, I want you to know that he died on a cross for you. He was put in a grave and he rose from the dead and you can trust him today. Put your faith in him today, his accomplishments. Repent of thinking you can save yourself and he will forgive you of all of your sin. He’ll come into your life and he’ll begin to rearrange things and prioritize things and give you clarity of how to live your life.

I urge you today, this morning, to trust Christ. Many of us have, and I want you to know for those who have that, I believe with all of my heart, that standing with Christ is going to grow more difficult in time. Which is why our next study, starting next week, we're going to study the book of Jude. The book of Jude is the every single day in our culture. It's drawing less sympathetic to truths that we hold dear. Truths like one God, one authority, one savior, one gospel, one name above all. These we hold dear, and these our culture holds in contempt. I want you to know, unless we, the people of God learn self-denial, we will surely drift away from the path of Christian truth, Christian purity and missionary obedience. We won't do it until we can tell ourselves no.

Friends, this is the first day of the rest of your life. So, I urge you, whether you have 75 days left or 75 years left, to number all of them. To seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, to seek to understand his will, to learn to control yourself and to run like a champion.

So, let me pray. Father, I pray that you would help us run like someone intending to win. Would you help us to see the imperishable prize before us and run with great endurance and energy? Would you help us to put to death the urgent desires of our life that would compromise our own witness and would shame our King Jesus? I pray now that as we sing to you, that you will be pleased. As we give to you, that you would take these gifts, these resources, and that you would use them in such a remarkable way to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. We pray for the day when you'll fill the whole earth with the knowledge of your glory, and we pray first that you will fill a harp. So, we sing to you now with joy. We pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen.



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