

How To Win People To Christ (Part 1) – 1 Cor 9:15-27

1 Cor 9:15-27; **At issue here is how to win people to Christ**

But we're only going to cover v15-18 this weekend, and then pick up the remaining verses in part 2, next weekend (**The Text**)

For now though, Paul has just spent the first part of ch9 making the case that ministers of the gospel have a right to be paid

And then, after going to such great lengths to do so, he says in v15 . . .

But I have made no use of any of these rights [rights plural, referring not only to his right to be paid, but also his right to be married and have his wife with him], *nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision* [any such pay]. *For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting* [my reason for reveling and rejoicing].

And then he explains that

16 For if I preach the gospel [i.e. if I do it of my own accord], *that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me* [I have to do it]. *Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel* [IOW I'm in trouble]!

And then, he explains *that* – the thought that he's compelled

17 For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward [which is the meager satisfaction of doing something *he* simply decided to do]

Like the satisfaction you might get from flying a kite

That's the extent of your reward if there's no other reason for doing it than your own desire

Paul's not saying that's *bad* in life – he's just saying that small purposes yield small rewards; And that's definitely not the case in this situation

17 For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship.

If I preach b/c I have to or am compelled to, it's not for naught he says

It's not just preaching for preaching sake; It's not just make-work

It's for a purpose – which is to meet a need and fulfill a responsibility; a *stewardship*

And then, he comes full circle to his initial thought in v15, where he said – *I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting.*

18 What then is my reward [my ground for boasting]? *That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.*

So as not to misuse, or over-use, or abuse his right to be paid

That's the connotation of the phrase *full use*

B/c in Greek, Paul uses an *intensive* form of the verb *make full use*, to convey use to the extreme; It's *katachraomai* instead of just *chraomai*

It would be like a man referring to a woman in a dysfunctional relationship – “I'm going to use her for all I can get”

The idea being abuse or mis-use

And given the context, that's the same idea here in v18 – Paul's reward, Paul's ground for boasting or rejoicing, is that he's able to offer the free gift of salvation, for *free* . . .

And in no way abuse or over-use his right to be *paid* for doing so

- That's the flow of thought; But don't miss the fact that even in the midst of his explanation as to why he refuses compensation . . .

Paul's focus is still on *preaching the gospel*, in order to win people to Christ
Providing us a perfect example of how to do the same

The first part of which, is to . . .

Remove as many obstacles as you possibly can (v12b,15,18)

That's what Paul said back in v12b – *We have not made use of this right* [this right to be paid for our work of ministry], *but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.*

If you're going to win your friend, or family member, or co-worker to Christ . . .

You're going to have to avoid and remove as many obstacles as you possibly can

I don't care how many gospel tracts you carry, or how slick your presentation is – you'll never get to use it if you don't first remove the obstacles

And I say *as many as you possibly can*, b/c you can't remove them all

Some of them are internal issues of their heart that only the HS can remove

Others are up to them – for instance, if they avoid you like the plague, it's going to be pretty hard to win them to Christ; It's an obstacle you can't remove

But the ones you *can* remove, **you must**; Requiring **6 Commitments** on your part

1. Be willing to endure anything

If you're going to win people to Christ, that's the first obstacle you need to remove – be willing to endure anything, just like Paul said in v12

Which could mean physical hardship, persecution, abandonment, or neglect

Those are some of the things Paul endured

Or, if you're like some of our Global Partners, it could mean enduring less than desirable living conditions

But for most of us, removing obstacles means being willing to endure *uncomfortable moments* when you talk about the things of God, or address issues of the heart

Or, enduring the *distrust and suspicion* of those who don't know you

Like Mike DuBard is doing in Chattanooga, as he plants a church there

People don't know him, and therefore don't trust him, and are suspicious of his motives

As were many of you when *we* came here

You wondered if there were horns sticking out of my head – I felt it

And still do on occasion from those who are just *starting* to come

Distrust and suspicion abounds

And as much as I don't like it sometimes, it comes with the territory of sinful, broken, hurting people

But if I'm going to win as many people to Christ as I possibly can, I have to endure it

And **so do you**

Be willing to endure anything

2. Give up your rights

That's the second commitment you have to make in order to remove as many obstacles as you possibly can, and win people to Christ

Which in Paul's case meant foregoing or relinquishing his right to be paid – he gave it up in order to remove the obstacle

For you, it might mean giving up your right to be treated fairly on the job
Or treated with respect in your family
Whatever the case, give up your rights if it removes obstacles to sharing your faith and winning people to Christ

3. **Be straight with people**

In v15a, Paul's like – "I'm not *writing these things* to get your money"
"I'm not trying to manipulate you, or coerce you, or deceive you"
"I'm just saying it like it is – I have a right to be paid, and I'm giving it up; That's it"
"There's nothing to read between the lines, no reverse psychology, and no ulterior motives"
He was straight up with the Corinthians

And we must do the same
If you're going to remove the obstacles of distrust and suspicion, you have to be straight with people – say it like it is, say it in love, and speak the truth
You may not win a popularity contest, but those with the slightest softness of heart, will eventually thank you

4. **Don't be a burden**

Don't be a burden to those you're trying to reach
Otherwise, you not only fail to *remove* obstacles, you *add* to them

It's not something Paul is *explicit* about here; But later, in **2 Cor 11:9** he says . . .
When I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way.
He made a commitment not to burden those he was trying to win to Christ

Certainly that applies to missionaries and church planters in a similar situation . . .
But it also applies to you and me in everyday conversations *****
If you're obnoxious with your faith, you're a burden to others
If you're argumentative, you're a burden
If you're negative and pessimistic, you're a burden
Which once again, puts *up* obstacles, instead **of removes them**

5. **Don't be beholden to anyone**

IOW make sure your obligations and relationships don't influence you to *say* things you'd rather not, or withhold things you'd rather say
Like the bank 6 years ago, who wouldn't loan us money as a church, unless I agreed to avoid controversial issues from the pulpit
That would have made me beholden to them; So we found another bank

And while this may not affect you directly, for Paul, this was *the* issue
You see, much like politicians in our day, orators and public speakers were paid by those who loved what they said, or how they said it
And in return, those benefactors expected an occasional nod or some public attention

And they certainly didn't want anything disparaging said about them, or the things they held dear; Which made the speakers beholden to them; Obligated
And Paul was like, "No way; I'm not going to go there"
I'm not taking your money, and won't tolerate your adverse influence
Which made him *free from all*, like he says in v19; Don't be beholden

And then 6th, if you're going to remove as many obstacles as you possibly can . . .

6. **Offer the gospel for free**

That's the commitment that Paul would rather die of than be deprived of
That in my preaching [v18] I may present the gospel free of charge

Which begs the question – Should *I* forego a salary? Or *all* pastors for that matter?
And the answer, based on Paul's example, is yes – *If*
If it's possible, financially; That's the first of 4 caveats here
If a pastor is independently wealthy or somehow self-sufficient, and they can support themselves and their family without exercising their right to be paid . . .
Then yes, I think they should forego a salary

- Or second, they should forego a salary *if they're good enough*
IOW if they're good enough to work another job and still do the ministry justice – then yes, they should forego a salary
But very few people are that talented and gifted
And those that are, should be using their gift and preaching *more*
Not preaching less and *working* more

Like the late E.V. Hill, who preached 4 different messages a week if I'm not mistaken
Something most pastors shouldn't even try in their dreams
He was good enough to work *outside* the church and still do the ministry justice
But what a shame it would have been *for* the church

- Third, a pastor should forego a salary *if it's necessary*
Necessary for the people to whom they are preaching
Which is most often the *case* with church plants and missionaries

That's why Paul was supported by the *other* churches he had established
And that's why I was too by *our* Fellowship, when we moved here . . .
And the reason we do the same for Mike and Jaime in Chattanooga
B/c people won't walk in the door if you essentially charge them admission
But once the church is established, and the *believers* are able to support the work, the outside support should stop, and the inside support start

- And last, pastors should forego a salary *if they're constrained*
That is, if they need to free themselves from undue influence that prevents them from speaking the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
Which takes us right back to commitment #5 – don't be beholden to anyone *****

So the bottom line is this – as a church, we should *always* offer the gospel free of charge in order to remove as many obstacles as we possibly can, in winning people to Christ
But that doesn't necessarily mean that pastors should relinquish their right to be paid

That's the case only if it's possible, only if they're good enough, only if it's necessary, and only if they're constrained

That's the first part of Paul's example in winning people to Christ – remove as many obstacles as you possibly can; The second, is to . . .

Do what you have to do as soon as you can (v16-17)

Which in Paul's case, was preach; He *had* to preach; He was *compelled*

In v16 he says – *Necessity is laid upon me*

IOW there was a need for the gospel in Corinth that God brought to his attention – and he met it; Done

No excuses; No delays; No himmin' and hawin'; He came, he saw, he preached

And he was scared to death *not* to – *not* to do what he felt compelled to do

In fact he says – *Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!* (16b); *Woe to me*

Which wasn't just an expression of inner turmoil or personal regret . . .

But an OT way of saying that he would stand under divine judgment if he failed

That is, if he failed to meet the need and preach the word as he was appointed to do

IOW Paul had a real, serious, and reverent *fear* of God's discipline

A serious concern about the repercussions that might result if he *didn't* preach

If he didn't do what he was supposed to; If he didn't do what was brought to his

attention, and laid on his heart as a necessity

I wonder what the HS has laid on **your heart**; I wonder what makes *your* blood run cold

Paul was *compelled* to preach out of necessity . . .

He was *fearful* of God's discipline if he didn't . . .

And he was *driven* by a keen sense of responsibility – a sense of responsibility to fulfill the purpose to which God had called him

To make the most of the *stewardship* that God *entrusted* to him, like he says in v17b

He had been given a stewardship, a responsibility – and he was ***driven to fulfill it***

- What are you driven to do? Who do *you* need to talk to?

What is it that makes you a bit fearful if you *don't* do anything about it?

Or what responsibility or role is just waiting for you to step up and step into?

Whatever it is, do it; Now

Whether it's showing people the gospel in how you *live*, or telling them explicitly . . .

Teaching kids in CM, or loving the unlovable at your workplace

Whatever it is, follow Paul's lead here, and do what you have to do, as soon as you can

Hold back no longer

- **Like Jeremiah**, who said in **Jer 20:9** of his prophecy– *If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.*

That was my story when I became a pastor

I was studying the book of Isaiah in my devotions, and was busting at the seams with things to say about it

It felt as though there was a pressure cooker in my chest, and I was weary of holding it in

So to let some of it out, I started writing in my Bible (**example**) – something I had never done up to that point

And made so many notes like the ones u see here, that I ran out of space on some pages

I would even sit at my desk and preach to thin air *****

So I started removing obstacles by looking for *real* opportunities in jails and prisons . . .

And eventually connected with the Wayside Cross Rescue Mission in Aurora, IL

Who just happened to need someone a few times a month, to deliver a gospel message to 10 or 15 guys off the street

And so began my ministry of preaching and teaching back in 2001, b/c I did what I had to do, as soon as I possibly could . . .

In order to win as many to Christ, and fulfill my sense of responsibility (**Summary**)

- Listen, it may not be preaching and teaching, or full time ministry that God wants you to do – and probably isn't for most of you
But whatever it is, if you have a passion for God and a passion for souls – get busy
And if you're even a bit concerned that God might be frowning on your lack of action . . .
Or feel even a faint sense of responsibility for the situation or the opportunity in front of you, or the possibilities around you – get going

Do what you have to do, as soon as you can

And remove as many obstacles as you possibly can . . .

In order to win people to Christ, **while you can**

Pray – Lord, give us a passion for souls; A passion to see people come to a saving knowledge of your Son

A sense of urgency to seek the lost, heal the lame, bind up the brokenhearted, and set the captives free

Put a fire within us God to speak of you – in fact make us miserable when we don't

And give us the strength to endure whatever is necessary in order to win people to Christ