

07/11/10

## Focusing Our Outreach – 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

- have you ever watched a person text-messaging while driving?...
- I'm not going to ask you if you've ever done that—because I know that no one associated with this church would ever do something that goofy – and certainly not one of your pastors...
- but I'm just asking you – have you ever seen anyone else do that?...
  
- I imagine we would all say “yes” --- then let me ask you this...how did that affect their driving?...did that lack of focus result in diminished driving ability?...
- and the way many people drive around here...it wouldn't appear there's much surplus driving ability to spare, if you know what I mean...
  
- I was out riding my bike early one morning out on these country roads south of where we live...and sometimes I can go for miles without even seeing a car at that time of day...but this particular morning there was a car coming towards me... but it started drifting into my lane...
  - in fact, it wasn't really a drift...it was more like a bee-line...on a perfect angle to run me down...
  - and I thought – the deacons have hired someone to take me out...that wasn't very nice...
  - and so I got as far over on the shoulder as I could...and I'm sorry ladies...but it turned out to be a young woman sending a text message...with no apparent concern for which side of the road she was driving on...
  - and she looked up right at the last moment and swerved over...but I'm thinking, I'm going to be run down right here before breakfast simply because some young woman would rather play on her phone than focus on the task of driving right now...
  
- so we all know what it is like to see a person driving an automobile which has the capability to seriously injure someone yet do it without placing nearly the amount of focus and attention on that task that it deserves...
  
- now, before we start wagging our fingers on that one too vigorously...let me ask you this...is it possible for people like you or me to do that spiritually?...
  - to not be nearly as focused on the task God has for us as we should?...
  - let's study a passage of Scripture that can really help us on that point, shall we?
  - please open your Bible to 1 Corinthians 9...page 134 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
  
- we're doing a series this year entitled **Taking the Next Step...with Joy...**
  - this is a verse by verse exposition of the book of 1 Corinthians...
  - now we're into a section of the book where Paul is answering questions that the Corinthians had previously posed to him...
    - **1 Corinthians 7:1 - Now concerning the things about which you wrote...**
- we don't have the actual list of questions...but as we read the answers, it's not hard to figure out what the Corinthians asked him...
- in chapter seven, it was all about singleness, and various kinds of marital states, and human sexuality...

- then chapter 8 introduced the important subject of Christian liberty – how Christians make decisions about areas that are not specifically spelled out in Scripture in absolute black and white terms...
- and we've mentioned a couple of times now that this is the most extended passage in all of God's Word on this topic...in fact, it actually comprises three chapters --- I Corinthians 8, 9, and 10...and if you bring along Romans 14, you have the bulk of what Scripture says about all of this...
- this morning's verses bring us to the end of chapter 9...so we're a little over halfway through this extended section...
  - let's think our way through what's we studied thus far...
    - chapter 8 was all about the meat offered to idols thing, do you remember?...
    - and the big point was – sure we all have knowledge – mature believers know that the idols aren't anything anyway – so it doesn't matter if meat was offered to an idol before you bought it in the marketplace, or had it at a dinner party...
    - but Paul also says this – knowledge alone puffs up...it makes you proud...
    - but love edifies...love causes you to consider how exercising that particular liberty will impact others spiritually...
    - so sometimes it's best to voluntarily enslave your liberty in order to maximize your ministry...
    - in other words...just because you can, doesn't mean you should...
- last week, we began working through chapter 9...and we saw three very clear waves of argumentation...
  - Paul started by talking about people who were questioning his apostleship...
  - then he gave a whole series of reasons for why churches should compensate their pastors and Christian workers in a generous fashion...
- and you read that and then scratch your head and ask---what does any of that have to do with Christian liberty?...
  - then the answer to that becomes very apparent in verse 15... **1 Corinthians 9:15 - But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one.**
  - in other words, Paul says – sure, I had the freedom [in fact, the right] to be paid by the church for my work...but I told myself “no”...I voluntarily enslaved that liberty in order to maximize my ministry...
  - and the way that fits into the whole apostleship question is – people were actually accusing Paul of not truly being an apostle because he wouldn't accept a salary...and we put that under the heading of...no good deed goes unpunished, sometimes even inside the church of Jesus Christ...
- and the take away for all of us was – look for opportunities to tell yourself “no”...or to rejoice when God tells you/us “no”...
  - just because we have the freedom to do something does not mean it's always best to exercise that freedom in each and every situation...
- now you might say – PV, I'm still intrigued by Paul's unwillingness to accept a salary...what was behind that refusal?...
  - well, Paul possessed something that the young woman who almost ran me down with her car apparently did not...it was the issue of focus...that's why this morning we're going to talk about the matter of **Focusing Your Outreach**...that emphasis will become more apparent as we read our text...**read 1 Cor. 9:15-27**

- so we're talking about Focusing your outreach, and with the time we have remaining, let's look for **3 characteristics of a person who uses freedom effectively.**
- it involves your heart, and your actions, and your goal...let's consider them in that order...

### I. The Heart of an Effective Witness – 15-18

- this part of the discussion actually began to come up last week...
- because Paul made some very strong statements about this whole "I don't want to accept a salary issue..."
- and you could summarize all of that, I think, with the words...he wanted to...

#### A. Wants to rise above the minimums.

- see, some could look at the apostle Paul and say – wow, you accomplished so much for God...
- you have been a wonderful church planter...there are so many young church families because of the work you've done...
- you've sacrificed greatly as a result of the various beatings and imprisonments and shipwrecks...
- at least take a salary – you deserve that in light of all you have done for God...
- and Paul would have said back – that's not the way I see it...
- much of what I've accomplished for God has simply been out of duty or obligation...
- did you notice that emphasis as we were reading in verses 15-18?...

#### 1. 9:16 - For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion...

- in other words, God called Him to this ministry on the road to Damascus (Acts 9)...and provided the training and the skill set necessary to accomplish the task...
- and his point is – if all I did was follow through on the task God called me to---that would have been simply doing the minimum...that's wasn't enough for Paul...

#### 2. 9:17 – I have a stewardship entrusted to me

- see, again – that's what God has done...
- he gave me this ministry...if all I'm doing is following through on the stewardship...that's the minimum...
- I don't want to just be doing the minimum for the Lord...
- see, Paul knew the commission Christ gave before he ascended into heaven, captured in places like... **Acts 1:8 - but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.**
- but he saw his part in the accomplishment of that as simply the minimum...doing his duty...
- if you know your Bible, you might be thinking of one of the parables Jesus used to tell...where the punch line was... **Luke 17:10 - So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'**
- some of you may have learned/memorized that in the...**KJV - Luke 17:10 - So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.**

- here's Paul's point – I don't want to just do the minimum...Jesus Christ means much more to me than that...so, he was...

### **B. Is looking for special reasons to rejoice in Christ.**

**- 1 Corinthians 9:16 - For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.**

- and I mentioned last week that that word "boast" can trip us up – I understand that...but that word is crucial to understanding Paul's argument here...
- the reason Paul was unwilling to take a salary was that he wanted to rise above the minimum...he wanted to have special reason to rejoice...
  - look at the transformation Christ is making in my life...I don't have to always have my way anymore...
  - and look at the joy Jesus is giving me as I seek to serve Him in a wholehearted fashion...
- you could say it this way – some Christian servants are like a child cleaning his room, some Christian servants are like an adult...
- what do we mean by that?...
- when you send a child into his room and say – pick up your toys, Johnny...what does he often do...the bare minimum...
  - so you walk in later and there's this whole stack of clothes right next to where the toys were...
  - and you say to Johnny – why didn't you pick up your clothes while you were at it?...because you said toys...
  - and right next to the clothes is a stack of books...so you say, but what about the books, you play with the books...
    - that's true mom, but technically, books are not toys...I can demonstrate that to you if you would like to goggle the definitions...
  - OK, what about this basketball and tennis racket...well, those are sporting goods...my instructions were to pick up the toys...and I did what I was told...
- see, that's the way a child thinks...
- but not with an adult...hopefully...it's not the bare minimum, it's everything that needs to be done...
- in fact, here's one of the signs that your child is growing up...you say on the way out the door – if you could pick up a little while we're gone, that would really help...and you come back, and they've put the dishes in the dishwasher, and they've run the vacuum, and dusted, and put a load of laundry in the machine, and maybe cleaned a bathroom or two, and given the dog a bath...
  - that's maturity...it some cases, that's a miracle...
  - but see, that's the heart of an effective witness...
  - not, what's the least amount of freedom I have to enslave in order to get by...
- [develop – the way people served at VBS, or at the community picnic...go way beyond the minimum...because ministry is a matter of the heart for them...]
- [if time – ask some applicational questions...]

- now, what does a person who has that kind of heart do?...that's answered in verses 19-23...

### **II. The Action of an Effective Witness – 19-23**

- do you see what this kind of heart results in?...

## A. Enslaves freedoms.

- now, when you think about it – those words really don't go together very well, do they?...
- why would you, and how would you, enslave a freedom?...
- it's like one of the major over at Purdue in urban forestry...what?...it's either in the city, or its in the forest, but how could it be both?
- or jumbo shrimp---are they big shrimp or little jumbos...how could they be both?...
- or non-inflammable...I know what flammable means (it burns easily)...I know what inflammable means (it doesn't burn easily)...but what does non-inflammable mean?...why do we need that word?...
  
- But, if you're going to be a person who is focused on accomplishing God's plan in a focused way...you have to learn this...you have to enslave your freedoms...
- what I'd especially like you to see right now is that Paul uses some very strong terminology at this point in the text...
- I'm talking about this phrase – **I have made myself a slave...edoulosa emauton...**
  - we don't like throwing Greek words around just to throw them around...
  - **edoulosa – doulos – slave**
  - edoulosa is the verb form of that word..."I make a slave"...
  - and again, it is a very strong word, and the Corinthians would have been very familiar with it
  - **Acts 7:6 - But God spoke to this effect, that his descendants would be aliens in a foreign land, and that they would be enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years.**
    - can you find doulos? -- enslaved...here's another one...
  - **Titus 2:3 - Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good,**
    - the point is – addictions feel like slavery...
  
- the second word – **emauton** – just adds intensity to all of this...because it's a **reflexive pronoun** – in other words, Paul isn't saying – somebody did this to me...no, he's saying – I did this to myself...
  
- and see, that's how you can tell if a person really appreciates the freedoms he's been given in Christ...watch how he exercises them...
- **1 Peter 2:16 - Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.**
- many of you read the advance copy of my book which is coming out in a couple of months because I had a rather extensive reader advisory committee...
- in you were part of that, you know I wrote about one of the guys who worked for me in the pool business named Moo Moo 9may need to back up and explain the pool business...]
  - Moo Moo grew up in a very little house in Gary on a run-down street...he lived with his dad—I never met his mom or knew what happened to her...
  - but he grew up in poverty or very close to it...
  - then when we got into the pool business, all of a sudden we were dealing with thousands of dollars at a time...and because we had to make a lot of money quickly in order to get back to Bible college and continue studying for the ministry...I had to trust him at certain points in the job while I was out getting set up for the next one...

- what that meant was – he had incredible amounts of freedom – it had to be that way...freedom from direct supervision...freedom to make all sorts of finance decisions...
- but what I loved about him was – he didn't abuse it...
- I knew when I came back, dirt would be flying, because Moo Moo and whoever I left there didn't have to be supervised---he used that freedom to work even harder...
- when it came time to ordering concrete (he was my concrete guy), he would try to never over-order (even though under-ordering could cause quite a problem), even though saving money on materials helped me financially, not him...
- so here's a guy who never had any money in his life, now having the freedom to spend incredible amounts of money...but he's doing it responsibly...he's enslaving the liberty and became a very valuable part of my team...
- that's edouosa emauton – he was voluntarily enslaving himself...
  
- do you have that kind of focus as a follower of Christ?...I've made myself a slave...I don't always have to have my way...if enslaving a freedom helps me accomplish my mission for Christ, then bring it on...
- [could apply to nursery workers, or SS teachers, youth workers...]
  
- now what about the rest of the argument of that section...to the Jews, I became as a Jew...to those who are without the law, I became as one without the law...
- is Paul saying – he was a chameleon – he just did whatever others wanted him to do, or said whatever had to be said to secure the sale...no, but did...

#### **B. Practices balanced adaptability.**

- in other words...I will do whatever is necessary to accomplish the mission, as long as it's not sinful...
- I'll go as far as I can to win someone, instead of expecting them to come to me...
  
- and that can look like all sorts of things...

1. In the way you dress – both ways – develop, ministering in very legalistic cultures – that's not the time to wear my brightest tie...
  - in other settings where people would not have nice clothes – that might be a time for jeans whether that's my preference or not...
  
2. Same is true music – it doesn't have to be my way...[develop]...
  
3. cf. going to a neighborhood cookout, or family member party – all the activities might not be to your liking (some people might be drinking a beer...they might be playing music, or using language you don't like)...
  - develop – but I don't want my kids around that...teach your kids to be evangelists, not legalists...

- now, we've ignored a big word in this text on purpose, but it's what ties all of this together...it's the word "win"...see, that's...

#### **III. The Goal of an Effective Witness**

- see, what is "the focus"?
- the answer is – the possibility of seeing another person come to Christ...winning them to Christ...

- 1 Corinthians 9:19 - For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.
  - 1 Corinthians 9:20 - To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law;
  - 1 Corinthians 9:21 - to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law.
  - 1 Corinthians 9:22 - To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.
  - 1 Corinthians 9:24 - Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.
- that's why **The mission of Faith Baptist Church is to glorify God by winning people to Jesus Christ and equipping them to be more faithful disciples.**
- and I would just ask every person here – Is that your focus?...or are you sending text-messages when you're supposed to be driving? (develop the whole issue of majoring on the minors...).
- here's a few "for examples..."
1. Community Picnic – did you make decisions about that event on the basis of what you wanted to do, or on the basis of what put you in the best position to winning others...[not wrong to miss – but wrong to not care about winning others]...
  2. VBS – did you invite, consider serving, pray
  3. Summer activities – looking for opportunities to win
  4. Fall readiness
  5. Possible capital campaign

## A. Run to win

- v. 24 – **Run in such a way that you may win**

- 1. Not, run to earn your salvation**
- 2. Not, run against other believers**
- 3. But instead, run to succeed spiritually**

- in other words – we ought not to run to come in second, to barely get there...we ought to run to win...

- so, what does that look like in this context?...

1. Here's evidence of how I enslaved my liberties in order to maximize my ministry
2. Here are clear examples of how. when I sought to tell someone about Christ
3. Here's someone who trusted Christ, was baptized, and is a faithful member of a church today because God used me to draw that person to Christ

## B. Run with self-control

- **1 Corinthians 9:25 - Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.**

- **competes – agonizomai – agony**

- and think about the reward -- for them, it was a wreath of pine or celery...would perish in a few days...

- for us – the joy of hearing our Savior say...well done...(cf. chap 3)

### **C. Run with purpose**

- **1 Corinthians 9:26 - Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air;**

- there's some question about whether Paul is talking about shadowboxing, or just throwing wild punches...

- but the point is the same – there's no purpose...

### **D. Run with self-discipline**

**1 Corinthians 9:27 - but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.**

- so many of the Christian liberty issues deal with some aspect of the body – we should never let our insistence on flaunting our liberties with our bodies put us in a position that we might lose an opportunity to draw someone else to Christ