

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 26TH - 27TH, 2022 // BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

AN APOSTLE (1 CORINTHIANS 9:1-14) RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LEADERSHIP

Paul had already begun the conversation of sacrificing freedoms for the sake of other people, but here he goes further by asking four questions that he expected positive responses from.

- Paul was making a case for his spiritual authority over the Corinthians. Some doubted this authority, but **his fruit proved his dedication and authority.**

WILLINGLY LAYING DOWN FREEDOMS

The church was upset that Paul chose to refrain from certain food even though he had the right to eat it. They were also mad that he encouraged them to do the same thing for the sake of witnessing to others.

- This goes back to **"permissible but not always beneficial"** (6:12). **Are we willing to lay down rights for the benefit of others?**

SACRIFICE IS PART OF THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

To choose to lay down rights for the benefit of others and the glorification of God is not a sign of weakness but strength. It also resembles the life of Christ.

- **It is wisdom and personal conviction through prayer that help us determine what rights we live in and which we lay down for the greater good.**

THE RIGHT TO MINISTRY AS A VOCATION

Though Paul didn't take money from the churches he started, he advocated for ministers who get paid to work for the church. Paul makes this a common-sense argument by using other examples (soldiers, farmers, shepherds) who must live off the work they do.

- Unfortunately, greed has made many people look down on vocational ministry.

"AM I SAYING THIS FROM A HUMAN PERSPECTIVE?"

Paul set up his biblical support for people earning a livelihood from ministry. His example was based in Deut. 25:4 about not "muzzl[e]ing an ox while it treads out grain."

- The logical balance is that **"an ox" only benefits when they are working the field.** Simply put, **pastors (and all people) are to work hard in order to earn their pay.**

PAUL LAID THIS DOWN RIGHT

Though Paul makes it very clear that "those who preach the gospel should earn [a] living by the gospel," he gave up this right in order to not "hinder the gospel." Paul wanted to live above reproach as he oversaw new churches.

- **Christians are to earn their livelihood and do it without suspicion. We must live in transparency and integrity!**

FORFEITING (1 CORINTHIANS 9:15-23) THIS IS NOT FOR YOUR MONEY

Paul was making this case, not so the Corinthians would start paying him, but to defend his position as an apostle.

- He says, **"it would be better for me to die than for anyone to deprive me of my boast!"** This means his call to preach, and voluntary sacrifice meant everything to him. Paul's relationship with Jesus was his life!

GOING A LITTLE FURTHER FOR GOD

Paul was "compelled to preach" and could have made a living doing it, but he **sacrificed even more than what was required because of the eternal reward he would receive.**

- Christians should **think about how temporary sacrifices yield eternal rewards. Is our goal to just be saved, or is it to build the best relationship with Jesus possible?**

THE SACRIFICE SHOULD ALSO BE A REWARD

Paul saw his preaching and working for the kingdom as a reward in and of itself.

- If we understand that Jesus sacrificed for us and that **in our sacrifice and suffering, we not only honor Jesus but identify more with Him** (Phil. 3:10, Mt. 16:24), we should feel blessed to give things up for God and others.

"I HAVE MADE MYSELF A SLAVE"

Paul makes it clear that he has freedom and doesn't have to conform to the preferences of others to be saved, BUT he chose to serve all kinds of people "to win" people to Christ.

- **Christians are called to humility and servitude. Our desire to live sacrificially and win people to Jesus should outweigh our personal freedoms.**

WE ARE ALSO TO RESPECT PEOPLE

Paul would follow cultural practices with Jews and Greeks as long as it didn't cause him to sin. Though not obligated, he did this to show respect.

- We're to respect cultural practices and people whose lifestyles we may not agree with without **compromising our faith. If we don't treat people with respect, we will never be able to present Jesus.**

WE NEVER WANT TO BE STUMBLING BLOCKS

Paul says that he "became weak in order to win the weak," and he had "become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some."

- **We sacrifice freedoms at times for others to grow and not stumble in their faith. If we enjoy freedoms that cause others to be bound by sin, we're sinning.**

THE MARATHON (1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27) USING A CULTURAL REFERENCE

The Corinthians would've been very familiar with the Isthmian Games, named after the Isthmus of Corinth that honored the Greek god Poseidon. Paul used the huge cultural celebration to prove a point about Christianity.

- This shows **the importance of being able to have real conversations. Without common ground, it's difficult to build relationships.**

"RUN IN SUCH A WAY TO WIN THE PRIZE"

1. Not everyone who runs a race wins, just like everyone who begins the Christian life doesn't endure to the end. **We're to always be moving forward, and our works should reflect this.**
 2. Runners must train. As Christians, we must be **disciplined and devoted to following Jesus and His Word.**
 3. Runners have a goal, and similarly, **we must set our eyes on Jesus and aim to honor Him in all we do.**
 4. Runners train and run for a temporary prize, but **we as Christians will receive an eternal reward.**
- Again, **we are to be consistent and disciplined in our faith in order to "win."**

THIS IS A FIGHT, BUT WE CAN WIN.

Paul knew the rewards of God are only received if we endure to the end. Though salvation is made evident in our commitment to Jesus, this is talking more about the rewards we receive for honoring the calling God places on our lives.

- **All of us are called in some way, and all of us have access to God for help in fulfilling that calling.**

CALLED TO BE SALT AND LIGHT

- **Every Christian has a call to lead in some capacity.** This may be witnessing, discipling a friend, leading our family, serving our city, or vocational ministry.
- We are not saved by works, but **we are to demonstrate our relationship with God through personal and public works** if we claim the Christian faith.

THE CALL DEMANDS WILLING SACRIFICE

- A relationship with Jesus and demonstrating Him to others not only calls for obedience to the Word but also a periodical forfeiting of our freedoms for the sake of others.
- **Though we may have the right to do something, we must be willing to lay rights down for the sake of advancing the gospel and preventing others from stumbling.**

WE'RE TO LOVE AND RESPECT EVERYONE

- There's a deceptive narrative in our culture that if we disagree, we must hate each other. **This is a lie and not a Christian belief.**
- Though people may live contrary to the Bible, **we're to love and show respect to all people in the hopes of them seeing Jesus in us and them eventually being touched by God.**

OUR ENDURANCE PAYS OFF

- The true Christian life is hard! This is why the Bible compares it to a marathon and fight.
- **The call to be growing in our faith, loving people, and living righteously can only be achieved by complete dependency on Jesus.**
- We must also know the price we pay isn't only an honor now but will be honored by God in an inexplicable way eternally.