

July 13, 2025

God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing

The Book of 1 Corinthians – Part 8 Chapter 9

The Gospel Priority

Today we continue on our multi-year journey through the New Testament where we are seeking to understand the historical, chronological and missiological of the 1st Century Church so that we in the 21st Century Church can keep the 'CHURCH LIVE & GROWING'. As we have made our way through the Book of Acts we have stopped at various points to delve into other books of the New Testament that seem to have been written at that specific point in time. We just completed study of Acts 19 and it seems that at this point in the 30 plus year time span that the book of Acts covers, that Paul took the time to **write to the Church in Corinth.** (MAP)

In the past messages we discovered that the Church in Corinth which Paul and his DreamTeam of Silas, Timothy, Aquilla, Priscilla & Apollos had spent about a year and a half planting churches, leading to salvation, baptized and given basic discipleship to a large number of believers. After he and Aquilla & Priscilla had left and went to Ephesus it appears that the cosmopolitan atmosphere in Corinth of debauchery, hyper-sexuality, materialism, and prideful academia had caused them to become **Defiled, Divided, Disgraced, Deluded, in a State of Disrepair, Directionless, Disobedient Church, Disrespectful, and today we learn they were an UnDisciplined Church.**

Paul, the model Evangelist, Church Planter, Pastor, Discipler, Encourager, Disciplinarian, Spiritual Physician and Building Consultant responded to those problems with some prescriptions to help with the spiritual sickness. He **REMINDS** them of their **HIGH CALLING TO...**

1. Be Holy
2. Develop a Fellowship of Harmony & Love
3. Glorify God.
4. Have the Mind of Christ.
5. Be God's Sanctuary & Temple
6. Honor & Respect Faithful Spiritual Leaders

7. Live as Obedient 'Beloved Children' of our Heavenly Father.
8. Live Your Life With Integrity & Godliness.
9. Honor God in Our Relationships & Service
10. To Use Your Liberty In Christ in Loving Wisdom
& today in Chapter 9 we discover
11. To Make The Message of the Gospel a Priority Over Our Freedom and Rights.

David Frederick summarizes Paul's message in Chapter 9 this way.

"Mature Christian faith moves from *"am I not free?"* to *"I surrender all"* (1 Corinthians 9:19). We see Paul, in our passage, exhort the Corinthians to sacrifice their personal preferences, freedoms and rights for the unity of the church and witness of the gospel. The differing factions in the church could only come together if some were willing to lay down their rights to love each other. Likewise, Paul gives us the powerful statement in verse 22... *"I have become all things to all people so I may win some to Christ,"* which models for us how we can take steps towards people outside the faith so they may see and know Christ. Rights, freedoms and preferences are all good things, but followers of Jesus will often need to lay them aside for the sake of a bigger goal. <https://www.westhills.org/blog/2021/08/05/>

Please take your Bibles and turn to 1 Corinthians Chapter 9

1 Corinthians 9:1-27... ¹ Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? ² Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. ³ This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. ⁴ Don't we have the right to food and drink? ⁵ Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? ⁶ Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living? ⁷ Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? ⁸ Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? ⁹ For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? ¹⁰ Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. ¹¹ If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? ¹² If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ. ¹³ Don't you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? ¹⁴ In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. ¹⁵ But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will

do such things for me, for I would rather die than allow anyone to deprive me of this boast. ¹⁶ For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! ¹⁷ If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. ¹⁸ What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel. ¹⁹ Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. ²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³ I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. ²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. ²⁶ Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. ²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

There are a lot of lessons and points that Paul brings up in this lengthy and spiritually challenging passage. Paul is expanding on his teaching in Chapter 8 about using our Freedoms in Christ with Loving Wise Liberty. In that Chapter Paul was setting the stage for a Christ - Focused love and concern for other people and their spiritual well-being. He continues this idea in Chapter 9 by using himself as an example of this self-less, Christ - Honoring, People Focused attitude.

He starts out with a rather unique style of *‘I have the right and authority to all things, but I give up my rights for the sake of the Gospel’*.

1. **Paul Defends His (and other ministers) of the Right to Be Supported by the Church for their spiritual service. (9:1-14)**

Paul goes into a litany of examples to make his point:

- It is the right of God’s Apostle in verses 1-6.
- It is the right of a soldier, vineyard farmer & shepherd in verse 7.
- It is the right of the ox, the plowman, and the thresher in verses 8-10.
- It is the right of God’s servants, priests, and those who minister the Word in verses 11-14.

Key verse 14: *In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.*

Paul is just reiterating what the Old Testament taught, as well as what Jesus taught in Luke 10:7,8 & Matthew 10:10 which can be summarized with “***the laborer is worthy of his hire***”.

These passages are the basis on why, how generously, and how cheerfully the Church should be to take care of the physical and financial needs of those who share the Gospel message and teach God’s Word.

2. **Paul Then Reinforces His ‘Liberty’ Message by Refusing to Take Their Financial Support. (vs. 15-21)**

In an amazing and plot twisting turn, Paul then says, even though has the right, he chooses to exercise his LIBERTY to not take this support so that he can be free to share the Gospel without any conditions or restrictions. (*by the way he is NOT teaching that all ministers should refuse support, because he states that other churches are freely and cheerfully taking care of his needs.*)

What Paul has done is that he has given the Church (then & now) a teaching and principle that ministers are worthy of compensation and honor for their work. But also, he is giving a ‘spiritual life lesson’ on liberty and the priority of the Gospel. He is using himself to teach the key point that Sharing and Teaching the Gospel so that others can come to salvation is the PRIORITY of his ministry but should be the PRIORITY of every church member and Christian. Paul stresses the compelling nature of God’s Call to Preach the Gospel. It is not an option or luxury; it is vital and irrefutable.

3. Paul Then Shows What It Takes to Make the Gospel a Priority... Self-Denial & Self Discipline.

Let me re-read this passage section...

1 Corinthians 9:22-27...²² *To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.* ²³ *I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.* ²⁴ *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.* ²⁵ *Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.* ²⁶ *Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air.* ²⁷ *No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

Key phrase: ²³ *I do all this for the sake of the gospel...*

Self-Denial:

Paul puts his “money where his mouth is” so to speak. He willingly denies himself personally, religiously, socially and completely for the ‘sake of the Gospel’.

Self-Discipline:

He intentionally, deliberately and consistently chooses to discipline himself like a runner in a race or a boxer in a contest. The Corinth Church would have instantly

identified with these analogies; “Isthmian Games, in ancient Greece, was a festival of athletic and musical competitions in honor of the sea god Poseidon, held in the spring of the second and fourth years of each Olympiad at his sanctuary on the Isthmus of Corinth”. (Google search)

Denial & Discipline are not concepts that modern people often choose. Paul shows us by example that it is both possible and necessary if we are to make the Gospel a Priority. Warren Wiersbe puts it this way. “*Paul had one great goal in life: to glorify the Lord by winning the lost and building up the church. To reach this goal, he was willing to pay any price. He was even willing to give up his personal rights. He chose to sacrifice immediate gains for eternal rewards, immediate pleasures for eternal joys.*” (p. 602 Bible Exposition Commentary)

Call to Challenge: Are you and I ready to deny ourselves and discipline ourselves so that the Good News Story of the Gospel of Salvation in Jesus Christ can be shared with everyone?