

Refusing to Use Your Liberty

Steve Hereford 8/9/20 (c) 2020

1 Corinthians 9:19-27

INTRODUCTION

1. Please take your Bibles this morning and turn with me to the 9th chapter of 1 Corinthians
2. In our last message we looked at the limits of our liberty and today we're going to see why Paul refused to use his liberty
3. We are looking at verses 19-27
4. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-27
5. All Christians are free

6. Free to serve Christ and no longer be enslaved to the flesh
7. But though we enjoy this freedom, it is important that we do not use it to cause other believers to stumble
8. In the first 18 verses Paul talked about how he used his liberty
9. He had a right to be provided for with food and drink (v.4)
10. He had a right to “take along a believing wife” like the rest of the apostles (v.5)
11. He had a right to refrain from supporting himself and let the church provide for his needs (v.6)
12. After all, soldiers, farmers and shepherds are provided for their work
13. And oxen are allowed to eat while they work
14. If this wasn't the case no one would have the hope of their needs being met from their work
15. But Paul said in verses 12 and 15 that “we did not use this right”

16. And now in verses 19-27 he tells us why
17. He says in verse 19 it was so that he “may win more”
18. Paul’s passion was the gospel of Jesus Christ and seeing those he ministered to come to an understanding of it
19. He didn’t want anything in his life to hinder that
20. So if refusing to use his liberty removed that hindrance, that’s what he wanted
21. He said in verse 12 that he endured “all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ”
22. Paul now gives two ways he sought to win the lost to Christ
23. The first...



Through Self Denial (vv.19-23)

A. HE BECAME A SLAVE TO ALL (V.19)

He says, “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.”

“A slave to all” is two words in Greek

(edoulōsa, “I enslave,” and emauton, “myself”). That word for enslavement is very strong. It is used to describe Israel’s 400-year experience in Egypt (Acts 7:6), the marriage bond (1 Cor. 7:15), addiction to wine (Titus 2:3), and the Christian’s new relationship to righteousness (Rom. 6:18).

It was not a small or easy thing that Paul enslaved himself to all. But his Lord had taught that “whoever wishes to be first ... shall be slave of all” (Mark 10:44). (MacArthur, John F., Jr. 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.)

He told the Corinthians in his second letter to them, 2 Corinthians 4:5 (NASB) For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus’ sake.

1. Though he was free from all men He limited his freedom because of his love for all men
2. He deeply believed that “he who is wise wins souls” (Prov.11:30)
3. Therefore he was willing to do anything and to sacrifice anything to win people to Jesus Christ

4. So he modified his habits, preferences, and entire lifestyle if any of those things caused someone to stumble, to be offended, or to be hindered from faith in Jesus Christ

5. He was motivated by love

1. He loved both believers and unbelievers

2. That's why he sacrificed so much

3. He said in 1 Corinthians 8:13 (NASB) Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.

4. In 1 Corinthians 13:5 he said that love "does not seek its own"

5. And in Romans 14:15 (NASB) For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.

6. In Romans 14:21 (NASB) It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles.

B. HE BECAME A JEW TO THE JEWS (V.20)

He said in verse 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.”

Jewish missionary practice was aware of the place of accommodation, service, and humility in its methods (Daube, pp. 336–51) (Barrett, C. K. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. London: Continuum, 1968. Print. *Black’s New Testament Commentary*.)

1. He would be as Jewish as necessary when working with the Jews
2. Though he was no longer bound to the ceremonies, rituals, and traditions of Judaism, he used them if it opened a door for witnessing to Jews
3. He always went to the Jews first with the gospel
 1. Acts 13:46 (NASB) Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

2. Acts 17:1-3 (NASB) 1 Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."
4. When Paul wanted to take Timothy with him in his ministry he had him circumcised, "because of the Jews who were in those parts" where he intended to go (Acts 16:3).
5. Timothy's circumcision was of no benefit to him and certainly not to Paul
6. But it could be of great benefit to their ministry among Jews and was a small price for the prospect of winning some of them to the Lord (MacArthur, John F., Jr. 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.)
7. Because of Paul's relationship to Christ, he was no longer under the law but the Jews were
8. So he would act as under the law in order to work with the Jews

9. His “hearts desire and...prayer to God for them [was] their salvation” (Rom.10:1)
10. You hear his passion and love for Jews in Romans 9:3-5 (NASB) For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

C. HE BECAME A GENTILE TO THE GENTILES (V.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. He was willing to live like a Gentile when working among the Gentiles
 1. He ate what they ate
 2. He went where they went

3. He dressed as they dressed

4. He observed their customs

5. He even changed his name to a Greek name, Paul (Acts 13:9)

2. He never ignored God's moral law

3. He taught the Gentiles that "love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom.13:8, 10)

4. To believers who are "under the law of Christ," he constantly taught that they are obligated to Jesus Christ

1. Colossians 2:6-7 (NASB) Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

5. His point was the same as with the Jews, to "win more" (v.19)

D. HE BECAME WEAK TO THE WEAK (V.22A)

"To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak"

1. He was willing to identify with those, whether Jews or Gentiles, who did not have the power of understanding to grasp the gospel
2. He stooped to the level of their weakness of comprehension
3. To those who needed simple or repeated presentations, that's what he gave them
4. His purpose was to win them to salvation

E. HE BECAME ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN (V.22B)

“I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some”

1. He did not compromise the gospel
2. He would not change the least truth in the least way in order to satisfy anyone
3. But he would condescend in any way for anyone if that would in any way help bring him to Christ
4. He would never set aside a truth of the gospel, but he would gladly restrict his liberty in the gospel

5. He would not offend Jew, Gentile, or those weak in understanding (MacArthur, John F., Jr. 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary)

The second way Paul sought to win more to Christ was...

2 Through Self Control (vv.24-27)

A. THE EXAMPLE OF RUNNING IN A RACE (V.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.”

There are two facts about all races:

1. All racers run
2. But one one receives the prize

Paul’s goal was to run to win!

To win people to Christ, not only did he become a slave to all but he had to exercise the same self control that runners do.

If you ever ran in a race, you know you have to prepare for it.

You have to have the right shoes, comfortable clothes, drink a lot of water, eat right and get plenty of sleep

Paul describes what he did but first mentions the “games” the Corinthians were familiar with

B. THE EXAMPLE OF THE GAMES (V.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.”

There were two types of athletic festivals:

1. The olympic games
2. The Isthmian games
 1. The Isthmian games were held at Corinth and were therefore intimately familiar to those to whom Paul was writing
 2. Contestants in the games had to prove rigorous training for ten months

3. The last month was spent at Corinth, with supervised daily workouts in the gymnasium and athletic fields. (MacArthur, John F., Jr. 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.)

C. THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL (VV.26-27)

“Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 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.”

1. Paul was focused

2. He disciplined his body to make it his slave

1. Buffet (hupōpiazō) literally means to hit under the eye. He figuratively would give his body a black eye, knock it out if necessary. Make it my slave (doulagōgeō) is from the same root as “made ... a slave” in verse 19. Paul put his body into subjection, into slavery to his mission of winning souls for Christ. (MacArthur, John F., Jr. 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.)

3. He practiced what he preached which is why he could say “imitate me as I imitate Christ.”

4. He did not want to become disqualified

1. Here is another metaphor from the Isthmian games. A contestant who failed to meet the training requirements was disqualified. He could not even run, much less win. Paul did not want to spend his life preaching the requirements to others and then be disqualified for not meeting the requirements himself. (MacArthur, John F., Jr. 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.)

QUOTE

A great difference between those races and the Christian “race” is that every Christian who will pay the price of careful training can win. We do not compete against each other but against the obstacles—practical, physical, and spiritual—that would hinder us. In a sense, every Christian runs his own race, enabling each one of us to be a winner in winning souls to Christ. Paul therefore

counsels all believers to run in such a way that you may win, by setting aside anything that might hinder the reception of the gospel.

Holding tightly to liberties and rights is a sure way to lose the race of soul-winning. Many of the Corinthian Christians seriously limited their testimony because they would not limit their liberty. They refused to give up their rights, and in so doing they won few and offended many.

If the Olympic and Isthmian athletes exercised such great discipline and self-control in all things, why cannot Christians, Paul asks. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

John MacArthur, 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.

The apostle animates the Corinthians by his own example, telling them that he ran so as he exhorted them; he ran with cheerfulness and swiftness in the way marked out for him, looking to Jesus; continuing steadfast in the profession of his faith, and discharge of his duty as a Christian, and in preaching the Gospel as a minister; and nothing had he more at heart, than to finish his course with joy.

John Gill, An Exposition of the New Testament. Vol. 2.
London: Mathews and Leigh, 1809. Print. The Baptist
Commentary Series.

APPLICATION

1. Are you make the necessary sacrifices to win people to Christ?
2. Some Christians don't witness because they're afraid
3. Others don't because they're lazy

4. They're not willing to bring their body in subjection to win others to Christ

5. Most people, including many Christians, are instead slaves to their bodies. Their bodies tell their minds what to do. Their bodies decide when to eat, what to eat, how much to eat, when to sleep and get up, and so on. An athlete cannot allow that. He follows the training rules, not his body. He runs when he would rather be resting, he eats a balanced meal when he would rather have a chocolate sundae, he goes to bed when he would rather stay up, and he gets up early to train when he would rather stay in bed. An athlete leads his body; he does not follow it. It is his slave, not the other way around. (MacArthur, John F., Jr. 1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.)

6. What about you?

7. Are you afraid, lazy or disobedient?

8. Charles Spurgeon said, "Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter."

9. Are you a missionary or an imposter?

10. If you're an imposter, you need to surrender your heart to Jesus.
11. You decide as we pray.
12. Let's pray.