

1 Corinthians 09 - Paul's Defense of His Apostolic Authority, Refusal of Financial Support; Evangelical Strategy; Run the Race to Gain the Prize

III. Questions asked of Paul (1 Cor 7:1—16:24)

(2) Food sacrificed to the idols (1 Cor 8:1—11:1)

(B) The apostolic defense (9:1-27)

(a) Apostolic identification (9:1-2)

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(c) Apostolic restraint (9:15-18)

(d) Apostolic freedom (9:19-23)

(e) Apostolic exhortation and example (9:24-27)

1 Corinthians 9

(B) The apostolic defense (9:1-27)

This chapter is an elaboration of the principle of 8:13; that one should set aside his rights/privileges for the sake of his brother. Paul illustrates how he sacrificed his rights as an apostle for the sake of the gospel. As a result he was able to not only illustrate the principle, but also defend his apostleship which was doubted by some in Corinth because he did not make full use of apostolic rights.

(a) Apostolic identification (9:1-2)

1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

1 I am free, am I not? I am an apostle, am I not? I have seen Jesus our Lord, haven't I? You are the result of my work in the Lord, aren't you?

1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?

- Paul uses four rhetorical questions to establish his rights as an apostle (all four questions demand an answer in the affirmative)...

— The fact that this chapter does not contain the phrase "Now concerning" [*peri de*] shows that it does not deal with a new subject. This chapter is a continuation of the discussion of eating in idol temples started in 8:1.

— Very few people subject their freedom for the benefit of others, so Paul knew that the Corinthians would benefit from additional instruction on the subject. He used himself as an example of the proper attitude toward one's freedom in Christ.

- "Am I not free?" - Paul enjoyed the liberty that every other believer had; he had liberty and rights just like any other believer

- "...Am I not an apostle?" - he also possessed all the rights and privileges of an apostle because he had "seen Jesus" resurrected (Acts 22:14-15; 26:15-18); see note:

Qualifications of an Apostle in Acts 1:25

— But how could Paul call himself an apostle when he didn't fit the two other criteria given in Acts 1:21-25 (follower of Christ from John the Baptist to the ascension and eyewitness to the ministry of Christ)? The answer is in 1 Cor 15:8-9, where Paul calls himself "the least of the apostles" and "not fit to be called an apostle" because he did not fulfill all of the requirements outlined in Acts 1:22-25.

- "...Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" - the third proof of his apostleship was that Paul saw the risen Christ on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:3-6,17; 22:14; 26:15-18; 1 Cor 15:8)

- "...Are you not my work in the Lord?" - Paul founded the church at Corinth (Cf. Rom 15:15-21); they had responded to his preaching of the gospel by believing it and receiving the Spirit (2:1-5,12; Cf. Gal 3:1-3; Rom 8:9,11)

- Paul's apostolic authority was in under attack by the Corinthians (Cf. 1:1,12; 4:1-5,8-13,14-21; 5:1-2), likely because they had misunderstood his policy of limiting the exercise of his activities to help others (8:13).

— Some of them concluded that because he did not exercise his rights, he did not have them: for example, his right to financial support (Cf. 2 Cor 12:13). He also worked with his hands, which led the Corinthians to assume that he was not an apostle and *lacked* apostolic rights, not that he had chosen to forego them.

— His apparently changing conduct also raised questions about his apostolic authority: he ate marketplace food with Gentiles but not with Jews

2 If I am not an apostle to others, at least I am to you; for you are **theseal** of my apostleship in the Lord.

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.

2 If I am not an apostle to other people, surely I am one to you, for you are the evidence of my apostolic authority from the Lord.

2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

- While others may have had doubts about his apostleship, the Corinthians certainly should not in view of his ministry among them. They were proof he was an apostle.

- "...the seal" - *sphragis*, attestation; confirmation; certification

(b) Apostolic rights (9:3-14)

3 My defense to those who examine me is this:

3 My defense to those who examine me is this:

3 This is my defense to those who would examine me:

3 Mine answer to them that do examine me is this,

- For those who were challenging his practice of foregoing his rights as an apostle, here is Paul's defense:

— Paul's defense consists of six rhetorical questions, each demanding a positive response

4 Do we not have a right to **eat and drink**?

4 Do we not have a right to eat and drink?

4 We have the right to earn our food, don't we?

4 Have we not power to eat and to drink?

- "...eat and drink" - to eat and drink at the expense of others; refers to accepting financial support for his ministry

— He defends his freedom to not exercise his rights in order to not hinder the gospel (v12). According to the Lord's command, a worker deserves his wages (Luke 10:7; 1 Tim 5:18).

The Corinthians who received Paul's teachings were obligated to support him financially.

— When Paul resided in Corinth at the home of Aquila and Priscilla, he plied his tentmaking trade to support himself (Acts 18:2-3). With respect to the preaching of the gospel, Paul unequivocally informed the Corinthians that he offered his services free of charge (v18).

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**?

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?

5 We have the right to take a believing wife with us like the other apostles, the Lord's brothers, and Cephas, don't we?

5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?

- "...take along a believing wife" - literal Greek, "a sister (in the Lord) is a wife." The celibacy of the clergy was unknown to Paul and the other disciples, including Peter (Cephas).

— The churches they served would cover the expenses of these women as well as those of their husbands

— Paul argues that he had the right to travel with a believing wife. In Paul's case, she would've had a rough time: shipwreck, lack of food, clothing, etc. (2 Cor 11:23-28).

- "...even" - *kai*, the ascensive use of *kai* here, correctly translated in the NASB as "even," heightens the force of the argument by giving the example of "the rest of the apostles," "brothers of the Lord," and "Cephas"

— These apostles brought their wives along on ministry trips and their expenses were covered along with their own. Paul says that both he and Sosthenes (Cf. 1:1) also had that right, even though they did not exercise it.

- "...brothers of the Lord" - Jesus' brothers; mentioned by both Matthew (Matt 13:55) and Mark (Mark 6:3): James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas

— These were half-brothers who did not believe until after Jesus' earthly ministry (John 7:5)

- "...Cephas" - the Aramaic name for Peter (John 1:42). This verse destroys the Roman Catholic belief that Peter, as (they believe) the first pope, initiated the celibacy of the priesthood. Peter was clearly married because he was mentioned here.

— More evidence that Peter was married is that Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law in Capernaum (Matt 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39). Now we learn that Peter took his wife along with him on missionary journeys.

— Since Paul mentions him repeatedly in this letter (1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5), it's possible that Peter had visited the church in Corinth and had a strong following there (1:12)

6 Or do only Barnabas and I have no right to refrain from working?

6 Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?

6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who have to keep on working for a living?

6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?

- The Corinthians acknowledged the right of other apostles to refrain from secular employment. Paul and Barnabas, however, chose to work with their hands at times, so their financial support would not burden their converts (4:12; 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:7-9; Acts 20:34).

- Paul had stooped to the demeaning work (in the Corinthians' eyes) of making tents while he ministered in Corinth (Acts 18:3). This may have given the Corinthians the impression that he was not an apostle.

— Some of the Corinthians took Paul's side job as an indication that he did not think of himself as worthy of support because he was not equal with other apostles. But the reality was that he had the right to receive financial support and refrain from working, but he had foregone that right for other reasons.

7 Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not consume some of the milk of the flock?

7 Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?

7 Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat any of its grapes? Or who takes care of a flock and does not drink any of its milk?

7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

- Paul uses six questions (v7-9) to support his point that those who work have a right to receive pay. The first three questions (v7) show that it was customary to receive financial support, as illustrated by a soldier, farmer and shepherd.

— God's people are often portrayed as an army, a vine, and a flock. Also, each exists on a different economic basis: soldier was salaried; owner obtains proceeds out of yield; shepherd was usually a slave.

— These examples show that Paul, as a servant of the Lord, had a right to accept monetary support from those to whom he ministered. The Lord's servants are certainly not inferior to soldiers, farmers or shepherd.

8 I am not *just* asserting these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does the Law not say these things as well?

8 I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things?

8 I am not saying this on human authority, am I? The Law says the same thing, doesn't it?

8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?

- Perhaps someone thought Paul was just using a humanistic way of arguing, so Paul asked "does the (Mosaic) Law not say these things as well?"

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

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?

9 For in the Law of Moses it is written, "You must not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." God is not only concerned about oxen, is he?

9 For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?

- "...YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE IT IS THRESHING" - quoted from Deut 25:4. Paul uses this verse to demonstrate God's thinking, namely that a worker deserves to be

paid (Cf. 1 Tim 5:18).

— God made special provision in the Law for the oxen that served people by threshing their grain. This quote speaks of how an owner should permit an ox to graze while it was threshing. The grazing of the ox is akin to being paid for its labor in this example.

— Paul is reasoning that if a lesser creature (an ox) should be treated a specific way, then it was reasonable that a higher creature (a person) should enjoy the same treatment

- "...God is not concerned about oxen, is He? " - in making a special provision for oxen, Paul stated that God was teaching His concern for the support and provision of all who serve others

— If a Jew muzzled an ox, he would run the risk of a scourging in the local synagogue

10 Or is He speaking **entirely** for our sake? Yes, **it was written for our sake**, because the plowman ought to plow in **hope**, and the thresher *to thresh* in **hope** of sharing *in the crops*.

10 Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher *to thresh* in hope of sharing *the crops*.

10 Isn't he really speaking for our benefit? Yes, this was written for our benefit, because the one who plows should plow in hope, and the one who threshes should thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.

10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

- "...entirely" - *pantos*, means "doubtless," "certainly," "probably," "by all means" to indicate that God had more in mind with the Law (v9, Deut 25:4) about oxen than just oxen

- "...it was written for our sake" - "it" refers to the Law Paul quoted in v9 (Cf. Deut 25:4); the specific Law was written not just for the sake of the oxen, but also for our sakes, to demonstrate God's heart that people ought to work with the expectation of receiving something in return.

— God meant to encourage labor with His provision for animals that labored

- "...hope" [2x] - pay for work done; God specified that human laborers should work with the "hope" of receiving pay for their labor

— People who profit from the ministry or teaching of others should consider those who served them worthy of support

11 If we sowed **spiritual things** in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

11 If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap material benefits from you?

11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

- "If" - first class condition; the statement following is assumed true for the sake of argument

- "...spiritual things" - are more important than "material things"; the former will last forever, the latter is only temporary. Because of this fact, how much more should those who benefit from spiritual ministry financially support those who minister to them (Cf. Gal 6:6).

- Whatsoever a man sows, this he shall also reap" (Gal 6:7) is a principle applied to ministry

- Paul's conclusion is that he had the right to receive financial support from the Corinthians even though he had not demanded it (Cf. Rom 15:27)

12 **If** others share the right over you, do we not more? **Nevertheless, we did not use this right**, but **we endure** all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

12 If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

12 If others enjoy this right over you, don't we have a stronger claim? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we tolerate everything in order not to put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of the Messiah.

12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

- "If" - first class condition; the statement following is assumed true for the sake of argument

- Paul's point is that if other people also shared the right to receive financial support from the Corinthian church, his right to receive it would supercede the rights of the others

- "...Nevertheless, we did not use this right" - Paul repeats the fact that although he had supreme rights over everyone else to receive financial support, he did not invoke his right

- "...we endure" - *stegō*, means to keep secret or silent about something; it conveys the idea that Paul (and Sosthenes) kept their right to financial support a "secret" so as to not hinder the gospel of Christ

- Paul did not want to be paid to preach the gospel because he was afraid that might hinder or hold back the progress of someone from believing it

- When Silas and Timothy eventually arrived in Corinth, they brought gifts from the churches in Macedonia, and Paul became a full-time preacher (Acts 18:5; 2 Cor 11:9). The church in Philippi supplied him again and again to aid him in his work (Phil 4:14-16). Paul and his associates strove to assure that their lifestyle would never become a hindrance to the Corinthians.

13 Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat *the food* of the temple, *and* those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar?

13 Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the *food* of the temple, *and* those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar?

13 You know that those who work in the Temple get their food from the Temple and that those who serve at the altar get their share of its offerings, don't you?

13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?

- Paul now highlights the similarity between God's command for the support of the priests and Levites in the Temple, and the Lord's directive concerning compensation for the messengers of the Gospel

— If this was true both in Judaism and pagan religions, why would it also not be true for Christian ministers?

— Gentile Christians in Corinth were familiar with the OT stipulations concerning priests and Levites (Lev 6:8-7:38; Num 18:8-31; Deut 18:1-5)

— Since the tribe of Levi had no land inheritance in Israel, God stipulated that their descendants should receive their income from the gifts to the sanctuary

14 So also **the Lord directed** those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

14 So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

14 In the same way, the Lord has ordered that those who proclaim the gospel should make their living from the gospel.

14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

- "...the Lord directed" - the Lord Himself taught that a worker is worthy of his pay (Matt 10:10; Luke 10:7)

— The Lord instructed the beneficiaries of a ministry to supply the minister's needs. He is not a servant of the church but of the Word of God.

Paul's Restraint from Accepting Support

After arguing for his right to monetary support from the Corinthians, Paul now argues just as forcefully for his right to give up the right of monetary support. Now he explains why he deliberately did not accept their financial support.

(c) Apostolic restraint (9:15-18)

15 But I have used none of **these things**. And I have not written these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than *that*. No one shall make my boast an empty one!

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.

15 But I have not used any of these rights, and I'm not writing this so that they may be applied in my case. I would rather die than let anyone deprive me of my reason for boasting.

15 But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

- "...these things" - his rights, based on all of the arguments he has given from v3-14

- And Paul was not writing these things to them now in order to begin to receive their financial support

- Paul says he'd rather "die" than give someone the opportunity to say that his boast in foregoing his rights was an empty one

- He made the decision to support himself while he preached freely; the Lord did not require this of him. Consequently, he took justifiable pride in it.

- Paul supported himself by his own trade during all three of his missionary journeys (1 Thess 2:9; Acts 18:3; 20:34; 2 Cor 12:14)

16 For **if** I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast *about*, for I am **under compulsion**; for **woe to me if I do not preach the gospel**.

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.

16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast about, for this obligation has been entrusted to me. How terrible it would be for me if I didn't preach the gospel!

16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

- "...if" - third class condition, the condition of possibility or potentiality; maybe he did, maybe he didn't "preach the gospel," but assuming he did...

- Paul could not boast that he preached the gospel. Even though his preaching involved sacrificing for the benefit of others, he made those sacrifices in obedience to the Lord (Acts 26:16-18).

- "...under compulsion" - *anagke*, means out of pressure or necessity; he was commissioned by the risen Lord Jesus Christ for this task (Cf. Acts 9:15-16; 1 Cor 4:1-5)

- "...woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" - Paul had no choice to preach the gospel, it was his divine destiny, but he could choose how to make a living while he did so
— He would be in serious trouble with the Lord if he did not do what the Lord saved him to do: preach the gospel

17 For **if** I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, **I have** been entrusted with **a commission** *nonetheless*.

17 For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me.

17 For if I preach voluntarily, I get a reward, but if I am unwilling to do it, I am still entrusted with that obligation.

17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

- "...if" - first class condition, the statement following is assumed true for the sake of argument

- If Paul preached the gospel "voluntarily" he would receive pay (a reward) from the Lord; if he preached it against his will, he would not receive a reward because he would only be doing his duty as a steward manager (4:1-2; Cf. Luke 17:7-10).

- "...I have...a commission" - *oikonomia*, stewardship (also translated "dispensation"); means "the management of a household or household affairs; management or oversight of another's property"

— Paul was "entrusted" with a "stewardship" for which he would answer at the Judgment Seat of Christ (4:1-5; Rom 1:14)

18 What, then, is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as **not to make full use of my right in the gospel**.

18 What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

18 What, then, is my reward? It is to be able to preach the gospel free of charge, and so I never resort to demanding my rights when I'm preaching the gospel.

18 What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

- How could Paul receive a reward? Only by preaching the gospel without charging his hearers

- "...not to make full use of my right in the gospel" - no one could ever lay a claim on Paul because of some monetary accountability (2 Cor 11:7). In this freedom, Paul could actively proclaim the good news to everyone.

— Paul refuses to avail himself of his apostolic right and calls his preference to preach without pay his “boast” (v15). Paul so chose, but nowhere does he abrogate the command Jesus gave to the workers in His kingdom.

Paul's highest pay was the privilege of preaching without pay. [Constable]

(d) Apostolic freedom (9:19-23)

19 For though I am **free** from all people, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may gain more.

19 For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.

19 Although I am free from everyone's expectations, I have made myself a servant to all of them to win more people.

19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

- “...free” - by not accepting financial support from the church at Corinth, he was free from any responsibility to them

— This gave him the opportunity to be a “slave to all” voluntarily

— Jesus taught that greatness in the kingdom required that one become the servant of others; Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many (Cf. Matt 20:26-28; Mark 10:45)

20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might gain Jews; to those who are under the Law, *I became* as *one* under the Law, though not being under the Law myself, **so that I might gain** those who are under the Law;

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;

20 To the Jews I became like a Jew in order to win Jews. To those under the Law I became like a man under the Law, in order to win those under the Law (although I myself am not under the Law).

20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

- When preaching to the Jews, he adapted himself to Jewish customs: Timothy's circumcision (Acts 16:3); Nazarite vow (Acts 18:18); Purification rites (Acts 21:23-24,26)

— He did this to make them receptive to him and his message rather than antagonistic (Cf. Acts 21:20-26)

— Paul wanted to demonstrate that he had no objections to obeying the law of Moses, having been accused of not teaching the law to Jewish people (Acts 21:20-21). But he also understood that keeping the Law does not justify or sanctify a person, so he was free to keep them with that understanding (Gal 2:16; 5:2-4).

— He didn't do this because he felt obligated to the Law (Rom 6:14), but to improve his ministry of preaching the gospel to the Jews. The salvation of more Jews was his objective.
- "...so that I might gain" - everything Paul did was aimed at winning more people to Christ (v23)

21 to those who are without the Law, *I became* as one without the Law, though not being without the law of God but under the **law of Christ**, so that I might gain those who are without the Law.

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.

21 To those who do not have the Law, I became like a man who does not have the Law in order to win those who do not have the Law. However, I am not free from God's Law, but I'm subject to the Messiah's law.

21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

- Whenever Paul spent time with Gentiles, he did not observe Jewish food laws, circumcision, New Moon and Sabbath celebrations (Gal 2:11-14; Col 2:11,16)

- "...law of Christ" - the Law of Christ is the code of responsibilities that Christ and His apostles taught, contained in the NT (Cf. Gal 6:2; See Tag: **Law of Christ**)

— Some of the same commands are in the Mosaic Law, although the Mosaic Law and Law of Christ are not the same

All covenants have a law which is administered by a priestly order. The Mosaic covenant's law was the law of Moses which was administered by the Levitical order of priests, but when Christ fulfilled the Mosaic covenant on the cross the law of Moses was rendered inoperative (Eph 2:15; 2 Cor 3:5-18; Rom 8:3-4). At that time He ratified the new covenant and the law of Christ went into effect which is being administered by Christ Himself who is of the Melchizedekian order of priests (Matt 26:27-28; 1 Cor 11:23-26; 2 Cor 3:5-18; Heb 7:11-12,18-24; 8:1-13; 10:9,19-22), though it will not be fulfilled to Israel until the second coming (Jer 31:31-34; 32:40; Deut 30:6; Hosea 2:18-23; Is 42:6; 49:8; 54:10; 55:3; 59:21; 61:8; Ezek 11:19; 18:31; 34:25; 36:26; 37:26).

22 To the **weak** I became **weak**, that I might gain the **weak**; I have become **all things to all people**, so that I may by all means save some.

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.

22 To the weak I became weak in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some of them.

22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

- "...weak" [3x] - *asthenēs*, those who have extremely sensitive consciences in the area of non-moral issues (Cf. 8:9). Here, Paul is referring to unbelievers, as is clear from what he said about them.

— Paul accommodated himself to their scruples, which led some people to state that Paul was inconsistent. However, his superficial inconsistency was really a fundamental consistency in that he did everything non-moral with a goal of bringing people to Christ.

— It's important to note that Paul is speaking exclusively about non-moral differences; he is in no way advocating a "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" attitude toward the wrong actions and immoral or unlawful practices of others.

- "...all things to all people" - if a group of people had scruples about something, Paul would conform to them so that it wouldn't interfere with someone being won to Christ

23 **I do all things for the sake of the gospel**, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

23 I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel in order to have a share in its blessings.

23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

- "I do all things for the sake of the gospel" - Paul was often criticized for being inconsistent in his ministry. He had Timothy circumcised, but did not do the same to Titus; he took a vow at Cenchrea and again at Jerusalem, but taught that we are not under the Law.

— This "inconsistency" even led to his eventual arrest and imprisonment

— But on closer examination, Paul was completely consistent with his statement here: "I do all things for the sake of the gospel." He was careful to not violate the Law of Christ, but if he could accommodate to someone under the Law, without the Law, or weak, he would do so to win them to Christ.

— Paul went to any length, descended to any level, for the work of the gospel...it was the great axis around which everything in his life revolved

— He goes on to explain what this involved in the following verses...

(e) Apostolic exhortation and example (9:24-27)

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.

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.

24 You know that in a race all the runners run but only one wins the prize, don't you? You must run in such a way that you may be victorious.

24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

- "...Run in such a way that you may win" - the emphasis of this verse: we should run the race of the Christian life in such a way that we will receive a reward from the Judge, not a participation trophy

- In the Christian race, we do not compete against one another, we compete against ourselves; the emphasis is on self-discipline, not competition

- In a foot race, there is only one winner, but in the Christian race, the challenge is to discipline ourselves to sacrifice our rights and privileges for the benefit of others (Cf. Matt 6:19-21; 2 Tim 2:5)

- The Isthmian games of Corinth were held every 2-3 years near the Schoenus harbor; they were second only to the Olympic Games

- Paul was in Corinth 50-52 AD; the games were held in Spring of 51 AD

- Though not mentioned here, the prizes were given at the judgment (*bema*) seat, which has been unearthed by archaeologists in Corinth

25 Everyone who **competes** in the games **exercises self-control** in all things. So they *do it* to obtain **a perishable wreath**, but we an **imperishable**.

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.

25 Everyone who enters an athletic contest practices self-control in everything. They do it to win a wreath that withers away, but we run to win a prize that never fades.

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

- "...competes" - *agonizomai*, where we get the English word "agonize." The athletes were required to agonize in training for 10 months. If one did not complete the training they were banned from competition.

- Rewards don't come easy and they are not automatic. Just as a person has to "agonize" physically to win perishable crowns, likewise one must agonize spiritually to win much more valuable imperishable crowns.

- "...exercises self-control" - self-control (2 Tim 2:5); an athlete wins by denying himself many "lawful" pleasures in order to gain an extra edge

- Likewise, as spiritual athletes, we may need to limit our liberty (exercise self-control) for a higher goal

- "...a perishable wreath" - *stephanos*, winners in the Isthmian Games typically received a wreath of parsley, wild celery, or pine; in the Olympic Games, a wild olive wreath
- "...imperishable" - in contrast, the Christian's reward is imperishable (Cf. 2 Tim 4:8), and will be received in eschaton. This crown is won for sacrificing one's rights for others.
- How much more important it is to be willing to forego our rights for the spiritual advancement of others than it is to train for a physical foot race (Cf. 2 Cor 4:17-18)

Scripture's Five Crowns (Rev 4:10: 3:11; 2 John 8)		
<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Crown</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
1 <u>Cor</u> 9:24-27	Incorruptible	Gaining mastery over the flesh
1 <u>Thess</u> 2:19-20	Rejoicing	Soul winning
James 1:12; Rev 2:10	Life	Enduring trials
1 Peter 5:2-4	Glory	Shepherding God's people
2 Tim 4:8	Righteousness	Longing for His appearing

26 **Therefore** I run in such a way as **not to run aimlessly**; I box in such a way, as to avoid **hitting air**;

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

26 That is the way I run, with a clear goal in mind. That is the way I fight, not like someone shadow boxing.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

- "Therefore" - signals a logical conclusion about how a Christian should "run the race"

- "...not to run aimlessly" - Paul ran his race with a purpose in mind, not "aimlessly" as if he was just participating but not competing. This purpose was to "win."

— After understanding the comparative value of these rewards, Paul states that he ran his race purposefully, not aimlessly or halfheartedly. He ran it in order to gain a prize at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

- "...hitting air" - to use a different metaphor, which makes the same point, he did not throw wild punches, but sought to make every punch score

— Service to Christ is not just spiritual "activity" with no purpose; it is activity focused on a target: the building of the church through preaching the gospel and teaching the flock

27 but I **strictly discipline** my body and **make it my slave**, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not **bedisqualified**.

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.

27 No, I keep on disciplining my body, making it serve me so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not somehow be disqualified.

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

- Paul viewed his flesh as his enemy; he recognized the need to exercise extreme self-discipline

— Obviously Paul was not speaking of self-discipline in the physical realm alone; he also had in mind moral discipline, and discipline in the non-moral areas of his life, including voluntarily foregoing his rights and liberties

- "...strictly discipline" - *hypopiazō*, a verb from boxing: "I give my body a black eye." Grace is not opposed to effort, it's opposed to earning.

- "...make it my slave" - Paul spiritually disciplined his body to serve as an instrument of godliness; in this context, godliness is the result of exercising self-discipline in his spiritual life. Then, when the opportunity comes to sacrifice his rights for the sake of others, it is easy to do.

- "...be disqualified" - *adokimos*, "not passing the test"; God tests believers in order to draw out what is in them. His purpose is for us to pass the test, but if we fail, we are disqualified from winning the prize, which is the imperishable crown (v25).

— The "test" presented in this passage is whether or not we will set aside our rights for the sake of others

— Disqualification does not mean one loses their salvation/justification or was only a professing believer. It means to lose a reward that was available to win. Paul had no fear of losing his salvation (Rom 8:1,29-39).

— This disqualification is not a loss of a previously earned crown, but rather the loss of acquiring additional crowns should he go back to the sin nature. Every moment we spend

walking in the flesh instead of walking in the Spirit is a moment that we are out of fellowship with Christ and do not have the opportunity to earn rewards.

Paul was afraid that he would drift back into carnality...he was worried that he would be "disqualified"...for what? Not for heaven because if that was the case, he would be teaching salvation by works. The prize that he's striving for is the imperishable crown, and he's worried about being disqualified from receiving that reward if he goes back into sin. He's not worried about going to heaven...he's worried about forfeiting a reward at the Bema Seat judgment of Christ if he were to lapse back into walking in the flesh. After he has told others of this prize/reward, he didn't want to be disqualified himself from receiving it.

*We should never conceive of the loss of rewards as a repossession. God does not take back something He has already awarded to us. At the heavenly Bema, we do not suddenly have a quantity of rewards ripped from our hands by the righteous Judge. We are not stripped of rewards as an erring soldier is stripped of his stripes. Not at all... Loss of reward is not like handing back a trophy that was mistakenly given to you. It's not returning something you earned. It's forfeiting a reward that you could have earned but failed to do so. [Woodrow Kroll, *Facing Your Final Job Review: The Judgment Seat of Christ, Salvation, and Eternal Rewards* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 123-124.]*