

ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN

1 Cor. 9:19-27

Let's look, first of all, at verses 19 to 23.

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Paul's Self Denial

Verse 19 - look at it - ***Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.***

Paul has been telling us to surrender our rights for the sake of the gospel and the principle that love limits our liberty.

Verse 19, That's what he does. *"I am free to do whatever I want, but I make myself a slave (servant) unto everybody in order to win them. I will set aside my liberty to win somebody to Christ. If somebody gets offended with something in my life, I'll stop that something, whatever it is. I won't do it in order that I might be inoffensive, in order that I might win them to Christ."* That's what he's saying.

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.

1st group: Unbelieving Jew

2nd group: Religious Jew Under Law

To the *secular* Jew Paul would accommodate himself to like them to win them to Christ. There was no consider of any Mosaic law or traditions. To the *religious* Jew under Law, Paul would keep some observances, those regarding indifferent matters (when they were called for), but to him, they meant nothing at all, for he was now under grace. He would make himself a slave (servant) in that sense to win the religious Jew to Christ.

Examples:

Acts 16:1-3 (NIV1984)

16 He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. 2 The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. 3 Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

Acts 18:18

Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at **Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken.**

Acts 21:26

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The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them.

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.

This 3rd group are Gentiles (pagans) without any written revelation of God (Romans 2:2).

Paul says he became like one not having the law and took his place among them and in their culture in order to reach them.

Gal. 2:11-21

11 When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. 12 Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. 13 The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

14 When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

15 "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' 16 know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So, we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

17 "If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! 18 If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker. 19 For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not set

aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

However, Paul does not wish to give the impression that he is under no restraints, so he hastens to correct any misunderstanding and says I am still under God's law (moral law), and even more, under Christ's law (which comes across in the NT).

V 22-To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.

To those with a weak conscience (perhaps emotionally fragile people?), he also wants to be sure to win. He becomes "weak" --that is, he refrains from excessing his Christian freedom, and acts as they do in respect these indifferent things. He has forfeited his freedom for the sake of all, that by all these means some may be saved.

I have become all things to all men, doesn't mean he lived a life of compromise, not at all. He was a principled man, but where no principles were at stake, he went to extreme lengths to meet the people and seek to win them to the Lord.

Paul had ability to adapt himself and truth. Paul was great soul-winner! His personal considerations were totally submerged in the great aim, that by all means he might lead some to Christ.

23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

Paul does all this for the sake of the gospel that he might be a co-sharer (have "communion, "fellowship ") with the gospel, having his share in it, in making it known and seeing its results in others.

What a joy it is for us to participate in such a work, to be allowed by God, to have a part of it, to be able to spread the gospel with all its blessings!

Now, let us consider Paul's self control in vv 24-27

Paul's Self Control

In vv24-27, Paul by way of practical application, gives us a strong exhortation for Christian self-control, using himself as an example and employing familiar to the Corinthian Greeks because of their games, which they hosted every 2nd year. The particular events he refers to are boxing and running.

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.

Paul assumes their common knowledge ('don't you know') of the foot race in the stadium. Every one of them should run as these runners do, with all the discipline and energy they can muster up to win the prize.

By the words "strict training," Paul refers to the athlete's self-control in diet, and his rigorous bodily discipline. He observes that the athletes train vigorously for a "corruptible crown" - a laurel, olive leaf wreath that would shall wither away and be discarded. But the Christian's crown is eternal.

26 Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. 27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Paul says of himself that he does not contend like an undisciplined runner or boxer. As boxer, he doesn't shadow box, or miss the opponent. He states that he aims his blows against his own body, beating it black and blue (same word in Luke 18:5, hypopiazo). He disciplines his flesh, bringing his sinful nature under control.

The picture is graphic: the ancient boxers devastatingly punishing one another with knuckles bound with leather thongs. And so, by pounding his body, Paul enslaves it in order to gain the Christian prize.

Now, Christians can not be unsaved, but they always run the risk of being disqualified for the prize-the crown.