"For the GOSPEL's Sake"

I Corinthians 9:1-27

7-30-2023

Introduction:

***What are you willing to sacrifice for the sake of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ?**

Let the Apostle Paul's example challenge you to surrender whatever it takes so that you will be more effective in giving your life for world evangelism!

I. Paul chose to remain <u>single</u>
so that he would not be hindered by marital obligations (v.5)

II. Paul chose to <u>minister</u> without <u>pay</u>
so that he would not be misjudged as a money-hungry evangelist (v.6-18)

III. Paul chose to <u>adjust</u> his <u>methodologies</u>
so that he would reach more people, without compromising his message or Biblical convictions (v.19-23)

IV. Paul chose to <u>discipline</u> his <u>life</u>
so that he would remain usable to Christ (v.24-27)

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Introduction:

Spreading the Gospel was Paul's life. When he woke up in the morning, he had one consuming thought: "How can I reach souls for Christ?" During his day: "How can I make contacts and build bridges into people's lives so that they might hear the Gospel and be saved? At night he did most of his discipleship as he taught from house to house, spreading the Gospel (Acts 20:20).

The word "Gospel" (good news) occurs seven times in this chapter.

Having answered the Corinthians question about the eating of meat offered to idols, Paul in chapter 9 gives himself as an example of one who did not abuse his Christian liberty (selfishly) but rather used it most effectively so as to reach as many people as possible with the Gospel of Christ (Note: One can only use himself as an example if he "practices what he preaches"!)

Note the theme of this chapter:

V. 12 - *"...[we] suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ."*

V. 18 - "*...when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge."*

V. 23 - *"And this I do for the Gospel's sake..."*

In Paul, we find an example of an unselfish, dedicated, flexible man, who was willing to adjust his lifestyle, techniques, and methodologies all so that he could reach others for Christ.

V. 1

"Am I not an Apostle" - Some questioned Paul's apostleship (perhaps because of his humble appearance, or his mediocre speaking ability, or his refusal to accept a large salary for his ministry - cf. II Cor. 11:7-12).

However, he was an official Apostle ("sent-one"), commissioned by Jesus Christ Himself, specially chosen to go to the Gentiles with the Gospel (Acts 9:15 - *"But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.")*.

One mark of an apostle was that he be an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:21-22) (Paul saw Him and heard Him in Acts 9; cp. II Cor. 12).

Other marks of an apostle include:

--Ability to perform signs and wonders (II Cor. 12:12; cp. Heb. 2:3-4)

--Commissioned directly by Christ (Lk. 6:13; Acts 9)

--Reception of direct revelation (II Cor. 12:7)

--They laid the foundation for the Church (Eph. 2:20; I Cor. 3:10)

--They preached with the power of God (Acts; I Cor. 9:2)

"Am I not free?" - Not a slave to anyone, but a free man. Free socially and spiritually. Able to come and go as he pleased; able to utilize his liberty any way he chose.

"Are ye not my work in the Lord?" - i.e. your salvation is the result of my labor accomplished in Christ's power and wisdom.

This statement shows the paradoxical interplay between human agency and divine energy in the salvation of sinners. God employs human instruments to bring lost souls to Himself.

V. 2

"seal" - a stamp of authentication.

Although some others did not view Paul as a bonified apostle, the Corinthians had no reason not to. You, says Paul, are living proof of my apostolic power and authority. A false apostle could not lead anyone to a saving knowledge of Christ.

V. 3

Paul's answer (defense) to those who sit in judgment on him is giving by means of a series of questions which he rhetorically asks (v. 4-13).

V. 4

Although Paul had the power (right) to eat and drink anything he wanted, he would suspend this right in cases where his actions might mislead a weaker believer (ex: meat offered to idols - chapter 8).

The reference to eating and drinking in this chapter may refer to his right to eat or drink what other Christians gave him in compensation for his ministry. (i.e. to eat and drink at the church's expense - Morris, p.132)

***What are you willing to sacrifice for the sake of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ?**

Let the Apostle Paul's example challenge you to surrender whatever it takes so that you will be more effective in giving your life for world evangelism!

I. Paul chose to remain <u>single</u>

so that he would not be hindered by marital obligations (v.5)

V. 5

Paul had the right to marry a believer (*"sister")* just as the other famous apostles; the physical brothers of Jesus (James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas - Mt. 13:55); and Cephas.

"Paul asserts here the right of the apostle, if married, to take his wife with him, the implication being that she, too, would be supported by the church" (Morris, p.133)

Paul relinquished his right to marry because he had the gift of celibacy, not because of clergy celibacy laws, which were never instituted by God.

As he said in chapter 7, he was more free to serve Christ without distraction and the obligations of marriage by being single (v. 7-8, 32, 35).

II. Paul chose to <u>minister</u> without <u>pay</u>
so that he would not be misjudged as a money-hungry evangelist (v.6-18)

"To illustrate the surrender of rights within Christian liberty, Paul chose to talk about one right that all people possess. It is the right to receive wages for work (cp. I Tim. 5:18). By moving into this non-controversial area, Paul was free to explain clearly what he had mentioned earlier (8:9, 13)." (Gromacki, p. 108).

Paul did <u>not</u> reject all financial support (EX: the churches of Macedonia and Philippi, etc. gave to him over and over again). He, knowing he would be falsely accused at Corinth (judged as someone who pedaled the Gospel for money) chose to waive his right to receive a salary from this church.

V. 6

"Have we not power to forbear working?" - Don't we have the authority not to work (a secular job)? Paul and Barnabas had the right to refrain from working (and to be supported by the churches they planted), but they chose to surrender that right and to work as tentmakers (Acts 18:3).

In verses 7-14, Paul gives four illustrations to show how a preacher is worthy of pay, a minister should be renumerated with money, a servant of Christ is deserving of a salary.

1. The <u>Soldier</u> (v. 7a) -

No one goes into the armed services (whether Marines, Army, Navy, or Airforce) at his own expense. He does not buy his own uniform, artillery, ammunition, food, etc.

2. The <u>Farmer</u> (v. 7b) -

No one plants grapes without eating some; no one raises cows or goats without drinking their milk

3. The <u>Ox</u> (v. 9) -

The ox that works the field should be allowed to eat some along the way (Dt. 25:4)

V. 10 - This law had a broader application than merely to benefit animals.

V. 11 - The sowing and reaping principle applies specifically to pastors and people (Gal. 6:6-7).

4. The <u>Old Testament Levitical Priests</u> -

Didn't the Old Testament Levites have a right to eat of the offerings brought to the Temple? (Num. 18:8-24) Couldn't they eat of the animal sacrifices, the shewbread; drink of the wine?

V. 11

I Tim. 5:17- *"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine."*

V. 12

If others benefited from the right to be renumerated for their ministry, certainly the founder of the Corinthian Church had the right to be! But Paul voluntarily chose not to use this right to a paid salary, but rather endured the rigors of a job, so that no one could ever accuse him of preaching for dollars or ministering for money.

V. 14

"The Lord ordained" - Jesus taught: *"The labouror is worthy of his hire"* (Luke 10:7)

Those who proclaim the Gospel (as a living) should get their living from the Gospel.

Those who minister to a Church should be supported by that Church.

Those who are in full-time ministry ought to be on a full-time salary.

For the Brethren denomination to legislate church law which forbids their elders (pastors) from receiving a salary is unscriptural. It is contrary to a principle *"the Lord ordained."*

V. 15

"But I have used none of these things" - Paul did not exercise any of these financial rights at Corinth.

Nor is he writing this chapter that some at Corinth might feel sorry for him and send him a check in the mail!

Paul says, in effect: "I would rather die, than for someone to strip me of my proof that I did not evangelize for denarai or sheckels." or "I would rather be dead than have people point the finger and accuse me of preaching and teaching for filthy lucre"

V. 16

When he realized he was merely the chief of sinners (I Tim. 1:15) saved by God's grace, apart from works, and called into a ministerial office he did not deserve, Paul was aware that he had nothing to brag or boast about.

For Paul, preaching the Gospel was a binding obligation, not an option. A sacred duty, not a sometimes desire. It was a must, not a maybe; a conviction, not a choice.

He was compelled like Jeremiah, who said: *"Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay."* (Jer. 20:9)

Compelled like Elihu, who said: *"For I am full of matter; the spirit within me constraineth me. Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles. I will speak, that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips and answer."* (Job 32:18-20)

Many times in our lives there is no "GO" because there is no "WOE." (We don't realize the seriousness of remaining silent.)

V. 17

Rewards only come to someone who witnesses willingly (not under compulsion from man, but love for Christ).

But even if we don't feel like doing it, we are stewards with a sacred trust and must preach the Gospel even when we don't want to.

V. 18

Paul's reward (in this life) was in the satisfaction of preaching the Gospel without pay. To see sinners saved and to know that his motive was not money.

III. Paul chose to <u>adjust</u> his <u>methodologies</u>
so that he would reach more people, without compromising his message or Biblical convictions (v.19-23)

V. 19

In verses 19-22, the phrase ***"that I might gain"*** occurs five times.

Paul's heart was fixed on gaining souls for Christ.

"Free from all men" - Although Paul did <u>not</u> have to live to suit anyone's customs, cultural practices, or mannerisms, he freely chose to serve them by adapting to their non-moral distinctions so as to win them for Christ.

V. 20

--Paul adapted his lifestyle to the <u>Jew</u> to win them (he would perhaps eat kosher foods, wear a homica on his head, speak the Hebrew which he knew, observe the Sabbath, etc. Observe certain Old Testament Jewish Laws (not with the intent of gaining salvation).

V. 21

--Paul adapted his lifestyle to the <u>Gentile</u> to win them (when in a Gentile's home, Paul did not rise up at the hour of prayer, face Jerusalem and begin praying; he didn't fulfill Old Testament civil and ceremonial laws, which were done away with and fulfilled at the cross. He lived by the Law of Love when in a Gentile's house.

V. 22

--Paul adapted his lifestyle to the weak to win them (the *"weak"* in context would include the one with a weak conscience toward idols [i:9-12]; Paul would not engage in any practice which would violate the conscience of anyone.)

"I am made all things to all men" - This does not involve Biblical compromise on doctrine, dogma, or clearly-defined moral issues.

This does not involve adaptations for fleshly purposes (i.e. "When in Rome do as the Romans do.")

It does involve adjustments in technique, methodology, and custom for the Gospel's sake.

If a person is offended by God's Word, Bible Doctrine, Clearly revealed standards etc. that is their problem. However, if he is offended by our unnecessary attitudes, behavior or practices, its our problem.

Jesus taught that those who go with the Gospel should be as *"wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."*

We need wisdom to adjust our methods without doing damage to the message.

Paul said that we all should *"walk in wisdom toward them that are without* (without Christ and salvation; those outside of the family of believers), *redeeming the time."* (Col. 4:5).

If Paul ministered in Mexico, would he allow a guitar to be used in the service?. . . in Jerusalem - a tambourine? . . . in Africa - a drum? (without the jungle demonic beat)

What does it mean to ***"be all things to all men"***? It means:

1. A willingness to allow for differences (not everyone has to "do Christianity" just like an American; how willing are you to accomodate the differences of others without ignoring or violating God's moral law?)

2. A willingness to bend on non-moral issues (compromise on preferences, never on principles)

3. A willingness to adjust your ways of doing things so that you can conform to the culture you are ministering in, without Biblical compromise (be flexible).

4. A willingness to be open to new methodologies (EX: a lunch sandwiched in between morning and afternoon services) (EX: Cell groups [as long as they do not abandon the corporate gathering]) (EX: Lifestyle Evangelism [as long as your lips give the Gospel])
   Methods change; Bible truth cannot change.

Paul adjusted his ways of doing things so that others might be joint-participants in the gospel (not joint-partakers in his version of dress, style, custom, and culture).

Paul was <u>not</u> a rigid, starchy, wooden, stereo-typed, cloned Christian. Paul in one sense would be against cloned Christianity.

We should be modelling Christ, not a standard American version of a three-piece suit, hair above the ears, black-framed glasses, old-time Fundamentalist.

IV. Paul chose to <u>discipline</u> his <u>life</u>

so that he would remain usable to Christ (v.24-27)

V. 24

In a race, all runners run, but only one ends up the winner.

All of us believers, who are also running a race (Heb. 12:1-2) ought to run so as to obtain the favor of Christ. Not a half-hearted, laxidazical, who cares style of Christianity.

In the Greek Isthmian games (likewise in the Roman Olympics), there could be only one winner, but in the Christian race, there can be many winners.

In the Olympic games, each contestant competed against others; in Christianity, we compete against ourselves (Gromacki).

V. 25-27

To be a winner for the Gospel's sake, we must be:

1) <u>Disciplined</u> (***"temperate"*** *v. 25* - not given to excesses or abuses, but given to strict training) Our Lord deserves more than half-hearted, flabby christian service!

2) <u>Focused</u> (***"not as uncertainly"*** v. 26 - not aimless or without purpose or objective -- Have a goal! Don't be a shadow boxing Christian; get in the ring & do something!)

3) <u>Self-Controlled</u> (***"body...into subjection"*** v. 27 - Paul's body did not control him; rather, he controlled it and subjected it to his spirit and mind. Our spirit should control our mind, and our mind should control our body -- not in reverse order!)

V. 27

"Castaway" - (*adokimos*) - unapproved, disqualified in the race.

The word "castaway" in context does not refer to the loss of salvation, but loss of

service or ministry for Christ. To be rendered unusable, worthless, or "put on a shelf."

Conclusion:

What are you willing to sacrifice for the Gospel? (i.e. that you may share it with others)

Some time? (Are you redeeming it? - Eph. 5:16)

Some sleep? (you can rest in Heaven)

Some energy? (walk door to door)

Some pride? (swallow your pride and witness)

Some money? (to buy tracts; give to missions)

Some TV? (what a preoccupation and time waster)

Some pleasures? (recreations, hobbies, etc.)

Are you willing to do for the truth what the cults are willing to do for a lie?