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Getting Your Way – 1 Corinthians 9:1-18

- have you ever been around a person who has to have everything their way?...
 - it has to be their radio station...turned up at their desired volume?...
 - you have to eat at their restaurant, or you're going to have a fight on your hands?...
 - you have to say it the way they want it said...you have to do it the way they want it done...
 - you know the kind of person I'm talking about...They just have to have everything their way...

- now, let's push it a bit further...
 - are you that kind of a person?...
 - when's the last time you heard the word "no"...and how did you respond?...
 - when's the last time you didn't get your way...and did the people around you have to pay a price?...
 - would the people in your life rather just give in to you (or walk on eggshells around you)—than put up with your moods, or your tantrums, or your vengeance?...

- let's go one more step...what does that have to do with the topic of liberty...or freedom?...
 - today we're celebrating the independence of our country...
 - there will be a lot of talk about freedom, and rightly so...
 - and that's a major Bible theme as well...

- Introduction – There is great freedom in Jesus Christ in several different ways

1. We are freed from the power and penalty of sin.

- **John 8:32 - and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.**
- if that's all the Scripture said about this topic—that would be plenty of reason to celebrate, today and everyday...

2. We are free from the law.

- **Galatians 5:1 - It was for freedom that Christ set us free...**
- in that context, Paul was speaking about the details and dictates of the OT law...
- and Paul says – thank the Lord, because of the finished work of Christ on the cross...we are freed from all of that...

- in fact, he went on to say...**Gal. 5:1 - ...therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.**

3. We are also freed from the blindness that plagues unsaved man.

- **2 Corinthians 3:17 - Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.**
- the previous verses in that context speak about the veil that darkens the minds and hearts of those who do not yet know the Lord...
- and we can all remember what that was that like...but now, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty...

- so there is no question about the fact that we have great freedom in Jesus Christ...and that includes the truth that God does not treat us like robots...and He does not want us to function like little clones of one another...
- and we know that in part because of what we studied last week if you were here from 1 Cor. 8...there's such a thing as Christian liberty – God has not spelled out every aspect of His will in absolute black and white terms...
 - there are buoys, or parameters,
 - but there is often a rather wide berth within to travel...to make decisions...
 - so all of that falls under the heading of Christian liberty...making decisions about matters that are not specifically addressed in Scripture in black/white terms...
- well, how does all we've put on the table thus far fit together?...
 - here's the answer...sometimes (perhaps many times), you maximize your ministry by enslaving your liberty...
 - in other words, by choosing not to have to have it your way, even if you have the freedom to do so...
 - with that in mind, please open your Bible to 1 Corinthians chapter 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...
 - and there's some tremendous truth in that chapter that has provided guidance for God's people for centuries...
- then the topic completely changes in chapter 8...because now Paul starts talking about Christian liberty...about how to make decisions in areas where the Bible does not explicitly speak...
- and if you were here last week...you know we explained that this is actually the most extended passage in all of God's Word on this topic...in fact, it actually comprises three chapters --- 1 Corinthians 8, 9, and 10...
 - now when we start reading this morning you might be tempted to say – you know, I think PV got this one wrong – this doesn't seem to be about Christian liberty...
 - I would encourage you not to speak too quickly on that one...that comment should make more sense in a minute...
 - because it will become very apparent that this really is one big package – 3 chapters on the same subject...and if you add Romans 14 to the mix, you have the primary biblical truth necessary to make decisions about matters related to Christian liberty...
- This morning we're talking about **Not Always Getting Your Way**.
 - let's see if we can find that theme in our passage...
 - read 1 Corinthians 9:1-18
- with the time we have remaining, let's look for **3 steps to being happy about not getting your way**.

I. Understand the Context of 1 Corinthians 9.

- I realize as I was reading this, you might have said – how does this all fit together, and how does it relate to what we studied last week in 1 Corinthians 8?
- it really is a tight package once you understand the context...the first 2 verses allude to...

A. People questioning Paul's apostleship – vv. 1-2.

- I realize that you might say – we didn't even get into the second part of verse 1 before the text seemed to steer away from the topic of Christian liberty...
- that's really not the case, but let's take this step by step...
- as hard as it is for us to consider in our day and age...in the early church there was a steady stream of people who questioned whether Paul was really an apostle...
- that's why we would have these questions at the early part of the chapter...
- **1 Corinthians 9:1 - ...Am I not an apostle?**
- **1 Corinthians 9:2 - If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.**

- now you might say – why in the world would people think that Paul wasn't an apostle?...
- there's actually several different reasons for that in other places in Scripture...
- but there's a very clear reason here...would you like to know what it is?...
- I can't say yet...because that would be getting ahead of ourselves...
- but here's all we need to remember right now...part of the overall context of 1 Corinthians 9 is people questioning Paul's apostleship for a yet-to-be determined reason...

- now, the next part of the context is a bit more extensive...because in verses 3-14, Paul talks about...

B. Reasons churches should generously compensate their Christian servants – vv. 3-14.

- now, you might say—what does that have to do with Christian liberty...and what could it possibly have to do with people questioning Paul's apostleship...and what could it possibly have to do with me today?...just trust me – all of this really does fit together in a very important package...
- but let's walk through these reasons...
- before I do that, I probably need to say this – on behalf of all of our pastors and staff members, we are very thankful for the way the church treats us financially...
- our church takes these verses seriously...
- short of an unusual act of God, there is absolutely no reason for our family to have any financial pressure, unless we just made bad decisions...and I recognize that as a great gift...
- [if time, develop discussion we often have with deacons around budget time – would happily work for less if necessary...]

1. Christian servants deserve to eat and drink

- **1 Corinthians 9:4 - Do we not have a right to eat and drink?**
- just like anyone else who is employed somewhere believing they should make enough to put food on the table...Paul says – people in ministry have that right as well...
- and I might not normally use the word "right," except that that is the word used in the text...

2. Christian servants deserve to support their families.

- **1 Corinthians 9:5 - Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?**
- a person should not have to choose between being in the ministry, or being married and having children...
- and the salary should cover the reasonable expenses associated with a family...
- a pastor called me not too long ago and said that he was being considered for a pastoral position at another church...and while he was candidating, the question came up about health insurance... and one of the men of the church said – we don't provide health insurance for our pastor and his family...we believe he ought to live by faith...
- and this prospective pastor was asking me what I thought about that...
- my answer to that man would have been – well, are you and your family living by faith too?...or is that just something the pastor is supposed to do?... (and by the way, I don't think not having health insurance is a great example of faith...it's really an example of foolishness in this culture)...and I don't know what you think about this---but I encouraged the man not to go to that church...If they don't care a lot about your family they don't care about God and His word...

- Paul goes on to explain...

3. Workers in other fields are compensated properly.

a. soldiers

- v. 7a – Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense?

- can you imagine if our government wanted men and women to work in the military without receiving proper pay and benefits?...there would be a public outcry...

b. farmers

- v. 7b – Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it?

- no farmer would put up with that for long...

c. shepherds

- v. 7c – Who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?

- the point is – there ought to be some consistency between the way secular workers are compensated and the way Christian workers are compensated...

4. It is consistent with OT law.

- 1 Corinthians 9:9 - For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING." God is not concerned about oxen, is He?

- that's a quote of Deut. 25:4 – and the expected answer at the end of the verse is – "no"...God's not concerned about oxen...you can't read the verse any other way...
- but you have to balance that with other principles in Scripture...God feeds the birds of the air...
- **Proverbs 12:10 - A righteous man has regard for the life of his animal...**
- but the point is – in comparison to the amount of concern God has for the way Christian servants are compensated...His care for oxen is practically nil...
- if an ox deserves to eat, so does a pastor...

5. It is consistent with the principle of indebtedness.

- **1 Corinthians 9:11 - If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?**

- it's just logical that you should want to financially support resources that benefit you spiritually...

6. Jesus ordained it.

- **1 Corinthians 9:14 - So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.**
- that's a quote of Luke 10:7 – the workman is worthy of his hire...

- now, as important as all of that is – and let's face it – Paul wasn't in a rush to make that argument – it comprised 14 verses of the chapter...but all of that is context...all of it is background...
- and I know I went over that pretty quickly...but what you need to keep in mind is – we've got the issue of Paul's apostleship being questioned on the table, and all these reasons why Christian servants should be generously compensated...
- now if you say – what does that have to do with Christian liberty...and more importantly, what does that have to do with me?...
 - all of that is about to come screaming out in living Technicolor...because now it's time to...

II. Embrace the Point of 1 Corinthians 9.

- **1 Corinthians 9:15 - But I have used none of these things...**

- in other words...

A. Paul chose not to be paid.

- that's how this fits into the subject of Christian liberty...all of these verses were given to explain why he certainly had the freedom to accept a salary – just like a soldier, or a farmer, or a shepherd...
- but just because you have the freedom to do something, doesn't mean it's always best to act on that freedom...
- sometimes it's best to voluntarily enslave your liberty in order to maximize your ministry...
- now, as an aside, you might say – well, then why don't our pastors do that?...why don't they go out and get secular jobs and then work at the church for free...
 - honestly, we wouldn't be opposed to that...
 - as long as the church family was Ok with the fact that we had far fewer hours to devote to ministry here...
 - but our church has decided that we need the full time attention of our pastors and have chosen to pay accordingly...
 - but don't miss the major point – Paul chose to not have it his way...because that was the best way to serve God in that particular situation...
 - and it wasn't only in Corinth that Paul did this...
- **1 Thessalonians 2:9 - For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.**
- **2 Thessalonians 3:8 - nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you;**

- now, you might say – OK, I see how this topic of taking a ministry salary and Christian liberty fit together...but what does this have to do with Paul's apostleship being called into question?...

- the answer is – some people were saying that because Paul would not take a salary from the church even when he had the freedom to do so, that proved that he wasn't a true apostle...
- the principle there is – if you handle your liberties by choosing from time to time to not have to have it your way...don't be surprised if some people criticize you because your approach to life will make no sense to their self-centered existence...
- it fits under the heading of...no good deed goes unpunished...
- now, let's push it further...why?...why didn't he take a salary?...why didn't he always have to have his way when it came to exercising his liberties?...

B. He wanted special reason to rejoice in Christ.

- 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.

- now I realize that in our culture...it is hard for us to get around the word "boast" – we would view that as always being a bad thing...
- in this case, it's clearly not...
- Paul is saying – by not taking a salary even when I have the freedom to do so...I have special reason to rejoice in Christ...and I don't want you to take that privilege away from me...
- now, that's a ton of content...and I fully realize that you might say – this is all well and good, but what in the world does it have to do with me today?...
- a lot, perhaps more than you realize...because here's what I'm called upon to do...to challenge us to...

III. Celebrate the Opportunity We Have to Apply This Principle as a Church Family.

- see, here's the question before the house now...are we, as a church, the kind of people who always have to have our way?...
- our plans always have to work...
- our initiatives always have to be fulfilled?...
- we're Faith Baptist – we always have to get our way...
- is that the way it works?...
- see, sometimes you voluntarily enslave your freedoms---sometimes God does it for you...
- sometimes it's not you saying no – it's Him saying no...
- you say, what are you talking about?...
- I'm talking about what's transpired with our property over at Purdue...please sit back--- what I have to tell you is not particularly good news...but in the providence of God, it is a great learning opportunity...
- most of you know that we had entered into an agreement with Purdue Research Foundation to purchase a couple of lots right across the street from Mackey Arena...
- our goal was to build a student ministry center and biblical counseling center in what we considered to be a very sweet location...
- so we have been working for the past several months with the city officials in West Lafayette to seek preliminary approval for the project...

- they have communicated to us that they are unwilling to allow us to construct that kind of project on that site...
- in other words, God said “no”...at least on that site in that way...
- in fact, last Wednesday was my 50th birthday, and that e-mail was one of the first birthday presents I received...no...from a sovereign God Himself...
- sometimes we tell ourselves no (just like Paul did in this text)---sometimes God answers for us...
- and here’s what I want to suggest to you...that can be good for us for a lot of different reasons...

A. It reminds us that Jesus is the king, not us.

- it was interesting that part of my Bible reading while all of this was unfolding was...
- **Romans 9:20-21 - On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?**
- you know – we’ve gotten our way a lot over the years – it’s healthy for us to get a “no” from time to time...
- it doesn’t always have to be our way...

B. It allows us to continue to focus on our core mission.

- if you’ve been around our church you know that we actually delayed our capital campaign a year for a variety of reasons...but one of them was...because we wanted to put additional effort into the core issues of spiritual growth and discipleship...
- **2 Peter 3:18 - but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.**

C. It allows the Lord to adjust our “dream” if that is His desire.

- you may remember that a very similar thing happened to King David...
- he wanted to build a temple for the Lord...
- and God told him “no”...
- but because that desire to do something for God revealed something very important about David’s heart...God rewarded Him and called Him to something he would have never believed...
- **2 Samuel 7:11-13 - ...The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever...”**

[discuss the status of the capital campaign...]

- bottom line – God is greatly pleased by people who don’t always have to have their way...