

## *"Something for Jesus"*

### *1 Corinthians 9.19-27*

INTRO:

When we arrive here in **1 Corinthians 9**, we need to remember Paul was answering the questions the Corinthians asked about meats offered to idols. Those who thought themselves spiritually superior claimed the "right" to eat meats offered to idols in the pagan temples. Because of this thought, the Apostle wrote about what rights he had and was willing to lay aside for the gospel's sake. He said to these Corinthians that they needed to be willing to surrender their rights for the good of their brothers and sisters in the Lord.

To illustrate how he gives his rights back to God, the Apostle Paul argued for the rights he enjoyed as an Apostle. After he established beyond question he had these right, he wrote in **verse 15**,

***"But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void."***

Paul said, I willingly gave up my "rights." Why? First, because God has put me in the ministry and I would do the ministry for Him for nothing. While we stopped there last time we were in this text, He did highlight two other reasons why he willing gave away his rights.

***I. I Want to Be Used of God in Reaching People with the Gospel (v. 19-23)***

***II. I Want to Win the Prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus (v. 24-27)***

***I. I Want To Be Used Of God in Reaching People with the Gospel (v. 19-23)***

A. Paul expresses his point in **verse 19**;

***"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more."***

As far as his rights were concerned Paul was a free man. He was a Roman citizen. If any man had a right to be free from any kind of bondage it was the Apostle Paul.

1. While in a legal sense Paul was no man's slave, yet, in a spiritual sense he was a slave to Christ. He reminded us earlier in this letter. **1 Corinthians 6:19** and **20**;

***"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."***

2. Can you hear these spiritually mature believers responding to Paul? If I don't go to the idol temple and eat because of these weak believers, I am allowing them to be my master and I am their slave. To these folks this illustration is revealing. Paul wrote, ***"I have made myself a slave to all."*** Paul gave his life to serving folks so that they might come to know the Savior who loved him so. Paul's philosophy of ministry was **2 Corinthians 4:5.**

***"For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake."***

B. How did Paul do this? What does this kind of ministry look like? Keep in mind as we look at this example, Paul did not write about doctrinal compromise. Paul offered three illustrations to show what this kind of ministry looks like.

1. ***"To the Jews I became as a Jew, [in order] that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law."***

When dealing with the Jews he became a Jew. He practiced all the Jewish customs and feasts. Paul recognized as a Christian that he was no longer bound by the ceremonies, rituals, and traditions of Judaism. He no longer needed to bring a sacrifice to the temple nor did he need to celebrate the feasts or to follow the customs. Yet, in order to be used of God in the lives of Jews, he willingly submitted to Jewish customs. This is clearly what he did in **Acts 21:23-26.**

***"Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law."***

He was willing to submit himself to Jewish ritual to reach Jewish people with the gospel.

2. (v.21) ***"To those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law."***

To minister to the Gentiles, those without the Law, he was willing to surrender other ***"rights and privileges"*** to reach them. When Paul talked about being without the Law, he was not talking about becoming lawless. He simply meant that he was willing to live and eat with the Gentiles as a Gentile to minister to them. He acted not as being without the Law to God, but under the Law to Christ. All of God's moral laws (i.e. the Ten Commandments) were not set aside by the New Covenant. Paul asserted he did not

live in sin to win the sinner. He was willing to lay down his “rights” as a Jew to minister to the Gentiles. He did not demand the Gentiles become Jews to become saved.

3. Third, he wrote in (v.22),

***“To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some.”***

4. What surrendering of rights would you give up to minister to people for the Lord? We are all too ready to lay down doctrinal differences. However, the issue is personal. Would you give up your comfort to reach out to someone else to try to reach them for Christ? We have folks who surrender their rights to an easy Wednesday evening for Jesus. Some give up an easy Sunday morning so that others can benefit. Would we do that for Christ?

## ***II. I Want to Win the Prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus (v. 24-27)***

A. Now that Paul has given us his short term goal he now opens the lens wider to give us the long view. The word picture changes in **verse 24**.

***“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.”***

We are all in a race. The Corinthian believers were intently interested in sports, specifically the Isthmian Games.

1. Athletes who wished to excel in these games and gain honor from the chief rulers of the city/state had to practice hard and long.

2. Contrary to what many think, God expects us also to expend effort and exercise spiritual discipline if we want to excel in our spiritual race for Him.

B. What does it take to run well?

***(v.25) “And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.”***

It takes self-control. We must watch what we eat, (Bible). We must also exercise and build our spiritual muscles, (fellowshipping, serving, witnessing). Third we have to be in constant communication with our coach (praying). Finally, we need to put out of our lives anything that will slow us down in the race.

***Hebrews 12:1 “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”***

C. Why we do it all. The Apostle Paul gives up his rights in order that he might receive a crown of glory which does not fade away. **(1 Corinthians 9:25)**

***“And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.”***

Why does he want the *stephenos* (crown)? Is it so he can put it in the trophy case of his home in heaven? He wants the wreath because it reflects the fact that he strove his whole life for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

***“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”***  
**(Philippians 3:12–14)**