

# 1 Corinthians 9 Commentary

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1 CORINTHIANS - PROBLEMS OF A LOCAL CHURCH

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**FROM CHART: Note 2 major divisions:**

- **FIRST DIVISION** - Chapters 1-6 = Problems of Congregation - Divisions & Depravities,
- **SECOND DIVISION** - Chapters 7-16 = Personal Problems, Worship Problems

**Charles Hodge** summarizes 1 Cor 9 - The apostle illustrates the duty of foregoing the exercise of our rights for the good of others, by a reference to his giving up his undoubted right to be supported by the church, vs. 1–18. He shows that in other ways he accommodated himself to the opinions and prejudices of others, 19–23. He reminds his readers that nothing good or great could be attained without self-denial, vs. 24–27.

**Dummelow** - Paul has appealed to the 'enlightened' converts at Corinth to give up for the sake of others a practice which they might otherwise have had no hesitation in indulging. He now strengthens this appeal by pointing to his own example of self-denial. As an Apostle he had the right to maintenance from the Church, but had refrained from exercising it, lest he might be suspected of preaching for gain.

**Jack Arnold** - By way of background, in chapter eight, the Apostle Paul dealt with the subject of doubtful things or questionable

practices. In the case of the Corinthians, it was meat offered to idols. Paul's conclusion was that a Christian had the liberty to eat the meat but it became a sin if the eating of that meat caused a brother who was weak in conscience to sin. He also pointed out that the mature brother should set aside his liberty in love to help the weak brother not to stumble and to enable him to grow up and understand the grace of God. The strong brother is not to insist upon his rights, giving up that which is alright to practice for the unity of the body of Christ. Love always causes the Christian to forego liberties and privileges. In chapter nine, Paul deals with those in the Corinthian Church who had difficulty setting aside their rights. They probably said, "I'm not going to give up my rights for any legalistic, narrow-minded Christian." In effect, they were saying, "We are too mature, too advanced in our knowledge of Christian doctrine to make that kind of adjustment" Perhaps they had said to Paul, "Do you practice what you preach? Do you give up your liberties? Do you sacrifice your own rights?" In this section of Scripture Paul uses his own life as an example of one who gave up all kinds of rights to be effective for Christ. He demonstrates how he, as a minister of Christ, had a right to financial support from the local churches, but because of love for the Corinthians and for the purity of the gospel, he set that right aside, taking up secular employment to finance his preaching.

**John MacArthur's** overview of chapter 9 - In chapter 9 the apostle illustrates how he followed the principle in his own life. In verses 1–18 he discusses his right to be financially supported by those to whom he ministers. Verses 1–14 set forth his right, and verses 15–18 give the reason why he would not take advantage of it. In verses 19–27 he explains that he would give up any and every right for the sake of winning men to Jesus Christ.

**W E Vine** - The apostle now illustrates and presses home the appeal he has just made for refraining from exercising one's rights, with a view to the spiritual welfare of others, and this he does by recording his own practice in the use of his apostolic rights, and referring particularly to his reasons for refusing to be maintained by the church.

**Brian Bell** - Last Week We talked about our Christian liberties. This week: Paul uses his own life as an example of the benefits of Voluntarily Limiting Personal Liberties!

## 1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

Amplified - AM I not an apostle (a special messenger)? Am I not free (unrestrained and exempt from any obligation)? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you [yourselves] not [the product and proof of] my workmanship in the Lord?

NET 1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not as free as anyone else? Am I not an apostle? Haven't I seen Jesus our Lord with my own eyes? Isn't it because of my work that you belong to the Lord?

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord?

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:1 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?

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:1 Ο κ ε μ λε θερος; ο κ ε μ π στολος; ο χ ησο ν τ ν κ ριον μ ν ρακα; ο τ ργον μου με ς στε ν κυρ ;

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:1 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?

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:1 Am not I an apostle? am not I free? Jesus Christ our Lord have I not seen? my work are not ye in the Lord?

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not ye my work in the Lord?

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not

my work in the Lord?

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:1 Don't you agree that I'm a free man? Don't you agree that I'm an apostle? Haven't I seen Jesus our Lord? Aren't you the result of my work for the Lord?

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not free? am I not an Apostle? have I not seen Jesus our Lord? are you not my work in the Lord?

- **Am I not an apostle:** 1Co 9:2,3 1:1 15:8,9 Ac 9:15 13:2 14:4 22:14,15 16:17,18 Ro 1:1,5 Ro 11:13 2Co 11:5 12:11,12 Ga 1:1,15-17 2:7,8 1Ti 2:7 2Ti 1:11 Tit 1:1-3
- **Am I not free:** 1Co 9:19 Ga 5:1
- **have:** 1Co 15:8 Ac 9:3,5,17 Acts 18:9 Acts 22:6-8,14-21 Acts 23:11 Acts 26:16-18
- **are:** 1Co 3:6 1 Cor 4:14-15 Acts 18:8-11 2Co 6:1
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL ASSERTS HIS APOSTLESHIP

Keep the context in mind for "Paul is writing against the Corinthians who were demanding their rights. He is showing how he laid aside his rights for the sake of others. He had a right to support in the ministry (1Cor 9:1-14), but he laid aside that right so as not to be a hindrance to the gospel (1Cor 9:15-18). (Steven Cole - [1 Corinthians 9:19-23 Winning Others to Christ](#))

**Jack Arnold** - By way of background, in chapter eight, the Apostle Paul dealt with the subject of doubtful things or questionable practices. In the case of the Corinthians, it was meat offered to idols. Paul's conclusion was that a Christian had the liberty to eat the meat but it became a sin if the eating of that meat caused a brother who was weak in conscience to sin. He also pointed out that the mature brother should set aside his liberty in love to help the weak brother not to stumble and to enable him to grow up and understand the grace of God. The strong brother is not to insist upon his rights, giving up that which is alright to practice for the unity of the body of Christ. Love always causes the Christian to forego liberties and privileges. In chapter nine, Paul deals with those in the Corinthian Church who had difficulty setting aside their rights. They probably said, "I'm not going to give up my rights for any legalistic, narrow-minded Christian." In effect, they were saying, "We are too mature, too advanced in our knowledge of Christian doctrine to make that kind of adjustment" Perhaps they had said to Paul, "Do you practice what you preach? Do you give up your liberties? Do you sacrifice your own rights?" **In this section of Scripture Paul uses his own life as an example of one who gave up all kinds of rights to be effective for Christ.** He demonstrates how he, as a minister of Christ, had a right to financial support from the local churches, but because of love for the Corinthians and for the purity of the gospel, he set that right aside, taking up secular employment to finance his preaching.

**Am I not free?** - The sentence begins with a negative (ouk) which in questions expects the answer "yes." Paul is **free!** Paul had liberty just like any other Christian, but he didn't always use that liberty. Notice how Paul connects this chapter with the previous chapter. He had just spoken of the "**liberty**" (1 Cor 8:9+) of those who potentially were stumbling weaker brothers and how he had given up his liberty (1 Cor 8:13+) and here he states (with a [rhetorical question](#)) that he is at liberty or **free** in Christ (cf Ro 8:2+, Jn 8:32, 36, 2 Cor 3:17+, Gal 5:1+). Chapter 9 illustrates from Paul's own life the principle he had proclaimed in (1 Cor 8:13+), for it shows that even though he had the right to receive [remuneration](#) as an apostle, he relinquished his right.

**THOUGHT** - Paul's example recalls how he calls us all to **be** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) imitators of Him as he is of Christ Jesus (1 Cor 11:1+), which raises the question - Is their any right (which is rightfully mine) that I need to relinquish for the sake of the Gospel of peace and the glory of the Lord? How about my rights in my marriage? Is there anything that is calling for me to deny and die to self (Mk 8:34+)? Just wondering?

**Warren Wiersbe** has an interesting thought - "We do not have the right to give up our freedom, for that was purchased by Christ (Gal. 5:1+); but we do have the freedom to give up our rights."

Liberty cannot be limited without self-control.

-- John MacArthur

MacArthur - Our sinfulness resents and resists restrictions, sometimes even in the name of spiritual freedom. It is one thing to acknowledge the principle of living by love; it is another to follow it. Paul followed it

**Free** (1658) **eleutheros** (See related verb [eleutheroo](#)) is an adjective which means freedom to go wherever one likes, at liberty, possessing the capability of movement, exempt from restraint, obligation or liability, unconstrained, unfettered. In the Greek culture this word pictured one who can go wherever they please) (from Homer down). For example, in one secular writing we find this statement "the temple of Artemis at Ephesus is **open** (free) to all". The opposite idea of **eleutheros** is that which depicts or characterizes a state of enslavement. Eleutheros in the Corinthian letters - 1 Co. 7:21-22; 1 Co. 7:39; 1 Co. 9:1; 1 Co. 9:19; 1 Co. 12:13;

1 Corinthians 7:21-22+ Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become **free** ([eleutheros](#)), rather do that. 22 For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while **free** ([eleutheros](#)), is Christ's slave.

**Technical Note** - There is a series of questions in this context. USB4 has fourteen, NASB has sixteen, NKJV has fifteen, NRSV has sixteen, TEV has fourteen, and NJB has twelve. It is uncertain whether these are statements or questions. (Utley)

**Brian Bell** - Paul, the master illustrator, uses 15 examples in this chapter. 1. He'll liken Christian Ministry to: a Soldier (7a), a Winegrower (7b), Shepherd (7c), Oxen (8,9), Farmer (10), an OT Priest (13), Preacher (14-16), Steward (17), Servant (19), Jew (20a), one under the law (20b), those w/o the Law (21), Weak (22), Runners (24,25), & Fighter (26,27).

**Am I not an apostle?** Again begins with a negative (ouk) which expects the answer "yes." First of three questions all calling for a "Yes." He opened his letter attesting to his apostleship writing "Paul, called as an **apostle** of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother." (1 Cor 1:1) Paul not only had the same rights as other Christians but he also had the rights of an apostle. While we do not know exactly what the Corinthians had said about his apostleship in the letter they wrote (1 Cor 7:1), it certainly appears that he is offering a defense of his apostleship at the beginning of this chapter.

**Apostle** (652) **apostolos** from **apo** = from + **stello** = send forth) ([Click](#) discussion of [apostle](#)) means one sent forth from by another, often with a special commission to represent another and to accomplish his work. It can be a delegate, commissioner, ambassador sent out on a mission or orders or commission and with the authority of the one who sent him. **Apostolos** referred to someone who was officially commissioned to a position or task, such as an envoy. Cargo ships were sometimes called *apostolic*, because they were dispatched with a specific shipment for a specific destination. In secular Greek **apostolos** was used of an admiral of a fleet sent out by the king on special assignment. In the ancient world a **apostle** was the personal representatives of the king, functioning as an ambassador with the king's authority and provided with credentials to prove he was the king's envoy.

**Apostolos** in the Corinthian letters - 1 Co. 1:1; 1 Co. 4:9; 1 Co. 9:1; 1 Co. 9:2; 1 Co. 9:5; 1 Co. 12:28; 1 Co. 12:29; 1 Co. 15:7; 1 Co. 15:9; 2 Co. 1:1; 2 Co. 8:23; 2 Co. 11:5; 2 Co. 11:13; 2 Co. 12:11; 2 Co. 12:12

**Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?** - This third question also begins with a negative (ouk) which expects the answer "yes." **Have seen** is perfect tense which means Paul had seen Jesus at a point in time in the past, with continuing effect or results of having seen the Lord.

**THOUGHT** - Paul was a man who had seen Jesus, and this experience was a driving force for him for the rest of his life on earth. Isaiah saw the thrice Holy LORD and his life was forever radically changed (Isaiah 6:1-13+). John saw the resurrected, ascended, glorified Lord and wrote the final glorious chapter of the Bible (Rev 1:12-20+). (Play "[I See the Lord](#)") Would it be true that we all would have a constant sense of Jesus high and lifted up in our mind's eye! How it would surely effect our Spirit empowered daily conduct and service to our Master! One thinks of this same motivating spiritual dynamic in 1 John 3:2-3+ John writing "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this **hope** fixed on Him (present tense - continually) **purifies** himself (aka, progressive sanctification), just as He is **pure**." Notice how our future hope (absolute assurance of future good) motivates present holy conduct! When was the last time you meditated on the truth of 1 John 3:2 to revive that glorious vision in your mind's eye? Memorize 1 John 3:1-3+ and ask the Spirit to use it to motivate you to continuing growth in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ in this short life. (2 Pe 3:18+).

An **apostle** by definition had to have seen the resurrected Jesus Peter declaring "Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us— beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection." (Acts 1:21-22+) Paul insists that he did not merely see a vision of Jesus, but an authentic appearance of the post-resurrection Jesus.

Acts 9:3-6+ As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; 4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" 5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, 6 but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do."

1 Corinthians 15:8+ and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

**Bob Utley** - Paul's apostleship was being attacked because he was not one of the original Twelve. The qualifications for an apostle were that he had been with Jesus during His earthly life and had seen the resurrection (cf. Acts 1:15–26). Paul asserts that he had seen the resurrected Christ (cf. Acts 9:3, 17, 27; 22:14; 1 Cor. 15:8). Paul's call was by a special act of Christ for a special mission to the Gentiles, which demanded special revelation (cf. Acts 18:9; 23:11). Paul not only encountered Jesus personally on the road to Damascus, but several times during his ministry Jesus (or an angel as Jesus' representative as in Acts 27:23) appeared to him to encourage him (cf. Acts 18:9–11; 22:17–21).

**Are you not my work in the Lord?** - The fourth question also expects a "yes," the saints at Corinth were Paul's work in the Lord. As my mother used to say "[The proof is in the puffing!](#)" The saints reading his letter were his "pudding!" Their changed lives were proof of his apostolic authority.

**THOUGHT** - Note the critical phrase "**in** (locative of sphere) **the Lord**." This spiritual dynamic is the key to **ALL** fruitful, lasting, God glorifying ministry. The clear parallel is found in the words of our Lord Jesus Who declared "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who (present tense - continually) **abides in Me** and I in him, he (present tense - continually) bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do (ABSOLUTELY) nothing." (John 15:5) Paul understood Jesus' declaration that "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits **nothing**." (John 6:63) Later in this letter Paul wrote "by the **grace** of God I am what I am, and His **grace** toward me (GOD'S SOVEREIGN PROVISION) did not prove vain; but I labored (MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY) even more than all of them, yet not I, but the **grace** of God with ("WITH" IS NOT [META](#) BUT SYN = INTIMATELY WITH) me." (1 Cor 15:10+) And writing in his second letter Paul affirmed this vital truth of in the Lord once again declaring "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. " (2 Cor 3:5-6+). And finally he encouraged his spiritual children to work **in the Lord** writing "Therefore, my beloved brethren, **be** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) steadfast, immovable, always abounding in **the work of the Lord**, knowing that your toil is not in vain **in the Lord**." (1 Cor 15:58+) The question is this -- Is the Christian work you are doing today "**IN** the Lord?" If not, it is likely it will be burned up (read 1 Cor 3:12-15+), because it is YOUR work, not HIS work in and through you (See [Good Deeds](#)).

**In the Lord** - Phrase in 1 Corinthians - 1 Cor 1:31 1 Cor 4:17 1 Cor 7:22 1 Cor 7:39 1 Cor 9:1 1 Cor 9:2 1 Cor 11:11 1 Cor 15:58 1 Cor 16:19

Paul had discussed their "examination" of his credentials earlier...

Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. 3 But to me it is a very small thing that **I may be examined by you**, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. 4 For **I am conscious of nothing against myself**, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. 5 **Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time**, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God. (1 Corinthians 4:1-5+)

#### Related Resources:

- Baker's Evangelical Dictionary [Apostle, Paul the Apostle](#)
- Charles Buck Dictionary [Apostle](#)
- CARM Theological Dictionary [Apostle](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Apostle](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Apostle](#)

- Holman Bible Dictionary [Apostles](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Apostle](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Apostle](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Apostle](#)
- Torrey Topical Textbook [Apostles, the](#)
- [What is an apostle? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Is God restoring the offices of apostle and prophet in the church today? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Was the Apostle Paul actually a false prophet? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the difference between a disciple and apostle? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why was Paul called the apostle to the Gentiles? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Chuck Swindoll** has an excellent illustration of the meaning of the verbeleutheros....

Back in the nineteenth century our sixteenth president realized something radical must be done about slavery in our country. Unwilling to look the other way any longer, on **September 22, 1862**, he presented what came to be known as the Emancipation Proclamation, an official document condemning human slavery. Abraham Lincoln, realizing that slavery is completely against human dignity, officially abolished it from the United States on that day. Tragically, little changed in the daily life of our nation, even though the slaves were officially declared free. You know why; you've read the stories. The Civil War was still going on. The plantation owners never informed their slaves. The vast majority of the former slaves couldn't read, so they had no idea what the news was carrying. There was no mass media then to announce those kinds of presidential pronouncements. And so for the longest time, slavery continued even though it had been officially brought to an end. The war ended in **April 1865**. Do you know when Lincoln's declaration was officially enacted? When the people finally began to leave their enslaved lives and make their way toward freedom? **December 18, 1865—more than three years after he first released his proclamation.** Lincoln had been dead for months. The word traveled out of the streets of Washington and down into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, across the back roads of the Carolinas and into Georgia, then Alabama, then Mississippi, then Louisiana, then Texas, then Arkansas, announcing what had been true for more than a thousand days. Even then the word somehow either wasn't believed or wasn't acted upon. Those officially emancipated people, thinking slavery was the way they were condemned to exist, continued to live in bondage though they had been declared **free** men and women since the fall of 1862. ([Embraced by the Spirit The Untold Blessings of Intimacy with God](#))

**1 Corinthians 9:2 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.**

Amplified - Even if I am not considered an apostle (a special messenger) by others, at least I am one to you; for you are the seal (the certificate, the living evidence) of my apostleship in the Lord [confirming and authenticating it].

NET 1 Corinthians 9:2 If I am not an apostle to others, at least I am to you, for you are the confirming sign of my apostleship in the Lord.

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:2 Even if others think I am not an apostle, I certainly am to you. You yourselves are proof that I am the Lord's apostle.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:2 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.

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:2 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.

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:2 ε λλοισ ο κ ε μ π στολος, λλ γε μ ν ε μι· γ ρ σφραγ ς μου τ ς ποστολ ς με ς στε ν κυρ .

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:2 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.

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:2 if to others I am not an apostle -- yet doubtless to you I am; for the seal of my apostleship are ye in the Lord.

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:2 If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you; for the seal of mine



apostleship are ye in the Lord.

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:2 If I am not an apostle to others, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:2 If I am not an apostle to others, I certainly am to you. For you are the evidence of my apostolic credentials in the Lord.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:2 If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:2 If I am not an apostle to others, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:2 Although I may not be an apostle for others, certainly I am for you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:2 Even if to others I am not an apostle, to you at any rate I am, for you are the seal of my apostolate in the Lord.

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:2 If I'm not an apostle to other people, at least I'm an apostle to you. You are the seal which proves that I am the Lord's apostle.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:2 If to others I am not an Apostle, at least I am one to you: for the fact that you are Christians is the sign that I am an Apostle.

- **for:** John 6:27 2Co 3:1-3 2 Cor 12:12
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

(THE SAINTS WERE PAUL'S LETTER) 2 Corinthians 3:1-3 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, **letters of commendation** to you or from you? **2 You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men;** 3 being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

### PAUL'S SEALED APOSTLESHIP

**If - IF** introduces a first class conditional clause, which is assumed to be true -- Paul's authority was rejected by different factions in the early church.

**To others I am not an apostle** ([apostolos](#)), **at least I am to you** - **To others** means "in the estimation of others." Who these **others** are is not stated, but clearly they were trouble makers who tried to refute Paul's apostleship in the Lord. **At least** is the contrasting conjunction [alla](#) which serves to contrast what **others** were saying. Those who were believers, men and women to whom he had spoken the Gospel and who were saved by that Gospel, knew that Paul was a genuine apostle of Christ Jesus.

**For** -Term of explanation. Paul explains the significance of the fact that he was an apostle in the minds of the saints at Corinth. They were his seal.

**You are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord- Amplified** = "for you are the seal (the certificate, the living evidence) of my apostleship in the Lord [confirming and authenticating it]." **NLT** = You yourselves are proof that I am the Lord's apostle. **The seal** was the believers Paul had led to the Lord, who were in effect living, confirming and guaranteeing signs as well as signs of his apostolic authority.

**THOUGHT** - Note repetition of the phrase again **in the Lord**. Is your (my) work solely in the Lord, by the strength of His Spirit, in reliance on His grace and power and for His glory Alone? Beloved, let us ever remember that if it is "*my* work: and not "*His* work," it is work that will burn (1 Cor 3:12-15+). We need daily to diligently seek to accomplish *His* "**good works** (cf [Good Deeds](#)), which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." (Eph 2:10+) Are you walking in them beloved?

**In the Lord** occurs 9x in 1 Corinthians - 1 Cor 1:31 1 Cor 4:17 1 Cor 7:22 1 Cor 7:39 1 Cor 9:1 1 Cor 9:2 1 Cor 11:11 1 Cor 15:58 1 Cor 16:19

**Utley** - A **seal** in the ancient world was a warm blob of wax into which a signet ring was pressed to seal a letter or package. It was an assurance that the contents had not been opened; it showed who owned the contents; and it showed the genuineness of the contents, that it was sent by the right person. This type of seal became a metaphor of Christian certainty (cf. John 3:33+; Ro 4:11).

Not only were the saints in Corinth Paul's **seal** of authenticity, they were also his **letter** (See [Passage](#) above). In addition Paul had performed supernatural **signs** that authenticated his apostleship, writing "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you (BY ME, PAUL) with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles." (2 Corinthians 12:12)

**Seal** (4973) **sphragis** from **sphragis** = seal, engraved object used to make a mark - denoting ownership, approval, or closure of something, normally done by pressing into heated wax usually attached to a document or letter) means to set a seal upon or to mark with a seal so as to certify that something is so. Sphragis is used most often in the Revelation of the scroll with seven seals, the first one being broken by the Lamb of God unleashing the final wrath of God on the earth, with seven seal judgments followed in succession by seven trumpet judgments and then the final seven horrible bowl judgements. Right now (2021) the scroll is still sealed (Rev 5:5+). If you have not believed in the Lamb of God, today can be the day of your salvation, the time of His rescuing of you from the wrath of God (1 Th 1:10). Seals were used to make something secure, to serve as a guarantee of the correctness of the contents, to indicate authenticity, to indicate ownership. Sacrificial animals were examined and sealed if perfect. Jars, sacks of fruit or grain were sealed. To mark with a seal as a means of identification in Greek secular writings was used to mark all kinds of animals, so that the mark denoting ownership also carries with it the protection of the owner. **Detzler** writes that "When a merchant bought a sack of grain, a seal would be placed on the sack until the full payment was made. This was a guarantee of coming payment. Later the seal became a mark of royalty. Any communiqué from the crown was sealed by the king. After dabbing hot wax on the document, the king would seal it by pressing his ring into the wax. Before long, the engraved ring was called "a seal." In the religious sphere, a sacrificial lamb which was found to be suitable was also sealed, marked as suitable. In the Septuagint Greek Old Testament, a seal was a signet ring. This ring was used to indicate a sale (Jer. 32:10). Royalty also used the seal to authenticate its orders (Esther 3:10; 8:8). Though the precise word for "sealing" is not used, Isaiah 44:5 speaks of people who had "for Jehovah" tattooed on their hands as a mark of religious sacrifice ([New Testament Words in Today's Language](#)) **Sphragis** in NT - Ro 4:11; 1 Co. 9:2; 2 Ti 2:19; Rev 5:1; Rev. 5:2; Rev. 5:5; Rev. 5:9; Rev. 6:1; Rev. 6:3; Rev. 6:5; Rev. 6:7; Rev. 6:9; Rev. 6:12; Rev. 7:2; Rev. 8:1; Rev. 9:4

**Apostleship** (651) **apostole** from verb **apostello** - from **apo** = from + **stello** = withdraw from; Click related word [apostolos or here](#)) means a sending forth, sending off, sending away, a dispatching. In secular Greek it was used of an expedition (LS). Not every believer is an apostle in the technical NT sense, but every believer is in a real sense "sent forth" from God and privileged to be an ambassador for Him (2 Cor 5:20+), going forth with the life transforming message of the gospel of grace and truth. **Are you fulfilling your purpose beloved?** (cp Eph 2:10+) **Apostole** - 4x in NT - Acts 1:25; Rom. 1:5; 1 Co. 9:2; Gal. 2:8

## 1 Corinthians 9:3 My defense to those who examine me is this:

Amplified - This is my [real ground of] defense (my vindication of myself) to those who would put me on trial and cross-examine me.

NET 1 Corinthians 9:3 This is my defense to those who examine me.

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:3 This is my answer to those who question my authority.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:3 This is my defense to those who would examine me.

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:3 This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me.

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:3 μ πολογ α το ς μ νακρ νουσ ν στιν α τη.

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:3 Mine answer to them that do examine me is this,

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:3 My defence to those who examine me in this;

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:3 My defence to them that examine me is this.

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:3 My defense to those who examine me is this:

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:3 My defense to those criticizing me is this:



NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:3 My defense to those who examine me is this:

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:3 This is my defense to those who would examine me.

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:3 My defense against those who would pass judgment on me is this.

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:3 To those who want to interrogate me, this is my answer.

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:3 This is how I defend myself to those who cross-examine me.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:3 My answer to those who are judging me is this.

- **My defense:** Ac 22:1 25:16 Php 1:7,17 2Ti 4:16 \*Gr:
- **to those** : 1Co 14:37 2Co 10:7,8 12:16-19 13:3,5,10
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL'S "APOLOGY"

Our English word **apology** originally did not mean "to say I am sorry" but actually referred to "a defense presented in court." **Apologetics** is the branch of theology that deals with the defense of the faith. Every Christian should be able to give a reasoned defense of his hope in Christ, especially in hopeless situations. A crisis creates the opportunity for witness when a believer behaves with faith and hope, because the unbelievers will then sit up and take notice.

**My defense to those who** (present tense - are continually) **examine me is this** - The word "my" is at the beginning of the Greek sentence which adds emphasis and could be read something like "my own." **Defense** means a speech in defense of something, as when making a defense in a law court which is not an inappropriate analogy, for he is being accused by some as not being a genuine apostle.. "The words defense (apologia) and examine (anakrino) are both legal words, taken from the Roman law court. Paul feels like he's on trial, or that he has already been "found guilty" by the Corinthian Christians." (Guzik) The word **examine** can have the sense of cross-examine, picturing the continual actions of his opponents.

**Robertson** - The critics in Corinth were "investigating" Paul with sharp eyes to find faults. How often the pastor is under the critic's spy-glass.

**Defense** (627) **apologia** from **apo** = from + **logos** = speech) literally means, "to talk one's self off from". **Apologia** was a technical word used in the Greek law courts and was used of an attorney who talked his client off from a charge preferred against him. In short it refers to a speech given in defense. Although **apologia** may have the idea of a judicial interrogation in which one is called to answer for the manner in which he has exercised his responsibility, the word can also mean an informal explanation or defense of one's position (1Co 9:3, 2Co 7:11) and the word would aptly describe giving an answer to the skeptical, abusive or derisive inquiries of ill-disposed neighbors. **Apologia** in 8v - Acts 22:1; Acts 25:16; 1 Co. 9:3; 2 Co. 7:11; Phil. 1:7; Phil. 1:16; 2 Tim. 4:16; 1 Pet. 3:15

**Examining** (appraise, call to account, ask questions) (350) **anakrino** from **aná** = again + **kríno** = sift, judge, separate out so as to investigate) means to sift up and down, to examine accurately or carefully (re-examine), to make careful and exact research as in legal processes. Originally implying a through examination; **ana**, up, from bottom to top. Technically, of a legal examination. The fundamental idea of **anakrino** is examination, scrutiny, following up (**ana**) a series of objects or particulars in order to distinguish (**krino**). **Anakrino** can mean to interrogate, to cross-examine or to put through a course of questioning as when one is questioned and examined by a judge in a court of law. It was often used in secular Greek of the interrogation of a prisoner. It was also used of a judicial examination before the final verdict was rendered. **Anakrino** in the NT - Lk. 23:14; Acts 4:9; Acts 12:19; Acts 17:11; Acts 24:8; Acts 28:18; 1 Co. 2:14; 1 Co. 2:15; 1 Co. 4:3-4; 1 Co. 9:3; 1 Co. 10:25; 1 Co. 10:27; 1 Co. 14:24

**Anakrino** used 3x by Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:3-4- "But to me it is a very small thing that I may be **examined** by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even **examine** myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who **examines** me is the Lord."

Amplified - Have we not the right to our food and drink [at the expense of the churches]?

NET 1 Corinthians 9:4 Do we not have the right to financial support?

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:4 Don't we have the right to live in your homes and share your meals?

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:4 Do we not have the right to eat and drink?

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:4 Don't we have the right to food and drink?

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:4 μ ο κ χομεν ξουσ αν φαγε ν κα πτε ν;

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:4 Have we not power to eat and to drink?

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:4 have we not authority to eat and to drink?

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:4 Have we no right to eat and to drink?

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:4 Don't we have the right to eat and drink?

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:4 We are not to be denied the right to eat and drink, are we?

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:4 Do we have no right to eat and drink?

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:4 Do we not have the right to our food and drink?

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:4 Do we not have the right to eat and drink?

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:4 Have we not every right to eat and drink?

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:4 Don't we have the right to eat and drink?

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:4 Have we no right to take food and drink?

- **we:** 1Co 9:7-14 Mt 10:10 Lu 10:7 Ga 6:6 1Th 2:6 2Th 3:8,9 1Ti 5:17,18
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## RIGHTS OF APOSTLES

**Do we not have a right ([exousia](#)) to eat and drink?** - **We** shows he is speaking for all the apostles or possibly Barnabas since he mentions him in v6. The sentence begins with two negatives (me ouk), the first negative is used in the question expecting the answer “no” and the second negative negating the verb so it reads: “you would not say that we do not have the authority, would you?” Eat and drink in context refers to doing so that the church's expense. Some evidently insisted that because Paul was not one of the original 12 apostles, he had no right to be maintained by the church. And though Paul and his co-workers had every right to eat, drink, marry, and collect funds for their work of preaching the gospel, they pursued none of these things.

Note the word [exousia](#) (**right**) is a key word in 1 Corinthians 9, occurring 5 times - 1 Cor 9:4, 5, 6, 12, 18.

**Utley** - This begins a series of questions (cf. vv. 4–7) in which Paul asserts his right as an Apostle to be supported by the local churches. However he personally chose not to exercise his rights (cf. 9:15, 18; 1 Thess. 2:6), but he affirms the rights of other Christian workers.

### 1 Corinthians 9:5 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?

Amplified - Have we not the right also to take along with us a Christian sister as wife, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas (Peter)?

NET 1 Corinthians 9:5 Do we not have the right to the company of a believing wife, like the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas?

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:5 Don't we have the right to bring a Christian wife with us as the other disciples and the Lord's brothers do, and as Peter does?

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:5 Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and

the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:5 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?

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:5 μ ο κ χ ο μ ε ν ξ ρ ο υ σ α ν δ ε λ φ ν γ υ ν α κ α π ε ρ ι γ ε ι ν ς κ α ο λ ο ι π ο π ο σ τ ο λ ο ι κ α ο δ ε λ φ ο τ ο κ υ ρ ο υ κ α Κ η φ α ς ;

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:5 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?

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:5 have we not authority a sister -- a wife -- to lead about, as also the other apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:5 Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:5 Don't we have the right to be accompanied by a Christian wife like the other apostles, the Lord's brothers, and Cephas?

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:5 We are not to be denied the right to have the companionship of a sister as a wife as do the rest of the apostles, the natural brothers of the Lord, and Cephas, are we?

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:5 Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:5 Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:5 Do we not have the right to take along a Christian wife, as do the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:5 And every right to be accompanied by a Christian wife, like the other apostles, like the brothers of the Lord, and like Cephas?

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:5 Don't we have the right to take our wives along with us like the other apostles, the Lord's brothers, and Cephas do?

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:5 Have we no right to take about with us a Christian wife, like the rest of the Apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?

- **Do we not have a right**: 1Ti 3:2 4:3 Tit 1:6 Heb 13:4
- **believing wife**: 1Co 7:15,39 Song 4:9,10,12 5:1,2 Ro 16:1 1Ti 5:2
- **the brothers**: Mt 12:46-50 Mt 13:55 Mk 6:3 Lu 6:15 Joh 2:12 Ac 1:14 Ga 1:19
- **Cephas**: 1Co 1:12 Mt 8:14 Mk 1:30 Joh 1:42
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 12:46-50+ While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and **brothers** were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. 47 Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You." 48 But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My **brothers**?" 49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! 50 "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."

Mark 6:3+ "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of **James and Joses and Judas and Simon**? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him.

## APOSTOLIC RIGHT TO WIVES

**Do we not have a right ([exousia](#)) to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas ([Kêphás](#))?** - Who is **we**? Is this Barnabas (v6) or other apostles? We cannot be dogmatic. Paul asks if he does not have just as much right to be accompanied by a wife as had other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Peter. And in regard to his

question, again the implied answer is "yes we have this right." The verb **take along** literally means to lead about or take someone alone, but in this context does not emphasize their traveling together on a journey but rather "to have constantly with oneself" meaning to be married. However it is also possible that these were wives who accompanied their husbands on missionary trips. Notice also that the **wife** is to be a **believing wife**, literally, "a sister as wife," because **believing** is the word [adelphē](#) which literally is a female sibling with at least one parent in common and here is clearly used figuratively of female fellow believer in the family of God. She is not his sister by blood (no incest intended here). NEVER marry unbelievers! Period! (1 Cor 7:39+). **Right** is [exousia](#) used 6 times in this chapter (1 Co. 9:4; 1 Co. 9:5; 1 Co. 9:6; 1 Co. 9:12 = twice; 1 Co. 9:18).

**Robertson** - This is a plea for the support of the preacher's wife and children. Plainly Paul has no wife at this time.

**Utley** on the phrase **believing wife** - In Greek there is a double pair of nouns, "**a sister, a wife**," which was idiomatic for "a believing wife." The historical problem is how is this related to (1) the women who accompanied Jesus and the Apostolic group and helped them (cf. Matt. 27:55; Mark 15:40–41) (2) the woman discussed in 7:36–38 (a daughter or a virgin companion or a fiancée) (3) the ministry of the wives of church leaders similar to the deaconesses of Ro 16:1 or the "widows roll" of the Pastorals (cf. 1 Tim. 3:11; 5:9–10) Probably all of the original Twelve were married because singleness among Jews was very rare. Jews would marry because of the commandment in Gen. 1:28; 9:1, 7.

Jack Arnold - It was the practice of the Apostles to take their wives and children with them when they traveled and ministered to various churches. This verse tells us that most of the Apostles were married to believing wives, and they were not separated from their wives and families when ministering. It also tells us that the church supported the Apostle, his wife and his family; therefore, we might conclude that the woman was not required to work for money outside the home. This verse certainly refutes the idea that men in the ministry should not be married....**and the Lord's brothers**. This is a reference to the half-brothers of Jesus. Mary had other children by Joseph after she bore Christ (Matt. 1:25; 12:46; Jn. 2:12). This obviously refutes the superstition that Mary was always a virgin. This more importantly tells us that the privilege of being financially supported in the ministry applied to those who were not Apostles, for the half-brothers of Christ were not Apostles, except James.... **and Cephas?** Even Peter and his wife were supported by the church in the work of the ministry. Peter was a married man (Matt 8:14; Mark 1:30). Again, this refutes the whole idea of the celibacy of the clergy. Furthermore, if Peter was the first Pope (as some erroneously claim) then that Pope was a married man.

**The brothers of the Lord** - (See [Related Passages](#) above) This refers to the Jesus' literal half brothers, who were active in the church, were considered leadership. As a matter of fact, one of Jesus' relatives was the leader of the Jerusalem Church for several generations during the first century, starting with James. (cf James in Acts 12:17+ in leadership in Acts 15:13+, author of James 1:1 and Jude author of Jude 1:1+)

**Robertson on Cephas** - Why is he singled out by name? Perhaps because of his prominence and because of the use of his name in the divisions in Corinth (1 Cor 1:12). It was well known that Peter was married (Matt. 8:14). Paul mentions James by name in Gal. 1:19 as one of the Lord's brothers. All the other apostles were either married or had the right to be.

**Guzik** - Apparently, most of the other apostles were married, and their wives traveled with them as they did ministry. This is especially interesting concerning Peter (Cephas), who was obviously married, yet still considered by the Roman Catholic church to be the first pope, in contradiction to the principle of mandatory celibacy.

## 1 Corinthians 9:6 Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?

Amplified - Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from doing manual labor for a livelihood [in order to go about the work of the ministry]?

NET 1 Corinthians 9:6 Or do only Barnabas and I lack the right not to work?

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who have to work to support ourselves?

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:6 Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living?

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:6 μ νος γ κα Βαρναβ ς ο κ χομεν ξουσ αν μ ργ ζεσθαι;

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:6 or only I and Barnabas, have we not authority -- not to work?

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:6 Or I only and Barnabas, have we not a right to forbear working?

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:6 Or do Barnabas and I alone have no right to refrain from working?

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:6 Or is it only Paul and Barnabas who are excluded from the right not to work a secular job?

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:6 Or is it only myself and Barnabas who do not have the right not to work?

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:6 Are Barnabas and I the only ones who have no right to stop working?

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who don't have any rights, except to find work to support ourselves?

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:6 Or I only and Barnabas, have we no right to take a rest from work?

- **Barnabas:** Ac 4:36 11:22 13:1,2,50 14:12 15:36,37
- **have:** 1Co 4:11,12 Ac 18:3 20:34,35 1Th 2:9 2Th 3:7-9
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right (exousia) to refrain from working?** - Amplified adds "[in order to go about the work of the ministry]" What Paul is asking is "Are Barnabas and I the only ones who do not have the right to refrain from working?" **Barnabas** is also called an apostle, which shows a wider use of the term (cf. Eph. 4:11) than simply the initial Twelve (cf. Acts 14:14, 18:5).

**Lias** makes an interesting observation - The reason why Paul and Barnabas refused to accept payment for their services is not hard to discover. They went on a mission to the Gentiles, the other Apostles to the Jews. The latter fully understood that the ministers should be maintained by the offerings of the worshippers. The Gentiles, on the contrary, had so long known what it was to be plundered by greedy sophists who lived by their wits, that it was above all things necessary for the Apostles of Christ to avoid being confounded with such persons" (Cambridge Greek Text - [1 Corinthians 9 Commentary](#))

**Utley** - The rabbis asserted the dignity of manual labor. All rabbis had to have a secular job because it was considered sinful to receive money for teaching YHWH's truths (cf. Pirke Abot 1:13; 4:7). Paul chose not to take advantage of his rights as a preacher of the gospel (v. 18), possibly because of (1) his Jewish heritage or (2) the attacks of those who claimed he manipulated people for money (cf. Acts 20:33; 2 Cor. 11:7–12; 12:14–18).

**Craig Blomberg** - Bi-vocational ministry has numerous advantages—freedom from human "strings," not imposing a financial burden on any group of believers, and exemption from charges of mismanaging funds or ministering primarily for financial gain

#### Related Resource:

- [Who was Barnabas in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**1 Corinthians 9:7 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?**

Amplified - [Consider this:] What soldier at any time serves at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat any of the fruit of it? Who tends a flock and does not partake of the milk of the flock?

NET 1 Corinthians 9:7 Who ever serves in the army at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit? Who tends a flock and does not consume its milk?

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:7 What soldier has to pay his own expenses? What farmer plants a vineyard and doesn't have the right to eat some of its fruit? What shepherd cares for a flock of sheep and isn't allowed to drink some of the milk?

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk?

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:7 τς στρατε εται δ οις ψων οις ποτ ; τς φυτε ει μπελ να κα τ ν καρπ ν α το ο κ σθ ει;  
τς ποιμα νει πο μνην κα κ το γ λακτος τς πο μνης ο κ σθ ει;

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:7 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?

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:7 who doth serve as a soldier at his own charges at any time? who doth plant a vineyard, and of its fruit doth not eat? or who doth feed a flock, and of the milk of the flock doth not eat?

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:7 What soldier ever serveth at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:7 Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit? Or who shepherds a flock and does not drink the milk from the flock?

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:7 Who at any time serves in the military and has to pay his own expenses? 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?

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:7 Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:7 Who at any time pays the expenses for doing military service? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not get any of its milk?

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:7 Who ever serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating its produce? Or who shepherds a flock without using some of the milk from the flock?

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:7 What soldier would ever serve in the army at his own expense? And who is there who would plant a vineyard and never eat the fruit from it; or would keep a flock and not feed on the milk from his flock?

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:7 Does a soldier ever serve in the army at his own expense? Does anyone plant a vineyard and not eat the grapes? Does anyone take care of a flock and not drink milk from the sheep?

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:7 Who ever goes to war without looking to someone to be responsible for his payment? who puts in vines and does not take the fruit of them? or who takes care of sheep without drinking of their milk?

- **serves as a soldier** : 2Co 10:4,5 1Ti 1:18 6:12 2Ti 2:3,4 4:7
- **plants a vineyard**: 1Co 3:6-8 De 20:6 Pr 27:18 Song 8:12
- **who tends a flock**: Jer 23:2,3 Joh 21:15-17 Ac 20:28 1Pe 5:2
- **use the milk of the flock**: Pr 27:27 Isa 7:22
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### THREE METAPHORS

Now in 1 Cor 9:7-14 Paul gives several examples from everyday life to show that it is appropriate for Gospel workers to receive a living (cf Ro 15:27).

**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?** - Each earns and deserves their reward, wages or pay. A Soldier is paid for his services. A Winegrower eats (drinks) from the grapes he harvests. A Shepherd drinks from the milk of his flock. According to Jewish custom a herdsman was allowed to drink from the milk of the herd when he was far away from home w. the herd, or when he needed food. The analogy is that Gospel seed planters should be paid by those who benefit from their proclamation.

**Jack Arnold** - Whatever it takes materially to support a soldier is given so he can be effective in battle. The minister of the gospel, who is a soldier of Jesus Christ, renders a service to the church; therefore, he should be paid by the church. The farmer who owns and plants a vineyard eats from the vineyard. If a minister plants and waters a spiritual vineyard by teaching the Word, then those who are recipients of the spiritual teaching should support him. The shepherd who keeps a flock of sheep drinks the milk from the sheep. A minister feeds the sheep spiritual food and the sheep should supply the minister with physical food. The point of the soldier, farmer and shepherd is that all three are fed and sustained from their own work, so the minister is to live by those to whom he ministers. Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor (Gal. 6:6+).

**Serves as a soldier** (4754) [strateuomai](#) from **strategos** = army, **stratos** = an encamped army) means



literally to perform military service, serve as a soldier in the army, go to fight, carry on a military campaign, make a military expedition, lead soldiers to war or to battle. Soldiers' pay was probably a denarius a day, out of which they had to equip themselves, secure any simple luxuries, or bribe the centurions for remissions of duties **Strateuomai** is used literally here in 1 Cor 9:7 as in Luke 3:14+ and 2 Ti 2:4+. In the other four occurrences (2 Cor 10:3; 1 Ti 1:18; Jas 4:1; 1 Pet 2:11) strateuomai is used metaphorically of spiritual warfare.

**Expense** (3800) (**opsonion** from **ópson** = cooked meat + **onéomai** = buy) whatever is bought to be eaten with bread. It meant rations for a soldier and so his stipend or pay. At Athens it meant "fish." It came to mean the "provision-money" which Rome gave its soldiers. The wages paid by sin (Ro 6:23+). Death can be "earned" so to speak! Eternal life cannot be earned but a gracious gift from God's.

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**ILLUSTRATION** - It is always difficult to speak on finances no matter how old the pastor is because it is such a touchy subject. There was a county church in North Carolina which had an advertisement in the Saturday newspaper which said, "Mt. Moriali Church. The Rev. John Obediah preaching. In the propagation of the gospel, three books are necessary: The Holy Book, the hymn book and the pocketbook. Come tomorrow and bring all three."

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## James Smith - THE MINISTRY

### 1 CORINTHIANS 9:7-27

The apostle is here vindicating both his ministry and his method, and there are suggested some qualifications for a successful ministry.

I. He had a Personal Experience of Jesus Christ. "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" (v. 1). He had both seen Him and heard Him, and knew the transforming power of His revelation. He could truthfully say: "I know Him whom I have believed." Should not this be the initial experience of every messenger of the Gospel? How can we say, "We speak that we do know," if we have no personal experience of His saving power?

II. He had Faith in God for the Supply of his Need. Although he asked nothing from those to whom he ministered the Word, but showed them that if he sowed spiritual things it was no great thing if he should reap their carnal things (v. 11), he reminded them that it was an ordination of the Lord, "that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel (v. 14). The Gospel of Christ is without charge, and he would put no price on it for his own advantage (v. 18). He could say: "My God will supply all your need" (Phil. 4:19). It is a sorry service that can be bribed with money.

III. He has Enthusiasm for the Gospel. "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel" (v. 16). This is not that kind of enthusiasm that can be worked up for a special occasion; not a convulsive effort that may be produced by a torrent of words. It is the result of the holy fire from the altar of the Cross blazing in the heart, where the "wood, hay, and stubble" of all self-seeking has been burned up, and where the Holy Spirit has taken possession of the life, and focused the energies of the soul in Christ and Him crucified. "To me to live is Christ."

IV. He has Humility of Spirit. "I have made myself the slave of all, that I might gain the more" (v. 19). He was ready to take the lowest place that he might, if possible reach the lowest down. Like his Master, he took the towel of humility and girded himself, that he might wash the feet of others (John 13:4, 5). "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." "The proud He knoweth afar off." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9).

V. He has the Power of Adaptation in Method. "To the Jews I become as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. To them under the law, as under the law, that I might win them that are under the law" (vv. 20, 21). He declares further: "That I am made all things to all, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the Gospel's sake" (vv. 22, 23). In all this we may be assured Paul never condescended to pander to that which was evil, or encourage customs and practices which were dishonouring to the Name of Jesus. He simply and lovingly stooped down far enough to get a hold of them, that he might lift up into God's salvation. No weakling in the faith should attempt this. It takes a strong man to swim against this tide.

VI. He is Self-denying that he might Keep Physically Fit. "I keep my body in subjection, lest I myself should be rejected" (v. 27). The body is a sacred instrument for the work of God. In eating and drinking, in work or in physical exercise, let us remember that the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body (1 Cor. 6:13). "Ye are not your own," therefore take care of the Lord's property.

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**1 Corinthians 9:8 I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things?**

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Amplified - Do I say this only on human authority and as a man reasons? Does not the Law endorse the same principle?

NET 1 Corinthians 9:8 Am I saying these things only on the basis of common sense, or does the law not say this as well?

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:8 Am I expressing merely a human opinion, or does the law say the same thing?

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:8 Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same?

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:8 Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing?

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:8 Μ κατ' ἀνθρώπου τὰ τὰ λαλῶ καὶ ὡς τὰ τὰ οὐρανοῦ;

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:8 According to man do I speak these things? or doth not also the law say these things?

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:8 Do I speak these things after the manner of men? or saith not the law also the same?

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:8 Am I saying this from a human perspective? Doesn't the law also say the same thing?

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:8 It is not that I am saying these things merely as human values, is it? Does not the law also state these principles?

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:8 Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also?

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:8 Do I say this on human authority? Does not the law also say the same?

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:8 Am I saying this on human authority, or does not the law also speak of these things?

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:8 Do not think that this is merely worldly wisdom. Does not the Law say exactly the same? It is written in the Law of Moses:

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:8 Am I merely stating some human rule? Don't Moses' Teachings say the same thing?

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:8 Am I talking as a man? does not the law say the same?

- as: 1Co 7:40 Ro 6:19 1Th 2:13 4:8
- or: 1Co 14:34 Isa 8:20 Ro 3:31
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL PREPARES TO BACK UP HIS PREVIOUS STATEMENT

**I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I?** - MIT = "It is not that I am saying these things merely as human values, is it?" NLT = "Am I expressing merely a human opinion." Answer? No! The negative particle (me) introduces this question and thus expects a negative answer. **Human judgment** is one word [anthropos](#) (the generic term for a human being) and can be rendered "on the basis of common sense" (NET), "merely a human opinion." (NLT). Paul is saying that this is not just my human wisdom (or human authority) making this judgment, this declaration preparing for his appeal to God's "judgment" in the following passage.

**THOUGHT** - It is fine as believers to have our opinion but we are wise if we always compare our human wisdom with God's wisdom! This necessitates that we must be familiar with His Word (cf Mt 4:4+). This is another reason to be in the Word daily (Col 3:16+) and to begin the day in His Word (cf Ps 5:4, Ps 55:17) (for He might just speak wisdom to us that we will need during the day!)

**Utley** - The Greek text has "not according to man" (anthrōpos, which refers to humans). Paul uses these contrasting phrases several times (cf. 3:3; 9:8; 15:32; Rom. 3:5; Gal. 1:11; 3:15). It was his idiomatic way of contrasting earthly human ways with his new Spirit-led (Jesus' teaching or Spirit's insight) way of thinking and acting.

**Or does not the Law also say these things?** - **The Law** apparently refers here to [the Pentateuch](#), for Paul will go on to quote from the fifth book, Deuteronomy. And so with another rhetorical question Paul appeals to God for support of his premise.

**Robertson** - The illustrations from human life are pertinent, but he has some of a higher order, from Scripture.

**1 Corinthians 9:9 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?**

Amplified - For in the Law of Moses it is written, You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the corn. Is it [only] for oxen that God cares?

NET 1 Corinthians 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." God is not concerned here about oxen, is he?

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:9 For the law of Moses says, "You must not muzzle an ox to keep it from eating as it treads out the grain." Was God thinking only about oxen when he said this?

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:9 For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned?

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:9 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?

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:9 ν γ ρ τ Μωϋσ ως ν μ γ γραπται, Ο κημ σεις βο ν λο ντα. μ τ ν βο ν μ λει τ θε

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:9 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?

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:9 for in the law of Moses it hath been written, 'thou shalt not muzzle an ox treading out corn;' for the oxen doth God care?

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. Is it for the oxen that God careth,

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Do not muzzle an ox while it treads out grain. Is God really concerned with oxen?

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:9 For in the law of Moses it has been written: Do not muzzle an ox that is treading out the grain. It is not oxen God cares about, is it?

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about?

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned?

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:9 It is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is God concerned about oxen,

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:9 You must not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the corn. Is it about oxen that God is concerned here,

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:9 Moses' Teachings say, "Never muzzle an ox when it is threshing grain." God's concern isn't for oxen.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:9 For it says in the law of Moses, It is not right to keep the ox from taking the grain when he is crushing it. Is it for the oxen that God is giving orders?

- **You:** De 25:4 1Ti 5:18
- **God is not concerned about oxen:** Nu 22:28-35 De 5:14 Ps 104:27 145:15,16 147:8,9 Jon 4:11 Mt 6:26-30 Lu 12:24-28
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passage:**

1 Timothy 5:18 For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

**Unmuzzled Oxen Threshing Grain**

## OLD TESTAMENT SUPPORT

**For it is written in the Law of Moses- Written** is perfect tense meaning it has been written in the past and remains on record. It emphasizes the standing legal authority of the Word of God. As the psalmist penned "Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven." (Ps 119:89) Paul proceeds to quote the writing in Deuteronomy 25:4 "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing."

This OT farming analogy supports the right of financial support for those in ministry.

**Guzik** - The principle of Deuteronomy 25:4 is much more important than providing for the needs of oxen. God establishes the principle that a minister has the right to be supported by the people he is ministering to. As Wiersbe says, "Since oxen cannot read, this verse was not written for them." The law about oxen stated a principle that had greater application. However, "We must not make the mistake of thinking that Paul means to explain that commandment allegorically; for some empty-headed creatures make this an excuse for turning everything into allegory, so that they change dogs into men, trees into angels, and convert the whole of Scripture into an amusing game." (Calvin)

**YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING** - Paul quotes the Septuagint of Dt 25:4. **Muzzle** is kemoo (used only here) and describes putting something over the mouth of an ox treading grain to keep them from eating. The picture is of an ox working and how foolish it would be to prohibit the ox nourishment lest he become weak and not be able to continue the job of threshing. **Threshing** (aloao) means to thrash, to tread or trample out. Sledges were drawn by teams of oxen and encircled the pile of grain heaped in the center of the [threshing floor](#).

**Arnold** - The ox was used in treading out the corn for threshing. The ox trampled the corn, shaking the grain loose from the husks. The mixture was then tossed up in the breeze and the wind blew the chaff away while the heavier grain fell straight down. The ox was not muzzled while he trod the grain which means he could eat some if he chose. The plowman and thresher do this in the confidence (hope) that they will eat, so the minister preaches with the confidence the people will give him support.

**God is not concerned ([melo](#)) about oxen, is He?** - While God cares for His creatures, He cares even more for His new creatures in Christ (2 Cor 5:17YLT+)!

**Utley** explains that "Verses 9 and 10 show how an OT text was expanded (to draw out the significance or application) to meet the needs of a new day (cf. Rom. 4:23–24; 15:4; 1 Cor. 9:10; 10:6, 11). The OT exhibits special care for animals (cf. Exod. 21:33, 35; 27:10–13; 23:5, 12; Deut. 5:14; 22:4). Jesus alludes to this care of animals (cf. Luke 13:15; 14:5, where He applies the "light and heavy" rabbinical principle). This is not to imply that God does not care about animals, but that He also cares about people, and in this context, gospel workers (cf. 1 Tim. 5:18). This is similar to Matt. 6:26–34. Jesus uses God's provisions for nature as a way of asserting God's provision for humanity made in His image. This was a typical rabbinical technique known as "lesser to greater" or "light and heavy," which was one of Hillel's principles (cf. Aboth. de Rab. Nathan XXXVII and Tosefta Sanhedrin c. 7). Remember, Gamaliel was Paul's rabbinical teacher (cf. Acts 5:34; 22:3)."

### Related Resource:

- [Should pastors be paid a salary? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**1 Corinthians 9:10 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.**

Amplified - Or does He speak certainly and entirely for our sakes? [Assuredly] it is written for our sakes, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher ought to thresh in expectation of partaking of the harvest.

NET 1 Corinthians 9:10 Or is he not surely speaking for our benefit? It was written for us, because the one plowing and threshing ought to work in hope of enjoying the harvest.

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:10 Wasn't he actually speaking to us? Yes, it was written for us, so that the one who plows and the one who threshes the grain might both expect a share of the harvest.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:10 Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:10 Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the

plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest.

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:10 δι μ ς π ν τ ω ς λ γ ει; δι μ ς γ ρ γ ρ φ η τ ι φ ε λ ει π λ π δι ρ ο τ ρ ι ν ρ ο τ ρ ι ν κ α λ ο ν π λ π δι τ ο μ ε τ χ ει ν.

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:10 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.

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:10 or because of us by all means doth He say it? yes, because of us it was written, because in hope ought the plower to plow, and he who is treading ought of his hope to partake in hope.

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:10 or saith he it assuredly for our sake? Yea, for our sake it was written: because he that ploweth ought to plow in hope, and he that thresheth, to thresh in hope of partaking.

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:10 Or isn't He really saying it for us? Yes, this is written for us, because he who plows ought to plow in hope, and he who threshes should do so in hope of sharing the crop.

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:10 Is it not surely on our account that he says it? For our sake it has been written that of necessity the one plowing plows in hope of harvest, and the one who threshes does so in expectation of sharing in the crop.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:10 Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:10 Or does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was indeed written for our sake, for whoever plows should plow in hope and whoever threshes should thresh in hope of a share in the crop.

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:10 or is he not really speaking for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope, and the thresher in hope of receiving a share.

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:10 or is it not said entirely for our sake? Clearly it was written for our sake, because it is right that whoever ploughs should plough with the expectation of having his share, and whoever threshes should thresh with the expectation of having his share.

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:10 Isn't he speaking entirely for our benefit? This was written for our benefit so that the person who plows or threshes should expect to receive a share of the crop.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:10 Or has he us in mind? Yes, it was said for us; because it is right for the ploughman to do his ploughing in hope, and for him who is crushing the grain to do his work hoping for a part in the fruits of it.

- **For:** Mt 24:22 Ro 15:4 2Co 4:15
- **the plowman :** 1Co 3:9 Lu 17:7,8 Joh 4:35-38 2Ti 2:6
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Jn 4:35-38+ "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. 36 "Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. 37 "For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.' 38 "I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor."

2 Timothy 2:6+ The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

### ALL GOD'S LABORERS SHARE IN THE HARVEST

**Or is He speaking altogether for our sake?** - Note while the words in Deuteronomy were written down on a scroll, they are no less the words spoken by God Himself.

**Yes, for our sake it was written - For the sake** of His apostles (and for us) In Romans 15:4+ Paul emphasizes the value of the OT writing "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

**because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops** - If the plowman or thresher had no hope (no assurance) of participation in the harvest, this would be inhumane. But such was not the case in common practice, for they did have hope of sharing. The principle is clear that all the laborers in God's field (1 Cor 3:9+) should share in the fruit of the harvest (cf Jn 4:35-38+).

## 1 Corinthians 9:11 If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

Amplified If we have sown [the seed of] spiritual good among you, [is it too] much if we reap from your material benefits?

NET 1 Corinthians 9:11 If we sowed spiritual blessings among you, is it too much to reap material things from you?

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:11 Since we have planted spiritual seed among you, aren't we entitled to a harvest of physical food and drink?

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:11 If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:11 ε με ς μ ν τ πνευματικ σπε ραμεν, μ γα ε με ς μ ν τ σαρκικ θερ σομεν;

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:11 If we to you the spiritual things did sow -- great is it if we your fleshly things do reap?

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:11 If we sowed unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things?

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:11 If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it too much if we reap material benefits from you?

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:11 If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it something great that we should reap natural things from you?

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:11 If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:11 If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits?

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:11 If we have sown spiritual seed for you, is it a great thing that we reap a material harvest from you?

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:11 If we have sown the seed of spiritual things in you, is it too much to ask that we should receive from you a crop of material things?

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:11 If we have planted the spiritual seed that has been of benefit to you, is it too much if we receive part of the harvest from your earthly goods?

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:11 If we have been planting the things of the Spirit for you, does it seem a great thing for you to give us a part in your things of this world?

- **If we sowed spiritual things** : Mal 3:8,9 Mt 10:10 Ro 15:27 Ga 6:6
- **is it too much** 2Ki 5:13 2Co 11:15
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Ezekiel 34:2-4 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the



shepherds feed the flock? 3 “You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock. 4 “Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them.

## SPIRITUAL SOWING MATERIAL REAPING

**If - IF** introduces a first class conditional clause, which is assumed to be true

**We sowed (speiro) spiritual (pneumatikos) things in you** - Who is **WE**? Paul and Apollos certainly sowed **spiritual things** in Corinth. They had sown the Gospel seed. In 1 Cor 3:6 Paul wrote "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth."

**Is it too much if we reap (therizo) material things from you?** - The apostles deserved to **reap** wages from those among whom they had sown seed.

**Arnold** - It is far more important to receive spiritual things than to give physical things. There is no dollar value you can place on the person who sows in you spiritual realities. Every congregation needs to understand that the pastor does not live by bread alone, but he cannot live without bread either.

**Material things** is *ta sarkika*, literally “the fleshly things,” but in this context clearly not referring to fleshly things in a spiritual sense (as in 1 Cor 3:3+ = “you are still fleshly”), but rather in a physical sense as that which humans need to survive in this world (water, food, shelter, clothing, etc.). Paul used **sarkikos** in this same sense in his letter to the Romans....

Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in **material things (sarkikos)**. (Ro 15:27+)

**Utley on sowed...reap** - The OT agricultural setting of harvest becomes a spiritual principle (cf. Job. 4:8; Pr 22:8; Hos. 8:7; Hag. 1:6; John 4:37; 1 Cor. 9:11; 2 Cor. 9:6, 10; Gal. 6:7–9).

**Brian Bell** - Many pastors have fleeced the flock with this Scripture...but not one will get away with it! Paul had seen too many pastors growing fat, & he was determined to go to the other extreme!

**Material** (Fleshly)(4559) **sarkikos** from **sarx**) means of flesh and can refer to physical flesh or to the moral/ethical aspects of flesh. Generally, of things, *tá sarkiká*, things corporeal, external, temporal fleshly things; pertaining to the flesh. The word here is not identical with “sinful.” The contrast is between heavenly and earthly, or between spiritual and the material and it refers to the earthly things necessary for living

### Related Resources:

- [What does the Bible say about sowing and reaping? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Is “you reap what you sow” biblical? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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### Oswald Chambers - Approved Unto God - The Worker 1 Corinthians 9:11-27

#### The Matter

Plant every man on the Rock, and plant the whole man there.

(a) Amid a Crowd of Paltry Things (1 Corinthians 9:11-15)

The first thing a worker has to learn is how to be God’s noble man or woman amid a crowd of paltry things. A Christian worker must never make this plea—“If only I were somewhere else!” The only test that a worker is Christ’s witness is that he never becomes mean from contact with mean people any more than he becomes sinful from contact with sinful people.

We are not workers for God by our own choice (see John 15:16). Many deliberately choose to be workers for God, but they have no matter of God’s mighty grace in them, no matter from God’s mighty word. The pattern for God’s worker is that he is entrusted with a mission—for example, Moses and the Apostle Paul. We have to be in God’s hand so that He can plant men on the Rock as He has planted us, not by our testimony only, but because we are being made co-workers with God.

(b) Amid a Creed of Powerful Things (1 Corinthians 9:16-17)

Unless we have the right matter in our minds intellectually and in our hearts affectionately, we will be hustled out of usefulness to God. Keep the note of greatness in your creed: Whom do I believe Jesus Christ is? What do I believe sin is? What do I believe God

can do with sin? What do I believe is God's purpose for the human race? Face yourself with one central Fact only, the Lord Jesus Christ, His Life and Death and Resurrection.

Every Christian must testify, testimony is the nature of the life; but for preaching there must be the agonising grip of God's hand, something akin to verse 16. The whole of my life, says Paul, is in the grip of God for this one thing, I cannot turn to the right hand or to the left, I am here for one purpose, to preach the gospel. How many of us are held like that? The note of the majority is verse 17, that is why there is so much mediocrity, so much lazy work for God. "I have chosen you"—that is where the note of greatness is struck out of your creed.

### **The Manner**

However things move, they do not change us.

#### (a) The External Crush of Things (1 Corinthians 9:18-19)

God buries His men in the midst of paltry things, no monuments are erected to them, they are ignored, not because they are unworthy but because they are in the place where they cannot be seen. Who could see Paul in Corinth? Paul only became marvellous after he had gone. All God's men are ordinary men made extraordinary by the matter He has given them. God puts His workers where He puts His Son. This is the age of the humiliation of the saints.

Manner is the outcome of matter. Paul's whole soul and mind and heart were taken up with the great matter of what Jesus Christ came to do, he never lost sight of that one thing (see I Corinthians 2:2).

#### (b) The Ethical Character of Things (1 Corinthians 9:20-27)

"I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22 rv). The worker who is not chosen by God says, "I am all things to all men, and nothing in particular to any man." The stamp of the worker gripped by God is that, slowly and surely, one here and another there is being won for God.

The worker chosen by God has to believe what God wishes him to believe, though it cost agony in the process; the worker who chooses to work for God may believe what he likes. It is the latter class who exploit the Bible.

Here, in this College, God can break or bend or mould, just as He chooses. You do not know why He is doing it; He is doing it for One purpose only, that He may be able to say, "This is My man, My woman." Never choose to be a worker, but when once God has put His call on you, woe be to you if you turn to the right hand or to the left. God will do with you what He never did with you before the call came; He will do with you what He is not doing with other people. Let Him have His way.

**1 Corinthians 9:12 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.**

Amplified If others share in this rightful claim upon you, do not we [have a still better and greater claim]? However, we have never exercised this right, but we endure everything rather than put a hindrance in the way [of the spread] of the good news (the Gospel) of Christ.

NET 1 Corinthians 9:12 If others receive this right from you, are we not more deserving? But we have not made use of this right. Instead we endure everything so that we may not be a hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:12 If you support others who preach to you, shouldn't we have an even greater right to be supported? But we have never used this right. We would rather put up with anything than be an obstacle to the Good News about Christ.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:12 If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:12 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.

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:12 ελλοι τς μν ξουσας μετ χουσιν, ο μλλον μες; λλ οκ χρησ μεθα τ ξουσ τατ, λλ π ντα στ γομεν, να μ τινα γκοπ ν δ μεν τ ε αγγελ το Χριστο .

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:12 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.

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:12 if others do partake of the authority over you -- not we more? but we did not use this authority, but all things we bear, that we may give no hindrance to the good news of the Christ.

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:12 If others partake of this right over you, do not we yet more? Nevertheless we did not use this right; but we bear all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:12 If others have this right to receive benefits from you, don't we even more? However, we have not made use of this right; instead we endure everything so that we will not hinder the gospel of Christ.

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:12 If others have a right to share from you, do not we have that right even more? But we did not cash in on this right. Instead, we put up with everything so we might not cause any hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:12 If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:12 If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we still more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:12 If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we still more? Yet we have not used this right. On the contrary, we endure everything so as not to place an obstacle to the gospel of Christ.

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:12 Others have been given such rights over you and do we not deserve more? In fact, we have never exercised this right; on the contrary, we have put up with anything rather than obstruct the gospel of Christ in any way.

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:12 If others have the right to expect this from you, don't we deserve even more? But we haven't used our rights. Instead, we would put up with anything in order not to hinder the Good News of Christ in any way.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:12 If others have a part in this right over you, have we not even more? But we did not make use of our right, so that we might put nothing in the way of the good news of Christ.

- **others:** 2Co 11:20
- **do we not more:** 1Co 9:2 4:14,15
- **Nevertheless:** 1Co 9:15,18 Ac 20:31-34 2Co 11:7-10 12:13,14 1Th 2:6-9 2Th 3:8,9
- **but:** 1Co 4:11,12 6:7
- **hindrance:** Ge 24:56 Ne 4:8 Lu 11:52 Ro 15:22 2Co 11:12
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL SURRENDERS HIS RIGHTS

**If - IF** introduces a first class conditional clause, which is assumed to be true. In other words other leaders were exercising the right to be materially compensated.

**Others share the right (exousia) over you, do we not more?** - NLT = "If you support others who preach to you, shouldn't we have an even greater right to be supported?" Presumably **others** were claiming they had the right to reap material things from the Corinthians.

**Utley** on "**do we not more**" - This is an allusion to the fact that Paul started this church. He was their spiritual father (cf. 1 Cor 4:15). Now they were rejecting his spiritual rights (1 Cor 9:11, 14; Ro 15:27), but apparently were allowing others to demand material compensation.

**Nevertheless, we did not use this right** - Paul says the apostles did not avail themselves of the material rewards that were due them.

**Right** (1849)(**exousia** from **éxesti** = it is permitted, it is lawful) means the power to do something and was a technical term used in the law courts, of a legal right. "**Authority** or right is the dominant meaning (of exousia) in the New Testament." (Vincent) **Exousia** refers to delegated **authority** and combines the idea of the "right

and the might", these attributes having been granted to someone. Exousia in the Corinthian letters - Observe that **exousia** is a "**key word**" in 1 Corinthians 9 - 1 Co. 7:37; 1 Co. 8:9; 1 Co. 9:4; 1 Co. 9:5; 1 Co. 9:6; 1 Co. 9:12; 1 Co. 9:18; 1 Co. 11:10; 1 Co. 15:24; 2 Co. 10:8; 2 Co. 13:10

**But** - "Just as strongly as Paul affirms his right to be supported by the people he ministers unto, he will also affirm his right to not use that right, if using it might hinder the gospel of Christ." (Guzik)

**We** (present tense - continually) **endure** (1 Cor 13:7 of love) **all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ** - Paul explains that they did not avail themselves of their apostolic right so that there would be nothing to hold back the progress of the Gospel. In other words, men could not say "See, they are preaching the Gospel to get rich," which would deter people from wanting to hear the Gospel. In short, Paul surrendered his rights to save souls! As noted below **hindrance** was a strong military term used for breaking up a road to keep an enemy from using it and here figuratively applied to hindering the proclamation of the Gospel. (see [related note](#) by Lias)

**Guzik** - Here we see Paul's real heart. Paid or not paid, it did not matter to him. What mattered was the work of the gospel. Was it more effective for the gospel if Paul should receive support? Then he would receive it. Was it more effective for the gospel if Paul should work to support himself? Then he would do that. What mattered was that the gospel not be hindered in any way. If Paul was willing to deny himself such an important right for the good of the gospel and the Corinthian Christians, then should not also the Corinthian Christians deny their "right" to eat meat sacrificed to idols for the same good?

**Arnold** - Paul refused to take any money when he preached. Why? At this time there were traveling bans of philosophers and teachers who would teach people if they would give them money. Paul simply did not want the stigma of having the unsaved make the connection of receiving Christ and giving money. In the local church or when preaching evangelistically to the lost, we should never ask the unsaved to support the work of the Lord. The issue is not money but Christ. The unsaved should never think we are begging for their money. In my first church, I had an old, Mennonite elder who opposed my viewpoint of never asking the unsaved for money. He had no Biblical support for his position. His rational was, "If the church does not get their money, the devil will!"

**Brian Bell** - Men judge a message by the life and character of the man who brings it and Paul was determined that his hands would be clean! Someone once said to a preacher, "I cannot hear what you say for listening to what you are." He should be respected if he is respectable! Not pastors who are lazy or sleazy. Nor just because of their Title (P. I. Pastor).

**Endure** (4722) **stego** from **steg** = to cover, conceal, **stege** = roof) had a fairly broad range of meanings including to cover, to protect, to hold back, to hide, to bear, to endure or to persist. This is a metaphorical use of the Greek word for "roof," meaning "to cover," "to conceal," or "to endure". **Stego** means to protect by covering or to cover closely (so as to keep water out). Thus **stego** is found in secular Greek writings - "the camp **protects** men against the cold" (Plato); "a house **protects** men". **Bruce** explains that **stego** was used "originally of keeping out or keeping in water or another fluid (e.g. of a watertight house or of a vessel that does not leak), comes from the latter sense to mean generally "to contain" and then "to endure" **Stego** used 4x in the NT - 1 Co. 9:12; 1 Co. 13:7; 1 Thess. 3:1; 1 Thess. 3:5

**Hindrance** (1464) (**egkopte** from **en** = in + **kopto** = to cut down, strike) refers to something that stands in the way and must be circumvented or surmounted. It is often understood as something cut down and which then lies in the person's way. Figuratively it is that which prevents or hinders the occurrence of an event, in this case the proclamation and reception of the Gospel. **Egkopte** comes from the military practice of making a trench or ditch to slow down a pursuing enemy. It was also a surgical term for making an incision. Paul didn't want his financial needs to cut into the body of Christ.

**Gospel** (2098) **euaggelion** from **eú** = good + **aggéllō** = proclaim, tell) is literally good news or glad tidings. In the NT **euaggelion** is used only of God's message of salvation in three senses (1) act of proclamation (preaching the gospel) (1 Cor 4:15), (2) the work of evangelization (spread of the gospel) (Phil 4:3), (3) the content of the message as an offer of salvation (good news) (Ro 1:16) (Adapted from Friberg - Analytical Lexicon). In secular Greek it originally referred to a reward for good news and later became the good news itself. The word **euaggelion** was commonly used in the first century as our words "good news" today. The idea then and now is something like this - "Have you any **good news** (euaggelion) for me today?" This was a common question in the ancient world. In ancient secular Greek **euaggelion** described **good news** of any kind and prior to the writing of the New Testament, had no definite religious connotation in the ancient world until it was taken over by the "Cult of Caesar" which was the state religion and in which the emperor was worshipped as a god (see more discussion of this use below).

**Related Descriptions:**

- the Gospel of the kingdom (Mt 4:23+)
- the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mk 1:1+) - it centers in Christ
- the Gospel of God (Mk 1:14+) - it originates with God and was not invented by man
- the Gospel of the kingdom of God (Lk 16:16+)
- the Gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24+),
- the Gospel of His Son (Ro 1:9+)
- the Gospel of Christ (Ro 15:19+)
- the Gospel of the glory of Christ (2Co 4:4+)
- the Gospel of your salvation (Ep 1:13+)
- the Gospel of peace (Ep 6:15+)
- the Gospel of our Lord Jesus (2Th 1:8+)
- the glorious Gospel of the blessed God (1Ti 1:11)
- In Ro 16:25, 26+ Paul called it “my Gospel” indicating that the special emphasis he gave the Gospel in his ministry.

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### **J Oswald Sanders - Money: A Test of Character 1 Corinthians 9:12**

If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right" (1 Corinthians 9:11–12).

In support of his contention, the apostle cites the generally accepted principle that the farmer who produces the crop has the right to a share of it, as also the grower of grapes a share of the wine. In other words, there is nothing wrong in being a paid preacher. Even the ox is not muzzled (kept from eating) when he is engaged in threshing the grain. “In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel” (v. 14).

Throughout his ministry Paul was meticulous in his financial dealings. He refused to allow monetary considerations to influence his decisions or actions. Money is an acid test of character. Our real riches are the quality of our character, and these remain with us eternally. In his attitude toward money, Paul was pure—something that cannot be said of all Christian workers. He had victory in the realm of finance, and he renounced his right to be supported by the church so that he might win more souls to Christ (v. 12).

Whether we possess much money or little, our attitude toward it is revealing. There is no moral quality in riches or poverty per se, but our attitude toward it is a test of true spirituality. In a world in which material and financial values are paramount, it is not easy to escape their corruption.

Discover a person's attitude toward money, and you will learn a great deal about his or her character. Not every Christian worker has mastered the problem of financial stewardship, and, as a result, many have lost spiritual effectiveness. Paul did not fall into that trap. (SD)

### **1 Corinthians 9:13 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?**

Amplified Do you not know that those men who are employed in the services of the temple get their food from the temple? And that those who tend the altar share with the altar [in the offerings brought]?

NET 1 Corinthians 9:13 Don't you know that those who serve in the temple eat food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar receive a part of the offerings?

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:13 Don't you realize that those who work in the temple get their meals from the offerings brought to the temple? And those who serve at the altar get a share of the sacrificial offerings.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:13 Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:13 Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar?

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:13 ο κ ο δατε π ο τ ερ ργαζ μενοι [τ ] κ το ερο σθ ουσιν, ο τ θυσιαστηρ παρεδρε οντες τ θυσιαστηρ συμμερ ζονται;

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:13 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?

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:13 Have ye not known that those working about the things of the temple -- of the temple do eat, and those waiting at the altar -- with the altar are partakers?

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:13 Know ye not that they that minister about sacred things eat of the things of the temple, and they that wait upon the altar have their portion with the altar?

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:13 Don't you know that those who perform the temple services eat the food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the offerings of the altar?

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:13 Do you not know that those who work in the sacred precincts eat from the offerings made there? That is, those tending the sacrificial altar get their share of what is placed on the altar.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:13 Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:13 Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is sacrificed on the altar?

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:13 Do you not know that those who perform the temple services eat (what) belongs to the temple, and those who minister at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:13 Do you not realise that the ministers in the Temple get their food from the Temple, and those who serve at the altar can claim their share from the altar?

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:13 Don't you realize that those who work at the temple get their food from the temple? Don't those who help at the altar get a share of what is on the altar?

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:13 Do you not see that the servants of the holy things get their living from the Temple, and the servants of the altar have their part in the food which is offered on the altar?

- **they:** 1Co 10:18 Lev 6:16-18,26 7:6-8 Nu 5:9,10 Nu 18:8-20 De 10:9 18:1-5 1Sa 2:28
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ILLUSTRATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PRIESTS

**Do you not know that those who perform ([ergazomai](#)) sacred services ([hieros](#)) eat the food of the temple**- This question expects a positive answer. Paul is referring here to the Levitical priests who were granted a portion of some of the animal sacrifices the Israelites offered ((cf. Lev. 7:6, 8–10, 14, 28–36+; Dt. 18:1). The Levites worked full time on care of the tabernacle and were supported by the tithes and offerings. (see Nu 18:8–20+ for the details). If this were true in the Old Testament, how much more so in the New Testament?

**And those who** (present tense - continually) **attend regularly to the altar ([thusiasterion](#)) have their share from the altar ([thusiasterion](#))** - The **altar** is where the meat would be sacrificed. Paul saw his gospel ministry as priestly service as he taught in Romans. The customs Paul refers to were widespread in antiquity. The recompense to those who served was the eating of the temple food not only among the Jews but also among the pagans.

But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, **ministering as a priest the gospel of God**, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. (Ro 15:15-16+).

**1 Corinthians 9:14 So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.**

Amplified [On the same principle] the Lord directed that those who publish the good news (the Gospel) should live (get their maintenance) by the Gospel.

NET 1 Corinthians 9:14 In the same way the Lord commanded those who proclaim the gospel to receive their living by the gospel.

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:14 In the same way, the Lord ordered that those who preach the Good News should be supported by those who benefit from it.



ESV 1 Corinthians 9:14 In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:14 In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:14 ο τωσ κα κ ριος δι ταξεν το ς τ ε αγγ λιον καταγγ λλουσιν κ το ε αγγελ ου ζ ν.

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:14 so also did the Lord direct to those proclaiming the good news: of the good news to live.

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:14 Even so did the Lord ordain that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel.

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:14 In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should earn their living by the gospel.

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:14 In a comparable manner the Lord organized his work so that those who preach the gospel should have their living from the gospel.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:14 Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:14 In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:14 In the same way, the Lord ordered that those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel.

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:14 In the same way, the Lord gave the instruction that those who preach the gospel should get their living from the gospel.

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:14 In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who spread the Good News should earn their living from the Good News.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:14 Even so did the Lord give orders that the preachers of the good news might get their living from the good news.

- **the Lord directed:** 1Co 9:4 Mt 10:10 Lu 10:7 Ga 6:6 1Ti 5:17
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 10:10+ or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.

Luke 10:7+ "Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.

Galatians 6:6+ The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.

1 Corinthians 2:1 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, **proclaiming** ([kataggello](#)) to you the testimony of God.

### PREACHER'S PAY FOR PROCLAMATION

**So also - MIT** = "In a comparable manner," **Amplified** = "[On the same principle]" "Just as God gave orders about the priests in the temple, so did the Lord Jesus give orders for those who preach the gospel to live out of the gospel " (Robertson).

**MacDonald** - This (A DEFINITE DIRECTIVE FROM THE LORD JESUS) would be conclusive proof alone of Paul's right to support from the Corinthians. But this raises the question of why he did not insist on being supported by them. The answer is given in verses 15–18.

**The Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel (euaggelion) to get their living from the gospel (euaggelion)** - Nowhere is it recorded in the Gospels that Jesus made this statement. However the Lord Jesus did give a directive to the original disciples declaring "the laborer is worthy of his wages." (Lk 10:7+) and "the worker is worthy of his support." (Mt 10:10+) This statement in essence answers the question Paul had asked earlier "Do we not have a right to eat and drink?" (1 Cor 9:4)

**Directed** (gave orders or instructions) (1299) **diatasso** from **dia** = through + **tasso** = order) means literally to arrange thoroughly, to arrange in its proper order, to issue orderly and detailed instructions as to what must be done. To institute, prescribe, to appoint, to set in order (Titus 1:5+), ordain (1 Cor 7:17 regarding marital conditions); to give directions (Acts 7:44+-God directed Moses to make the Tabernacle according to pattern), to command (with the implication of setting in order) as did Emperor Claudius' "commanding" that Jews must leave Rome (Acts 18:2+, cp Lk 3:13+). **Diatasso** was a technical word for carrying out laws and sometimes used by military and government officials (cf Acts 18:2+, Lk 3:13+). It was a word that denoted a command given from an authority. Moulton and Milligan add that diatasso was a technical term used in connection with wills, as well as a general word for commanding. All NT uses - Matt. 11:1; Lk. 3:13; Lk. 8:55; Lk. 17:9; Lk. 17:10; Acts 7:44; Acts 18:2; Acts 20:13; Acts 23:31; Acts 24:23; 1 Co. 7:17; 1 Co. 9:14; 1 Co. 11:34; 1 Co. 16:1; Gal. 3:19; Titus 1:5

**Proclaim** (2605) **kataggello** from **kata** = an intensifier, down + **aggelos** = messenger and **aggello** = to declare, report) literally means to "declare down". It means to announce, with focus upon the extent to which the announcement or proclamation extends and so to proclaim throughout. It means to declare plainly, openly and loudly! It was used of solemn religious messages. Webster adds that our English "**proclaim**" (from pro = before + clamare = to cry out) means to "declare publicly, typically insistently... in either speech or writing... and implies declaring clearly, forcefully, and authoritatively." (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary) All 18 NT uses - Acts 3:24; Acts 4:2; Acts 13:5; Acts 13:38; Acts 15:36; Acts 16:17; Acts 16:21; Acts 17:3; Acts 17:13; Acts 17:23; Acts 26:23; Rom. 1:8; 1 Co. 2:1; 1 Co. 9:14; 1 Co. 11:26; Phil. 1:17; Phil. 1:18; Col. 1:28

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### **Realistic Thoughts About Paying a Pastor - Jack Arnold**

You have heard about the congregation who prayed, "Lord, you keep the pastor humble and we will keep him poor." That, of course, is not the Christian way to view the paying of the pastor.

**First**, if ministers are required to support themselves, the danger is that they will be forced to become men of the world when they should be men of prayer and the Word. Ministers ought not to go into real estate, investments, gold and silver, playing the stock market or whatever. These distract a man of God from his number one task which is to pray and minister the Word. The normative principle is that a minister is never to seek support from a secular occupation unless it is a particular, special case such as Paul and Barnabas.

**Second**, a minister should be paid well enough so as to keep his mind from worldly things such as where his next dollar is coming from. He should receive an amount of money which would make him free from the basic cares of the world. He should not be rich nor should he live in poverty simply because he is in the ministry.

Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God (Prov. 30:8-9).

We are not told how much any minister should be paid but there are some hints from the Bible and common sense. According to the Bible, there are ruling elders and teaching elders. It says in I Timothy 5:17-18, The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." In the New Testament church, there were ruling elders who were not paid, ruling elders who were paid, and teaching elders who were always paid because they labored in the Bible, preaching and teaching. Apparently these teaching elders are to be paid according to the quantity and quality of preaching and teaching work they did.

Other considerations for paying a pastor are: 1) types of people to whom he ministers; 2) the size of the congregation to whom he ministers, and 3) his own particular needs as a pastor. Pastors are not to be paid with the same criterion as the secular world. Several ways to determine a pastor's salary might be: 1) pay a little above the average of the congregation; 2) pay the average of the elders, throwing out the highest and the lowest, and 3) pay the same as a school teacher with a Masters or Doctors degree plus experience.

**Third**, When a local congregation hires a pastor, they commit to take care of all of his needs which includes housing, food,

transportation, hospitalization, education of his children, retirement and other basics of our American culture. However, no money should be given to any pastor if he is not feeding his people the Word of God and caring for their spiritual needs. A church must not call a man to be their pastor and expect him to trust God for his finances when the congregation is not willing to trust God for their pastor's finances. It is the responsibility of the congregation to meet those needs. As one dear old pastor said, "A minister cannot eat without prayer, but he can't eat prayers either!"

In my first pastorate, my elders pulled me aside the first week at the church and said to me, 'Pastor, we expect you to trust God for your finances so we are committed to pay all of our bills at the church first and then we will pay your salary if there is any money left.' I thought for a minute and said, "Why don't you pay me first as the Bible declares and then you as a board of elders trust God for the bills? It is biblical for pastor, elders, deacons and congregation to trust God for all financial needs, paying the pastor first not last."

**Fourth**, the first responsibility of every congregation is to meet the financial needs of the pastor or pastors whom God has placed in their midst to feed them spiritually and to train them for ministry. A local church is made up of a congregation with its rulers, teaching and ruling elders. A local church is not buildings but people, although a building may be helpful to the furtherance of the ministry.

**Fifth**, a congregation must be aware of how difficult it is for a pastor to preach to people who pay his salary. There may be a tendency for a pastor to protect his ministry by compromising truth or not addressing certain subjects because he knows there are people in the audience with big bucks who oppose what he is saying. The pastor more than anyone else realizes that in many churches and Christian organizations it is not the Almighty God who runs them but the almighty dollar.

**Sixth**, congregations need to try to sense the frustration of many pastors who are poorly paid for the amount of education they possess. This has caused many pastors to play up the ministry as a profession rather than a calling from God. The result is that the ministry becomes professional and the emphasis is placed on education, administration, counseling, public relations or whatever. Quite often these things are substituted for preaching and teaching the Word of God.

"Occasionally, Christian ministry has elicited an unusual amount of prestige and financial reward, usually when the gospel has been compromised by political entanglements. But for the most part, believers who have chosen paid ministry as a career have foregone higher salaries and more comfortable lifestyles that other occupations or careers could have afforded them. Yet those who are truly called with the compulsion Paul felt will confess that no other line of work could have proved so satisfying, notwithstanding all the obstacles they have encountered" (Blomberg, 1 Corinthians).

**Seventh**, a congregation must not lump all faithful ministers with the few unfaithful ones. It is true that one of the great scandals of Christianity is the huge sums of money some of the pastors of mega-churches and televangelists receive. They are looked upon as corporate executives. If Christ were physically here today, I do think he would in righteous indignation drive them out of the visible church.

"Large segments of the well-to-do, non-Christian world, highly influenced by sect education and media, remain convinced that most conservative Christians are racketeers, seeking to bilk the rich out of their money for self-serving ends. Radio and television ministries that constantly harangue their audiences for donations do little to dispel this stereotype. Numerous televangelists keep phone numbers constantly on their viewers' screens, distracting from any message they might be trying to preach other than "we want your money." Questionable spending practices of the money they do receive often add fuel to the fire" (Blomberg, 1 Corinthians).

**1 Corinthians 9:15 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.**

Amplified But I have not made use of any of these privileges, nor am I writing this [to suggest] that any such provision be made for me [now]. For it would be better for me to die than to have anyone make void and deprive me of my [ground for] glorifying [in this matter].

Wuest - But as for myself, I have not made use of these things in even one instance, and at present continue the same policy. Moreover, I am not writing these things [concerning privileges] in order that in this manner it should be done in my case, for it were good for me rather to die than—no one shall nullify my boasting. ([Erdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 9:15 But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing these things so that something will be done for me. In fact, it would be better for me to die than— no one will deprive me of my reason for boasting!

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:15 Yet I have never used any of these rights. And I am not writing this to suggest that I want to start now. In fact, I would rather die than lose my right to boast about preaching without charge.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:15 But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting.

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:15 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. I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of this boast.

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:15 γ δ ο κ χρημαι ο δεν το των. ο κ γραψα δ τα τα, να ο τως γ νηται ν μο · καλ ν γ ρ μοι μ λλον ποθανε ν - τ κα χημ μου ο δε ς κεν σει.

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:15 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.

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:15 And I have used none of these things; neither did I write these things that it may be so done in my case, for it is good for me rather to die, than that any one may make my glorying void;

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:15 But I have used none of these things: and I write not these things that it may be so done in my case; for it were good for me rather to die, than that any man should make my glorifying void.

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:15 But I have used none of these rights, and I have not written this to make it happen that way for me. For it would be better for me to die than for anyone to deprive me of my boast!

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:15 But in my case, I have not made use of these provisions. Nor did I write these things so that I might now start being remunerated. For I would rather die (of lack of necessities) than that anyone should reduce to nothing my basis for boasting.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:15 But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void.

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:15 But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing this so that they may be applied in my case. Indeed, I would rather die than that-- no one will deprive me of my ground for boasting!

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:15 I have not used any of these rights, however, nor do I write this that it be done so in my case. I would rather die. Certainly no one is going to nullify my boast.

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:15 However, I have never availed myself of any rights of this kind; and I have not written this to secure such treatment for myself; I would rather die than that . . . No one shall take from me this ground of boasting.

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:15 I haven't used any of these rights, and I haven't written this in order to use them now. I would rather die than have anyone turn my bragging into meaningless words.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:15 But I have not made use of any of these things: and I am not writing this in the hope that it may be so for me: for it would be better for me to undergo death, than for any man to make this pride of mine of no effect.

- **have:** 1Co 9:12 4:12 Ac 8:3 20:34 1Th 2:9 2Th 3:8
- **I am not writing:** 2Co 11:9-12 2 Cor 12:13-18
- **For it would be better for me to die:** Mt 18:6 Ac 20:24 Php 1:20-23
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

1 Thessalonians 2:9+ (PAUL DID NOT ASK FOR MONEY SO HIS MOTIVES WOULD NOT BE QUESTIONED) For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

2 Thessalonians 3:8 (PAUL CHOSE TO EARN HIS LIVING EVEN THOUGH HE HAD THE RIGHT AS AN APOSTLE TO RECEIVE SUPPORT) nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you;

1 Peter 5:2+ shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain ([aischrokerdos](#)) (NET - NOT FOR SHAMEFUL PROFIT, NIV = NOT GREEDY FOR MONEY), but with eagerness;

Acts 20:33-35+ (PAUL HAD NOT PREACHED OR TAUGHT FOR MONEY AS HE TOLD THE EPHESIAN ELDERS) "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. 34 "You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. 35 "In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

## PAUL LAID DOWN HIS RIGHT TO SUPPORT

Notice the **key words** in 1 Cor 9:15-23 - "**gospel**" occurs four times, "**win**" five times and "**preach**" five times. Clearly this section is about winning souls by preaching the Gospel! This was Paul's passion and should be ours also beloved! And don't say "Well, I am no apostle Paul." No, you are not but you are one of Christ's disciples to whom His prayer applies...

"As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world....."I do not ask on behalf of these (original disciples) alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word (you and me beloved) (John 17:18, 20)

The Lord Jesus has commanded all Christians:

"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation (Mk. 16:15+).

**Arnold** - Each one of us is to have a heart for evangelism as did Paul, although none of us will ever be as effective as he because he had a special calling. Evangelism, however, is to be at the heart of our Christian experience and without that concern, we will never enjoy God or glorify Him as we ought. We must put 1 Corinthians 9:15-23 in its context. This section is part of the three chapters in which Paul is dealing with the subject of meat offered to idols. It was alright to eat the meat as long as it did not cause a weaker brother in conscience to stumble into sin. Meat sacrificed to idols was a doubtful thing or a questionable practice for Christians in Corinth. Paul's point was that Christians had the right to eat but they were to set aside that right if it offended and caused a weaker brother to stumble. The essence of his argument was that a Christian should never exercise any right if it is going to be a detriment to another person. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul shows from the example of his, own life how he gave up rights to be more effective in his witness for Christ. In 1 Corinthians 9:1-14, he showed how he had the right to be paid wages as Apostle and minister of the gospel, but he relinquished that right so as not to bring any black mark against Christ and the gospel. Now in 9:15-23, Paul will show from his life how Christ and the gospel were the most important aspects of his life and how he was willing to forego all rights to see men and women, boys and girls, saved.

**MacArthur** introduces this next section 1 Cor 9:15-27 - In 9:15-27 Paul restates (v. 15) and then continues to illustrate the principle that love limits Christian liberty as well as his own policy of not using his right to be supported financially by those to whom he ministered. He gives two reasons why he refused to accept such support. First, he did not want to lose his reward for preaching the gospel without charge (vv. 16-18). Second, and more importantly, he wanted absolutely nothing to hinder his reaching the lost with that gospel (vv. 19-27).

**Constable** has an interesting comment on 1 Cor 9:15-18 - Having argued vigorously for his right to the Corinthians' support, Paul now proceeded to argue just as strongly for his right to give up this right, his point from the beginning. He explained why he had deliberately not accepted their patronage. This pericope gives the reader a window into the apostle's soul. We see here what made him tick.

**But I have used none of these things - I have used** ([chraomai](#)) is perfect tense which "includes the thought that Paul still pursues this course (Wuest = "and at present continue the same policy") and the pronoun "I" is emphatic, "I for my part," to say nothing about others whose case is not like Paul's." (Lenski) What **things**? In context this seems to refer to the preceding reasons he had just described in 1 Cor 9:1-14 supporting his premise that he had the right to expect financial support. Paul declares he had taken advantage of none of his rights as an apostolic preacher of the Gospel.

**Barton** - He must have felt, however, that to take any money in Corinth would have caused some to think he was after money instead of souls! Paul wanted the Corinthians to see in him integrity and self-denial for the sake of the gospel. So Paul willingly set aside his rights as an apostle, giving up the easier path of voluntary support for hard work, in order to bring more people in Corinth to the Lord. Paul was single-minded—his entire life was focused on advancing God's kingdom. (LAC)

It is not that Paul never accepted or received aid from any of the churches. In fact Paul did accept money from the churches in Philippi (cf. Phil 4:14-19) and [Thessalonica](#) (which would have been one of the churches in Macedonia alluded to in 2 Cor 11:9), but only later and not while he was actually present ministering personally to those churches.

**Alan Redpath** - The Lord Jesus was dearer to Paul than anything else, and he could stand before them and say that he had renounced every one of his rights. The test of apostleship is one that many of us will find very difficult to attain. Many of our missionary family, however, have denied themselves the right to a normal life. Of every one of them it can be said that they have a right to an adequate salary, to a Christian home, to good food, to reasonable recreation. But each of them can say, "I have used none of these things for the sake of the gospel." We could go to any part of the world and find examples of those who come within this test of apostleship today....Paul vindicates his apostleship by pointing out things that were absolutely legitimate, but to which he has said "no" for the Lord's sake. Within the scope of that test, what counts is not my doctrine or my orthodoxy, or my connections, but that my heart and life bear the brand of the cross: it has cost me something to follow Jesus.

In a later letter Paul wrote

But whatever things were gain to me, **those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ**. More than that, **I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord** for Whom **I have suffered the loss of all things**, and count them but **rubbish** so that I may gain Christ, (Philippians 3:7-8+)

**And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case**- NLT = "And I am not writing this to suggest that I want to start now." MIT = "Nor did I write these things so that I might now start being remunerated." The intent of this present letter was not to coerce or encourage the Corinthians to pay him. As **Guzik** says "Paul was not "hinting" for support by the Corinthian Christians. He shows them the value, and the reasons, for giving up one's own rights."

**MacArthur** adds that "He was not using subterfuge, hoping that, despite his protest, they would begin to pay him. He had never taken pay from those he served and he never intended to. Nor was he now asking for that in a disguised way."

**For it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast (kauchema) an empty one** - NLT = "In fact, I would rather die than lose my right to boast about preaching without charge." Paul is saying he would rather die than have anyone think that he was preaching the Gospel for financial gain or with a financial motive! This is a strong statement! What is the **boast** to which he refers? In context he has just said ("boasted") "I have used none of these things."

**MacArthur** on **my boast (kauchema)** - The term "**boast**" refers to that in which one glories or to the basis of one's glorying, and carries the idea of rejoicing. It is a statement of sincere joy, not pride (cf. 1 Cor 1:31; Ro 15:17). Paul was genuinely overjoyed for the privilege of serving the Lord and did not want material support to rob him of it in any way. (MSB)

**ESV Study Bible** on **make my boast** - Paul uses this word not in its usual sense of pride that steals glory from God (see 1 Cor. 1:29) but rather as expressing a rightful sense of joy and fulfillment in what God has done through him (e.g., see Acts 14:27; Rom. 15:17-19; 2 Cor. 1:14; 10:7-8; Gal. 6:4; Phil. 2:16; 2 Tim. 4:7-8).

**Guzik** - Paul's boasting wasn't that he preached the gospel. He had to do that (for necessity is laid upon me); instead, his boasting was that he was able to do it without asking his hearers for support.. Remember that Greek culture, which the Corinthian Christians approved so much, looked down its nose on all manual labor. Even though the Corinthian Christians seemed to think less of Paul because he worked with his own hands to support himself, it did not embarrass Paul at all. He will boast about it!

**Uttley** asks why did Paul not take money from? Uttley thinks "because of this he is being personally attacked by some group, faction, or false teacher. It is so hard to interpret Paul's letter when we do not have (1) the letter the church wrote to him or (2) specific knowledge about the local situation."

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## **Worse Than Dying**

It would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void. —1 Corinthians 9:15

Today's Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:11-23

The apostle Paul said he would rather die than give the impression that he was serving the Lord for money. That's why he supported himself while preaching in Corinth. To him, anything that marred his testimony for Christ was worse than dying.

Down through the centuries, many have held that same conviction and have proven it by dying as martyrs rather than denying their Lord. Most of us will not face a "deny Christ or die" ultimatum. But our lifestyle must reflect that we believe some things are worse than dying.

On New Year's Eve 1951, I was deeply impressed as I read Paul's declaration in Philippians 1:20. He said that his supreme expectation was that he would be ashamed "in nothing." His only hope was not that he be released from prison but that Christ would be magnified in his body, "whether by life or by death." I was also struck by his confident statement in verse 21, "For to me, to live is



Christ, and to die is gain." Since that evening, I've told the Lord many times that I would rather die than do anything to dishonor His name, break the hearts of my wife and family, or disappoint those who respect me.

Yes, some things are worse than dying, and dishonoring Christ is one of them. By: Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

I'd rather die than bring disgrace  
Upon my Lord, His name debase;  
So I will live my life each day  
To honor Christ and walk His way.  
—Hess

To keep your testimony alive, you must die to sin.

**1 Corinthians 9:16 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.**

Amplified - For if I [merely] preach the Gospel, that gives me no reason to boast, for I feel compelled of necessity to do it. Woe is me if I do not preach the glad tidings (the Gospel)!

Wuest - For if I am preaching the good news, there is nothing for me to boast about, for a necessary compulsion is pressing down upon me, for woe to me if I do not proclaim the good news. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 9:16 For if I preach the gospel, I have no reason for boasting, because I am compelled to do this. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:16 Yet preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about. I am compelled by God to do it. How terrible for me if I didn't preach the Good News!

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:16 For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:16 Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:16 ν γ ρ ε αγγελ ζωμαι, ο κ στιν μοι κα χημα· ν γκη γ ρ μοι π κεται· ο α γ ρ μο στιν ν μ ε αγγελ σωμαι.

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:16 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!

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:16 for if I may proclaim good news, it is no glorying for me, for necessity is laid upon me, and woe is to me if I may not proclaim good news;

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:16 For if I preach the gospel, I have no reason to boast, because an obligation is placed on me. And woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:16 For if I preach the gospel, it is inappropriate for me to boast about that. Indeed, a compulsion weighs upon me to do that. How horrible it would be for me were I not to preach the gospel.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:16 If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:16 If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it!

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:16 In fact, preaching the gospel gives me nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion

and I should be in trouble if I failed to do it.

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:16 If I spread the Good News, I have nothing to brag about because I have an obligation to do this. How horrible it will be for me if I don't spread the Good News!

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:16 For if I am a preacher of the good news, I have no cause for pride in this; because I am forced to do so, for a curse is on me if I do not.

- **I have:** Ro 4:2 15:17
- **for:** Jer 1:17 20:7,9 Am 3:8 7:15 Ac 4:20 Acts 9:6,15 Acts 26:16-20 Ro 1:14
- **woe:** Isa 6:5 Lu 9:62 Col 4:17
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Acts 26:16-18+ 'But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; 17 rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, **to whom I am sending you, 18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.**'

Jeremiah 20:9 (**EXAMPLE OF UNDER COMPULSION**) But if I say, "I will not remember Him Or speak anymore in His name," Then in my heart **it becomes like a burning fire** Shut up in my bones; And I am weary of holding it in, And I cannot endure it.

**COMMENT** - A classic description of prophetic reluctance overcome by divine compulsion (Jer 1:6-8; Am 3:8; Ac 4:20; 1Co 9:16). (NIVSB)

Acts 4:20+ (**EXAMPLE OF UNDER COMPULSION**) But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to for **we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.**"

## COMPELLED TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

For ([gar](#)) [term of explanation](#) -

**If - IF** introduces a third class conditional clause, which mean potential action or viewed as possible. (Second "if" below is the same).

I (present tense - continually) **preach the gospel** ([euaggelizo/euangelizo](#)), **I have nothing to boast** ([kauchema](#)) **of** - NLT = "Yet preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about" ICB = "Telling the Good News is not my reason for bragging." The **boast** he had just alluded to in 1 Cor 9:15 "was not personal. He was not proud as if it were his gospel; nor was he proud about the way he preached it, as if it were his ability" (MacArthur Study Bible) Paul knew that he himself could save no one, but that the Gospel he preached could save anyone, for "the gospel...is the **power** ([dunamis](#) = inherent power to accomplish a result) of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Ro 1:16+) Paul could not take credit for the power, but he could **boast** in the power of God, even as he said in (1 Cor 1:31+) "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

For ([gar](#)) [term of explanation](#) Paul explains why he has nothing about which he can boast in himself. His preaching was not from personal pride but a result of divine compulsion.

**William MacDonald** - Paul is saying that he cannot **boast** in the fact that he preaches the gospel. A divine **compulsion** is laid upon him. It is not a vocation that he chose for himself. He received the "tap on the shoulder" and he would have been a most miserable man if he had not obeyed the divine commission. This does not mean the apostle was not willing to preach the gospel, but rather that the decision to preach did not come from himself, but from the Lord. (BBC)

**Hodge** - The reason why it was so important to him to refuse all remuneration as a minister was, that although he preached the gospel that was no ([kauchema](#)), ground of boasting to him. That he was bound to do, yea, woe was denounced against him unless he did preach it. Nothing could be a ground of boasting, but something which he was free to do, or not to do. He was free to receive or to refuse a remuneration for preaching; and therefore his refusing to do so was a ground of glorying, that is, a proof of integrity to which he could with confidence appeal.

**Kistemaker** - Because Paul was appointed to preach, he did not see that task as a reason for boasting. Instead, his commission from the Lord compelled him to preach. Paul wanted to complete the task which the Lord Jesus had given him, namely, preaching the gospel to both Jews and Greeks.

**MacArthur** - He gloried in the gospel but not for it. He had absolutely nothing to do with the giving or the content of the gospel. He simply received the revelation. Nor was he boasting of his commitment to or ability in preaching the gospel....At some time or another, every preacher whom the Lord has called will realize that he is under God's compulsion. It is not that God's calling cannot be ignored, neglected, or slighted, but that it cannot be changed. The man who resists God's call or tries to give it up will, like Jeremiah, experience a "burning fire shut up in [his] bones" until he obeys. He has no choice.

**I am** (present tense - continually) **under compulsion** ([anagke](#)); **for** (explaining the necessity) **woe is me if I do not preach the gospel** ([euaggelizo/euangelizo](#)) - Wuest = "a necessary compulsion is pressing down upon me." MIT = "a compulsion weighs upon me to do that." Paul was saved by Jesus to preach the Gospel as Jesus instructed Ananias to tell "'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." (Acts 9:15-16+) Paul was like Jeremiah, Peter and John (see [related passages](#) above)

He didn't control it; it controlled him.

-- Steven Cole

**Redpath** - He is able to face those who question his authority with the fact that he has maintained a testimony. This is an obligation which is laid upon every one of us.

**Bruce Barton** - Preaching the gospel was Paul's gift and calling. He admitted he couldn't stop preaching even if he had wanted to. Paul was driven by the desire to do what God wanted, using his gifts for God's glory. Paul's admission offers a clue to discovering our spiritual gifts. What do you find yourself doing over and over? In what very specific way do you have a habit of serving others and enjoying it? Give other Christians permission to observe you and offer feedback. Make it a point to discover what special gifts has God given you. (LAC)

**Guzik** - He did not just have "preacher's itch." He was called to preach and felt compelled to fulfill that call.

**Kistemaker on woe is me** - Paul raises the lament which the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles raised. Like Paul, these men were overcome by the urgency of uttering the message God gave them. Jeremiah said that God's Word was like a fire in his heart and in his bones (Jer. 20:9) and Amos writes that because God has spoken he must speak (Amos 3:8). The phrase **woe to me** describes the greatest misery imaginable for Paul. He would bring this misery upon himself if he proved disobedient to his divine mandate to preach. He must preach the gospel of salvation—in his own words to Timothy, "in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2).

As he testified to King Agrippa "**I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision** but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance." (Acts 26:19-20+)

**I am under** (1945) [epikeimai](#) from **epí** = upon + **keímai** = to lie on) means to lie upon, to be placed on, to lie on (literally of the stone against Jesus' tomb - Jn 21:9, of fish on the fire of coals - Jn 21:9). Metaphorically as used here in Hebrews 9, **epikeimai** means imposed upon and has the force of obligation, thus speaking speaks of necessity. Used 7x in NT - Lk. 5:1; Lk. 23:23; Jn. 11:38; Jn. 21:9; Acts 27:20; 1 Co. 9:16; Heb. 9:10. Here in 1 Cor 9:16 the picture is continually "presses upon me" (**ED**: Sounds like what we sometimes refer to as a "spiritual burden" except his was CONTINUAL!)

**Compulsion** (constraint) (318) [\(anagke](#) from **ana** = up, again, back, renewal, repetition, intensity, reversal + **agkale** = arm when bent) refers to any necessity or compulsion, outer or inner, brought on by a variety of circumstances. It can mean necessity imposed either by external conditions or by the law of duty.

**Anagke** refers to constraint (which is the act of being checked, restricted or compelled either to avoid or to perform some action) which is either a result of external pressures (compelling forces) or moral sense of duty. It refers to that which is necessary due to the pressure of circumstances and so refers to that which is inevitable. It refers to a necessity (an indispensable thing, something needed for a desired result) or constraint as inherent in the nature of things. **Anagke** - 17x in NT - Matt 18:7; Luke 14:18; 21:23; Rom 13:5; 1 Cor 7:26, 37; 9:16; 2 Cor 6:4; 9:7; 12:10; 1 Thess 3:7; Philemon 1:14; Heb 7:12, 27; 9:16, 23; Jude 1:3.

**Woe** (How dreadful!) (3759) [ouai](#) (3759 - click and select "**Phonetics**" to hear "ouai" pronounced) ([ouai](#) pronounced "oo-ah'ee," an eerie, ominous foreboding sound some say is like the cry of an eagle) is an onomatopoeic word (an imitation of the sound) which serves as an interjection expressing a cry of intense

distress, displeasure or horror. It may convey a warning of impending disaster to the hearers. Jesus used "Woe" frequently in the Gospels (see below) often in an eschatological context (Mt 24:19; Mk 13:17). Most NT uses of **ouai** are in the context of warning about inevitable, impending judgment, often intermingled with a feeling of pity (Mt 11:21-22, Lk 22:22 = Judas' betrayal). Rev 8:13-note has woe in triplicate which seems to provide the greatest possible emphasis on God's coming judgment on the world, much as the cry of "holy" in triplicate emphasizes His holiness. Indeed, His perfect holiness demands His perfect judgment! In the Lxx a double woe is addressed to unfaithful Jerusalem because of her idolatry and immorality (Ezek 16:23). **Ouai** does **not** depict sorrow on the part of those who have sinned (as some have mistakenly taught).

**Preach the gospel** (2097) (**euaggelizo/ euangelizo** from **eu** = good, well + **aggello** = proclaim, tell; English = evangelize) means to announce good news concerning something. **Euaggelizo** was often used in the **Septuagint** for preaching a glad or joyful message (cf. 1Sa. 31:9; 2 Sa 1:20; 4:10). **Euaggelizo/ euangelizo** in its original sense could be used to refer to a declaration of any kind of good news, but in the NT it (with 2 exceptions discussed below) refers especially to the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God and of salvation obtained through Jesus Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Most of NT uses of **euaggelizo** are translated "preach" or "preach the gospel," whichever fits more smoothly into the context. There are two passages that illustrate the original meaning of simply to "bring glad tidings" or "bring good news" of any nature. **W E Vine** writes that euaggelizo "is almost always used of "the good news" concerning the Son of God as proclaimed in the gospel [exceptions are e.g., Luke 1:19; 1 Thess. 3:6, in which the phrase "to bring (or show) good (or glad) tidings" does not refer to the gospel]; Gal. 1:8 (2nd part). With reference to the gospel the phrase "to bring, or declare, good, or glad, tidings" is used in Acts 13:32; Rom. 10:15; Heb. 4:2."

**Euaggelizo** in the NT - Matt. 11:5; Lk. 1:19; Lk. 2:10; Lk. 3:18; Lk. 4:18; Lk. 4:43; Lk. 7:22; Lk. 8:1; Lk. 9:6; Lk. 16:16; Lk. 20:1; Acts 5:42; Acts 8:4; Acts 8:12; Acts 8:25; Acts 8:35; Acts 8:40; Acts 10:36; Acts 11:20; Acts 13:32; Acts 14:7; Acts 14:15; Acts 14:21; Acts 15:35; Acts 16:10; Acts 17:18; Rom. 1:15; Rom. 10:15; Rom. 15:20; 1 Co. 1:17; 1 Co. 9:16; 1 Co. 9:18; 1 Co. 15:1; 1 Co. 15:2; 2 Co. 10:16; 2 Co. 11:7; Gal. 1:8; Gal. 1:9; Gal. 1:11; Gal. 1:16; Gal. 1:23; Gal. 4:13; Eph. 2:17; Eph. 3:8; 1 Thess. 3:6; Heb. 4:2; Heb. 4:6; 1 Pet. 1:12; 1 Pet. 1:25; 1 Pet. 4:6; Rev. 10:7; Rev. 14:6

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### Oswald Chambers - The consciousness of the call

For necessity is laid upon me: yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! 1 Cor. 9:16.

We are apt to forget the mystical, supernatural touch of God. If you can tell where you got the call of God and all about it, I question whether you have ever had a call. The call of God does not come like that, it is much more supernatural. The realization of it in a man's life may come with a sudden thunder-clap or with a gradual dawning, but in whatever way it comes, it comes with the undercurrent of the supernatural, something that cannot be put into words, it is always accompanied with a glow. At any moment there may break the sudden consciousness of this incalculable, supernatural, surprising call that has taken hold of your life—"I have chosen you." The call of God has nothing to do with salvation and sanctification. It is not because you are sanctified that you are therefore called to preach the gospel; the call to preach the gospel is infinitely different. Paul describes it as a necessity laid upon him.

If you have been obliterating the great supernatural call of God in your life, take a review of your circumstances and see where God has not been first, but your ideas of service, or your temperamental abilities. Paul said—"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" He had realized the call of God, and there was no competitor for his strength.

If a man or woman is called of God, it does not matter how untoward circumstances are, every force that has been at work will tell for God's purpose in the end. If you agree with God's purpose He will bring not only your conscious life, but all the deeper regions of your life which you cannot get at, into harmony.

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### Oswald Chambers - The constraint of the call

Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! 1 Cor. 9:16.

Beware of stopping your ears to the call of God. Everyone who is saved is called to testify to the fact; but that is not the call to preach, it is merely an illustration in preaching. Paul is referring to the pangs produced in him by the constraint to preach the Gospel. Never apply what Paul says in this connection to souls coming in contact with God for salvation. There is nothing easier than getting saved because it is God's sovereign work—"Come unto Me and I will save you." Our Lord never lays down the conditions of discipleship as the conditions of salvation. We are condemned to salvation through the Cross of Jesus Christ. Discipleship has an

option with it—"IF any man ..."

Paul's words have to do with being made a servant of Jesus Christ, and our permission is never asked as to what we will do or where we will go. God makes us broken bread and poured-out wine to please Himself. To be "separated unto the gospel" means to hear the call of God; and when a man begins to overhear that call, then begins agony that is worthy of the name. Every ambition is nipped in the bud, every desire of life quenched, every outlook completely extinguished and blotted out, saving one thing only—"separated unto the gospel." Woe be to the soul who tries to put his foot in any other direction when once that call has come to him. This College exists to see whether God has any man or woman here who cares about proclaiming His Gospel; to see whether God grips you. And beware of competitors when God does grip you.

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### C H Spurgeon - Preach the gospel

"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!" 1 Corinthians 9:16

There was a young woman under great distress of soul; she came to a very pious Christian man, who said "My dear girl, you must go home and pray." Well I thought within myself, that is not the Bible way at all. It never says, "Go home and pray." The poor girl went home; she did pray, and she still continued in distress. Then he said, "You must wait, you must read the Scriptures and study them." That is not the Bible way; that is not exalting Christ. I find a great many preachers are preaching that kind of doctrine. They tell a poor convinced sinner, "You must go home and pray, and read the Scriptures; you must attend the ministry;" and so on. Works, works, works—instead of "By grace are ye saved through faith." If a penitent should come and ask me, "What must I do to be saved?" I would say, "Christ must save you—believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." I would neither direct to prayer, nor reading of the Scriptures, nor attending God's house; but simply direct to faith, naked faith in God's gospel. Not that I despise prayer—that must come after faith. Not that I speak a word against the searching of the Scriptures—that is an infallible mark of God's children. Not that I find fault with attendance on God's word—God forbid! I love to see people there. But none of these things are the way of salvation. It is nowhere written—"He that attendeth chapel shall be saved;" or, "He that readeth the Bible shall be saved." Nor do I read—"He that prayeth and is baptised shall be saved;" but, "He that believeth,"—he that has a naked faith in the "Man Christ Jesus,"—in his Godhead, in his manhood, is delivered from sin. To preach that faith alone saves is to preach God's truth.

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### 1 Corinthians 9:17 For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me.

Amplified - For if I do this work of my own free will, then I have my pay (my reward); but if it is not of my own will, but is done reluctantly and under compulsion, I am [still] entrusted with a [sacred] trusteeship and commission.

NET 1 Corinthians 9:17 For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward. But if I do it unwillingly, I am entrusted with a responsibility.

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:17 If I were doing this on my own initiative, I would deserve payment. But I have no choice, for God has given me this sacred trust.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:17 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.

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:17 If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:17 ε γ ρ κ ν το το πρ σσω, μισθ ν χω· ε δ κων, ο κονομ αν πεπ στευμαι·

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:17 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.

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:17 for if willing I do this, I have a reward; and if unwillingly -- with a stewardship I have been entrusted!

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:17 For if I do this of mine own will, I have a reward: but if not of mine own will, I have a stewardship intrusted to me.

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:17 For if I do this willingly, I have a reward, but if unwillingly, I am entrusted with a stewardship.

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:17 If I preach willingly, I have a reward coming to me. But if I do it unwillingly, it would be

because of the responsibility entrusted to me.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:17 For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:17 For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission.

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:17 If I do so willingly, I have a recompense, but if unwillingly, then I have been entrusted with a stewardship.

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:17 If I did it on my own initiative I would deserve a reward; but if I do it under compulsion I am simply accepting a task entrusted to me.

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:17 If I spread the Good News willingly, I'll have a reward. But if I spread the Good News unwillingly, I'm only doing what I've been entrusted to do.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:17 But if I do it gladly, I have a reward; and if not, I am under orders to do it.

- **For if:** 1Ch 28:9 29:5,9,14 Ne 11:2 Isa 6:8 2Co 8:12 Phm 1:14 1Pe 5:2-4
- **have:** 1Co 3:8,14 Mt 10:41
- **against:** Ex 4:13,14 Jer 20:9 Eze 3:14 Jon 1:3 4:1-3 Mal 1:10
- **stewardship:** 1Co 9:16 4:1 Mt 24:25 Lu 12:42 Ga 2:7 Eph 3:2-8 Php 1:17 Col 1:25 1Th 2:4 1Ti 1:11-13
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL'S STEWARDSHIP OF THE GOSPEL

This is a difficult verse to understand. Here are three expanded paraphrases.

**Amplified** - For if I do this work of my own free will, then I have my pay (my reward); but if it is not of my own will, but is done reluctantly and under compulsion, I am [still] entrusted with a [sacred] trusteeship and commission.

**Wuest** - For, assuming that I am doing this of my own volition, I have a recompense; but doing it without my own volition, a responsibility of administering [the propagation of the good news] has been entrusted to me and at present is the impelling motive that makes it impossible not to proclaim it. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

**NLT** - If I were doing this on my own initiative, I would deserve payment. But I have no choice, for God has given me this sacred trust.

**For** - Most commentators feel this term of explanation explains what is meant by saying an obligation (under compulsion v16) is laid upon him.

The two "if's" both introduce first class conditional clauses, which are both assumed to be true.

**If I do this voluntarily** - As noted above this is a difficult passage to understand. **Trail** in his exegetical summary gives two possible explanations of the two "IF" statements (abbreviations are the commentaries that support each interpretation)

(1) The first condition is hypothetical and the second is factual [Alford, Edwards, Expositor's GT, Godet, Hering, HNTC-Barrett, Hodge, ICC-Robertson & Plummer, Lenski, Meyer, NICNT - Gordon Fee, Translator's Guide, W E Vine]: if I preach of my own decision (but I don't), I would have a reward, but if I preach without having a choice (as is the case), I do it because I have been commissioned to do it. Paul did not take up his ministry by his own decision, so he has no reward for doing his duty [Alf]. Paul is just a steward who cannot demand a payment, not a mercenary who could claim his wages [Ed]. The words κῶν 'willingly' and κων 'unwillingly' should not be taken as indicating 'cheerfully' and 'reluctantly', but rather 'optionally' and 'obligatorily' [Gdt, Ho]. Since he does not merit a reward for preaching the gospel, the next question means 'But by what then do I merit a reward?' [He, HNTC].

(2) The first condition is factual and the second is hypothetical [Expositor's BC, New Century BC, NICNT]: if I preach willingly (and I do), I have a reward, but if I preach unwillingly (but I don't), I still have to preach because I have been commissioned to do it. He preaches freely, not merely fulfilling the commission given to him (Acts 26:16) [EBC]. He receives a reward because he preaches with all his heart and that reward is



described in the next verse [NIC]. If he obeys his commission willingly, he will get a reward. If he does so unwillingly, he must still do it, but without a reward [New Century BC].

I (present tense - continually) **have a reward** - The implication is he would have the reward (pay, recompense) that goes with preaching the Gospel.

**W E Vine** - that is, if of his own choice he makes a business of preaching, as others did, he gets a reward in the pay he receives.

**Reward** (wage) (3408) **misthos** literally refers to pay which is due for labor performed or dues paid for work. **Misthos** is used in two general senses in the NT, either to refer to wages or to reward, recognition or recompense. In this latter figurative usage, **misthos** refers to rewards which God bestows for the moral quality of an action, such rewards most often to be bestowed in eternity future. Uses in First Corinthians - 1 Co. 3:8; 1 Co. 3:14; 1 Co. 9:17; 1 Co. 9:18;

**But if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted (pisteuo) to me** - Earlier in this letter Paul had alluded to this stewardship writing "Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and **stewards (oikonomos)** of the mysteries of God (INCLUDING THE GOSPEL). In this case, moreover, it is required of **stewards (oikonomos)** that one be found trustworthy (**pistos**)." (1 Cor 4:1-2+) Jesus had **entrusted** the dispensation and declaration of the Gospel to Paul. Note that **entrusted** is in the perfect tense indicating it was bestowed (by Jesus) in the past and it was still in force so to speak.

**Vine** - his preaching was not a matter of his own choice; accordingly he is simply a steward, a servant doing his duty to his Master. **Oikonomia**, "**stewardship**," primarily denotes the management of a household; it came to mean the management of the property of others; hence a stewardship, as in Luke 16:2-4+.

**Ryrie** says "Paul could not escape his responsibility to preach the gospel, because a **stewardship** (responsibility) had been committed to him and he was under orders to preach even though he was never paid (cf. Luke 17:10)." (Study Bible)

**ESV Study Bible** on **stewardship** - This term (Gk. oikonomia) refers to the responsibility of managing a household. Paul uses it metaphorically to say that God has entrusted him with a responsibility to which he must be faithful, whether he benefits from it materially or not.

**MacDonald** has a lengthy explanation of this difficult verse - If the Apostle Paul preached the gospel willingly, he would have the reward that goes with such service, namely, the right of maintenance (COMPENSATION). Throughout the Old and New Testaments, it is clearly taught that those who serve the Lord are entitled to support from the Lord's people. In this passage, Paul does not mean that he was an unwilling servant of the Lord, but is simply stating that there was a divine compulsion in his apostleship. He goes on to emphasize this in the latter part of the verse. If he preached against his will, that is, if he preached because there was a fire burning within him and he could not refrain from preaching, then he had been entrusted with a stewardship of the gospel. He was a man acting under orders, and therefore he could not boast in that. Verse 17 is admittedly difficult, and yet the meaning seems to be that Paul would not claim his right of maintenance from the Corinthians because the ministry was not an occupation which he chose by himself. He was placed in it by the hand of God. The false teachers in Corinth might claim their right to be supported by the saints, but the Apostle Paul would seek his reward elsewhere. (Believer's Bible Commentary)

**Stewardship** (3622) **oikonomia** from **oikos** = house + **némo** = manage, distribute) (Related word **oikonomos**) in secular Greek referred literally to the management of a household by the **oikonomos**, the **steward** manages a house and is accountable to the owner (which even involved a presentation and examination of records, receipts, disbursements, cash on hand and the settlement of accounts - our English words "economy", "economic" are derived from **oikonomia** and this background helps one see some association). **Oikonomia** indicates the task given to responsible and faithful servants who were appointed over the economy or an area of responsibility in the household. Thus **oikonomia** stresses obligation, responsibility, and faithfulness of the servant to his master in carry out the entrusted task. **Oikonomia** used 8x in NT - Lk. 16:2; Lk. 16:3; Lk. 16:4; 1 Co. 9:17; Eph. 1:10; Eph. 3:2; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:25; 1 Tim. 1:4

#### **Related Resources:**

- Holman Dictionary [Stewardship](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Steward, Stewardship](#)
- King James Dictionary [Stewardship](#)
- Thompson Chain Reference [Stewardship-Ownership](#)

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**Warren Wiersbe** on **Money and Ministry** - It is unfortunate when the ministry of the Gospel is sometimes hindered by an overemphasis on money. The unsaved world is convinced that most preachers and missionaries are only involved in "religious

rackets” to take money from innocent people. No doubt there are religious “racketeers” in the world today (1 Tim. 6:3–16), people who “use” religion to exploit others and control them. We would certainly not agree with their purposes or their practices. We must make sure that nothing we do in our own ministry gives the impression that we are of their number. A wrong attitude toward money has hindered the Gospel from the earliest days of the church. Ananias and Sapphira loved money more than they loved the truth, and God killed them (Acts 5). Simon the magician thought he could buy the gift of the Spirit with money (Acts 8:18–24). His name is now in the dictionary. Simony is the practice of buying and selling religious offices and privileges. For eighteen fruitful years, Dr. H.A. Ironside pastored the Moody Church in Chicago. I recall the first time I heard him announce an offering. He said, “We ask God’s people to give generously. If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, we do not ask you to give. We have a gift for you—eternal life through faith in Christ!” He made it clear that the offering was for believers, lest the unsaved in the congregation stumble over money and then reject the Gospel.

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**Question:** [What is biblical stewardship?](#)

**Answer:** To discover what the Bible says about stewardship, we start with the very first verse: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). As the Creator, God has absolute rights of ownership over all things, and to miss starting here is like misaligning the top button on our shirt or blouse—nothing else will ever line up. Nothing else in the Bible, including the doctrine of stewardship, will make any sense or have any true relevance if we miss the fact that God is the Creator and has full rights of ownership. It is through our ability to fully grasp this and imbed it in our hearts that the doctrine of stewardship is understood.

The biblical doctrine of stewardship defines a man’s relationship to God. It identifies God as owner and man as manager. God makes man His co-worker in administering all aspects of our life. The apostle Paul explains it best by saying, “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Corinthians 3:9). Starting with this concept, we are then able to accurately view and correctly value not only our possessions, but, more importantly, human life itself. In essence, stewardship defines our purpose in this world as assigned to us by God Himself. It is our divinely given opportunity to join with God in His worldwide and eternal redemptive movement (Matthew 28:19-20). Stewardship is not God taking something from us; it is His method of bestowing His richest gifts upon His people.

In the New Testament, two Greek words embody the meaning of our English word “stewardship.” The first word is epitropos which means “manager, foreman, or steward.” From the standpoint of government, it means “governor or procurator.” At times it was used in the New Testament to mean “guardian,” as in Galatians 4:1-2: “What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.” The second word is oikonomos. It also means “steward, manager, or administrator” and occurs more frequently in the New Testament. Depending on the context, it is often translated “dispensation, stewardship, management, arrangement, administration, order, plan, or training.” It refers mostly to the law or management of a household or of household affairs.

Notably, in the writings of Paul, the word oikonomos is given its fullest significance in that Paul sees his responsibility for preaching the gospel as a divine trust (1 Corinthians 9:17). Paul refers to his call from God as the administration (stewardship) of the grace of God for a ministry of the divine mystery revealed in Christ (Ephesians 3:2). In this context, Paul is portraying God as the master of a great household, wisely administering it through Paul himself as the obedient servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Also significant in what Paul is saying is that once we’re called and placed into the body of Jesus Christ, the stewardship that is required of us is not a result of our own power or abilities. The strength, inspiration and growth in the management of our lives must come from God through the Holy Spirit in us; otherwise, our labor is in vain and the growth in stewardship is self-righteous, human growth. Accordingly, we must always remember the sole source of our strength in pleasing God: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13 NJKV). Paul also said, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

More often than not, when we think of good stewardship, we think of how we manage our finances and our faithfulness in paying God’s tithes and offerings. But as we’re beginning to see, it’s much more than that. In fact, it’s more than just the management of our time, our possessions, our environment, or our health. Stewardship is our obedient witness to God’s sovereignty. It’s what motivates the follower of Christ to move into action, doing deeds that manifest his belief in Him. Paul’s stewardship involved proclaiming that which was entrusted to him—the gospel truth.

Stewardship defines our practical obedience in the administration of everything under our control, everything entrusted to us. It is the consecration of one’s self and possessions to God’s service. Stewardship acknowledges in practice that we do not have the right of control over ourselves or our property—God has that control. It means as stewards of God we are managers of that which belongs to God, and we are under His constant authority as we administer His affairs. Faithful stewardship means that we fully acknowledge we are not our own but belong to Christ, the Lord, who gave Himself for us.

The ultimate question, then, is this: Am I the lord of my life, or is Christ the Lord of my life? In essence, stewardship expresses our

**1 Corinthians 9:18 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.**

Amplified - What then is the [actual] reward that I get? Just this: that in my preaching the good news (the Gospel), I may offer it [absolutely] free of expense [to anybody], not taking advantage of my rights and privileges [as a preacher] of the Gospel.

NET 1 Corinthians 9:18 What then is my reward? That when I preach the gospel I may offer the gospel free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights in the gospel.

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:18 What then is my pay? It is the opportunity to preach the Good News without charging anyone. That's why I never demand my rights when I preach the Good News.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:18 What then is my reward? 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.

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:18 What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it.

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:18 τ ς ο ν μο σπιν μισθ ς; να ε αγγελιζ μενος δ πανον θ σω τ ε αγγ λιον ε ς τ μ καταχρ σασθαι τ ξου σ μου ν τ ε αγγελ .

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:18 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.

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:18 What, then, is my reward? -- that proclaiming good news, without charge I shall make the good news of the Christ, not to abuse my authority in the good news;

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:18 What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel without charge, so as not to use to the full my right in the gospel.

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:18 What then is my reward? To preach the gospel and offer it free of charge and not make full use of my authority in the gospel.

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:18 Therefore, what is the reward for me? It is that I might preach without financial support for my gospel ministry. I shall present the gospel so as not to make use of my rights in the gospel.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:18 What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:18 What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel.

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:18 What then is my recompense? That, when I preach, I offer the gospel free of charge so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:18 What reward do I have, then? That in my preaching I offer the gospel free of charge to avoid using the rights which the gospel allows me.

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:18 So what is my reward? It is to spread the Good News free of charge. In that way I won't use the rights that belong to those who spread the Good News.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:18 What then is my reward? This, that when I am giving the good news, I may give it without payment, not making use of my rights as a preacher of the good news.

- when: 1Co 9:6,7 10:33 2Co 4:5 11:7-9 12:13-18 1Th 2:6 2Th 3:8,9
- that I: 1Co 7:31 8:9 Ro 14:15
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**What then is my reward (misthos)?** - Paul's **reward** was not money but privilege, the privilege to preach the Gospel. That is every believer's **reward**! Are you "earning" your reward, so to speak?

**That, when I preach the gospel (euaggelizo/ euangelizo), I may offer the gospel (euaggelion) without charge, so as not to make full use of my right (exousia) in the gospel (euaggelion)** So for Paul preaching the gospel was reward enough. In other words Paul's pay is that he preaches the gospel as a servant for no pay. This is one reason some churches do not "pass the plate" so people do not feel like they have to pay to hear the preaching.

**William MacDonald** - If then he could not boast in the fact that he preached the gospel, of what would he boast? Of something that was a matter of his own choice, namely, that he presented the gospel of Christ without charge. This is something he could determine to do. He would preach the gospel to the Corinthians, at the same time earning his own living, so as not to use to the full his right for maintenance in the gospel. To summarize the apostle's argument here, he is making a distinction between what was obligatory and what was optional. There is no thought of any reluctance in his preaching the gospel. He did that cheerfully. But in a very real sense, it was a solemn obligation that rested upon him. Therefore in the discharge of that obligation there was no reason for his boasting. In preaching the gospel, he could have insisted on his right to financial support, but he did not do this; rather he decided to give the gospel without charge to the Corinthians. Since this was a matter of his own will, he would glory in this. As we have suggested, Paul's critics claimed that his working as a tentmaker indicated that he did not consider himself to be a true apostle. Here he turns his self-support in such a way as to prove that his apostleship was nonetheless real; in fact, it was of a very high and noble character.

**ESV Study Bible** - Paul preached the gospel in urban centers where itinerant orators were a common sight. Some of them openly used their rhetorical skills to seek fame and fortune. Other more philosophically inclined teachers proclaimed self-discipline and verbally despised the world but sometimes actually pocketed large sums from their followers as they moved from town to town. Paul seeks to distinguish himself from such preachers (cf. 1 Thess. 2:3-5, 9-10). It is recorded elsewhere that Paul used his manual labor to set an example of hard work for new Christians, some of whom had a tendency to take advantage of the charitable impulses of the larger group (1 Thess. 4:11; 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6-9).

**Without charge** (77)(**adapanos** from **a** = negative + **dapane** = cost) literally means without cost. "Without expense or charge, not chargeable (1 Cor. 9:18). Paul does not teach here that a minister of Christ is not entitled to compensation (1 Cor. 9:13, 14). It was Paul's right to be paid, but he decided to forego this right voluntarily so that his preaching of the gospel might be more effective among the Corinthians." (Zodhiates) BDAG adds " free of charge typical of many Greco-Roman benefactors."

**Make full use** (2710)(**katachraomai** from **kata** = against + **chraomai** = to use) means to make use of use to the uttermost, to use completely. Only other use is 1 Cor 7:31+ = "those who use the world, as though they did not **make full use** of it." BDAG adds "As a rule the prep. gives the simple verb a special coloring ('make full use of', 'misuse', 'use up'); in the only two pass. where it occurs in our lit. (both 1 Cor), this word differs little, if at all, fr. the simple verb: use "

**Ray Stedman** - What he (Paul) is saying is simply that the thing that motivated him, the thing that drove him to work late hours at night making tents so he would earn a living and would not have to be supported by anybody in the church in Corinth, was the sheer delight it gave him to bless and enrich someone else without taking a penny in return. It was the joy of giving that Paul was experiencing. There are so many religious racketeers around that it is fun sometimes to surprise people by not asking anything for your ministry

**Steven Cole on the gospel** - This means that winning people to Christ does not require that you learn how to become a clever salesman. Rather, it means that you understand the gospel clearly so that you can present it well. You should be able to present it in one minute or less. There are 3 parts:

**First**, our problem is sin, rebellion against the holy God who created us to know Him. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). And, "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23), which means eternal separation from God in hell.

**Second**, God's provision for our sin is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is God in human flesh. He came to teach us God's ways and to offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin that God's righteousness demands. Since He is God, His death has infinite value. Since He is man, His death atones for human sin. God raised Jesus from the dead as proof that His death is the acceptable sacrifice for our sins. "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24). "He [God] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

**Third**, our required response is to trust in God's provision in Christ as the payment in full for our sins. To trust in Christ, we must turn from our sins and give up our attempts to get into heaven by our good works. Rather, whoever believes in Jesus Christ has eternal life (John 3:16). We must trust in Jesus as we would trust a doctor who gave us a prescription and said, "Take this; it will cure you." We must trust in Christ as we would trust a pilot who said, "Get on board and I will fly you to your destination." To trust in Jesus

Christ as Savior means that His death and resurrection are your only hope to be acquitted and get into heaven on judgment day. To win others to Christ, we must present this simple good news: You have sinned against God, but Jesus Christ bore your penalty on the cross if you will turn from your sin and trust in Him. ([Winning Others to Christ](#))

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### Warren Wiersbe - NOT IN IT FOR THE MONEY

It is unfortunate when the ministry of the Gospel is sometimes hindered by an overemphasis on money. The unsaved world is convinced that most preachers and missionaries are only involved in "religious rackets" to take money from innocent people. No doubt there are religious "racketeers" in the world today, people who "use" religion to exploit others and control them. We would certainly not agree with their purposes or their practices. We must make sure that nothing we do in our own ministry gives the impression that we are of their number.

A wrong attitude toward money has hindered the Gospel from the earliest days of the church. Simon the magician thought he could buy the gift of the Spirit with money (Acts 8:18-24). Ananias and Sapphira loved money more than they loved the truth, and God killed them (Acts 5).

For eighteen fruitful years, Dr. H.A. Ironside pastored Moody Church in Chicago. I recall the first time I heard him announce an offering. He said, "We ask God's people to give generously. If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, we do not ask you to give. We have a gift for you—eternal life through faith in Christ!" He made it clear that the offering was for believers, lest the unsaved in the congregation stumble over money and then reject the Gospel. (Pause for Power)

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### 1 Corinthians 9:19 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.

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Amplified - For although I am free in every way from anyone's control, I have made myself a bond servant to everyone, so that I might gain the more [for Christ].

NET 1 Corinthians 9:19 For since I am free from all I can make myself a slave to all, in order to gain even more people.

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:19 Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:19 For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:19 Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:19 λεθερος γρ ν κ π ντων π σιν μαυτ ν δο λωσα, να το ς πλε ονας κερδ σω·

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:19 for being free from all men, to all men I made myself servant, that the more I might gain;

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:19 For though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more.

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:19 Although I am a free man and not anyone's slave, I have made myself a slave to everyone, in order to win more people.

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:19 For although I am independent of all people, I made myself a servant to all that I might win even more.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:19 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:19 For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them.

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:19 Although I am free in regard to all, I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible.

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:19 So though I was not a slave to any human being, I put myself in slavery to all people, to win as many as I could.

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:19 Although I'm free from all people, I have made myself a slave for all people to win more of them.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:19 For though I was free from all men, I made myself a servant to all, so that more might have salvation.

- **I am free from all men:** 1Co 9:1 Ga 5:1
- **made:** 1Co 10:33 Mt 20:26-28 Joh 13:14,15 Ro 1:14 15:2 2Co 4:5 Ga 5:13
- **that:** 1Co 9:20-22 7:16 Pr 11:30 Mt 18:15 Ro 11:14 1Ti 4:16 2Ti 2:10 Jas 5:19,20 1Pe 3:1
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Galatians 5:1+ It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

2 Corinthians 4:5+ For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and **ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.**

### PAUL'S EXAMPLE OF A BONDSERVANT

Keep the context in mind for "Paul is writing against the Corinthians who were demanding their rights. He is showing how he laid aside his rights for the sake of others. He had a right to support in the ministry (1Cor 9:1-14), but he laid aside that right so as not to be a hindrance to the gospel (1Cor 9:15-18). Here he is arguing that he had a right to be free from the social customs of others in non-moral areas, but he laid aside that right and enslaved himself to all, becoming all things to all men that by all means he might save some. We need to understand that to win others to Christ, we must share the content of the gospel (1Cor 9:18). People will not be converted by watching our lives alone, without hearing the good news about Christ. But what Paul tells us here is that we should remove all cultural barriers that would needlessly distract or offend those we are trying to reach. We don't want our outward appearance or political views to be the issue. We want the gospel to be the issue." (Steven Cole - [1 Corinthians 9:19-23 Winning Others to Christ](#))

**MacDonald** writes that "In 1 Cor 9:19–22, Paul cites his example of the waiving of legitimate rights for the gospel's sake. In studying this section, it is important to remember that Paul does not mean that he ever sacrificed important principles of the Scripture. He did not believe that "[the end justified the means](#)." In these verses he is speaking about matters of moral indifference. He accommodated himself to the customs and habits of the people with whom he worked in order that he might gain a ready ear for the gospel. But never did he do anything which might compromise the truth of the gospel.

**For though I am free** ([eleutheros](#)) **from all men** - MIT - "For although I am independent of all people"**ICB** - "I am free. I belong to no man." Paul reiterates the truth in 1 Cor 9:1 " **Am I not free?**" Paul begins this next section (1 Cor 9:19-23) emphasizing proper Christian freedom or liberty (Cf 1Cor 10:29) In his letter to the Galatians Paul wrote "For you were **called to freedom** ([eleutheria](#)), brethren; only do not turn your **freedom** ([eleutheria](#)) into an opportunity ([aphorme](#)) for the flesh, but through love serve one another." (Gal 5:13+)

**Reformation Study Bible** - Paul returns to the first question of 1 Cor 9:1. It appears that Paul must defend himself from the charge of inconsistency: he exercised freedom in his own behavior and therefore should not deprive others from doing the same.

**Guzik** - Paul was free to do what he wanted, but bringing people to Jesus was more important to him than using his freedom selfishly.

**Arnold** - Paul was free from religious traditions, man-made scruples and secular prejudices. He was free in Christ, for his soul had found the real secret to liberty. Being set free internally, he made himself externally a slave or a servant to all men. Out of his own volition, he relinquished his own rights in order to win as many people as he possible could for Christ.

**Martin Luther** said, "A Christian man is free lord over all things and subject to nobody. A Christian man is a ministering servant in all things, subject to everybody."

**Bruce Barton** - In 9:19–22, Paul asserted that he was free to yield certain rights in matters that did not compromise the gospel message. In such a way, he could vary the style of his message or other minor matters, becoming a slave to his audience so that



[he] might win more of them. Paul's goals were to glorify God and to bring people to Christ. Thus he stayed free of any philosophical position or material entanglement that might sidetrack him while he strictly disciplined himself to carry out his goals. (LAC)

**I have** (active voice - volitionally, of my own choice) **made myself a slave to all, so that I may win** ([kerdaino](#)) more - This is an interesting declaration in light of his earlier statement " You were bought with a price; do not become **slaves** ([doulos](#)) of men.' (1 Cor 7:23+). Here Paul is not speaking of being a slave in the sense of the others being his absolute master (as was the case in 1 Cor 7:23). Here Paul is saying he is willing to give up his rights (even as he has been discussing regarding his right to receive pay) that in so doing he might win more people over to the Gospel and thereby procure their eternal salvation. Paul was far more interested in the eternal than the temporal.

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who is wise wins souls.  
-- Proverbs 11:30

**MacDonald** on **slave to all** - In one sense he was free from all men. No one could exercise jurisdiction or compulsion over him. Yet he brought himself under bondage to all people in order that he might win the more. If he could make a concession without sacrificing divine truth he would do it in order to win souls to Christ.

**Wiersbe** - What a paradox: free from all men, yet the servant of all men! "Ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 4:5). Because he was free, Paul was able to serve others and to set aside his own rights for their sake.

**Utley** on **slave to all** - This is the emphasis on proper Christian responsibility (cf. Rom. 14:1–15:13; 2 Cor. 4:5). Because Paul was a slave of Christ, he was a slave of all who Christ came to serve and save, both the believer and the unbeliever.

**MacArthur** has a slightly different interpretation of **slave to all** - By choice, he set aside his right to be supported, and thus "enslaved" himself to self-support, in order to remove a potential offense and win more people to Jesus Christ (cf. Pr 11:30).

Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven,  
and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.  
-- Daniel 12:3+

**Cole** on **I have made myself a slave to all** - A slave does not view himself as being over others, but rather as being under them to serve. He doesn't think of himself first, but of those he serves. Paul made himself a slave to those who were without Christ. Do you view the lost as the enemy to be fought or as those whom you need to serve? If the latter, how are you serving them? Do you look for opportunities to serve your neighbors or your lost family members? If an unbeliever is rude toward you, do you react with anger or with kindness? I read of a mean army sergeant who threw his muddy boots at a Christian private as he knelt by his bunk in prayer. They hit him in the head, but he went on praying. In the morning the sergeant found his boots beside his bunk beautifully polished. That act of kind service on the part of that private resulted in the sergeant's salvation. I'll be the first to admit that I probably would not have responded as that private did. But that kind of behavior starts with an attitude that we all must adopt: "I am a slave to the lost." ([Winning Others to Christ](#))

Note the "key word/phrase" "**I may win**" ([kerdaino](#)) used 6 times in 1 Cor 9:19-22. Paul "defines" what **win** means in 1 Cor 9:22, where **win** is changed to **save**.

**Made...a slave** (1402) ([douloo](#)) means to bring someone into a state of absolute obedience and thus to bring into bondage, to enslave, to make someone a slave. The idea is to be held and controlled against one's will. **Figuratively** (all NT uses except Acts 7:6) **douloo** means to gain control over someone. To become servant, to make someone a slave or to become a slave, to serve. The imagery derives directly from the ancient practice of enslaving an enemy defeated in battle as a prisoner! And so **douloo** describes not so much a relation of service as primarily one of dependence upon, or bondage to, something.

**Douloo** - 8v in NT - Acts 7:6; Rom. 6:18; Rom. 6:22; 1 Co. 7:15; 1 Co. 9:19; Gal. 4:3; Tit. 2:3; 2 Pet. 2:19

**Win** (gain) (2770) ([kerdaino](#) from [kerdos](#) = gain) means literally to procure an advantage or profit, to acquire by effort or investment (as in the parable of the talents Mt 25:16,17, 20, 22; Jas 4:13 = "make a profit"). In 1 Cor 9:19-22 **kerdaino** is used 5 times and translated "might win", in each use this "gain" referring not to money but to men's souls, for those whom Paul might "gain" equates with those who were saved. This is the ultimate "good investment" which will pay "dividends" for eternity! Are you placing more effort into investing in the market where the gains are temporal or in men where the gain is eternal? **Utley** on **win** - In this context Paul uses the term in an evangelistic sense (cf. 1 Cor 9:19, 20, 21, 22 and 1 Pet. 3:1). This is the proper evangelistic goal of all of our actions (cf. vv. 22–23). Evangelistic intentionality in every area of our lives, not a particular methodology, is the key to a proper balance between Christian freedom and Christian responsibility."

**Kerdaino** (key word/phrase in 1 Cor 9) - 19v in NT - Mt. 16:26; Mt. 18:15; Mt. 25:16; Mt. 25:17; Mt. 25:20; Mt. 25:22; Mk. 8:36; Lk. 9:25; Acts 27:21; 1 Co. 9:19; 1 Co. 9:20; 1 Co. 9:21; 1 Co. 9:22; Phil. 3:8; Jas. 4:13; 1 Pet. 3:1

**1 Corinthians 9:20 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;**

Amplified -To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to men under the Law, [I became] as one under the Law, though not myself being under the Law, that I might win those under the Law.

NET 1 Corinthians 9:20 To the Jews I became like a Jew to gain the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) to gain those under the law.

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:20 When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:20 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.

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:20 καὶ γὰρ μὴν τοὺς οὐδαμοὺς οὐδαμῶς, ἵνα οὐδαμῶς κερδίσω τοὺς πνεύμων· οὐκ ἔπι μόνον, μὴ ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου, ἵνα τοὺς πνεύμων κερδίσω·

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:20 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;

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:20 and I became to the Jews as a Jew, that Jews I might gain; to those under law as under law, that those under law I might gain;

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:20 And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; to those under the law, like one under the law-- though I myself am not under the law-- to win those under the law.

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:20 I have become to the Jews as one who is a Jew that I might win Jews. To those under the law, I became as one under the law—not being myself under the law—that I might win those under the law.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:20 and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law;

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law.

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:20 To the Jews I became like a Jew to win over Jews; to those under the law I became like one under the law-- though I myself am not under the law-- to win over those under the law.

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:20 To the Jews I made myself as a Jew, to win the Jews; to those under the Law as one under the Law (though I am not), in order to win those under the Law;

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:20 I became Jewish for Jewish people. I became subject to Moses' Teachings for those who are subject to those laws. I did this to win them even though I'm not subject to Moses' Teachings.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:20 And to the Jews I was as a Jew, so that I might give the good news to them; to those under the law I was the same, not as being myself under the law, but so that I might give the good news to those under the law.

- **To the Jews:** Acts 16:3 Acts 17:2-3 Acts 18:18 Acts 21:20-26
- **under:** Ro 3:19 Ro 6:14-15 Ga 4:5,21 Gal 5:18
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL'S WILLINGNESS TO WIN JEWS TO CHRIST

**To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win** ([kerdaino](#)) **Jews to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win** ([kerdaino](#)) **those who are under the Law** - Obviously Paul who had just stated that he was free (1 Cor 9:1) did not place himself back under the Mosaic Law, for he was now and forever under grace (cf Ro 6:14b+). But he was willing to speak to the Jews on the common ground of their Law, for he knew that the Gospel was still present in the Law and that it had the power to save them. Also he would not do anything to offend those who were under the Law. "He wouldn't eat pork in the face of one still under the Levitical law regarding no pork." (Brian Bell)

One illustration of Paul's willingness to win Jews to Christ was in his calling of Timothy as his disciple, Luke recording "Paul wanted this man to go with him; and **he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts**, for they all knew that his father was a Greek (AND NORMALLY GREEKS WERE NOT CIRCUMCISED)." Paul did not have to do this, for he himself had just written "Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised." (1 Cor 7:18+). In Acts 17:2-3+ we see Paul's custom when entering a city to hopefully plant a church, the first place he would go was to the Jewish Synagogue. In Acts 18:18+ we see Paul **became as a Jew** by keeping a vow ("In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was [keeping a vow](#)." = an Old Testament, Jewish practice, cf **vow** in Acts 21:20-26+) In the case of Titus, there were those who insisted that unless he was circumcised, he couldn't be saved. Realizing that this was a frontal attack on the gospel of the grace of God, Paul stoutly refused to have Titus circumcised (Gal. 2:3+).

**MacDonald** - When he was with Jewish people, Paul behaved as a Jew in matters of moral indifference. For instance, he ate the foods which the Jewish people ate and refrained from eating such things as pork which were forbidden to them. Perhaps Paul also refrained from working on the Sabbath day, realizing that if he did this, the gospel might gain a more ready hearing from the people. As a born-again believer in the Lord Jesus, the Apostle Paul was not under the law as a rule of life. He merely adapted himself to the customs, habits, and prejudices of the people in order that he might win them to the Lord.

**MacArthur** - Within the limits of God's Word and his Christian conscience, Paul would be as culturally and socially Jewish as necessary when witnessing to Jews (cf. Ro 9:3; 10:1; 11:14). He was not bound to ceremonies and traditions of Judaism. All legal restraints had been removed, but there was the constraint of love (cf. Ro 9:3; 10:1; Ro 11:14). For examples of this identification with customs of the Jews, see notes on Acts 16:3; 18:18; Acts 21:20-26. (MSB)

**ESV Study Bible** - Paul was a Jew (2 Cor. 11:22; Gal. 1:13; Phil. 3:5) and valued his Jewish heritage (Rom. 9:3-5), but the Jewish Messiah himself had nullified the distinctively Jewish parts of the Mosaic law (Matt. 15:11; Mark 7:19; Rom. 14:14; 1 Cor. 7:19; Gal. 2:11-14; 6:2; Eph. 2:14-15). In Christ, God had created a newly defined people where there was no distinction between Jew and Gentile (Acts 15:9; Rom. 3:22; 10:12; 1 Cor. 10:32). became

**Cole on To the Jews I became as a Jew**, - There is a perception to gain: Where is this person at? Paul had one message, the gospel, which he never changed. But culturally, he considered the perspective of his hearers and tried to think and act as they did, as long as it wasn't sinful, so that they would hear the message. To the Jews, Paul became a Jew (1Cor 9:20). Wasn't Paul already a Jew? Yes, but he had left the strict cultural aspects of Judaism behind when God called him to preach to the Gentiles. So when he went back to Jerusalem or to Jewish people anywhere, he had to relate to them as a Jew. In modern terms, with the Jews, Paul was kosher. He skipped the bacon for breakfast. "Those under the Law" (1Cor 9:20) is another way of looking at the Jews. It focuses on their religious practices, especially keeping the ceremonial aspects of the Law. Paul was no longer under the Law of Moses (Ro 6:14; 7:4), but he could observe a Jewish celebration if it gave him an opportunity to reach the Jews. ([Winning Others to Christ](#))

**Utley on though not being myself under the Law** - We must relate Paul's words here to Jesus' words in Matt. 5:17-20. Paul is not doing away with the Mosaic Law, but seeing its true fulfillment in Christ. The Law is not the means of salvation, but it is still (1) a true revelation and (2) a reflection of God's will for humanity in society. It functions in progressive sanctification, but not justification.

**Robertson** - He was emancipated from the law as a means of salvation, yet he knew how to speak to them because of his former beliefs and life with them (Gal. 4:21). He knew how to put the gospel to them without compromise and without offence..

**Utley** makes an excellent point - Paul's main concern was evangelism (cf. 1 Cor 9:20-23; 10:31-33). Therefore, he circumcised Timothy so as to work with Jews (cf. Acts 16:3), but would not circumcise Titus (cf. Gal. 2:3-5) so as not to compromise the freedom of the gospel among Gentiles.

**Brian Bell** - Also, with Christians who are still under some legalism or custom you may have to submit to their moral standards...so as to reach them.

(eg.) Haiti trips we require ladies to wear long dresses & guys to wear ties to church service. No clapping in a Bulgarian church I was in, in Etropole. Not putting my bible on the floor India.. Last time in Haiti 1 of our guys had piercings. Was asked to remove for Sun

Service. Because of Paul's restraint, many under the Law were brought above it to enjoy the full knowledge of Christ!

Jack Arnold - A buzz word among missiologists and missionaries is contextualization. By this it is meant that creative ways are used to reach different people groups in their particular culture. It is being sensitive to the non-Christian, neutral mores of society so as not to hinder people from accepting the gospel. All aspects of a culture are not inherently evil but some are. Contextualization means that as we present the gospel to other people groups we change the forms which surround the gospel but we do not change the content of the gospel. Contextualization is nothing more than adapting the Christian message to a particular culture without compromising biblical truth. To evangelize Jews, it would be helpful to worship on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, observe Jewish holidays, use folk music and dance, use Jewish idioms or whatever. If evangelizing the Muslims, it may be well to assume certain postures in prayer, pray three times a day, use regular times of reflection and devotion, use houses of worship which resemble mosques or whatever. However, the message of the gospel is never changed.

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### Question - [What is contextualization?](#)

**Answer:** Generally, to contextualize an idea, statement or event is to place it within its larger setting in which it acquires its true and complete meaning. Contextualization aids comprehension. For example, an arithmetic problem may not seem very practical until it is seen within a story problem; the real-life situation *contextualizes* the math problem and makes it more understandable. In Christian evangelism, to contextualize is to tailor the presentation of the gospel to the wider sociological context in order to achieve greater understanding and, therefore, greater acceptance of the message.

Various churches and missionary efforts through the years have used varying levels of contextualization. At one end of the spectrum is no contextualization at all. On the foreign field, this means that the gospel is presented in Western terms that may not be understood by the indigenous peoples. Truth is presented with no regard for the background, experience or thinking of the hearers. In America, we sometimes see churches that refuse to adapt music or programs to the surrounding culture. Gospel truth remains, but it is set in a rigid framework that allows little room for creativity.

At the other end of the contextualization spectrum is too much adaptation. A message is presented in terms that are easily understood by the audience, but truth is compromised. We see this in places where Christian customs have been added to pagan belief systems, resulting in a confused syncretic of doctrine, and in churches that try to incorporate modern philosophy into their theology, whether or not it's biblical. The result is a watering down of the truth.

The necessary balance falls somewhere between those two extremes. The gospel must be presented in terms that are easily understood, but truth must also remain distinct from untruth. This occurs in churches that understand the culture in which they function and adapt their methods to the preferences of that culture. Gospel truth remains, presented in a culturally relevant manner, and no attempt is made to "sanitize" the cross to avoid offense (1 Corinthians 1:23).

Contextualization is most often discussed in terms of missionary work. Some very early missionaries made no attempt to contextualize, but rather required their converts to become "Westernized," or at least required a drastic break from their native culture. This tended to build walls rather than build relationships. Later, missionaries of the 19th and early 20th centuries, such as [William Carey](#), [Hudson Taylor](#), [Amy Carmichael](#) and others, leaned more toward immersing themselves in the culture and partnering with natives in reaching the lost. They contextualized the message to the culture without diluting the truth. This led to the modern missionary movement.

In his book *Peace Child*, Don Richardson tells of his effort to bring the gospel to the Sawis, a tribe of headhunters in Papua New Guinea. He faced tremendous obstacles in a culture that honored deceit and betrayal—when they first heard the gospel, the natives saw Judas Iscariot as the hero of the story. In order to bridge the gap between the Sawi worldview and God's message of love, Richardson had to contextualize the message. Through much prayer, hard work and persistence, Richardson was able to find the "key" to unlock the Sawi culture and present the gospel of Jesus in a way the Sawi could truly understand. The result was that a jungle church was established and some of the Sawi began evangelizing neighboring tribes.

In the Bible, Daniel and his three friends were fully immersed in the Babylonian culture without giving in to influences that might draw them away from their God (Daniel 1-2). Their willingness to accommodate earned them an audience with the Babylonian king, and their refusal to compromise truth eventually led to the king's acknowledgement of God (Daniel 4). When Paul spoke to the Athenians, he not only emulated the Athenian style of argument and oratory, but he also used their own writers to bolster his points (Acts 17:22-34). In other words, Paul understood Greek culture and contextualized the gospel in order to gain a hearing.

There are clear biblical examples of contextualization in the New Testament. Jesus preached to Samaritans and Gentiles without requiring them to conform to Jewish practices. Peter's dramatic vision of Acts 10 showed him that he needed to modify his approach to the Gentile culture; this he did, and a Roman centurion came to faith in Christ as a result. Paul's statement that he would be "all things to all men" (1 Corinthians 9:22) indicates his willingness to contextualize the truth for his hearers, whoever they may be. And,

finally, in Revelation we see that the Lord Jesus has redeemed people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (Revelation 5:9; 14:6). The gospel is truly cross-cultural and must be presented in a way that each culture can apprehend.

The Christmas song "Some Children See Him" describes the baby Jesus from the point of view of various children of the world: to different children, Jesus is "lily white," "bronzed and brown," "almond-eyed," or "dark as they." The children understand Jesus in terms of their own background and culture. That is contextualization. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**1 Corinthians 9:21 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.**

Amplified - To those without (outside) law I became as one without law, not that I am without the law of God and lawless toward Him, but that I am [especially keeping] within and committed to the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law.

NET 1 Corinthians 9:21 To those free from the law I became like one free from the law (though I am not free from God's law but under the law of Christ) to gain those free from the law.

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:21 When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:21 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.

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:21 το ς ν μοι ς ς νομο ς, μ ν νομο ς θεο λλ ννομο ς Χριστο , να κερδ νω το ς ν μου ς.

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:21 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.

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:21 to those without law, as without law -- (not being without law to God, but within law to Christ) -- that I might gain those without law;

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:21 to them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law.

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:21 To those who are without that law, like one without the law-- not being without God's law but within Christ's law-- to win those without the law.

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:21 To those without the law, I became as one without the influence of the law—not being lawless as far as God is concerned, but subject to Christ's "law"—that I might win those outside the realm of the law.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:21 to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law;

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law.

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:21 To those outside the law I became like one outside the law-- though I am not outside God's law but within the law of Christ-- to win over those outside the law.

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:21 to those outside the Law as one outside the Law, though I am not outside the Law but under Christ's law, to win those outside the Law.

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:21 I became like a person who does not have Moses' Teachings for those who don't have those teachings. I did this to win them even though I have God's teachings. I'm really subject to Christ's teachings.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:21 To those without the law I was as one without the law, not as being without law to God, but as under law to Christ, so that I might give the good news to those without the law.

- **to those who are without law:** Ac 15:28 16:4 21:25 Ro 2:12,14 Ga 2:3,4,12-14 3:2
- **though not being without the law of God:** 1Co 7:19-22 Ps 119:32 Mt 5:17-20 Ro 7:22,25 8:4 13:8-10 Ga 5:13,14,22,23 Eph



- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Hudson Taylor Dressing for the Gospel

## TO THE GENTILES

**Steven Cole** - These verses throb with Paul's passion to reach the lost: "that I may win more" (1Cor 9:19); "that I may win Jews" (1Cor 9:20); "that I may win those who are under the Law" (1 Cor 9:20); "that I might win those who are without law" (1Cor 9:21); "that I might win the weak" (1Cor 9:22); "that I may by all means save some" (1Cor 9:22); "I do all things for the sake of the gospel" (1Cor 9:23). Back in 1 Cor 9:16, Paul says that he was under compulsion to preach the gospel. He didn't control it; it controlled him. The man was obsessed! If it were not the apostle Paul and if this were not inspired Scripture, some theologically correct brothers might say, "Paul, don't you know that you can't save anyone? Only God can save people. So relax, will you? If God has chosen to save them, then He will do that without your help!" That's what a pious minister told [William Carey](#) 220 years ago when he proposed taking the gospel to India. But both Carey and the apostle Paul realized that the sovereign God uses means to save His elect. He uses men and women who are compelled by the goal of saving some. Does the goal of saving lost people grip you? Is it your passion, as it was Paul's? ([Winning Others to Christ](#))

**To those who are without law, as without law** - Those without the law refers to Gentiles. Paul has divided the world into two groups, Jews and Gentiles and here seeks to be all things to both groups, in order to win some.

**Poole** - "To the Gentiles he behaved himself as if he himself had been a Gentile, that is, forbearing the observances of the Levitical law, to which the Gentiles had never any obligation at all."

**Ryrie** - Paul is not demonstrating two-facedness or multi-facedness, but rather he is testifying of a constant, restrictive self-discipline in order to be able to serve all sorts of men. Just as a narrowly channeled stream is more powerful than an unbounded marshy swamp, so restricted liberty results in more powerful testimony for Christ. (The Grace of God)

**Though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ** - Paul's point is that he did not live lawlessly (without obedience to the moral law of God), but by the Spirit was enabled to obey the moral law of God since he was now subject to the **law of Christ**. Paul was like the man described by James "who looks intently at the perfect law, the **law of liberty** ([eleutheria](#)), and abides by it (ENABLED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT), not having become a forgetful hearer (AS IN James 1:22-24+) but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does." (James 1:25+)

The phrase **law of Christ** is used one other time in the NT in Galatians 6:2 "Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ." Here the **law of Christ** is the law of love which fulfills the entire law (Gal 5:14; Ro 13:8, 10+).

**NIVSB on law of God...law of Christ** - By God's law Paul likely means the universal moral standards that are inherent to God's character, such as prohibitions against lying, stealing, murder, etc. By "Christ's law" Paul is probably referring to Christ's teachings, though the term is not necessarily restricted to them.

**MacArthur on law** - To keep from being misunderstood, he makes it clear that he is not talking about ignoring or violating God's moral law. The Ten Commandments and all of God's other moral laws have, if anything, been strengthened under the New Covenant. For example, not only is it sin to commit murder but also to be inordinately angry with your brother or to call him a fool. Not only is adultery sinful, but so is lust (Matt. 5:21-30). Love does not abrogate God's moral law but fulfills it (Rom. 13:8, 10; cf. Matt. 5:17). None of us in Christ is without [outside] the law of God, but rather are under the law of Christ. Every believer is under complete legal obligation to Jesus Christ—even though love, rather than the externalities of the law, is to be the guiding force. (MNTC-1 Cor)

**William MacDonald** - In other words, he was bound to love, honor, serve, and please the Lord Jesus, not now by the Law of Moses, but by the law of love. He was "enlawed" to Christ. We have an expression "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." Paul is saying here that when he was with the Gentiles, he adapted himself to their manner of living as far as he could consistently do so and still be loyal to Christ. But we must keep in mind that this passage deals only with cultural things and not with doctrinal or moral matters.

**Jack Arnold** - Paul's methods might change, but his message never changed. Nor did his morals and ethics change, for he was guided by the law of Christ which is the law of love, and this law is expressed in the moral law of the Old Testament and the moral law of the New Testament. All Christians are under the law; however, that law is not the Mosaic Law but a higher law--the law of Christ.

**Table Talk** - Notice that Paul became all things to all men only in those things indifferent. He never compromised the doctrines of Christ, never watered them down, never sinned against the dictates of God's law or his conscience for the sake of evangelism. But



he did take great pains in those matters of indifference to win others to Christ. It is necessary to stress this point because many have abused this passage to allow for all kinds of ungodliness and for the neglect of proclaiming the full counsel of God. Paul's duty was to God first, but when it came to his duty before men, he always put others first

**Cole** - When Paul was with them (THE GENTILES), he could lay aside the non-moral aspects of the Law of Moses and live culturally like a Gentile. He is quick to clarify that he was not without God's law, but under the law of Christ, which refers to the moral aspects of God's law. Paul would never use profanity or tell dirty jokes to relate to lost people. But he would eat meat offered to idols to reach Gentiles (1 Cor. 10:27-31). Paul's overall point is that we need to understand where a person is at and not do things in our behavior or manners that needlessly offend them. The message of the cross may well offend them (1 Cor 1:18+), but we should not be personally offensive to them. Don't make non-gospel issues the issue. Make the gospel the issue. ([Winning Others to Christ](#))

**Alan Redpath** - To the Gentiles he became as one of them in their freedom, yet he never forgot that he was the Lord's bond-slave and therefore under His authority. Paul did not compromise his position in the sight of heaven, but he went right alongside those men in their need and sin to win them for Jesus.

**MacArthur** - If a person is offended by God's Word, that is his problem. If he is offended by biblical doctrine, standards, or church discipline, that is his problem. That person is offended by God. But if he is offended by our unnecessary behavior or practices—no matter how good and acceptable those may be in themselves—his problem becomes our problem.

**Utley** feels that "The **law of Christ** is a way of referring to the New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34+). Paul and James phrase it in several different ways ("the law of the Spirit of Life," Rom. 8:2; "the law of Christ," Gal. 6:2; "the perfect law, the law of liberty," James 1:25 and James 2:12+; "the royal law," James 2:8+).

It takes tact to make contact.

**So that** (term of purpose) **I might win** ([kerdaino](#)) **those who are without law** - Gain Gentile converts. Paul reminds me of **Hudson Taylor** (founder of China Inland Mission) who when he was led by God into the interior regions of China, chose to adopt their style of clothing and manner of living in order to facilitate reaching more with the Gospel. ([See picture above](#))

"Together with his co-workers, Hudson Taylor began speaking and preaching and distributing literature in the nearby areas. However, when he saw that the Chinese people could only see him as an outsider he followed the example of Dr. Charles Gutzlaff, whom he called the "grandfather of the China Inland Mission," and **chose to wear the clothes of the common Chinese people**. Although this made him the laughing stock of both foreign and Chinese onlookers, the effects proved his point and helped people see that what he preached was not such a foreign message after all.....While stressing the need to preach widely, Hudson Taylor urged local churches to establish and mature, for church buildings to be of **Chinese not foreign design**, and for leaders of the churches to be Chinese Christians." (from [Article on James Hudson Taylor](#))

**Smith** - "Paul sought to win people to Jesus Christ by being sensitive to their needs and identifying with them. We should try to reach people where they are today and expect to see changes later."

**Brian Bell** - Paul did this so well in all the Greek cities. He didn't use Jewish analogies, but instead spoke to their Gentile-ness! One w/o the Law...could also refer to the "freedom abusers". Paul encourages us to be mobile in method, but not in morals!

#### **Related Resource:**

- [An Enquiry Into The Obligations Of Christians To Use Means For the Conversion of the Heathen](#) - by [William Carey](#)

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#### **True Teamwork**

They [train] to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. —1 Corinthians 9:25

Today's Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Sports brings out the best and the worst in people. The news media often focus on the worst. Those who comfort players with "It's not whether you win or lose that counts; it's how you play the game" seldom make world news. But once in a while they do.

After a baseball team from Georgia defeated a team from Japan in the Little League World Series, one reporter wrote: "The boys from Warner Robins left a lasting impression of their inner character for the world to see. They proved again, it's not whether you win or lose that counts. It is, how you play the game."

When the losing players broke down in tears, the winning team members stopped their victory celebration to console them. "I just

hated to see them cry,” said pitcher Kendall Scott, “and I just wanted to let them know that I care.” Some referred to the moment as “sportsmanship at its best.”

It was indeed heartwarming, but it points out that sports—even at its best—is an imperfect metaphor for Christianity. In sports, someone always loses. But when someone is won to Christ, the only loser is Satan.

For Christians, true teamwork is not about defeating opponents; it’s about recruiting them to join our team (1 Cor. 9:19-22). By: Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, too often I view as my enemies those who don’t know You. Help me love them as You love them. Help me gently share Your truth with them. Help me see them as part of Your great mission field. Amen.

Tact is the knack of winning a point without making an enemy.

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## **J Oswald Sanders - The Value of Prohibitions 1 Corinthians 9:21**

We must by diligent study of the Scriptures and by thought and prayer arrive at our own convictions and not weakly adopt those inherited from others.

We should, nonetheless, guard against the idea that there is no place for taboos and prohibitions in the Christian life. They are plentifully found in both Old and New Testaments—the Ten Commandments, for example. If it be objected that we are “not under law but under grace” (Romans 6:15) and that the restrictions of the law do not apply to Christians, the answer is that nine out of ten commandments in the Decalogue are reiterated in the New Testament, where their application is greatly widened. Murder in the act is traced to hatred in the heart. It is true that we are no longer “under the law” as a way of justification but we are “under . . . law to Christ” as a new way of life. Paul is as strong in his prohibitions as with his calls to freedom. “Put off,” “abstain,” “lay aside” are characteristic commands of his letters.

The Bible does not legislate in detail for every matter of conduct that might arise, but it does enumerate clear principles which, correctly applied, cover every conceivable case. If God did not give clear guidance, how can we then be held responsible for failure to do His will? It is within the unique qualities of New Testament Christianity that lay down clear guiding principles rather than imposing a set of taboos, a system of rules and regulations, for God delights to deal with His people as adult sons and daughters rather than as children under a tutor. Since this is the case, in reading the Scriptures we should constantly ask, “What are the spiritual principles put forth in this passage?” (SC)

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## **Common Ground**

That I might win those who are without law. — 1 Corinthians 9:21

Today’s Scripture: Acts 17:22-31

Roman emperors are not generally remembered for their wisdom, but there are a few exceptions. One great thinker was Marcus Aurelius, emperor of Rome from AD 161 to 180. Gifted with a brilliant mind, he was one of the great intellectual rulers in Western civilization.

Although he never became a convert to the new faith that would be called Christianity, he displayed remarkable insight. His wisdom reflects the law of God written in the heart of someone who did not have God’s Word (Rom. 2:14-15). For example:

- The happiness of your life depends on the quality of your thoughts.
- You have power over your mind—not outside events.
- Your life is what your thoughts make it.

These words sound similar to Proverbs 23:7, “As [a person] thinks in his heart, so is he.” We can learn helpful principles from non-Christians and use their beliefs as common ground for sharing the gospel. When Paul stood on Mars Hill addressing some of the leading intellectuals of his day, he did not belittle their beliefs but established common ground with them and then gave the gospel (Acts 17:26-28).

Let’s look for common ground with our neighbors, so that we may lead them to Christ. By: Dennis Fisher [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

What common ground do you share with your friends?

Books read Hobbies Travel

Children Sports Upbringing

**1 Corinthians 9:22 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.**

Amplified - To the weak (wanting in discernment) I have become weak (wanting in discernment) that I might win the weak and overscrupulous. I have [in short] become all things to all men, that I might by all means (at all costs and in any and every way) save some [by winning them to faith in Jesus Christ].

NET 1 Corinthians 9:22 To the weak I became weak in order to gain the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that by all means I may save some.

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:22 When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:22 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.

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:22 γεν μὴν το ς σθεν σιν σθεν ς, να το ς σθενε ς κερδ σω· το ς π σιν γ γονα π ντα, να π ντως πν ς σ σω.

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:22 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.

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:22 I became to the infirm as infirm, that the infirm I might gain; to all men I have become all things, that by all means I may save some.

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:22 To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some.

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:22 To the weak I became weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some.

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:22 I became to the weak as one who was weak that I might win the weak. To all I have become everything needed in order that by all means I would be able to rescue some of them.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:22 to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:22 To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some.

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:22 To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all, to save at least some.

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:22 To the weak, I made myself weak, to win the weak. I accommodated myself to people in all kinds of different situations, so that by all possible means I might bring some to salvation.

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:22 I became like a person weak in faith to win those who are weak in faith. I have become everything to everyone in order to save at least some of them.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:22 To the feeble, I was as one who is feeble, so that they might have salvation: I have been all things to all men, so that some at least might have salvation.

- **To the weak:** 1Co 8:13 Ro 15:1 2Co 11:29 Ga 6:1
- **I have become:** 1Co 10:33
- **that I may** 1Co 9:19 1 Cor 7:16 Ro 11:14
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL BECAME ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN

**To the weak I became weak, that I might win (kerdaino) the weak** - The "key word" here is **weak**. Who are the **weak**? In context this has to refer to the **weak** he has just described in 1 Cor 8:7, 9, 10+), the weak in faith and understanding. In those passages Paul used the verb [astheneo](#) and here uses the related adjective [asthenes](#). In Ro 5:8+ Paul describes the state of those before they received Christ as **helpless**.

Although **weak** is used in chapter 8, there it clearly refers to those who are already believers, but who are weak or immature in their faith.

**Arnold** says "They were **weak** because they had superstitious beliefs and hang-ups concerning meat sacrificed to idols or drinking wine or observing religious holidays. Paul was a total abstainer from these things if they ever became a hindrance to a person coming to Christ. Paul would not abuse his liberty so he could be the most effective witness for Christ he could possibly be."

**MacArthur** takes a different approach on the **weak** - Paul was willing to identify with those, whether Jew or Gentile, who did not have the power of understanding to grasp the gospel. When among those who were weak he acted weak. He stooped to the level of their weakness of comprehension. To those who needed simple or repeated presentations, that is what he gave them. No doubt he demonstrated that kind of consideration in the case of the Corinthians themselves (cf. 1 Cor 2:1–5+). His purpose was to win them to salvation.

**ESVSB** on **weak** - This is the attitude that Paul wants those in Corinth with superior "knowledge" to adopt toward the "weak" in their midst (cf. 1 Cor 8:9–13).

**NIVSB** on **weak** - Paul did not exercise his Christian freedom in such things as eating meat sacrificed to idols in pagan temples (8:9, 13), as if he shared the sensibilities of the weak.

**Alan Redpath** - To the weak he became as one weak. He refused to use his liberty as a Christian in any way that might become a stumblingblock or lead another astray.

**Steven Cole** - This is always a struggle and it's easy to err on both sides. Some professing Christians, such as the Amish, withdraw from the world and are so culturally distinct that they have virtually no impact in terms of saving any. The world just looks at them as being weird. They aren't of the world, but neither are they in the world. On the other hand, in their attempt to reach the world, other professing Christians become so much like the world that they lose their holiness and compromise the gospel. For example, I've read of pastors that freely use profanity and churches that use secular hard rock music (with lewd lyrics) to lure young people into the building. They're in the world, but they're also of the world. Jesus calls us to be in the world, but not to be of the world (John 17:15-16). He was known as the friend of sinners, but He never compromised His holiness. One way to keep our balance is to keep our goal in view at all times: "to save some." Your reason for going into the world is not to cavort with them, but to snatch them out of the flames (Jude 23). And, a second goal that Paul mentions is (1Cor 9:23), "so that I may become a fellow partaker of it [the gospel]." Along with those he sees come to faith in Christ, Paul wants to share in the eternal blessings of the gospel. If [Charlie, the converted alcoholic \(see illustration\)](#), had said, "Now that I'm a Christian, I won't go into bars," he never would have reached Gib Martin. On the other hand, if Charlie had gone into bars and started drinking and carousing again, he never would have reached Gib Martin. To win others to Christ, we have to go where they're at so that we will get opportunities to present the gospel to them. But we need to be distinct in our lifestyle and behavior so that we don't compromise the message that we have to give them.

**Brian Bell** - As Weak – they could be easily offended & slip back into sin. We must restrain our liberties while we are w/ them.

**Weak** (sick, helpless) (772) [asthenes](#) from **a** = without + **sthénos** = strength, bodily vigor) (See study of related verb [astheneo](#) - note the concentration of asthenes/astheneo in the epistles to the Corinthians - almost 50% of NT uses) is literally without strength or bodily vigor. **Asthenes** describes one's state of limited capacity to do or be something and is used literally of physical weakness (most of the uses in the Gospels) and figuratively of weakness in the spiritual arena (weak flesh, weak conscience, weak religious system or commandment [Gal 4:9, Heb 7:18], etc) and thus powerlessness to produce results. **Asthenes** - 22x - Matt. 25:43; Matt. 25:44; Matt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38; Lk. 10:9; Acts 4:9; Acts 5:15; Acts 5:16; Ro 5:6; 1 Co. 1:25; 1 Co. 1:27; 1 Co. 4:10; 1 Co. 8:7; 1 Co. 8:9; 1 Co. 8:10; 1 Co. 9:22; 1 Co. 11:30; 1 Co. 12:22; 2 Co. 10:10; Gal. 4:9; 1 Th 5:14; Heb. 7:18

**I have become all things to all men, so that (term of purpose) I may by all means save some** - Become is perfect tense which speaks of the abiding result of his action in the past. Note all the "all's!" Paul's great desire is the salvation **of some**. He is willing to **become all things to all men**, but he is realistic and knows that he cannot see **all** saved but only **some**.

"Give me 100 preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God,  
and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen;  
they alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the Kingdom of Heaven on earth."

-- John Wesley

**Utley on all** - Notice the number of "alls" (forms of pas) in this phrase. Paul's inner self has been transformed from self-centered to gospel-centered. He is free to serve Christ, to serve the gospel, to serve the Kingdom (cf. Rom. 6:11; 7:4). Flexibility, intentionality, and love are crucial aspects of Paul's life and ministry! Paul's mind was always on evangelism (cf. Rom. 11:14; 1 Cor. 1:21; 7:16; 10:31-33; 1 Tim. 1:15). However, it is sad to say that the last phrase gives a hint that most who heard him did not respond in faith to his message. Why **some** hear (with spiritual ears) and **some** do not, is the mystery of election and free will!

**Vine** - The comprehensiveness of his statement is only limited by his relationship to Christ. There was no sacrifice of principle, but a readiness to approach men on their most accessible side.....every permissible method was adopted in order to save men, though he knew that only some would be saved and that the majority would still go down the broad road.

**William MacDonald** - Verse 22 speaks of those who are weak or overscrupulous. They were excessively sensitive about matters that were really not of fundamental importance. To the weak, Paul became as weak, that he might win them. He would be a vegetarian if necessary rather than offend them by eating meat. In short, Paul became all things to all men, that he might by all means save some. These verses should never be used to justify a sacrifice of scriptural principle. They merely describe a readiness to accommodate to the customs and habits of the people in order to win a hearing for the good news of salvation. When Paul says that I might by all means save some, he does not think for a moment that he could save another person, for he realized that the Lord Jesus was the only Person who could save. At the same time it is wonderful to notice that those who serve Christ in the gospel are so closely identified with Him that He even allows them to use the word save to describe a work in which they are involved. How this exalts and ennobles and dignifies the gospel ministry!

**Jack Arnold** - Paul said, "... that I might save some." As Dr. D. James Kennedy says, "This statement is enough to shake some hyper-Calvinists right out of their TULIP tree." Did Paul think he actually saved people? No, but he was so taken up with the plans and purposes of God in salvation that he felt the keen responsibility for being an instrument in the salvation of people. We know Paul pleaded with people, reasoned with people, persuaded people and exhorted people to trust Jesus Christ. He clearly understood that it is God who saves, but he also knew he was an instrument through which the gospel was being preached, and he never gave up on a person's salvation until God did! Paul was driven in his experience by the realization that Christ does save people and that he could have a part in seeing the lives of men and women gloriously changed. Paul also said, "I might save some." He never expected everyone he talked to about Christ to respond positively. He did not say "all" or "most" or "many" but "some," for he knew if he faithfully gave forth the gospel the Holy Spirit would regenerate some and they would believe. He had assurance that some would come to Christ under his ministry if he faithfully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. Our task as Christians is to get the gospel to every person in the world. We are under command and obligation to do it. God will save some whom he pleases, and he pleases to save all who trust in Jesus Christ. This kind of confidence helps the Christian to get his eyes off numbers and to faithfully witness for Christ.

**Redpath** - He maintained his ministry by going anywhere and everywhere, no matter what the situation and surroundings were, to reach people with the message. He crossed over boundaries of prejudice in race and religion to win men and women for Jesus Christ. I do not wish to be uncharitable, but isn't it sad that in so many instances Christian people move in their own little watertight compartments and never launch out into somebody else's situation at all? They are locked in; their circle never touches the circles of unbelievers. They move only in their little circle of Christian fellowship; very seldom do they take the plunge outside in order to win another for Christ. I believe perhaps the greatest need of all in our evangelical circles today is that we might have the boldness in Christ to cross some of the barriers that exist to win others for Him. "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!" says Paul.

**Gordon Fee** makes a vitally important point in view of the "seeker friendly" movement in America - This passage has often been looked to for the idea of '*accommodation*' in evangelism, that is, of adapting the message to the language and perspective of the recipients. Unfortunately, despite the need for that discussion to be carried on, this passage does not speak directly to it. This has to do with *how one lives or behaves* among those whom he wishes to evangelize." (NICNT-1 Cor)

**Adam Clarke** (1762-1832 - although an older commentator Clarke has an important word for the modern church) - Let those who plead for the system of accommodation on the example of St. Paul, attend to the end he had in view, and the manner in which he pursued that end. **It was not to get money, influence, or honour, but to save SOULS** It was not to get ease but to increase his labours. It was not to save his life, but rather that it should be a sacrifice for the good of immortal souls!"

**Wiersbe** - It is unfortunate that the phrase "all things to all men" (1 Cor. 9:22) has been used and abused by the world and made to mean what Paul did not intend for it to mean. Paul was not a chameleon who changed his message and methods with each new situation. Nor was Paul a compromiser who adjusted his message to please his audience. He was an ambassador, not a politician! It

is worth noting that our Lord followed the same approach. To the highborn Jew, Nicodemus, He talked about spiritual birth (John 3); but to the Samaritan woman, He spoke about living water (John 4). Jesus was flexible and adaptable, and Paul followed His example. Neither Jesus nor Paul had an inflexible “evangelistic formula” that was used in every situation. It takes tact to have contact. When the people I witness to tell me about their experience of confirmation, I tell them that I too was confirmed. I express my appreciation for the pastor who taught me and prayed for me. Then I tell them, “A year after I was confirmed, I met Jesus Christ personally and was born again.” A good witness tries to build bridges, not walls.

**Arnold** - Paul also said, “that by all possible means I might save some.” He was for different methods in evangelism. Methods may vary from one generation to another, one locality to another or one country to another, but the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified for sinners must never change. Any means is acceptable to God—friendship evangelism, mass evangelism, door-to-door evangelism, media evangelism through TV and radio. The means change but the message never changes. We must never compromise the full gospel of Jesus Christ. What are the essentials of the gospel or good news? Jesus Christ died for sinful people to deliver them from eternal judgment. All those who believe Christ died for their sins and rose from the dead to give them eternal life and bow to Christ as Lord, acknowledging His right to rule over them, will be forgiven for every sin n they have ever committed, given eternal life, granted the Holy Spirit and be guaranteed a place in heaven. **Every one of us should be personally involved by one means or another in reaching people for Christ.**

**Brian Bell on all things to all people** - I have become all things to all men – doesn’t mean Paul had no convictions. It means he used his convictions to build bridges, not walls! Which do you build? Bridges or Walls? Bridges: with a Jehovah’s Witness this morning. We both love Jesus, but we both see Him as Someone completely different. With the Yoga lady Kim I met on plane - we are both spiritual. With anyone from India I meet, “Hey, I love your country, food, people.” Walls: Can you think of a wall you erected while witnessing to someone before? Time I got frustrated with a Jehovah’s Witness. lady and told her she was going to hell! (wall or bridge) [I went back and apologized later].. We should witness with tact! Tact is the art of making a point without making an enemy! Paul would “come-alongside” but not “compromise”! What barriers do you find difficult to cross...so as to win a friend of yours to Christ?

**THOUGHT** - Paul was willing to do anything and everything (legal and not sinful) to see people come to Christ. We would call that zealous passion! How would you describe your passion for the salvation of the lost in your sphere of influence?

**Save** (4982)(sozo) has the basic meaning of rescuing one from great peril. Additional nuances include to protect, keep alive, preserve life, deliver, heal, be made whole. **Sozo** is sometimes used of physical deliverance from danger of perishing (see Mt 8:25; Mt 14:30; Lk 23:35; Acts 27:20, 27:31), physical healing from sickness (Mt 9:21, 22; Mk 5:23, Acts 4:9), and deliverance from demonic possession (Lk 8:36). More often **sozo** refers to **salvation** in a spiritual sense to rescue or preserve from eternal death, from judgment, sin, bring salvation, bring to salvation (active sense = Mt 18:11; Lk 7:50; Jn 12:47; Ro 11:14; 1 Cor 1:21; 7:16; Titus 3:5; Hb 7:25; Jas 4:12; 5:20; 1 Pet 3:21 or passive sense = be rescued or saved, attain salvation = Mt 24:13; Mk 10:26; Lk 13:23; 18:26; Jn 3:17; Jn 5:34; Acts 11:14; 15:1, 11; Ro 8:24; 11:26; 1 Cor. 3:15; 5:5; Eph 2:5, 8; 1 Ti 2:4). Jesus' very Name speaks of His primary purpose to save men from their sin - "She (Mary) will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will **save** (sozo) His people from their sins." (Mt 1:21+) In Mt 1:21 **sozo** is equated with deliverance from sins (guilt and power of) with Jesus' Name being a transliteration of Joshua meaning "Jehovah is salvation". **Sozo** in the Corinthian letters - 1 Co. 1:18; 1 Co. 1:21; 1 Co. 3:15; 1 Co. 5:5; 1 Co. 7:16; 1 Co. 9:22; 1 Co. 10:33; 1 Co. 15:2; 2 Co. 2:15

#### Related Resources:

- [Should a church be seeker sensitive? | GotQuestions.org](#) - **Excerpt** - "Short sermons (typically 20 minutes at most) are usually focused on self-improvement. Supporters of this movement will say that the single reason behind all the expense, state-of-the-art tech gear, and theatrics is to reach the unsaved with the gospel; however, rarely are sin, hell, or repentance spoken of, and Jesus Christ as the exclusive way to heaven is rarely mentioned. Such doctrines are considered “divisive.”.....Further, the **seeker-friendly gospel** presentation is based on the idea that if you will believe in Jesus, He will make your life better.
  - [Should churches be seeker-friendly? | GotQuestions.org](#)
  - [What is Willow Creek? | GotQuestions.org](#) (INTERESTING ARTICLE ON ONE OF THE LARGER SEEMINGLY "SUCCESSFUL" CHURCHES IN AMERICA IN PAST COUPLE OF DECADES). (SEE ALSO SUMMARY "[WILLOW CREEK REVEAL STUDY](#)")
  - [What is an attractional church? | GotQuestions.org](#)
  - [What does it mean to be missional? Should Christians be missional? | GotQuestions.org](#)
-



**Question: [What does it mean to become all things to all people \(1 Corinthians 9:22\)?](#)**

**Answer:** To understand what the apostle Paul meant when he wrote, “I have become all things to all people,” we must keep the statement in context. Paul was explaining to the Corinthian church his motivation for submitting himself to a hard life. He had relinquished his rights to be married (verse 5) and to draw a salary from the church (verses 6–12). Paul had completely abandoned himself to the purposes of Christ and bore the marks of that decision in his own body (see Galatians 2:20; 6:17).

Part of Paul’s calling was to preach to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:8), and that required him to change elements of his approach when needed: “Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 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. 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. 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. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings” (1 Corinthians 9:19–23).

What this does NOT mean is that we are to compromise with the world in order to fit in. Some have used Paul’s statement “I have become all things to all people” as an excuse to live worldly lives, assuming that unrepentant sinners will be impressed and want to come to Christ. But Paul never compromised God’s moral standards set forth in Scripture; rather, he was willing to forgo traditions and familiar comforts in order to reach any audience, Jewish or non-Jewish.

For example, when [in Athens](#), Paul established rapport with the Greeks before telling them about Jesus. He stood amidst their many idols and commented about their devotion to their gods (Acts 17:22). Rather than rail against the idolatry of Athens, Paul used those symbols of pagan pride to gain their attention. Another time, when speaking to educated Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, Paul pointed out his own high level of education in order to earn their respect (Acts 22:1–2). Later, when in Roman custody and about to be flogged, Paul mentioned that he was a Roman citizen and avoided the flogging (Acts 22:25–29). He never bragged about his credentials, but if pertinent information would give him credibility with a specific audience, he did what he could to find common ground with them. He knew how to behave in a Hebrew household, but he could dispense with the cultural Jewish traditions when he was in a Greek household. He could be “all things to all people” for the sake of the gospel.

There are several ways we can “**become all things to all people**”:

1. *Listen.* We are often too eager to share our own thoughts, especially when we know the other person needs to hear about Jesus. One common mistake is to jump into a conversation before we really hear what the other person is saying. We all appreciate being heard; when we extend that courtesy to someone else, he or she is more likely to listen to what we have to say. By listening first, the other person becomes an individual we care about rather than simply a mission field to convert.
2. *Be kind.* This should go without saying for Christians, but, unfortunately, we can forget kindness in the passion of the moment. This is especially true on the internet. Online anonymity leads many people, even some professing to represent Christ, to make rude or hate-filled comments. Getting in the last word does not mean we won the argument or earned the person’s respect. James 1:19–20 admonishes us to “be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” Kindness and respect never go out of style and are appropriate regardless of the subject matter.
3. *Be sensitive to culture.* Trained missionaries know that, before they can reach a cultural group, they must understand the particulars of that culture. The same is true for every believer, even if we never leave our own city. Western culture is rapidly changing, and in many places [Judeo-Christian principles](#) are no longer accepted or even understood. We don’t have to approve of every part of a culture to understand it or reach those immersed in it. By first listening to discern where people are spiritually and then finding commonality with them, we may be able to reach those hungry for a truth they’ve never heard.
4. *Deal with prejudice.* Prejudice of every kind has been part of human history since the beginning. Despite how hard we try, we all carry some form of prejudice against certain other people groups. Ironically, even those who denounce prejudice of any sort are usually quite prejudiced against those they consider prejudiced! Admitting to God our own pride and repenting of judgmental attitudes and lack of love should be an ongoing process for Christians wanting to follow Paul’s example of being all things to all people. As a former [Pharisee](#), he had to deal with his own prejudice against Gentiles in order to spread the gospel to the people Jesus had called him to.

The goal of a Christian is to be inoffensive in every way except in the matter of the cross. The message of the cross of Christ naturally gives offense, but we cannot water it down. “The preaching of the cross is foolishness

to those who are perishing” (1 Corinthians 1:18). Jesus warned us not to be shocked when the world hates us—it hated Him first (John 15:18). Our message is offensive to human pride and contradicts the sin nature, so our behavior and our attitudes should not give offense. When we strive to follow Paul’s example and become all things to all people, we must be willing to humble ourselves, let go of our “rights,” meet people where they are, and do whatever Jesus calls us to do. He died to save them. We must love them enough to tell them that in ways they can understand. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

#### Related Resources - from Questions to John MacArthur

- [1 Corinthians 9 Be All Things to All Men](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9 The Apostle Paul Disqualified?](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9 Becoming All Things to All People](#)

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**ILLUSTRATION OF ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE** - When Gib Martin, who later became a pastor, was 27-years old, he was a school teacher. After spending his day with 27 kids, he would unwind by stopping at a bar to have a beer and bemoan life. He had come from a religious background, but for three years he had been an atheist. He was going through a period of desperation and he didn’t feel like being around anyone.

Every day at the bar he would see an older man named Charlie, a carpenter who for many years had been an alcoholic, but then, many years before, had been led to Christ by Martin’s great-grandmother. Charlie was so burdened for souls that after work each day, he would stop at this bar, drink coffee, and share his life with those who would listen.

Charlie could tell that Gib was miserable, so he tried to befriend him, but was met with resistance. He wasn’t able to share Christ because of Gib’s attitude, but he invited him to go hear a man with a doctor’s degree who was speaking in the community. Gib told Charlie he would go if they could later discuss what the man had to say. Gib went and heard the gospel for the first time. He was so convicted of his sin that he vomited all night long and thought he was dying. The next day at noon, he dropped to his knees and gave his life to Christ. He later found out that Charlie and others that Charlie had led to Christ had spent all night praying for him.

But the sad part of the story is that none of the local churches would allow Charlie to associate with them because he went to the bar every day. Even though he wasn’t getting drunk—he wasn’t even having a beer—they didn’t like what he was doing. Even the church where Charlie directed Gib to go after his conversion wouldn’t allow Charlie to join (from *A Theology of Personal Ministry*, by Lawrence Richards and Gib Martin [Zondervan] pp 44-45).

What do you think? Was Charlie wrong to go into a bar to get acquainted with those who frequented that place and look for opportunities to share the gospel? Or, was Charlie following the example of the apostle Paul, who became all things to all men so that by all means he might save some (1 Cor. 9:22)? I’ll tip my hand: Give me ten men like Charlie to reach out to Flagstaff’s bar crowd!

There is no doubt that some have greatly misapplied our text. For example, during the hippie days, women from the Children of God cult were encouraged to “be all things to all men” by offering themselves sexually to entice men to join the group! A more current and subtle example is the so-called “Insider Movement” among missions to the Muslims. In attempting to contextualize the gospel for Islamic cultures, some have gone so far as to say that Muslim converts to Christianity can still go to the mosque, repeat the Islamic creed, observe the fasts, view the Koran as a revelation from God, and esteem Mohammed as God’s prophet! Many rightly fear that these missionaries are creating a new syncretistic religion that we might call, “*Christlam*.”

If we want truly to win others to Christ, we need to think carefully about Paul’s words in these verses. As Gordon Fee points out (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Eerdmans], p. 432), this text has nothing to do with adapting the message of the gospel to the language and perspective of the recipients. Neither, he says, does it have anything to do with observing social taboos among Christians. Rather, it has to do with how one lives or behaves among those he wishes to evangelize. The message of the cross is often offensive to proud sinners, but we should not be personally offensive in neutral matters of custom or culture. Paul is saying, **Winning others to Christ requires presenting the gospel to lost people without needlessly offending them** (Steven Cole [Winning Others to Christ](#))

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#### The Lingo

I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. —1 Corinthians 9:22

Today’s Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

What do teenagers mean when they say they’re “chillaxin”? (They’re chilling and relaxing.) What if they ask for some “cheddar”?

(That's cash.) If a teen likes someone's new clothes, he might just say, "money," meaning cool. Teenagers have their own lingo that some of us might not understand, and it seems to be always changing.

Believers in Jesus have their own lingo as well. We use common jargon that nonbelievers may not comprehend. For instance, we use the words grace, saved, and repentance. These are all good words, but as we're sharing our faith, it might be more helpful to say, "God's gift of unearned forgiveness" instead of grace. Or "rescued from death and given eternal life" for saved. We could say, "to turn away from wrongs" for repentance.

The apostle Paul was willing to be flexible in his ministry in order to reach as many as possible with the gospel of Christ (1 Cor. 9:19-23). That might have even included the words he used as he explained the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Explaining our faith in easy-to-understand terms may help someone to grasp the meaning of being born again—transformed by Jesus' love and forgiveness. By: Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

You have called us, Lord, to witness—  
To tell others of Your Son;  
Spirit, give us words so simple  
That they'll reach some seeking one. —D. De Haan

If we have God's Word in our mind, He can put the right words in our mouth.

### 1 Corinthians 9:23 I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

Amplified - And I do this for the sake of the good news (the Gospel), in order that I may become a participator in it and share in its [blessings along with you].

NET 1 Corinthians 9:23 I do all these things because of the gospel, so that I can be a participant in it.

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:23 I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:23 π ντα ὃ ποι ῶ δι τ ε ἀγγ λιον, να συγκοινων ς α το γ νωμαι.

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:23 And this I do because of the good news, that a fellow-partaker of it I may become;

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:23 And I do all things for the gospel's sake, that I may be a joint partaker thereof.

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:23 Now I do all this because of the gospel, so I may become a partner in its benefits.

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I might become teamed up with it in every respect.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:23 Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:23 All this I do for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may have a share in it.

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:23 All this I do for the sake of the gospel, that I may share its benefits with others.

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:23 I do all this for the sake of the Good News in order to share what it offers.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:23 And I do all things for the cause of the good news, so that I may have a part in it.

- **for:** 1Co 9:12 Mk 8:35 2Co 2:4 Ga 2:5 2Ti 2:10
- **that:** 1Co 9:25-27 2Ti 2:6 Heb 3:1,14 1Pe 5:1 1Jn 1:3
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**A FELLOW PARTAKER  
OF THE GOSPEL**

I ([poieo](#) in present tense - continually) **do all things for the sake of the Gospel**([euaggelion](#)), **so that** (term of purpose) **I may become a fellow partaker of it** - In the previous passage Paul became all things and here does all things, referring to all things within reason and not referring to anything that is sinful. **NLT** - "I do all this to spread the Good News, and in doing so I enjoy its blessings." When someone is saved by the Gospel, we rejoice. When Paul saw someone saved by the **Gospel**, he became a **fellow partaker** with the Gospel's impact in that person's life. Paul's one great desire was to win the lost, and that governed his every decision!

Paul was willing to offend people over the gospel,  
but he wanted to offend them *only* over the gospel.

-- David Guzik

**MacArthur** says it this way "If a person is offended by God's Word, that is his problem. If he is offended by biblical doctrine, standards, or church discipline, that is his problem. That person is offended by God. But if he is offended by our unnecessary behavior or practices—no matter how good and acceptable those may be in themselves—his problem becomes our problem." (MNTC-1Cor)

I like the **NIVSB** note on fellow partaker - Paul's hope concerning the manner of **his own participation in the future glory of believers** is linked with the faithfulness with which he carried out the apostolic mission Christ gave him (cf. 2 Co 3:1–3; 5:10; Php 2:16; see especially 1 Th 2:19–20+).

**W E Vine** has a similar comment - The apostle is not thinking here of his partnership with the believers at Corinth, but of his cooperation with the gospel itself in its activity. That he is **thinking of the great eternal issues** and of the effects of taking his share of the work effectually, seems clear from the remainder of the chapter.

**Utley** - This is a summary verse, a transition verse. It can go with vv. 19–22 or 24–27 or stand alone. This verse is not advocating a salvation by works. Paul is not saved because he evangelizes. He does it because he has accepted the gospel and knows its peace and urgency.

**Steven Cole** - There is a goal that we must own: by all means to save some. When we read these words, we all must ask, "Is that my goal?" Maybe you're wondering, "Should it be my goal? Isn't that just a goal for an apostle or missionary or for someone gifted in evangelism?" But Jesus said that He came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10+), and we are to become like Him. And Paul said (1 Cor. 10:33+), "Just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved." Then he immediately adds (1Cor 11:1+), "**Be** imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ." So while we all have different gifts, we should purpose to use them for the ultimate goal of seeing lost people get saved....But maybe I can be God's instrument in saving some. Begin praying for those you have contact with who don't know Christ. Pray for opportunities to present the gospel to them. It is a realistic goal to ask God to use you to save some. Nothing is more worthy of your time and effort than helping people get rightly related to God. Nothing will help the world more than leading people to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Nothing will help families more than leading family members to Christ. A worthy goal deserves worthy means of achieving it. When Paul says that he uses "all means" to save some (1Cor 9:22), in the context he means that he is willing to lay aside all of his rights to bring someone to Christ. He does not mean that the end justifies any means. I read about a church in Texas that attracted 23,000 to its Easter services by advertising that they would give away 16 cars and millions in prizes, including bicycles, furniture sets, flat-screen TV's, and 15,000 gift envelopes stuffed with coupons for goods and services valued at \$300 each (World, May 8, 2010, p. 30). The pastor justified it by saying that it gave them a chance to offer the free gift of heaven to those who came. He claims that thousands received Christ because of the giveaway. But I think he cheapened the gospel by making it seem like an extra door prize that you can take home with your new TV set! It was not a worthy means for the worthy message of the gospel. ([Winning Others to Christ](#))

**Fellow partaker** ([4791](#))(**sugkoinonos** from **sun** = with + **koinonos** - partaker) means literally "partaker with" and so describes one who takes part in something along with another. **Louw-Nida** - one who shares jointly with someone else in a possession or relationship, with emphasis upon that which is in common

**Jack Arnold** - Christian, what is your heart beat? Have you come to the place your experience where you can say, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some"? God sovereignly saves sinners, but He does not save apart from the means of evangelism, prayer, dedication and commitment. Do you witness for Christ? Is evangelism a priority in your thinking? Is world missions foremost in your thoughts? Do you make attempts to invite people to church (statistics will show that one out of four will come)? Do you make time in your schedule to do things which are directly related to reaching the world for Christ? Remember, Christian, without evangelism you and your local church will dry up spiritually.

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Swindoll - Our human ways are based on what seems fair. We firmly believe that when someone does what is right, rewards and

blessings result. When someone does what is wrong, there are serious consequences, even punishment. But that's our way, not necessarily God's way. At least not immediately. He's been known to allow unfair treatment to occur in the lives of some absolutely innocent folks—for reasons far more profound and deep than they or we could have imagined.

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## Loving Freely

Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you. —1 Corinthians 9:23

Today's Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:7-23

A woman desperately needed a kidney transplant. The outlook for her was not good unless a compatible donor could be found. Then came the break. The woman's brother offered to be the donor. His personal sacrifice seemed to provide the perfect solution; their matching blood types made successful surgery almost certain.

But then came the catch. The brother was willing to give the kidney as a gift, but he wanted \$25,000 for the stress he would suffer. The sister, deeply offended by the apparent profit motive, rejected her brother's terms and decided to take her chances in finding another donor.

This story illustrates two spiritual principles found in 1 Corinthians 9. The first is that a worker has a right to be compensated for his personal sacrifice (v.14). The second is that doing things for others without monetary reward is sometimes the only appropriate action (v.18). In Paul's case, he wanted his personal sacrifice to be a testimony of the reality of his relationship to the Lord. His desire to help the Corinthians was best served, he felt, by being a model of faith and love without any monetary consideration.

We should have that same willingness. Our primary motivation should be love, not compensation. By: Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The worker's worthy of his hire—  
His wages he can claim;  
But by the grace of God we can  
Give love in Jesus' name.  
—Sper

Those who serve God only for money are spiritually bankrupt.

**1 Corinthians 9:24 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.**

Amplified - Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but [only] one receives the prize? So run [your race] that you may lay hold [of the prize] and make it yours.

NLT - Remember that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize. You also must run in such a way that you will win.

Phillips - 9:24 - Do you remember how, on a racing-track, every competitor runs, but only one wins the prize? Well, you ought to run with your minds fixed on winning the prize!

Wuest - Do you not know that those who are running in a race are indeed all running, but one receives the victor's award? Be running in such a manner as the one who won the race, in order that you may obtain the victor's award. ([Erdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that all the runners in a stadium compete, but only one receives the prize? So run to win.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:24 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.

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:24 Ο κ ο δατε τι ο ν σταδ τρ χοντες π ντες μ ν τρ χουσιν, ε ς δ λαμβ νει τ βραβε ον; ο τως τρ χετε να κατολ βητε.

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:24 have ye not known that those running in a race -- all indeed run, but one doth receive the prize? so run ye, that ye may obtain;

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:24 Know ye not that they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so run; that ye may attain.

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:24 Don't you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way to win the prize.

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:24 You know, do you not, that in the sport of track all the runners race, but only one receives the prize? With the same determination in mind, run so that you might be awarded.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it.

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win.

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not realise that, though all the runners in the stadium take part in the race, only one of them gets the prize? Run like that -- to win.

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:24 Don't you realize that everyone who runs in a race runs to win, but only one runner gets the prize? Run like them, so that you can win.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not see that in a running competition all take part, but only one gets the reward? So let your minds be fixed on the reward.

- **those:** Ho 12:10
- **who run:** Ps 19:5 Ec 9:11 Jer 12:5
- **run:** 1Co 9:26 Ga 2:2 5:7 Php 2:16 3:14 2Ti 4:7,8 Heb 12:1 Jas 1:12 Rev 3:11
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**CLICK FOR ADDITIONAL COMMENTARY ON THIS VERSE - THE MATERIAL BELOW IS NOT DUPLICATED (FOR THE MOST PART)**

Flaminius restoring Liberty to Greece at the [Isthmian Games](#).

## RUN FOR THE PRIZE

Running to Win takes...

- 1 Cor 9:24 - Determination
- 1 Cor 9:25 - Discipline
- 1 Cor 9:26 - Direction
- 1 Cor 9:27 - Denial

**Paul Apple** has an intriguing approach to this last great section seeing it as showing "Two motivations for disciplined Christian living. (1) The value of the eternal prize and (2) the danger of disqualification should motivate disciplined Christian living in the warfare against sin." THE CARROT - RUNNING ANALOGY - THE VALUE OF THE ETERNAL PRIZE MOTIVATES DISCIPLINED CHRISTIAN LIVING IN THE WARFARE AGAINST SIN

**THOUGHT** - Can I challenge you? Would you consider memorizing 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 over this next week? Then you can meditate on it over the succeeding weeks, asking the Spirit to illuminate it's profound meaning and import for our once in a lifetime race. Beloved, we have only one chance to run in this race. The writer of Hebrews says "let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." (Hebrews 12:1+) Note the



little phrase "**THE RACE**" (not "a race") which signifies the one, once in a lifetime, specific race we have all been given the privilege to run. And this race is not a sprint but a "marathon" so that we are exhorted to run until we cross the finish line called GLORY (glorification 1 Jn 3:2+)! There is no second RACE, but only this one race. Therefore it behooves each of us to deeply ponder the meaning of this truth for our lives. One day we will "appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his/her deeds in the body, according to what he/she has done, whether good or bad." (2 Cor 5:10+) How foolish would it be for an Olympic runner to squander the time in trivial things as he prepares to run the one race of his life! So again I challenge you to memorize 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 paying special attention to the race qualifications and the sobering truth that you can be disqualified (not loss of salvation but loss of usefulness now and rewards in the future) if you fail to meet the qualifications. Paul gives us a list of things that can result in our disqualification in 1 Corinthians 10:1-11+ (craving evil things, idolatry, immorality, trying the Lord, grumbling) and then gives a sobering warning to every Christian runner "Therefore let him who thinks he stands **take heed** (command to continually keep an eye on the spiritual obstacles and hindrances) that he does not fall.." (1 Cor 10:12+). Beloved, the race is REAL. The prize is REAL (and eternal). But the danger of falling and being disqualified is also a very REAL, "clear and present danger!" Memorize. Meditate. Discipline yourself (1 Ti 4:7-8+ = discipline "holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come!"). May our Father in Heaven enable you to run "with the wind at your back," in the power of His Spirit, energized by His Holy Word, for the glory of the Lamb. Amen Run beloved. Run! May our life motto be that of [Eric Liddell](#) who said "**When I run, I feel God's pleasure.**" May his tribe increase. Amen.

#### Related Resources:

- [The Secret of Greatness - Eric Liddell](#)
- [The Torchlighters: The Eric Liddell Story \(2007\) | Full Episode](#) (watch this your children!!!)

**Swindoll** - Paul describes here (9:24-27) in vivid imagery the life of a go-for-broke minister of the gospel, one who has not only given up creature comforts for the sake of the ministry but has given up all things for the sake of the call. He did this in view of eternal, not temporal, rewards. These verses drip with the sweat of athletes. You can almost hear their grunts and groans as you read these colorful words.

**Jack Arnold** introduces 1 Cor 9:24-27 - In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul has been dealing with the giving up of rights to be effective for Jesus Christ. He has shown that he had the right to be paid money as a gospel minister, but he willingly set that right aside so as not to have the Corinthians connect the giving of money with the preaching of the gospel. He then used his own life as an example of a person who became "all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." Paul give up the right to do all kinds of legitimate practices such as the eating of meat sacrificed to idols, the drinking of wine and the observing of Jewish holidays so as not to offend men in order to win men to Christ or help them grow in Christ. As a mature Christian, Paul set aside his rights to any questionable practice in order to reach as many men, women, boys and girls as he possibly could for Christ. This whole context is about reaching people for Christ, **so in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, the emphasis is upon practicing self-denial for the salvation of others.** Paul's point will be that by giving in all the time to the love of indulgences and luxury, we may find ourselves trapped in a lifestyle spiritually injurious to us which could cause us to be disqualified from the spiritual race.

**ESVSB** - Paul frequently uses athletic metaphors to describe the rigors and **single-minded focus** of his apostolic work to pursue the advancement of the gospel (see also Phil. 3:12-14; 2 Tim. 4:7-8 - ED: listen to and ponder Craig Smith's song [Single Heart](#)). The extended metaphor is particularly apt in a letter to Corinth, which was the location of the biennial Isthmian games, at that time second in fame only to the Olympic games.

**Do you not know** (eido/oida) **that those who run** ([trecho](#)) **in a race all run**([trecho](#)), **but only one receives the prize?**- Answer? YES! The Corinthians knew this truth because they had seen it played out (pun intended) in the [Isthmian Games](#) held about 10 miles outside the city, these games being second in prestige only to the Olympic Games. They knew many ran, but only one won. As he applies this metaphor to the spiritual lives of the Corinthians, while Paul does not specifically state it, the truth is that every "Christian runner" has the potential to win "**the prize**," so in that sense the metaphor is not an identical picture. The fact that only one receives the prize, but all believing "runners" can potentially receive **the prize** should be both encouraging an motivating truth (to them and us).

#### Related Resource:

- Metaphors of St Paul - The Greek Games

**Race** ([4712](#)) (**stadion** from **histemi** = to stand) refersto (1) an oval area surrounded by tiers of seats for

spectators, used for public contests arena, stadium, racecourse (1Co 9:24); (2) as a measure of distance; cf. (stade) in Jn 6:19. **Stadion** - 7v in NT - Matt. 14:24; Lk. 24:13; Jn. 6:19; Jn. 11:18; 1 Co. 9:24; Rev. 14:20; Rev. 21:16

**Receives** (2638) **katalambano** from **katá** = adds intensity + **lambáno** = take) means to take eagerly, grasp with force, lay hold of, seize with hostile intent (Mk 9:18). **Katalambano** in some contexts meant to make something one's own, to obtain (the prize = win - 1Co 9:24), to attain (Php 3:12, 13, Ro 9:30). In a similar use in the papyri, **katalambano** is used in the papyri of colonists appropriating land. **Katalambano** in 1 Cor 9:24 refers to seizing or taking possession of the prize and holding on to it. 14 uses in the NT - Mk. 9:18; Jn. 1:5; Jn. 8:3; Jn. 8:4; Jn. 12:35; Acts 4:13; Acts 10:34; Acts 25:25; Rom. 9:30; 1 Co. 9:24; Eph. 3:18; Phil. 3:12; Phil. 3:13; 1 Th 5:4.

**Prize** (1017) (**brabeion** - kindred verb **brabeuo** = to be an umpire, Col 3:15+) is used only here in the NT. The crown is not salvation, which is God's gift to those who trust in Christ; it is, rather, the future reward of one who is a Christian and seeks to honor Christ in his life. The reward will be received at the Judgment Seat of Christ (**bema** - See 2Co 5:10+, Ro 14:10-12+ 1Co 3:11-15+). The **only other use** in the NT is in Philippians 3:14+ "I press on toward the goal for the **prize** (**brabeion**) of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.



**Run** (**trecho** - keep on running) **in such a way that you may win** - In light of this well-known athletic metaphor Paul gives them not a suggestion but a serious command to **Run** (**trecho**), a command in the **present imperative** which calls for continual dependence **on the Holy Spirit to obey**. Pursue the Prize Diligently and Zealously. **In such a way** is a term of comparison, so that one could paraphrase it "run LIKE the Isthmian runners," each running to win, holding nothing back, **going for the gold** so to speak! **May win** is in the **subjunctive mood**, the mood of possibility, the point being that winning the prize is not absolutely guaranteed to every Christian runner. Participation does not equate with victory. So sadly the possibility of running and not obtaining is very real to the Apostle Paul. Paul will expand in the following passages on the major requirements that must be met in order to win the prize.

The Christian Life is a Marathon not a Sprint

**Vine** observes that these passages emphasize "the need of constant training and strenuous effort, so that nothing of the flesh may hinder or injure the spiritual life and prevent the prospect and actual receipt of the reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ."

**MacArthur** - Paul therefore counsels all believers to run in such a way that you may win, by setting aside anything that might hinder the reception of the gospel.

Holding tightly to liberties and rights is a sure way to lose the race of soul-winning. Many of the Corinthian Christians seriously limited their testimony because they **would not limit their liberty**. They refused to give up their rights, and in so doing they won few and offended many. (Bold added)

**Hunter** - "So run" demands tremendous effort, concentration, determination, dedication, resolution. It means calling upon every ounce of energy, putting forth all of one's strength, to emerge as victor. There is no place here for half-heartedness; for the soft, flabby christian. May God help us all." (**CAVEAT**- DO NOT INTERPRET THIS AS IF IT IS ALL UP TO US TO EXERT THIS TREMENDOUS EFFORT - YES WE ARE TO DO IT BUT WE CAN ONLY DO IT WITH SUPERNATURAL ENABLEMENT. IF YOU LEAN TOO FAR TO YOUR PART, YOU RUN THE RISK OF BECOMING A LEGALIST OR AT THE VERY LEAST A PERSON WHO IS FRUSTRATED BECAUSE OF REPEAT FAILURES TO "KILL SIN" - JERRY BRIDGES GIVES THE BALANCED APPROACH HE CALLS "**Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible**" (100/100)) (What the Bible Teaches)

## WHAT IS THE PRIZE?

**At this point, the question must be asked, what is the prize?** Commentators vary considerably on what they think **the prize** represents. If we keep the **context** in mind ("context is king" in interpretation!), what has Paul been emphasizing in the preceding section? He has been describing his willingness to give up his rights (self-denial) and he has been describing his willingness to do anything (that is legal, moral) necessary to win souls to Christ with the Gospel. Therefore in light of this **context**, several commentators interpret **the prize** as souls won to Christ (God of course wins them, but allows us to participate in the process by proclaiming the Gospel), and I personally believe that this is the primary meaning of Paul's exhortation and instruction in 1 Cor 9:24-27.

In 1 Cor 9:25 Paul mentions **wreath** which is used 18x in the NT and every other time is translated **crown** or **crowns**. And in 1 Cor 9:25 Paul says **we** (he and all saints potentially) receive a perishable **wreath** or **crown**. It follows that **the prize** in verse 24 parallels the **wreath/crown** in verse 25. Therefore it would be logical to examine the 18 uses of crown to see if they provide any clue as to the identity of the prize.

We thank Thee for the crown  
Of glory and of life;  
'Tis no poor withering wreath of earth,  
Man's prize in mortal strife;  
'Tis incorruptible as is the Throne,  
The kingdom of our God and  
His Incarnate Son.

—Horatius Bonar

So if we study all 18 uses of crown/wreath, we find some very interesting truths. For example in Php 4:1 Paul writes " Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and **crown**, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved." So clearly the saints at Philippi (where he planted the first church on the European continent), are themselves his **crown** (and joy). And then in 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 we read "For who is our hope or joy or **crown** of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are (present tense - continually) our glory and joy." Paul clearly states the saints (undoubtedly the ones he had a role in leading to Christ) in the church at Thessalonica were his **crown of exultation** (and hope and glory and joy). The New Living Translation says paraphrases verse 19 as "After all, what gives us hope and joy, and **what will be our proud reward and crown as we stand before our Lord Jesus** when He returns? **It is you!**" (1Th 2:19NLT) Clearly Paul is saying that those believers in whom he played a role in bringing to Christ will be his crown and by implication (cf "you are our glory and joy" is in the present tense) he will in some way experience that "living reward," that "crown," that "prize" for all eternity. In short, this simple analysis of crown and comparison with context of 1 Corinthians 9 leave little doubt that at least one aspect or component of **the prize** is the converts we have had a role in their coming to Christ.



#### Crowns At the Bema (See [Table](#))

Of course, other passages use **stephanos** to describe the various crowns that will be awarded to Christians which certainly could be a component of the prize Christians receive after running their race of life.

1. "the crown of righteousness" (2 Ti 4:8) for all who have loved His appearing.
2. "the crown of life" (James 1:12) for the one who perseveres under trial and is approved.
3. "the unfading crown of glory" (1 Peter 5:4) given when the Chief Shepherd appears to award spiritual shepherds
4. "the crown of life" (Rev 2:10) to those at Smyrna who are faithful until death

In Philippians Paul has the only other use of the Greek word for prize, writing " I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Php 3:14) What is the prize in this verse? The text does not say but I like the ESV Study Bible comment that "The prize is the fullness of blessings and rewards in the age to come, most especially being in perfect fellowship with Christ forever." MacArthur Study Bible is similar describing it as "Christlikeness in heaven." Constable suggests "The prize probably refers to the reward faithful believers will receive at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). God has called every believer to salvation so we may obtain that prize. However only those who run the race as Paul did, namely to gain an ever increasing experiential knowledge of Christ, will obtain it (1 Cor. 9:24)."

One **"prize"** of course is Christ Himself, for nothing and no one could be a greater prize.

Closely related to the prize being Christ Himself, are the words from Christ Himself of **"Well done."** (cf Mt 25:21, 23, Lk 19:17).

Here are a few comments on **the prize**.

**MacArthur** also sees the prize as salvation of souls - In a sense, every Christian runs his own race, enabling each one of us to be a winner in winning souls to Christ. Paul therefore counsels all believers to run in such a way that you may win, by setting aside anything that might hinder the reception of the gospel.

**Baker** - In 1 Cor 9:24–27, Paul tops off the discussion of the purpose and strategy of his missionary activity by focusing on his goal, noted in 1 Cor 9:23, to do everything he possibly can to save those who might respond positively to the gospel message

**Jack Arnold** - The prize at the end of the race is not salvation because the Christian already has that due to his eternal relationship with Christ Jesus the Lord. He runs the race for rewards which come for faithful service. Again, there is an analogy with the Greek games. For a young Greek, the reward at the end of the race would not be his Greek citizenship. It was the law of the Greeks that no person could participate in the games unless he could prove that he was of pure Greek parentage. These young Greek athletes were already Greek citizens running in a race to obtain honor, glory and a prize. Christians are already citizens of heaven, and that happened at the moment they were converted to Christ. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ

(Philip. 3:20). We Christians are not running the race hoping that we will someday be citizens of heaven. We are citizens of heaven now, and we are running the race for spiritual crowns, for rewards given to us by Christ himself at the Judgment Seat of Christ as an expression of His satisfaction because of the Christian's love, devotedness and faithfulness in this life. Christians are free men and women in Christ, and as such are placed in the spiritual race and are to win that race. If we fail to give all we have to win, we do not lose heaven, but we lose reward. Salvation is by grace, not by works. We do not work to keep ourselves saved, but we work to prove or demonstrate salvation. We work, not for salvation, but because of salvation, and the result of that work is reward in heaven at the judgment Seat of Christ. Salvation is by grace, and thank God that even though we fail at times, God's grace is sufficient. If salvation were by works, we would be miserable, for none of us ever lives the Christian life as he could or should. When would we do enough works to know that we were saved? As runners put forth every effort to win, so the Christian must strain every nerve and stretch every muscle to produce his finest spiritual effort....Why are you here on earth? God saved you. He designed you with your gifts, talents and abilities that He might use you, that you might be pleasing to him, and that you might win the race. If you do not win, it is not God's fault; it is your fault because you refused to get in spiritual shape, to pray, to discipline your body, to bring your mind under control, to make your heart obey. Paul says, "Run that you might win!"

**Warren Wiersbe** - In order to give up his rights and have the joy of winning lost souls, Paul had to discipline himself. That is the emphasis of this entire chapter: Authority (rights) must be balanced by discipline. If we want to serve the Lord and win His reward and approval, we must pay the price....Each believer is on the track; each has a special lane in which to run; and each has a goal to achieve. If we reach the goal the way God has planned, then we receive a reward. If we fail, we lose the reward, but we do not lose our citizenship."

#### **Related Resources:**

- [What are the five heavenly crowns that believers can receive in Heaven?](#)
- [How can we store up treasures in heaven?](#)
- [What do I need to do to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant" when I arrive in heaven?](#)
- [What did Paul mean when he said he had fought the good fight?](#)
- [What did Paul mean when he said he had finished the race?](#)
- [What did Paul mean when he said he had kept the faith?](#)
- [In what ways is the Christian life like the Olympics?](#)
- [Video of the Ancient Greek Games](#)
- [Historical Background on the Games](#)

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#### **Puritan Writings - To Persevere**

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. 1  
Corinthians 9:24

The believer is to persevere in his Christian course to the end of his life: his work and his life must go off the stage together. This adds weight to every other difficulty of the Christian's calling. We have known many who have gone into the field, and liked the work of a soldier for a battle or two, but soon have had enough, and come running home again, but few can bear it as a constant trade. Many are soon engaged in holy duties, easily persuaded to take up a profession of religion, and as easily persuaded to lay it down, like the new moon, which shines a little in the first part of the night, but is down before half the night is gone—lightsome professors in their youth, whose old age is wrapped up in thick darkness of sin and wickedness. O, this persevering is a hard word! this taking up the cross daily, this praying always, this watching night and day, and never laying aside our clothes and armor, I mean indulging ourselves, to remit and unbend in our holy waiting on God, and walking with God. This sends many sorrowful away from Christ, yet this is a saint's duty, to make religion his every-day work, without any vacation from one end of the year to the other. These few instances are enough to show what need the Christian has of resolution.

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**Brian Bell** - Columnist Herb Caen wrote in the San Francisco Chronicle: "Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning a lion wakes up. It knows it must outrun the slowest gazelle or it will starve to death. It doesn't matter whether you are a lion or a gazelle; when the sun comes up, you'd better be running."

1. Like this gazelle :)

2. As we look forward to the Olympics every 4 years. So during the time of Paul.

1. Back then it was the Isthmian Games, held every 2 years, 10 miles outside of Corinth.

2. Let's listen to our trainer Paul, & follow his advice so we will one-day, Stand as Victors!

3. Reading these verses you can almost "smell the locker room"!

3. (1 Cor 9:24) Run in a race – (racecourse) σταδῖω, stadium.

1. A running track which was a parallelogram about 200 yds. long & 30 yds. wide.

2. How sad, knowing that God has set mankind in such a race where heaven or hell is our certain end, that we should sit down and loiter, or run after the childish toys of the world, forgetting the prize we should run for.

(Adapted from Richard Baxter)

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**ILLUSTRATION - Winning The Race**- On May 6, 1954, Roger Bannister became the first man in history to run a mile in less than 4 minutes. Within 2 months, John Landy eclipsed the record by 1.4 seconds. On August 7, 1954, the two met together for a historic race. As they moved into the last lap, Landy held the lead. It looked as if he would win, but as he neared the finish he was haunted by the question, "Where is Bannister?" As he turned to look, Bannister took the lead. Landy later told a Time magazine reporter, "If I hadn't looked back, I would have won!"

One of the most descriptive pictures of the Christian life in the Bible is of an athlete competing in a race. First Corinthians 9:24-27+ tells us that discipline is the key to winning. In Hebrews 12:1-2+, we are encouraged to lay aside anything that might hinder our spiritual advancement and to stay focused on Christ. And in Philippians 3:12, 13+, the apostle Paul said, "I press on, ... forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead."

Lord, give us endurance as we run this race of life. Help us not to wallow in past failures, but to be disciplined and to shun sinful ways. May we fix our eyes on the eternal goal set before us and keep looking unto Jesus. — Henry G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)) (ED: [Play the video of this famous race](#) and listen to the announcer say Landy "looked the wrong way," looking over his left shoulder just as Roger Bannister passes him on the right side!)

Run the straight race through God's good grace,

Lift up thine eyes and seek His face;

Life with its way before us lies,

Christ is the path and Christ the prize.

--Monsell

## You can't make spiritual progress by looking back.

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### Lowell Johnson - Paul's Greatest Determination 9:24-26

Paul wanted to live a faithful life unto Jesus.

- He wanted Christ to rule and reign in his life.
- He wanted to serve Christ with all of his being.
- He wanted to win others to Christ.

But when his life on earth was over, He wanted to hear Christ say to him, "Well done, Paul!" Paul compares the Christian to a race.

- In a race, all runners will run but only one of them will win and only he receives the prize.
- Paul's point is clear: No athlete runs just to run. They spend months and years training and preparing for the race. They train hard and give up many luxuries and pleasures, not just so they can compete in the race, but so that they will win the race.
- Every athlete runs to win! That is his SET DETERMINATION! Every day as he trains he thinks about winning. Every time he pushes his body harder, he determines to win.

So, it should be in our Christian lives! We should not merely run the race, we should run to win! The great difference between athletic contests and our lives as believers is that every Christian who will strive can win.

- We do not compete against other believers, but against the obstacles and hindrances that lay before us.
  - Each of us runs his own race. Each of us can win. Each of us can receive eternal rewards.
- Hebrews 12:1-2 How do we win?

1. "Lay aside every wright and the sin which so easily ensnares us."

- We repent of and renounce sin that keeps holding us back. We must lay aside certain things that may not necessarily be sinful within themselves, but still may hinder us. We may choose not to exercise certain Christian liberties.

2. "Run with endurance the race set before us."

- The Christian life is not a sprint, but a marathon. We must approach it with a set determination to finish well.

3. "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

- - We keep our eyes on Him and know that when we cross the finish line, He will be there to greet us. He endured the cross and He will help us finish the course too!

Sometimes in P.E. Classes or on track teams, there are some who don't want to be there. They don't like to run or to train. They only participate half-heartedly. When the coach is not looking, they slack off or don't do the exercise at all. In the same sense, there are many believers who run the race, but don't run to win. What's the point of being in a race if you're not trying to win? The Bible makes it plain that when this life is over, there will be eternal rewards for obedience and faithfulness.

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### Spurgeon - The heavenly race

When zealous racers on yonder heath are flying across the plain, seeking to obtain the reward, the whole heath is covered with multitudes of persons, who are eagerly gazing upon them, and no doubt the noise of those who cheer them onward and the thousand eyes of those who look upon them, have a tendency to make them stretch every nerve, and press with vigour on. It was so in the games to which the apostle alludes. There the people sat on raised platforms, while the racers ran before them, and they cried to them, and the friends of the racers urged them forward, and the kindly voice would ever be heard bidding them go on. Now, Christian brethren, how many witnesses are looking down upon you. Down! Do I say? It is even so. From the battlements of heaven the angels look down upon you, and they seem to cry today to you with sweet, silvery voice, "Ye shall reap if ye faint not; ye shall be rewarded if ye continue steadfast in the work and faith of Christ." And the saints look down upon you—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; martyrs and confessors, and your own pious relatives who have ascended to heaven, look down upon you; and if I might so speak, I think sometimes you might hear the clapping of their hands when you have resisted temptation and overcome the enemy; and you might see their suspense when you are lagging in the course, and you might hear their friendly word of caution as they bid you gird up the loins of your mind, and lay aside every weight, and still speed forward; never resting to take your breath, never staying for a moment's ease till you have attained the flowery beds of heaven, where you may rest for ever

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## **GET IN THE GAME - Truth for Today - John MacArthur**

Run in such a way that you might win. 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24

Because I was athletic as a boy, I played on many different teams in various sports programs. I remember many boys with little or no athletic ability who would try out for these teams. Every once in a while, a coach would feel sorry for such a boy and place him on the team in spite of his performance. He would give the boy a uniform to make him feel that he was a part of the team even though he would never let the boy play in a game.

Fortunately, the opposite is true in the Christian life. The Lord doesn't place us on the team just so we can sit on the bench. He intends to send us into the game. It is His grace that calls us to salvation, and it is His will that sends us into the world to witness for Him.

We are all like the boy who had no ability. God graciously puts us on the team, not because of our own ability, but purely by His sovereign grace. And He gives us the ability to play the game. So get in the game and give thanks for the holy privilege of serving Jesus Christ.

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## **RICHARD BAXTER So run, that ye may obtain. 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24**

HEAVEN IS ABOVE THEE, AND dost thou think to travel this steep ascent with out labour and resolution? Canst thou get that earthly heart to heaven and bring that backward mind to God, while thou liest still and takest thine ease? If lying down at the foot of a hill and looking toward the top and wishing we were there would serve the turn, then we should have daily travelers for heaven. But the "kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and violent men take it by force." There must be violence used to get these firstfruits, as well as to get the full possession. Dost thou not feel it is, though I should not tell thee? Will thy heart get upwards, except thou drive it?

Teach me, O Lord, Thy love to know,  
With all my powers of mind and thought;  
The utmost consecration show,  
Of all this being Thou hast brought.

To do Thy will, most Merciful,  
I seek Thy guidance day by day;  
To bear the trials that befall,  
I would for constant courage pray

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## **Discipline - Bob Gass**

Run in such a way as to get the prize. (1 Corinthians 9:24, NIV)

John Wesley was ordained at 24, preached for the next 64 years, and died at 88. He preached 42,000 sermons and rode over 250,000 miles, mostly on horseback. He attributed his good health to rising at 4 a.m. and preaching at 5 a.m. every day for 60 years. Now that's discipline!

Here's what you can learn from his life. First, you have to start! That might seem obvious, but so many of us are still stuck in the starting blocks waiting for someone or something to get us going. Next, you've got to give it all you've got! Divers in the Olympics have more than one try before the judges, but the winners don't save all their effort for the final dive. Instead, they concentrate on nailing every single one, thus increasing their chances for a gold medal. Don't settle for mediocrity at any stage in your journey!

And don't quit! In the 1992 Olympics, Derrick Redmond of Britain was competing in the 400-meter race when he suffered a torn hamstring and fell. As the other runners breezed past him, he began to struggle to his feet and his father, whose face was covered with tears, ran down from the stands to help him up. Slowly, agonizingly, they made their way around the rest of the track and crossed the finish line, as the stadium in Seoul burst into thunderous applause. Derrick didn't win a medal, but he won something more important—he won the respect of the world!

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## **In the Race 1Co 9:24 (Loins Girded)**

The life of the believers is, according to the holy apostle, no futile game or a laugh, like the vain assume; neither is it a suffering or a curse, as is taught by those who have no eye for the blessings of God that even in the most sombre existence make a joyful light to shine; it is much more a running in the race, like in the Grecian games many tried for the prize, but there was only one who obtained it. Here the apostle admonishes all of us to run the race like the one who would be crowned at the end of the race.

This image points us to three fruitful thoughts.

First of all, a circuit is a designated area. Whoever participated could not run up and down a self-appointed path, but he had to stay within the confines, else all his toils would be in vain after all. In this manner the Lord has also ordained an appointed path for us in which we have to hasten on swift feet. The Ten Commandments of the holy Law,—behold the rule of life for all who believe. The holy Scriptures immediately call out to us in this image: stay within the limits! Do not seek to please God with all kinds of self-made service, but obey the express rules: Place your trust in God alone, keep the Name of the Lord holy, do not curse nor steal, honour thy father and thy mother, do not insult nor lie,—stay within the boundaries!

Secondly, we learn here that our lives have a purpose. In ancient times people kept an eye on the goal in the race. That goal meant the prize, a corruptible crown, while the crown that awaits us, is incorruptible. To wander back and forth aimlessly,—that is no life. To pursue after this now and later after nearly the opposite, like one without character or principle,—that is no life. However, to content with all the strength of thinking and wanting, of being able to gain and longing to obtain eternal life and to strife in it for the glorification of God,—behold, that is life, that is running in the race that is set before us.

Finally it be remarked, that whoever runs in the race must aspire to perfection. To stand still is also here to regress. Always another step forward. Every time again another leap. Continuously closer to the crown. The knowledge of the truth must become deeper, the insight in God's Word clearer, the conscience more refined, the heart more tender, the faith stronger. Jesus Christ has run a race in His redeeming suffering and death, that was marked by His precious blood, but because of it He has opened for us a plain path that shall lead us directly to glory if our eye remains upon Him.

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### **Warren Wiersbe - RUN FOR YOUR (SPIRITUAL) LIFE**

An athlete must be disciplined if he is to win the prize. Discipline means giving up the good and the better for the best. The athlete must watch his diet as well as his hours. He must smile and say "No, thank you" when people offer him fattening desserts or invite him to late-night parties. There is nothing wrong with food or fun, but if they interfere with your highest goals, then they are hindrances and not helps.

The Christian does not run the race in order to get to heaven. He is in the race because he has been saved through faith in Jesus Christ. Only Greek citizens were allowed to participate in the games, and they had to obey the rules both in their training and in their performing. Any contestant found breaking the training rules was automatically disqualified. The famous Indian athlete, Jim Thorpe, had to return his Olympic gold medals because the committee discovered he had previously played on a professional team.

In order to give up his rights and have the joy of winning lost souls, Paul had to discipline himself. That is the emphasis of 1 Corinthians 9: Authority (rights) must be balanced by discipline. If we want to serve the Lord and win His reward and approval, we must pay the price.

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### **[Sparkling Gems from the Greek](#) - 1 Cor 9:24 - Rick Renner**

The word "run" is the Greek word *trecho*, which means to run and indicates a constant and continuous pace. This word *trecho* often depicted runners who ran a foot race in a huge stadium before adoring crowds of fans. In order for the runner to run successfully and finish triumphantly, every ounce of his strength and his complete attention were required. Paul had this example in mind as he wrote this verse.

Just as it takes full concentration and a stride that is paced for a runner to run a long distance, Paul now uses the word *trecho* to tell us that if we are going to run our race as God expects, it will require 100 percent of our attention and will mandate that we learn how to run at a constant and continuous pace. In other words, we can't try today, stop tomorrow, and then give it another shot a week later. We must be constant and consistent. Once we are in the race, we must run ferociously. On the other hand, to stay in the race on a long-term basis, we must learn to pace ourselves so we can stay consistent and avoid wearing ourselves out!

Paul tells us that we are to run until we "obtain." The word "obtain" is the Greek word *katalambano*, which is a compound of the words *kata* and *lambano*. The word *kata* describes something that is coming downward, and the word *lambano* means to take or to seize something. When compounded together into one word, it becomes *katalambano*—a very powerful word indeed!

For example, the word *katalambano* can picture someone who has found something he has searched for his entire life. Rather than lose it or pass up the opportunity to possess it, he pounces on it with all his might, latching hold of it and seizing it with joy! Or once again, this word can portray a runner who runs fiercely, using every last ounce of his energy as he strains forward toward the finish line. At last he reaches the goal and crosses the finish line. The prize is now his! He won the reward because he put his whole heart, soul, and body into obtaining it!

In light of the words *trecho* and *katalambano* found in this verse, First Corinthians 9:24 carries this idea:

*"Don't you know that those who compete in a foot race run with all their might and strength against the other runners, but only one wins the competition and takes the prize? In light of this, run with all the might you can muster! Go the distance, and pace yourself to make sure you have enough energy to get to the finish line, where you will finally latch hold of and possess that which you have been so passionately pursuing!"*

At the end of Paul's own life, he wrote, "I have finished my course" (2 Timothy 4:7). He triumphantly exclaimed that he had done it! His race was finished! He had given his spiritual race all he had to give; he had run with all the might he could muster; and he had run so consistently over the years that he had finished a winner! All those years of being concentrated and focused finally paid off. If Paul had approached his race with an attitude of lazy complacency, the prize would have gone to another. But because he had "run to obtain," he obtained!

Paul looked at his divine destiny that lay before him like a runner looks at the finish line. Rather than approach his spiritual race lazily and halfheartedly, Paul did everything within his power to preach the Gospel. If it meant getting a job on the side in order to be able to preach, that's what Paul did (Acts 18:3). If it meant becoming as a Jew in order to be able to preach to the Jews, that's what Paul did (1 Corinthians 9:20). And if it meant becoming as those without law to win those who were without law, that's what Paul did (1 Corinthians 9:21). He became all things to all men in order that he might win some to the Lord (1 Corinthians 9:22).

Paul suffered hardship, persecution, lack, cold, hunger, nakedness, homelessness, trouble from false brethren, trouble from true brethren—in the city, in the wilderness, and even at sea. He was beaten, afflicted by persecution, and troubled by religious people. Yet Paul never lost sight of the fact that he was called of God and that he would one day account for what he did with that calling. The finish line was always before him! He kept one thing foremost in his mind and preeminent in his thinking: I must obtain the prize. I must fulfill the purpose for which I was born. I must achieve the plan of God for my life.

Likewise, if you want to achieve God's will for your life, there isn't room for any other attitude than one of boldness and determination to keep running toward the goal with your eyes fixed on the finish line! This alone will take you through every obstacle and attack of the enemy and ultimately bring you to the place God desires for your life.

Like Paul, you must have resolve, strength of will, determination, backbone, high morale, courage, devotedness, persistence, tenacity, and an unrelenting mindset. You must put your foot down and take your stand as a no-nonsense kind of person who puts your whole heart into your calling. Sitting around hoping for something to happen isn't going to produce anything! You have to jump in the race, fix your eyes on the goal, and run with all your might to the finish line so you can take the prize!

It's time for you to "take the bull by the horns" and then hold on for dear life all the way to the goal! Make the decision that you are going to run the race, go the distance, and finish first place! Only you can make this choice, so why not get started today?

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## Run!

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. —1 Corinthians 9:24

Today's Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

In the award-winning film *Chariots of Fire*, one of the characters is legendary British sprinter Harold Abrahams. He is obsessed with winning, but in a preliminary 100-meter dash leading up to the 1924 Olympics, he is soundly beaten by his rival, Eric Liddell. Abrahams' response is deep despair. When his girlfriend, Sybil, tries to encourage him, Harold angrily declares, "I run to win. If I can't win, I won't run!" Sybil responds wisely, "If you don't run, you can't win."

Life is full of reversals, and we as Christians are not excluded from disappointments that make us want to give up. But in the race that is the Christian life, Paul challenges us to keep running. He told the Corinthians, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it" (1 Cor. 9:24). We are to run faithfully, Paul is saying, spurred on by the knowledge that we run to honor our King and to receive from Him an eternal crown.

If we falter in our running—if we quit serving God or give in to sin because of our difficulties—we risk losing a rich reward we could have received had we run our best.

Sybil was right. "If you don't run, you can't win." By: Bill Crowder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

While running with patience the race for the King,  
With obstacles taking their toll,

We slow down to look up for help from our Lord;  
He keeps us aware of our goal.  
—Branon

Greater than winning any medal will be hearing the Master say, "Well done!"

## MULTIPLE DEVOTIONALS RELATED TO 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27

- [1 Corinthians 9:24 Running Well](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:24. Aiming for the Prize](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Your Biography](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:24-27 The Finish Line](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Grooves of Grace](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Too Soon to Quit](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Run to Win 3](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Foolish Baggage](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Run to Win](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Winning the Race](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Brother Donkey](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Racing Toward the Goal](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Run to Win 2](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Running Every Day](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Lasting Rewards](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Going For The Prize](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:26 Purpose in Routine](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:27 Training for Life](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:27 Make Your Body Listen](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:26 Plan to Win](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:27 Make Your Body Listen](#)
- [1 Corinthians 9:27 Where is Your Trust?](#)

**1 Corinthians 9:25 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.**

Amplified - Now every athlete who goes into training conducts himself temperately and restricts himself in all things. They do it to win a wreath that will soon wither, but we [do it to receive a crown of eternal blessedness] that cannot wither.

Phillips - Every competitor in athletic events goes into serious training. Athletes will take tremendous pains - for a fading crown of leaves. But our contest is for an eternal crown that will never fade.

Wuest - Everyone who participates in the athletic games exercises constant self-control in all things, those, to be sure, in order that they may receive a perishable victor's garland of wild olive leaves to be worn as a crown of victory, but as for us [we engage in Christian service, exercising constant self-control to obtain] a victor's garland which is imperishable. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 9:25 Each competitor must exercise self-control in everything. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one.

NLT 1 Corinthians 9:25 All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:25 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.

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:25 π ς δ γωνιζ μενος π ντα γκρατε εται, κε νοι μ ν ο ν να φθαρη ν στ φανον λ βωσιν, με ς δ φθαρον.

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:25 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.

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:25 and every one who is striving, is in all things temperate; these, indeed, then, that a corruptible crown they may receive, but we an incorruptible;

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:25 And every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:25 Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. However, they do it to receive a crown that will fade away, but we a crown that will never fade away.

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:25 Every serious athletic contender practices self-control in every aspect of his life. They do it in order to receive a garland that will wither. Ours will be one that will not wilt.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:25 Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one.

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:25 Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one.

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:25 Every athlete concentrates completely on training, and this is to win a wreath that will wither, whereas ours will never wither.

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:25 Everyone who enters an athletic contest goes into strict training. They do it to win a temporary crown, but we do it to win one that will be permanent.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:25 And every man who takes pa

- **Everyone who competes:** Eph 6:12-18 1Ti 6:12 2Ti 2:5 4:7 Heb 12:4
- **exercises self-control:** Ga 5:23 Titus 1:8 2:2 2Pe 1:6
- **but:** 1Co 15:54 2Ti 4:8 Heb 12:28 Jas 1:12 1Pe 1:4 5:4 Rev 2:10 3:11 Rev 4:4,10
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**CLICK FOR ADDITIONAL GENERALLY MORE DETAILED COMMENTS ON THIS VERSE - THE MATERIAL BELOW MAY HAVE SOME DUPLICATION.**

## A PERISHABLE WREATH

### THE KEY TO VICTORY: EXERCISING SELF CONTROL

**Everyone who** (present tense - continually) **competes** ([agonizomai](#)) **in the games** (present tense - continually) **exercises self-control** ([egkrateuomai](#)) **in all things** - Everyone knew **self-control** was critical for an athlete to win the prize and be crowned with a wreath. However many/most of the Corinthians were doing anything but controlling their flesh, for earlier Paul had written "you are still **fleshly** ([sarkikos](#)). For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not **fleshly** ([sarkikos](#)), and are you not walking like mere (unregenerate) men?" (1 Cor 3:3+). And yet even though they were fleshly, they still knew that the effort required to win in the Isthmian Games involved agonizing effort, as seen even in the verb [agonizomai](#) which reminds us our English words [agony](#) and [agonize](#), both of which describe suffering extreme mental and/or physical pain! While the athletes were to undergo agonizing training for 10 months (they took an oath to do this), the [agonizing](#) training for believers lasts for our entire life! There is to be no [furlough](#) to enjoy the **TTT'S** ("[trivial temporal trinkets](#)") of this quickly passing godless world (1 Cor 7:31+, 1 Jn 2:17+, cf 2 Ti 2:4-5+). And so we see the athletes practiced **self-control** continually (during the requisite 10 months of training) and their training was in the sphere of **all things**. In short, all the time, in all things!

**THOUGHT** - Now carry this over to the Christian's race! Note that the word **SELF** control" can be a bit

misleading, leading the young believer or the naive older believer into thinking he or she can exert this self control by them **SELF!** This is what we call a "[recipe for disaster](#)," because **SELF** cannot control **SELF** in the moral/ethical sphere, at least not for any significant length of time. "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Gal 3:3+) Ultimately, **SELF** needs to be subdued by a higher power, the supernatural, miracle producing power of the Holy Spirit, Who Alone can energize and enable a believer to kill sinful thoughts that originate from our fallen **SELF**, our fallen **FLESH**. In short, we would be more accurate theologically in calling "**SELF**-control" "**SPIRIT** control." Of course, we are not "[off the hook](#)," but are fully responsible for our volitional choices and daily decisions, the difference being that the Spirit filled believer (Eph 5:18+), who is walking in the power of the Spirit (Gal 5:16+), now has both the requisite desire and the necessary power to quench the incessant desires that fly into our mind from our fallen flesh (1 Peter 2:11b+). Paul commands us in Php 2:12+ to continually, daily work out our salvation in fear and trembling (subduing **SELF** and killing **SIN**), doing so by the power of "God (the Spirit Who) is (continually) working in (us), (continually) giving (us) the **DESIRE** (THE "WANT TO") and the **POWER** (100% HIS PROVISION) to do (100% OUR RESPONSIBILITY) what pleases Him. (Php 2:13NLT+) This vital spiritual truth must be understood to achieve victory in the Christian race. Click the following link for more discussion on the important "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)" (100/100).

**BRING IT HOME - LET'S BE HONEST** -- In what sphere of attitude and/or activity are you failing to continually, habitually, as your lifestyle, practice Spirit enabled self-control? For many men this is their wasted, [wanton](#) time on the internet! But this could even be some *good* thing, that steals time and energy from the *best* thing (cf *every encumbrance* - Heb 12:1+, Lk 10:42-43+, Php 3:13-14+), the dedication to our Lord Jesus Christ as His vessel of honor, set apart and prepared for every good work (2 Ti 2:21+, Eph 2:10+). Are you retired and [hanging up your spiritual cleats](#) (your running shoes) so to speak? **Don't do it!** Today is the only day like today that you will have on this earth to **REDEEM THE TIME!** Tomorrow is too late to do what you should do today! Get busy dying to self (Mk 8:34-35+), so you will be supernaturally enabled to live for the Savior! Experience the reality of Gal 2:20+ "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." You will not regret it throughout eternity! And remember, your real retirement day is yet future, for the Christian runner's retirement is called [glorification](#)! May God enable us by His Spirit to practice self-control for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, in Whose Name we pray. Amen.

**Table Talk** (1 Corinthians) - No one can deny the oftentimes intimidating difficulties of the Christian life. It is like a race. It is a struggle from beginning to end, but the prize that waits for you at the finish line is worth it. Sometimes the struggle gets so overwhelming, sometimes your sin hangs about you like a weight, and sometimes you feel like giving up; but if you keep your eyes focused on Christ, on the prize of glory and eternal life, you will be strengthened to endure (Table Talk, 1 Corinthians).

**Jack Arnold** - Paul had to deny himself lawful, legitimate rights in order to win the spiritual race. He gladly, willingly and voluntarily set aside rights he had in order to win more people to Christ. Why? He was doing this ultimately to win a prize, to finish the race, to be a winner at the Judgment Seat of Christ. What does it take then for any Christian to win the race? It takes denial of personal rights. He must limit indulgences, set aside legitimate pleasures, and refuse to give way to laziness. Self-control comes when one has Christ controlling his life. A life of discipline flows out of a life of dependence on Jesus Christ, an occupation with Him who said, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5). With Christ, a life of discipline is possible. I can do everything through him who gives me strength (Philip. 4:13). If we have a life of discipline but no life of faith, we face a possible spiritual burnout. If we have a life of faith but no discipline, we face a spiritual passivity. A balanced Christian knows how to depend on Christ and how to discipline his body with all of its legitimate and evil desires. In order for a Christian to win the spiritual race, he must have self-control in all things. Self-control is to be exercised in temper, in diet, in sleep, in Bible study habits, in prayer habits, in sexual habits and in witnessing habits. In fact, self-control is the key to winning the spiritual race and receiving the crowns that are ours for faithful service for Christ.

[Epictetus](#) on the "agonizing" effort involved in training - Do you wish to gain the prize at the Olympic games? Consider the requisite preparations and the consequences. You must observe a strict regime; must live on food which is unpleasant; must abstain from all delicacies; must exercise yourself at the prescribed times in hot and in cold; you must drink nothing cool; must take no wine as usual; you must put yourself under a pugilist, as you would under a physician, and afterwards enter the lists.

**Craig Blomberg** - The sacrifices that athletes in training make call to mind as well that Paul's "evangelistic principle" should permeate all of our lives and order all of our priorities. From time to time we verbally share our faith and explain our moral commitments, but all of life involves modeling for a fallen world the balance of freedom and restraint that Paul articulates here. Whether at work or at play, at church or in the world, **we are never "off-duty" with respect to the tasks of exhibiting the values of a balanced Christian life** or of identifying with our culture for the sake of redeeming it (NIVAC-1 Corinthians). (Bold added)



We need to imitate "those who through faith and patience inherit the promises," (Heb 6:12+), like the humble servant of God, Moses...

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing (THIS IS KEY - EVERY DAY WE HAVE A CHOICE - WHO WILL WE SERVE SAVIOR OR SELF?) rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 considering the reproach of Christ **greater riches than the treasures of Egypt**; for he was looking to the reward (HERE IS A KEY! HE WAS LOOKING TO THE GOAL - EVEN AS BELIEVERS RUNNING THE RACE [Heb 12:1+] SHOULD "FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS" Heb 12:2+). 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.(Heb 11:24-27+)

**Competes in the games (75)** (**agonizomai** from **agon** = conflict or the place of assembly for the athletic contests and then a reference to the contests which were held there. English words = agony, agonize, agonal) means to exert oneself, to fight, to labor fervently, to **strive** (devote serious effort or energy = implies great exertion against great difficulty and suggests persistent effort), to struggle, to contend as with an adversary - all of these actions picture an intense struggle for victory. **Agonizomai** was a familiar term in writings of both military and athletic endeavors and was used to emphasize the concentration, discipline, conviction, and effort needed to win in both arenas. It pictures a runner straining every nerve to the uttermost towards the goal. **Agonizomai** was used in secular Greek meaning to **contend** for the prize on the stage, both of the poet, etc., and of the actor. **Agonizomai** was used in secular Greek in the context of public speaking meaning to **contend against**, as law-term, to **fight** a cause to the last and to **fight** against a charge of murder. Agonizomai - 8v - Lk. 13:24; Jn. 18:36; 1 Co. 9:25; Col. 1:29; Col. 4:12; 1 Tim. 4:10; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7

**Exercises self control (1467)** (**egkrateuomai** from **egkrates/enkrates** = self-controlled from **en** = in + **kratos** = power from stem **krat-** = power or lordship) means literally to control the strength of and thus depicts one who exercises power to "hold oneself in" or to "master self". This virtue describes "lordship" or dominion over self. The self-controlled individual exercises restraint over his own impulses, emotions, appetites and desires. This verb is used here and in 1 Cor 7:9 "if they do not have self-control, let them marry," in this passage clearly referring especially to sexual temptations.

See additional comments for more on **self control** related to 1 Corinthians 9:25

**They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable** - Notice the striking contrast (which highlights the effect) for Paul goes from a lesser goal (temporal) to a greater goal (eternal), for "the useless to the priceless!" (Swindoll) This truth alone should be a strong motivating force to encourage every saint to diligently pursue self-control. The difference between the Isthmian athletes and believers is that the former have only the fallen flesh to depend on for **self-control** whereas believers have the indwelling Holy Spirit who gives as part of His fruit the discipline of self-control. So even as the athletes in training were to continually (present tense) exercise self-control, believers are "in training" for the rest of our lives, further emphasizing our continual need to be continually filled (Eph 5:18+) so that we may continually walk by the Spirit (Gal 5:16+) for then we will not obey the lusts of our flesh (aka "break training" so to speak).

**Arnold** - The strenuous self-denial of the athlete in training for his fleeting reward is a rebuke to all half-hearted Christian efforts and flabby Christian commitment. What kinds of crowns will you be receiving Christian?

Paul writes

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control ( **egkrateia**); against such things there is no law. (Gal 5:22-23 - see commentary on self-control)

**MacArthur** - Christians do not run for a short-lived pine wreath or for short-lived fame. They already have true immortality. They run in order to receive a "crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award ... on that day" (2 Tim. 4:8), "an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven" (1 Pet. 1:4). That prize is imperishable. But the imperishable requires self-control just as the perishable. No Christian will be successful in witnessing, or in anything else worthwhile, without discipline. Every good thing we accomplish—whether in learning, business, artistic skill, marriage, spiritual living, witnessing, or whatever—is accomplished through discipline and self-control.....The athlete's disciplined self-control is a rebuke of half-hearted, out-of-shape Christians who do almost nothing to prepare themselves to witness to the lost—and consequently seldom do.

**Swindoll** expresses the logic this way "If those rewarded with a withering wreath disciplined their bodies until they hurt, how much more should believers discipline their lives for heavenly rewards?"...Paul knew that the potent temptations of the world threaten to

draw our attention away from the greater calling. It takes discipline to avoid their allurements—the kind of self-control that allows us to cross the finish line victoriously or leave the boxing ring on our feet instead of on our backs (9:27).

**Lenski on imperishable wreath/crown** - The argument from the less to the greater is overwhelming: if those athletes practice such self-control merely to obtain a slight and fading earthly crown, shall we do less for a heavenly crown of glory that lasts forever? The two crowns are contrasted with each other by μὲν and δὲ, the ο v only continues and means “now.” The perishable crown consisted of wild olive, ivy, or parsley (Fausset); or of laurel, pine, or parsley, which was said to originate from the laurel wreath that was assumed by Apollo on conquering the Python (Smith). Our crown is imperishable, “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,” 1 Pet. 1:4.

**Vine** gives some helpful background on the games - These occasions were more than mere contests, they were great national and religious festivals. Only freemen could enter for them, and these only after they had satisfied the officials that they had undergone the appointed preliminary training. Upon the occasion a herald announced the name and country of each competitor. The victor received a crown consisting of a garland of either ivy or pine leaves. His family was honored, and when he returned to his own town, a breach was made in the walls through which he was to enter, this being a token that a place so honored needed no defending walls. The most famous contemporary Greek poet would immortalize his name in verse.

**Perishable (5349)** (**phthartos** from **phtheiro** = to destroy from **phthino** = waste) is that which is subject to corruption, rot, withering, decay or decomposition. The basic idea is that which is short lived, or that which has a brief life or significance. The ancient crowns or wreaths were composed of olive, apple, parsley, fir, pine or celery (depending on who one reads). Obviously such crowns would undergo decay over time as would even the very memory of the award. What a dramatic contrast with the eternal crown awarded to every Christian who faithfully finishes the race!

**Phthartos** - 6v in NT - Rom. 1:23; 1 Co. 9:25; 1 Co. 15:53; 1 Co. 15:54; 1 Pet. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23

**Wreath (Crown) (4735)** (**stephanos** from **stepho** = to encircle, twine or wreath) in classical usage originally referred to anything that encircled something else, such as a besieging army or the wall around a city. The usual meaning in secular Greek was a crown or wreath won at various athletic contests. **BDAG** - The **stephanos** was "a wreath made of foliage or designed to resemble foliage and worn by one of high status or held in high regard... Apart from recognition of athletes and winners of various kinds of competitions, in the Greco-Roman world the awarding of a crown or wreath signified appreciation for exceptional contributions to the state or groups within it" In the New Testament **stephanos** is used as a metaphor for the eternal reward of the faithful --1Co 9:25; 2Ti 2:5; Jas 1:12; 1Pe 5:4; Rev 3:11; Re 4:4, Re 4:10. And so we see that the **stephanos** was literally an adornment worn around the head as a crown of victory in the Greek athletic games, this reward being given to the runner who crossed the goal first, to the disc thrower with the longest toss, etc. Apart from recognition of athletes and winners of various kinds of competitions, in the Greco-Roman world, the awarding of a crown or wreath signified appreciation for exceptional contributions to the state or groups within it.

**Stephanos** - 25x in 25v in the NAS - Mt 27:29; Mk 15:17; John 19:2, 5; Acts 6:5, 8f; 7:59; 8:2; 11:19; 22:20; 1 Cor 9:25; Php 4:1; 1Th 2:19; 2Ti 4:8; Jas 1:12; 1 Pet 5:4; Rev 2:10; 3:11; 4:4, 10; 6:2; 9:7; 12:1; 14:14

**Imperishable (862)** (**aphthartos** from **a** = negates what follows + **phtheiro** = to corrupt) means nothing can corrupt or ruin, not liable to pass away, not subject to corruption, decay or dissolution and so imperishable. Absolutely nothing can ruin your eternal crown beloved! In secular Greek **aphthartos** described something that had not been ravaged by an invading army. Our crown is totally unlike any earthly crown awarded at the ancient Olympiad. A Christian's crown cannot be ravaged by hostile forces!

**Aphthartos** - 7x in 7v in the NAS - Ro1:23; 1Co 9:25; 15:52; 1Ti 1:17; 1Pe 1:4, 23; 3:4. **NAS** = immortal(1), imperishable(4), imperishable quality(1), incorruptible(1).

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**Brian Bell** - All the endeavors of the athlete are in vain if he has not trained his body & abstained from all that might in any way harm his physical condition.

1. “Champions aren’t born, they’re made!”

1. Made, via discipline, right training, desire & motivation, & realistic goals.
2. Our key word is temperate or to exercise Self-control!

1. It means strength within. [It carries the idea of mastering yourself instead of giving in to impulse or

overindulgence]

3. Winners won: a lifetime exemption from paying taxes & serving in the military. Tuition free education. A not-so-modest statue of yourself erected along the roadway that led to the site of the games. But, the real prize was The Crown!

1. The Isthmian Crown was a wreath of wild celery.

2. 5 Crowns:

1. Crown of Life (Blessed is the man who... James 1:12);
2. Crown Incorruptible (1 Cor 9:25)
3. Crown of Rejoicing (at His presence 1 Thes 2:19,20);
4. Crown of Righteousness (all who have loved His appearing 2Ti 4:5-8);
5. Crown of Glory (Shepherd the flock 1Pet 5:2-4)

4. Let's keep in mind Paul isn't speaking of salvation, but Rewards!

5. Paul wants us running to the finish line of life with our sites on winning...not just on finishing the race.

1. Myself in track in H.S. I just wanted to finish!

2. Except one race, I felt great, I was going for it. The race, the 880 yrd dash. 1st lap...I was smokin...the 2nd lap started...I hit the wall so hard! WHY? Lack of discipline...On our long run days I'd talk my friends into running to my house & going swimming, or trampoline-ing.

6. Since these athletes disciplined themselves so strenuously...for a wilting wreath, how much more should we train to win a continuing crown.

1. Heb.12:1 Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

7. "If you want to perform like a champion, you must practice like one!"

8. (John Wesley) "Give me 100 preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; they alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the Kingdom of Heaven on earth."

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## AN EVERLASTING CROWN

Run in such a way as to get the prize ... to get a crown that will last forever. 1 Corinthians 9:24-25NIV

THERE IS a story told of a European princess who had everything she could ever want. Her husband was a wealthy man who adorned her with jewelry at every occasion. But the princess was a fervent Christian, and God put a burden on her heart to start an orphanage. Having no money of her own, she begged her husband to let her sell her jewels so that she could help the children.

"Don't you appreciate the jewels I give you?" he would ask in frustration. "Of course," she would answer him. "But there are so many homeless children we could help." Finally he relented, and she set out to sell her jewelry. With the money she gained, she was able to build a beautiful orphanage, and each day workers would bring in orphan children from the streets to be fed and clothed. The more children who came, the greater joy she found in showing them love and affection. One day the princess returned to her husband and said excitedly, "I found my jewels today. I found them in the bright and happy eyes of the children who were rescued from the streets. I found my jewels!"

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus implores us to "store your treasures in heaven, where they will never become moth-eaten or rusty and where they will be safe from thieves" (Matthew 6:20). Peter explains why this is so important. "The day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and everything in them will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be exposed to judgment" (2 Peter 3:10). The jewels of this world, precious as they may seem at the moment, are as temporal as the days. They hold no value in the eyes of God.

I heard a minister once tell of a flood that ravaged his town and flooded his basement. As he stood on the stairway surveying the damage to his possessions, watching helplessly as the things he had accumulated throughout the years were swallowed up in water, he struggled with feelings of anger and remorse. Suddenly he heard the Lord speak to his spirit. "Don't worry about all that stuff," the Lord said. "I was planning to burn it all up anyway." There is a crown waiting for those who hold possessions loosely, and its value is not only priceless but eternal. (Embracing Eternity)

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[Bruce Goettsche](#) on the prize, the imperishable wreath - **What is this crown we seek?** In the Bible we are told that there will be rewards given to those who are faithful. I don't know what these rewards will be, but one of those rewards will surely be the reward of knowing that you were used by God to bring someone else to faith in Christ. Imagine how wonderful it would be to walk around Heaven and see those who are in Heaven because you were faithful in sharing the truth with them. Personally, I can't imagine a greater reward....Our ultimate blessing and reward would be to hear the Lord say to us, "**Well done!**" A child playing ball will often search the stands to see his/her parents. Why? They desire the approval of the people who are most significant to them. When someone we love says, "Good job!" or "I'm proud of you" it is a very significant moment. How much more significant it will be to stand before our precious Redeemer and Lord and hear Him say, "You served me well"? That will be a reward surpassing any trinket the world could afford.

**Goettsche's** comment reminds me of Paul's words in 1 Thes 2:19-20 describing our **crown**....

For **who** is our hope or joy or **crown** of exultation? Is it not even **you**, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.

Comment - So in this passage Paul identifies the believers he led to the Lord as his **crown!**

**Goettsche** goes on to discuss HOW TO TRAIN TO WIN

Let's assume (for argument's sake) that you want to be a winner as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Let's say that you do want the imperishable crown and you do want to know that you have been responsible for others spending eternity in Heaven. What kind of training is needed?

**Focus.** Paul says the true athlete goes into strict training. The athlete does not run "aimlessly". He is constantly working on something. He is working on his start, his finish, his stride, or his endurance. He works purposefully. The athlete keeps working toward the prize of being a champion. He never loses sight of the goal. As believers we must keep before us the prize that we are seeking. It is easy to get distracted in this world. There are titles, awards, and milestones that can distract us. There are sports, politics, and profit margin that can occupy our attention. There is pleasure, the achievement of our children, and an abundance of stuff that can cause us to lose our focus. We must constantly, daily, perhaps even hourly, remind ourselves of the goal: the reward of Heaven and the souls of men.

**Discipline.** The second thing that's needed is discipline. Paul says, "I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave." Paul says he isn't just playing games; he is serious. We are told that he "beats his body to make it his slave." The phrase "beat my body" means to hit below the eye or to get a black eye. The word for athlete in the Greek is the word "agonizomenous" from which we get our word "agony". The person who plays to win agonizes to grow in their walk with God.

### 1 Corinthians 9:26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air;

Amplified - Therefore I do not run uncertainly (without definite aim). I do not box like one beating the air and striking without an adversary.

NLT - So I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step. I am not like a boxer who misses his punches.

Phillips - I run the race then with determination. I am no shadow-boxer, I really fight!

Wuest - As for myself, therefore, I so run, in no uncertain manner. I so swing my fists, not as one who, when fighting, misses his opponent, merely beating the air and not striking a straight blow which finds its target. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

NET 1 Corinthians 9:26 So I do not run uncertainly or box like one who hits only air.

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:26 Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:26 γ το νυν ο τως τρ χω ς ο κ δ λως, ο τως πικτε ω ς ο κ ρα δ ρων·

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:26 I, therefore, thus run, not as uncertainly, thus I fight, as not beating air;

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:26 I therefore so run, as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not beating the air:

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:26 Therefore I do not run like one who runs aimlessly or box like one beating the air.

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:26 In this manner I run, but not like the runner who is unsure of where he is headed. In a comparable way, I box—not like one shadow boxing.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:26 So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air;

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:26 Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing.

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:26 So that is how I run, not without a clear goal; and how I box, not wasting blows on air.

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:26 So I run-but not without a clear goal ahead of me. So I box-but not as if I were just shadow boxing.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:26 So then I am running, not uncertainly; so I am fighting, not as one who gives blows in the air:

- **not:** 2Co 5:1,8 Php 1:21 2Ti 1:12 2:5 Heb 4:1 1Pe 5:1 2Pe 1:10
- **I box:** Mt 11:12 Lu 13:24 Eph 6:12 Col 1:29
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**CLICK FOR ADDITIONAL COMMENTARY ON THIS VERSE - THE MATERIAL BELOW IS NOT DUPLICATED (FOR THE MOST PART)**

## Ancient Greek Boxer

### PAUL'S PATTERN: REAL PUNCHES - NO SHADOW BOXING!

**Shadow boxing** - Shadow boxing is an exercise used in the training for combat sports, especially, as its name implies, in boxing. It is used mainly to prepare the muscles before the person training engages in stronger physical activity. In shadowboxing, only one person is required to participate; the participant throws punches at no one in particular.

Paul repeatedly referred not to shadow boxing but to a very real (spiritual) fight with invisible enemies, the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#) (and his minions)....

1 Timothy 1:18 This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight,

1 Timothy 6:12+ **Fight** ([agonizomai](#) in [present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

2 Timothy 4:7+ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;

Ephesians 6:10-12+ Finally, **be strong** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) in the Lord and in the strength of His might. **Put on** ([aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

**Therefore** - Term of Conclusion - In view of the pricelessness and permanence of the prize here is what Paul will do.

I (present tense - continually) **run** ([trecho](#)), **in such a way, as not without aim** - Notice that Paul now switches from second person plural (we) to the first person singular explaining what he himself determines to do. In a way he is now presenting himself as a model to imitate (cf 1 Cor 4:16+, 1 Cor 11:1).

What was Paul's aim? He has just clearly stated his aim in 1 Cor 9:19-22, four times stating that his desire was to win as many to Jesus as he could.

**William MacDonald** - His service was neither purposeless nor ineffectual. He had a definite aim before his eyes, and his intention was that his every action should count. There must be no wasted time or energy. The apostle was not interested in wild misses.

**Jack Arnold** on running **not without aim** - The first athlete Paul picks out is the runner, probably a dash runner, to illustrate how we

Christians should run the spiritual life. in the dashes, the Greeks would run with their eyes fixed on a pole at the end of the race (cf "fixing our eyes on Jesus" - Heb 12:2+). Their goal was to reach the pole. Paul was determined to run the race with definite aims, goals and purposes. He made a solemn resolution that he would not run the race aimlessly. Everything he did as a Christian had a definite purpose. He fixed his eyes on the goal which was Christ and gave every ounce of strength to win the race. (see Php 3:13-14+). Paul knew where the finish line was and he was not going to let anyone or anything hinder him from finishing the race. No sin would keep him from the prize. Paul's point is that if we Christians are not willing to give up rights and press towards the mark, focusing our lives on the goal of pleasing Christ, we will not win the race, and we will miss our rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. **(ED: THIS BEGS THE QUESTION UNDER GRACE - HOW ARE YOU RUNNING? DON'T MISS THIS ONCE IN A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY TO RUN WITH GRACE THE RACE OF YOUR LIFE!)**

**Run (5143)** (**trecho** from **dremo** = to run or walk hastily) means literally to move faster than a walk, making rapid linear movement. To speed on or to make progress. Trecho therefore describes someone in haste (Mt 28:8, Mk 5:6, Jn 20:2, 4, Lk 24:12). Figuratively trecho describes rapid propagation of doctrine, spreading without restraint (2Th 3:1). It also pictures one exerting effort, striving hard, spending strength to attain a goal (Ro 9:16, Gal 5:7, 2:2, Php 2:16, He 12:1). In Gal 5:7 **trecho** describes the course of the conduct. **BDAG** characterizes the figurative use of **trecho** as "to make an effort to advance spiritually or intellectually." Matt. 27:48; Matt. 28:8; Mk. 5:6; Mk. 15:36; Lk. 15:20; Lk. 24:12; Jn. 20:2; Jn. 20:4; Rom. 9:16; 1 Co. 9:24; 1 Co. 9:26; Gal. 2:2; Gal. 5:7; Phil. 2:16; 2 Thess. 3:1; Heb. 12:1; Rev. 9:9

**Not without aim (84)** (**adelos** from **a** = without + **delos** = evident, plain, manifest) is used only here in the Scriptures and means uncertainly, indistinctly, not aimlessly or as one who has no fixed goal. Paul is saying that he is running with a fixed goal. He is running and boxing with purpose. He runs with a view of the finish line and the precious prize that awaits all who "cross the goal". **Zodhiates** says **adelos** means "Uncertainly, irresolutely, without attending to the prescribed marks or lines, without exposure to the spectators who are there to judge the race or the performance. (Remember that Paul places a "not" before adelos so he runs "not uncertainly", "not irresolutely", etc.) **Adam Clarke** notes that **adelos** can mean "ignorantly; I do not run like one ignorant of what he is about, or of the laws of the course; I know that there is an eternal life; I know the way that leads to it; and I know and feel the power of it."

I (present tense - continually) **box** (pukteuo) **in such a way, as not beating** (dero) **the air** (aer)- No "**shadow boxing**" for Paul ([See picture](#))! **Boxing** (see also [note below](#)) was one of the events in the Isthmian Games and was considered the most brutal of all the events. Paul had very likely witnessed boxers engaged in this violent (and sometimes deadly) sport as they strapped their knuckles with leather strips in order to make the blows more punishing.

**Jack Arnold** - He would not live his life like a boxer who was constantly throwing punches at his opponent but never landing a punch. For Paul, every punch was to be meaningful, everyone landed on its mark, every one counted. Paul so lived his life that everything he did counted for eternity. As Christians, we must not miss spiritual punches and waste energy. Every blow is to strike its object We are not to waste energy on that which will produce no results. We are not to fight with rash, ill-advised or uncertain blows, but all efforts are to be directed towards subjugating the body to make it do the will of God. Do you have a plan? Are you wasting effort on things that do not count for eternity? Are you giving up rights? Are you given to holiness of life? Are you involved in reaching a lost world for Christ? Will you come up to the Judgment Seat and have to admit to Christ that you spent most of your time spinning your wheels? Will you be able to tell Christ that you struck definite blows for Him against the enemy in this life? Will the inscription of your tombstone say, "Here lies one who spend his life beating the air"?

**Rod Mattoon** - If you are going to be a champion for Christ, then you need to keep your focus on God's purpose for your life. Champions make wise use of their time. They take advantage of the good opportunities that come their way. Champions are focused on their tasks, fervent in their trials, firm in their training, and fierce in their tournaments. They are people with a purpose. Paul expressed this sentiment here. Paul did not run for the Lord aimlessly or without any purpose. That is what he was saying here. He was not a time-waster. He was not like a boxer who did shadow-boxing, swinging at the air and wasting his energy. He used his strength for a purpose. Paul was a champion for Christ because he had spiritual goals.

**Brian Bell** - Not w/uncertainty – Eyes fixed on the goal.

1. Note: he moves to "I" (not "we") Paul doesn't stop to sightsee, window shop, or pick flowers in his spiritual race of life.
2. When Paul was in the ring w/sin, he'd cock back his arm & plant his fist square on the chin of sin.
3. J.B.Phillips translation of this, I am no shadow-boxer, I really fight! I am my body's sternest master, for fear that when I have preached to others I should myself be disqualified.

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**Here are 10 "running tips" for those who seek to run in light of eternity...**

1. Invest in the lives of those who minister the word. (Gal 6:6, 7)



2. Minister to those in need. (Lk 10:42)
3. Sacrifice to follow Christ. (Lk 19:27, 28, 29)
4. Give without fanfare. (Mt 6:1, 3, 4)
5. Be willing to suffer for the sake of Christ. (Mt 5:11, 12)
6. Pray in Secret (Mt 6:5, 6)
7. Engage in spiritual activity without fanfare. (Mt 6:16, 17, 18)
8. Love your enemies by being willing to help them. (Lk 6:35)
9. Give hearty service to the Lord and not just to please men. (Col 3:23, 24)
10. Entertain those who cannot repay you. (Lk 14:12, 13, 14)

(from [Going for the Gold - Joe, L Wall](#) Recommended)

### **J Oswald Sanders - The Force of Self-Discipline 1 Corinthians 9:26–27**

Leaders are able to lead others only because they discipline themselves. The person who does not know how to bow to discipline imposed from without, who does not know how to obey, will not make a good leader—nor will the one who has not learned to impose discipline within his or her own life. Those who scorn scripturally or legally constituted authority or rebel against it rarely qualify for high leadership positions.

Paul imposed on himself a rigorous inner discipline in two areas:

He waged war with his body. “I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body to make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize” (1 Corinthians 9:26–27).

Here Paul was expressing a genuine fear, a real possibility. He had not yet completed the course. Even his vast experience and great successes did not make him immune to the subtle temptations of the body. In order that his ministry should not be short-circuited, he was willing to bring his bodily appetites under self-discipline as strict as that of the Spartan athletes in the arena.

The Christian leader is open to the danger of being defeated through overindulgence of physical appetites or through laziness. Such an acute danger calls for stern self-discipline. At the other end of the scale is an excess of physical activity, which can lead to fatigue and exhaustion. Leaders must be prepared to work even harder than their colleagues. But an exhausted person easily falls prey to the adversary. We should be alert to guard against both of these dangers.

He waged war with his thoughts. “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4–5). (PL)

**1 Corinthians 9:27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.**

Amplified -But [like a boxer] I buffet my body [handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships] and subdue it, for fear that after proclaiming to others the Gospel and things pertaining to it, I myself should become unfit [not stand the test, be unapproved and rejected as a counterfeit].

NLT - I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.

Phillips - I am my body's sternest master, for fear that when I have preached to others I should myself be disqualified.

Wuest - But I beat my body black and blue and make it my abject slave lest somehow, when I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified [from further Christian service]. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by [permission](#))

Kistemaker - But I treat my body roughly and enslave it, so that after I have proclaimed the gospel to others, I myself do not become disqualified.

NET 1 Corinthians 9:27 Instead I subdue my body and make it my slave, so that after preaching to others I myself will not be disqualified.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:27 But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

NIV 1 Corinthians 9:27 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.

GNT 1 Corinthians 9:27 ἄλλ' ἑπιζῶ μου τὸ σῶμα καὶ δουλαγωγῶ, μὴ πως ἄλλοις κηρῶν ἕξαστα ὀκίμος γινώμαι.

KJV 1 Corinthians 9:27 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.

YLT 1 Corinthians 9:27 but I chastise my body, and bring it into servitude, lest by any means, having preached to others -- I myself may become disapproved.

ASV 1 Corinthians 9:27 but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected.

CSB 1 Corinthians 9:27 Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

MIT 1 Corinthians 9:27 But I punch out my body and bring it under control, lest somehow, having preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

NRS 1 Corinthians 9:27 but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified.

NAB 1 Corinthians 9:27 No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

NJB 1 Corinthians 9:27 I punish my body and bring it under control, to avoid any risk that, having acted as herald for others, I myself may be disqualified.

GWN 1 Corinthians 9:27 Rather, I toughen my body with punches and make it my slave so that I will not be disqualified after I have spread the Good News to others.

BBE 1 Corinthians 9:27 But I give blows to my body, and keep it under control, for fear that, after having given the good news to others, I myself might not have God's approval.

- **I discipline my body:** 1Co 9:25 4:11,12 6:12,13 8:13 Ro 8:13 2Co 6:4,5 11:27 Col 3:5 2Ti 2:22 1Pe 2:11
- **and:** Ro 6:18,19
- **so that:** 1Co 13:1-3 Ps 50:16 Mt 7:21-23 Lu 12:45-47 13:26,27 2Pe 2:15
- **disqualified.:** Jer 6:30 Lu 9:25 Ac 1:25 2Co 13:5,6
- [1 Corinthians 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## Related Passages

2 John 8 “**Watch** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full **reward**”

Revelation 22:12 “**Behold**, I am coming quickly, and My **reward** is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

**CLICK FOR ADDITIONAL COMMENTARY ON THIS VERSE - THE MATERIAL BELOW IS NOT DUPLICATED (FOR THE MOST PART)**

## SELF DISCIPLINE TO HIS OWN BODY

In his letter to young Timothy Paul reminded his disciple that to win the Christian race we must **discipline** ourselves using the verb [gymnazo](#) which means to make oneself obey, in essence to control one's heart which is going to take some "holy sweat"...

**Discipline** ([gymnazo](#) in [present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) yourself for the purpose of [godliness](#); for (TERM OF EXPLANATION) bodily discipline is **only of little profit**, but [godliness](#) is [profitable for all things](#), since it holds promise for (1) **the present life** and (2) also for **the life to come**. It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. For it is for this we labor ([kopiao](#) in [present tense](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to labor](#)) and strive ([agonizomai](#) in [present tense](#)), because we have fixed our hope ([perfect tense](#)) on the living God, Who is the Savior of all men, especially of faithful. (1 Ti 4:7-10+)

#### Related Resource:

- See Spiritual Discipline

**But I** (present tense - continually) **discipline my body and** (present tense - continually) **make it my slave, so that** (lest - ESV, KJV), **after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified** - NLT - I discipline my body like an athlete. **Wuest** - "But I beat my body black and blue and make it my abject slave" Paul speaks of his body in a sense as his adversary, as the instrument through which appetites and lusts, if left unchecked, would war against his soul! Paul was determined that his body with these appetites would be his **slave**, not his **master**. (WHO IS IN CONTROL OF YOUR BODY?) In 1 Cor 9:19 Paul used a similar metaphor in a different context writing " I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may **win** more." Here he says he makes his body his slave in order to win not be disqualified!

**Vine** adds **discipline my body and make it my slave** "indicates the suppressive treatment of the body, not merely the physical frame, but that regarded as the instrument of the inward passions and lusts; not the bruising of the body itself, but rigid self-denial in order to keep oneself spiritually fit. treating it as a bondsman, refusing the indulgence of its desires, and making it constantly subordinate to the spirit. If our body gets the upper hand of us we are marred in spirit. Our natural desires should be those over which we act as complete masters. For this we need the help (NOT JUST "HELP" BUT ENABLEMENT) of the Holy Spirit which is ever available, but we need also the spiritual determination to respond to His power and direction."

Notice Paul personalizes this warning (**my body...my slave**). If Paul thought there was even a chance of himself being disqualified, how much greater risk for us "mere mortals!" Discipline was not an occasional pursuit, but a present tense passion for Paul! The only way one can continually discipline and make the body our slave is by the supernatural enabling power of the Spirit. That is why we must daily arise and confess and be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18+). There is simply no other way to imitate Paul and fulfill these present tense actions which he undertakes to avoid being disqualified.

**THOUGHT** - It strikes me that another way to make my body my slave is enabled by grace and the Spirit to offer it to the Lord each day for His good pleasure (Ro 12:1+) and during the day to "watch and pray" (Mt 26:41+) with prayers such as those of the psalmist in Psalm 119 --"Establish Thy word to Thy servant, as that which produces reverence (holy fear, not trembling dread) for Thee. (Ps 119:38+) And then praying "Establish my footsteps in Thy word, And do not let any iniquity have dominion over me. (Ps 119:133+) Do you see the common denominator in this two great prayers? (THE WORD - compare [Filled with His Spirit/Richly Indwelt with His Word](#)) Remember too that the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Pr 9:10, cf Ps 119:38). What a great mindset (and heart attitude) with which to begin each day!

**Alan Redpath** on **discipline my body** - In connection with this whole issue of preaching a so-called "gospel of works," I would say that the only faith that matters is a faith that is expressed in the action of your body. The faith that has qualified a man for heaven gets into his feet, his hands, his mind, his tongue — **in other words, it is expressed in the physical. If his faith in Jesus Christ does not begin to make his whole body move in the will of God, there is no evidence that it is saving faith at all. It is how a Christian uses his body that proclaims his eternal destiny.** That is why Paul says these tremendous things, "I buffet my body; I keep it in subjection." Like any athlete daily keeps himself in training behind the scenes to win an earthly crown, he keeps his body down.

**THOUGHT** - As other people examine our lives, do they see that you, as a Christian, have left behind certain things to which you are entitled for Jesus' sake? Do they see you as one who is maintaining an unblemished testimony? You have not let down the standards, and you are taking the gospel message out to an ungodly world. But do they see, above all, a man (or woman) who is triumphing in his own personal walk because he is not allowing the flesh with its appetites and intemperance to dominate his life, a man living under the control of the Spirit of God? These are the authentic marks of Christian experience. But even the apostle Paul could never have expressed those things in his life were it not that within him was the indwelling life of the risen Lord Jesus (AND THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST) which enabled him to do so....Perhaps you have been saying to yourself, "I don't know whether I can pass the tests — I'm not sure if I've renounced anything for Jesus. I'm

not sure about my ministry; I don't know about this battle with the enemy." But the Holy Spirit within you, my friend, will give you unction to maintain you ministry and testimony; He will give you courage to combat Satan at close quarters and defeat the enemy of your soul. (Redpath)

**Jack Arnold** - What kept Paul from running the race? What kept him from giving up fights to win men for Christ and to glorify Christ? His body! Yes, but more than that he is referring to the flesh or sin nature which was housed in his body. The flesh wants its rights. The way Paul kept his sin nature down was to discipline his body. Literally this say, "I beat my body black and blue." Paul dealt harshly with his body which wanted by nature to be lazy, slothful, indifferent and even rebellious. He had to put the body to death by severe discipline. Running the Christian life sometimes calls for radical mortification of the flesh in order to be effective for Jesus Christ. When things get rough in the Christian life, the Christian sucks it up on the inside and endures. Someone has said, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going !" We should not want to get into heaven by the skin of our teeth. We should run the spiritual race for the glory of God to win it.

**ESV Study Bible** - This verse has a long history of misinterpretation in terms of punishing one's own body as a means of spiritual discipline. Paul's language, however, is governed both by the athletic metaphor of the previous two verses and by the physical demands of his apostolic work (1 Cor 4:9, 11–13; 2 Cor. 4:8–12; 6:3–10; 11:23–12:10; 1 Th 2:1–2, 9; 3:7–8). Just as an athlete goes through physical training that is sometimes uncomfortable in order to attain the goal of victory, so Paul endures physical and emotional hardship, and gives up his right to material support, for the gospel's advancement. (See 1 Cor. 9:12 and 2 Cor. 6:1–10.)

**Rod Mattoon** - If you are trying to live your life for Jesus Christ, you know that the Christian life is not a playground, but a battlefield. Christians face many struggles, many dangers, and many difficulties because of their dedication to Jesus Christ. In fact, world-wide there is an average of 160,000 Christians that are martyred for Christ every single year. Live for Christ, and yes, Satan and his followers will oppose you. God's challenge to us is, "Strive for the mastery." As Christians, we are to contend for Christ. We are to struggle to be victorious over our vices, triumphant over our tribulations, conquering our cowardness, and successful in having a servant's attitude toward the Lord and other people. Jude challenged us to contend for the faith.

**Arnold on make it (my body) my slave** - Paul subdued the flesh with vigor. Literally this says, "I lead my body around like a slave." He made his body his slave and did not become a slave to the cravings and desires of the flesh. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul would dominate his body and not let it dominate him. He would not indulge in anything that would hurt his testimony or keep people from coming to Christ under his ministry. Christian, is your body a slave to you? Are you able to go to bed at night and get up early? Are your eating habits such that you are not overweight? Are your sex drives under control so as not to bring a bad name on Christ? Do you make your body be involved in Christian service? Do you keep your mind from wanting more and more money and more and more things in order that you might give more and more to the cause of Christ? Until we train our bodies to be our slaves, we will never be as effective as we should be for Christ, and we will end up at the Judgment Seat with few or no crowns to throw at Christ's feet. Christianity is not a life of complacency but of commitment. For sure, the Christian life is not for sissies. God is looking for a few good men and women.

**John MacArthur** - Most people, including many Christians, are instead slaves to their bodies. Their bodies tell their minds what to do. Their bodies decide when to eat, what to eat, how much to eat, when to sleep and get up, and so on. An athlete cannot allow that. He follows the training rules, not his body. He runs when he would rather be resting, he eats a balanced meal when he would rather have a chocolate sundae, he goes to bed when he would rather stay up, and he gets up early to train when he would rather stay in bed. An athlete leads his body; he does not follow it. It is his slave, not the other way around.

**Rod Mattoon** - To keep himself under control, Paul was extremely stern with himself. You have to be this way if you are going to keep the brama bull of your flesh under control. Our flesh kicks, twists, and snorts when we exert self-discipline. It does not like to be controlled, but that is what is needed if you are going to be a champion for Christ.

**THOUGHT** - In a small church yard at the foot of a Swiss mountain, the body of a young English climber was buried. On the tombstone under his name and date were these words, "He Died Climbing." When you die one day, will you be climbing for Christ when that time comes? God help us all to be pressing for the prize. May we run our race for Christ faithfully and be champions for Him.

In his last recorded words Paul gave a warning to his young disciple Timothy noting that

"if anyone competes as an athlete, **he** (absolute negative and present tense - continually) **does not win the prize** ([stephanoo](#)) unless he competes ([athleo](#)) according to the rules (lawfully - see [disqualification](#))." (2 Ti 2:5-see commentary)

**John MacArthur** on disqualified says that "Many believers start the Christian life with enthusiasm and devotion. They train carefully for a while but soon tire of the effort and begin to "break training." Before long they are **disqualified** from being effective witnesses (**ED: REMEMBER THE CONTEXT WAS "WITNESSING" PAUL BECOMING ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE TO WIN SOME AND IN**

V27 HE AGAIN MENTIONS PREACHING SO THIS WOULD DEFINITELY SUPPORT MACARTHUR'S INTERPRETATION - WITH WHICH I AGREE) . They do not have what it takes, because they are unwilling to pay the price. The flesh, the world, everyday affairs, personal interests, and often simple laziness hinder spiritual growth and preparation for service. Even good things can interfere with the best. Fulfillment of freedoms can interfere with fulfillment of love. Following our own ways can keep others from knowing the Way. Souls are won by those who are prepared to be used when the Spirit chooses to use them. ([MacArthur, J: 1Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**Chuck Swindoll** - Throughout this passage, it's important to remember that Paul isn't talking about working hard to earn salvation. The whole context is selfless participation in ministry by those already saved. Paul uses an athletic illustration to explain that not all Christians will be rewarded equally for the way they lived and invested their time, energy, and resources.

**Henry Morris** - The Greek for "castaway" (adokimos) means literally "disapproved," but does not suggest being discarded altogether. Paul had just written about losing all rewards, but still being saved (1 Corinthians 3:15), and he realized that this could become possible even for him.

**Hampton Keathley** - The disqualification mentioned in 1 Corinthians 9:27 means disqualified from rewards, not loss of salvation. This is clear from the context and the analogy to the Greek athletic games.

**W E Vine** - The word [adokimos](#), "rejected," does not mean a castaway, as in the A.V., but disapproved as a result of not standing the test, and here it means disapproved, and so rejected from present testimony, with loss of future reward. Such a possibility should be so appalling and abhorrent to any servant of Christ, that he should follow the apostle's example, which is here given, not simply as a record of his own life, but as a guide to us in all our circumstances. We need to remember also that the apostle is here speaking of the responsibility and joy of winning souls for Christ. To save others should be the pursuit of our lives. The conflict and its issues are so tremendous, that we should never forgo any means of spiritual strength.

**ESVSB** - Disqualified (Gk. adokimos, "not approved, not standing the test") in this context means "disqualified from receiving rewards"

**NIVSB** - not be disqualified for the prize. Paul realizes that he must with rigor serve the Lord and battle against sin. If he fails in this, he may be excluded from the reward (cf. 2 Ti 4:8).

**Alan Redpath** - I do not think for moment that Paul was concerned that he should be lost, but he was desperately concerned that God might remove his testimony and take him from his place of opportunity and witness because deep down in his heart he had been failing to contend with the enemy. Perhaps this is the greatest battle any child of God has to face. (The Road to Heaven)

**Jack Arnold on disqualified** - So that after I have preached to others, Paul was very concerned that his life should not be hypocritical, for he preached to thousands and knew that he could be disqualified from the spiritual race God had called him to run. It seems like monthly I hear of some famous preacher or well-known Christian who has fallen into adultery, or stolen from the church funds, or left the ministry out of disgust. These men and women have preached to thousands but their ministry ends in disgrace because of sin. I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. The Greek word for "disqualified" is adokimos which means to test and disapprove or reject. It can mean either "to disapprove" or "to reject." The King James Version uses "castaway," favoring the idea of rejection. The New English Bible says "rejected" or "reprobate." Since the context is about rewards, I believe Paul is referring to loss of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. How might a runner get disqualified from a race? He first of all could be disqualified if he failed to keep the rules. Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules (II Tim. 2:5). If we, as Christians or as ministers of the gospel, choose, by an act of our own will, to go against God and His revealed will for us in the Bible, we must be ready to suffer the consequences. Sin can disqualify a Christian from winning the race. If we choose to sin, God may bring heavy discipline upon us in this life. If we refuse to repent God just may take our lives because we are of no use to Him down here. We would not lose our salvation but our opportunity to serve Him, and our lives would be wasted in this world. What motivated Paul was the godly fear that he might lose his ministry, lose his opportunity to serve, lose his chance to gain rewards to throw at Christ's feet. **A second way an athlete may be disqualified is if he receives an injury while running and is unable to finish the race.** Because of laziness, indifference, coldness of heart, lack of discipline, a Christian may give in to the indulgences of the flesh. The indulgence of the so-called "good life" may so entrap him that he will fall into temptation, receiving a spiritual injury that may put him on the shelf spiritually. God may disqualify him temporarily by putting him on the shelf or permanently taking him home to heaven. When the Christian life is dry, mechanical and ritualistic, with no power of joy, the Christian is in danger of being disqualified, not from salvation but from life and service for Jesus Christ. When Christians refuse to deny themselves, to exercise discipline, to undergo self-control, then the spiritual power goes and a person's life may be wasted. There will be a going through the motions, a charade, a ritual of futility, but there will be no power. Some spiritual injury has set in to disqualify from the race. A Christian cannot lose his salvation but he can lose his reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and he can lose his only purpose for living which is to please Jesus Christ. **There is a third way an athlete may be disqualified.** He can quit the race. He may begin strong, but if he quits he cannot win. A person who claims to be a Christian and then quits



altogether running the race, showing absolutely no interest at all in spiritual things, may experience total rejection that is, he may be tested and rejected, finding out he is a reprobate, having never really known Christ's salvation. This person was not saved and then lost. He was never saved at all. He may have looked saved externally, but time and the cares of the world choked out his interest in Christ. This sounds much like the second and third kinds of soil in the Parable of the Sower. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy, but since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful (Matt. 13:20-22). This person completely stops running, turning from the faith once for all delivered to the saints and goes back into the world. The reprobate is different from a Christian who may falter, may stumble, may go backward for awhile, but he does win the race. A mere professing, unsaved Christian quits and refuses to run the race. All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved (Matt. 10:23). Someone has put it this way, "Quitters never win and winners never quit." Frank Barker, pastor of Brierwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama puts it well when he says, "He who fizzles before the finish was faulty from the first." Christian, God wants you to finish the race. The race is difficult, taxing and challenging and it may zap you of every ounce of strength at times. But your goal must be to cross the finish line with arms stretched high and a shout of joy and victory! Then you can fall to the ground in total exhaustion. But you will know you have finished the race. Where you finish in the race is not nearly as important as that you finish the race. If you are a Christian who is running the race poorly, if you have broken God's rules or have some spiritual injury due to sin, God says that you must repent. You must come to grips with your life before a holy God lest He put you on the shelf and you become useless to Him. Remember, Christian, God is loving, compassionate and merciful and He is ready to forgive any Christian who has gone astray. He wants you to run the race with power, freedom, liberty and joy. If anything is keeping you from running and winning the spiritual race, deal with it today.

**Hunter** - Paul's biggest enemy is "**my body**". By this he means the power of sin in his life. The body is not the seat of sin as is so often said. The seat of sin lies in the will. The body is the medium through which sin operates. Paul is determined that "sin will not reign" there ("Therefore **do not let sin reign** [[present imperative with a negative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)] in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts." - Rom 6:12+). To "keep under" is to discipline so as to stop the ready obedience to sin. The strongest measures are so necessary. He buffets it, beats it (lit. "I give it a black eye") and thus "brings it into subjection". He makes it his slave, so that he is in complete control. How salutary is all this. How many have failed just here. If any one of us fails to do this there is the danger of being disqualified, being set aside now in this life, and losing reward at the Judgment Seat. Salvation is not in view, but service. (What the Bible Teaches)

#### Related Resource:

- [What Does Disqualified Mean?](#) - see discussion of the three main interpretations which have quite different eternal consequences

**Jerry M. Hullinger** This investigation leads to two notable conclusions regarding the Christian life. **First**, the dedicated Christian life consists not in a passive "letting go and letting God." Instead it requires an earnest, consistent striving, fueled by the grace of God. **Second**, being disqualified from reward is a real possibility for every believer. Thus the child of God must be careful to strive according to the rules (2 Ti 2:5) in order to receive rewards from the Lord. ([Article](#))

**Discipline** (buffet, batter, beat my body black and blue) ([5299](#)) (**hupopiazō** from **hupo** = under + **ops** = eye) means literally to strike under the eye a description of an "uppercut" to use modern pugilistic parlance. To strike in this manner was generally considered to be a "knockout" punch by the ancient Greek boxers. The idea then is to strike hard and heavy on one's face, rendering it "black and blue." Recall that (apparently not in the first rounds but only in later rounds according to some sources) the boxers wore gloves (the "cestus") made of leather bands and tied into knots in addition to being embedded with metallic objects composed of lead and iron! It is not surprising that these gloves obtained the nickname of "**limb-breakers!**"

**Make it my slave** (only use in the NT) ([1396](#)) (**doulagogeō** from **doulos** = servant, slave + **ago** = to lead, bring) means literally to bring into a state of servitude, to make a slave, to bring into a state of subjection. Used only here in the Bible. Note that while the body per se is not evil, it is the "base of enemy operations", the camp from which **Sin** launches its missiles of anti-God impulses and desires that if not deflected by the shield of faith always result in death and destruction to our spiritual life. Paul could hardly give us a more vivid picture of his willingness to severely discipline his own body than the picture invoked by the verb **hupopiazō**!

**Preached** ([2784](#)) (**kerusso** from **kerux** = a herald - one who acts as the medium of the authority of one who proclamation he makes; **kerugma** = the thing preached or the message) means to proclaim (publicly) or to herald or act as a public crier, the town official who would make a proclamation in a public gathering. Kerusso in the Corinthians letters - 1 Co. 1:23; 1 Co. 9:27; 1 Co. 15:11; 1 Co. 15:12; 2 Co. 1:19; 2 Co. 4:5; 2 Co. 11:4;



**Disqualified** (castaway, disapproved) (96) (**adokimos** from **a** = without + **dokimos** = tested and thus reliable or acceptable) refers to that which is rejected after a trial or examination because it fails the test. It means to put to the test for the purpose of being approved, but failing to meet the requirements. **Adokimos** describes that which does not prove itself to be such as it ought and which is therefore disapproved and useless. For example, "sterile soil" (see Hebrews 6:8) is unfit for fulfilling its purpose. In short **adokimos** describes that which is worthless, spurious, unqualified, disqualified, corrupted, not approved. **Adokimos** was commonly used of metals that were rejected by refiners because of impurities (eg, Isa 1:22 uses **adokimos** to refer to dross [the scum or impurities floating on the top of heated metal]). The dross was discarded, and **adokimos** therefore came to convey the sense of worthlessness and uselessness. **Boice** describes an interesting secular use of **adokimos** that helps us understand the meaning "Silver and gold coins were made quite roughly in those days, not milled to exact sizes as our coins are, and people would often cheat with them by carefully trimming off some of the excess metal. We know they did this because hundreds of laws were passed against the practice. After people had trimmed away enough metal, they would sell it for new coins. When coins had been trimmed for a long time, they eventually got so light that the merchants would not take them anymore; then a coin was said to be **adokimos**, "disqualified." This is what Paul is referring to. He is saying that he does not want to be **disqualified**, but rather to be judged "fit" as a result of his sufferings and self-discipline. (An Expository Commentary – Romans, Vol 2).

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**ILLUSTRATION OF DISQUALIFICATION** - You may have heard the story of the American Indian, Jim Thorpe. In the 1912 Olympics, Thorpe won both the decathlon and pentathlon. King Gustaf V of Sweden said to Thorpe, "You, sir, are the greatest amateur athlete in the world today." After he had received his gold medals, it was discovered a few months later that Jim Thorpe had played for a professional baseball team, making him no amateur. The King of Sweden asked him to return his medals and it nearly broke Thorpe's heart. He sent the awards back to the King with a letter which read, "I hope your majesty will not think too hard of me. Please remember that I am only a poor, ignorant Indian boy. I did not know that taking five dollars a week for playing ball on the village baseball team made me a professional. I never meant to deceive." The greatest athlete in the world, at that time, perhaps the greatest athlete of all time was disqualified because he broke the rules.

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### Laser Eye Surgery (Living Water - James Scudder)

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. 1 Corinthians 9:27

David Rittenhouse of Pennsylvania was a great astronomer. He was skillful in measuring the sizes of planets and determining the position of the stars. But he found that because of the distance of the stars, a silk thread stretched across the glass of his telescope would entirely cover a star; and thus a silk fiber appeared to be larger in diameter than a star.

Our sun is 886,000 miles in diameter, and yet, seen from a distant star, our sun could be covered, hidden behind a thread when that thread was stretched across the telescope.

There are those who let sin do the same thing to their spiritual lives. Someone might direct your eyes to the Star of Bethlehem through the telescope of faith; but, there is a secret thread, a silken fiber, which, holds you to subservience to the world.

Laser eye surgery is a relatively new technique that is bringing renewed vision to thousands of people. Throughout her whole life, my wife, Linda has had glasses or contacts. But a year or so ago, she experienced this radical surgery and now has almost perfect vision.

We need to let Jesus Christ do laser eye surgery on us. It is important that we keep sin out of our life, and that we never open the door to temptation. The Apostle Paul kept his body under subjection. In other words, he worked to keep sin out of his life, so that he could continue to be used of God, which was his greatest joy.

Sin enough and you will soon be unconscious of sin!

Oswald Chambers

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### Train To Finish Strong

I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. — 1 Corinthians 9:27

Today's Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Eighty years ago, Eric Liddell electrified the world by capturing an Olympic gold medal in the 400 meters—a race he was not expected to win. Liddell was the favorite at 100 meters, but he had withdrawn from that race after learning the qualifying heats would be on Sunday, a day he observed as one of worship and rest. Instead of lamenting his lost chance in the 100, he spent the next 6 months training for the 400—and set a new Olympic record.

Paul used a sports metaphor to emphasize the Christian's need for spiritual discipline. "Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things" (1 Corinthians 9:25), that is, goes into strict training. "Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown." Paul longed to remain faithful to Christ because he wanted to bring the message of salvation to others (vv.19,27).

Throughout Liddell's life, he disciplined himself spiritually each day by spending time in God's Word and in prayer. He remained faithful until he died of a brain tumor in a Japanese internment camp during World War II.

Strengthened by the grace and power of God, Eric Liddell ran well and finished strong in the race of life. And so can we. By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

To win the race of life in Christ,  
This must become our daily goal:  
To trust in God for grace and strength,  
For discipline and self-control.  
—Sper

In the race of life, it takes discipline to finish strong.

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**Brian Bell - Disqualified** – Rejected as unusable.

1. Used of metals & coins which were rejected for not standing the test. (RWP)

7. Paul's one great desire was to win the lost, & that governed his every decision!"

8. Someone once defined real failure as: "...living without knowing what life is all about, feeding on things that do not satisfy, thinking you have everything, only to find out in the end you have nothing that matters."

9. So...what are you going to strive for? Winning your Rights, or your Race?

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**Jon Courson** -Newer translations correctly render the word 'castaway' as 'disqualified.' Thus, Paul is saying, 'I let go of my liberty in order that I might win people to Jesus. Why? Because I'm in a race for a prize which will affect who I am and what I do in the ages to come. Therefore, even though I am free to do all things, I can be disqualified if I don't keep my flesh under control, if I cause another to stumble...'

Favored to win the 1,500-meter Olympic event, Mary Decker was in excellent shape and running her best times. But after the gun went off, another talented runner, Zola Budd of South Africa, leaned into Mary Decker on the first curve, causing Decker to trip and fall—and herself to be disqualified.

This is the reason Paul was determined to keep his body under control. Before you were saved, your body was not under. Your body was on top. That is, your flesh was that which governed both your soul—your mind and emotions—and your spirit—the real you which lives forever. To see how true this is, all you have to do is listen to the conversations which take place at work or on the campus, wherein you'll hear the average person talk only about his body—about his financial concerns and recreational pursuits, his occupational goals and physical needs. But when the natural man gets saved, suddenly everything is different. The flesh no longer dominates him. The spirit is now on top, and suddenly there's peace in his heart and life makes sense. But because the flesh hates the basement, as time goes on, it demands to be on top again. And when it is, the new believer's life is a mess, for to be carnally-minded is death (Romans 8:6). So eventually, he gets to the place where he says, 'Lord, forgive me. I've given in to the flesh again.' He confesses his sin, turns his life back over to God, and his body is 'under' once more/

Does this war have to go on daily, hourly, constantly? Paul says here's the key: 'I keep my body under. I will not allow my body to determine what I watch, read, listen to, or think about. I will keep my body in the basement.' How can this be accomplished? Let me suggest to you one very practical way: how long has it been since you've said 'No' to your stomach? How long has it been since you've said, 'I'm going to use the hour I would have spent feeding my growling, demanding stomach in order to pull away and pray for my family, for the community, and for myself because I'm struggling with this temptation or that addiction'? That's called fasting. And I find it interesting that Jesus didn't say, 'If you fast...' but, 'When you fast...' (Matthew 6:16). When you say 'No' to your stomach

regularly, you'll be amazed how much easier it will be to say 'No' to the other temptations which plague you. Fasting from food is only one of the many disciplines the Bible teaches—not to be weird, but to be free. Another is saying 'No' when your body says, 'Hit the snooze bar.' It's saying, 'See, body, you're under. You're not ruling me. I'm out of bed. I'm on my knees. I'm in the Word.' It's following the example of Jesus who rose up a great while before morning to seek His Father. 'I keep my body under,' Paul says. 'I'm tired of my body ruling over me and the death it brings inevitably. Therefore, my spirit, ruled by God's Spirit, will be that which controls my soul—my will, my personality, my emotions.' You'll never regret knocking fleshly pursuits out of your life, gang. I promise you, you'll never regret the things you let go which would have tripped others and disqualified you; those things which would have wiped out your spiritual stamina and affected your endurance. Are you as disciplined in your spiritual life today as you were a year or five years ago? Or has your appreciation for the finished work of the Cross and your understanding that your salvation is secure apart from anything you do or don't do skewed your thinking? Yes, you're free, but have you used that liberty in a way that's tripping others and disqualifying yourself? Use your liberty wisely, precious people. Keep your body under, for to be carnally-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded brings abundant life and perfect peace.

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**Jerry Bridges** - True holiness includes control over our physical bodies and appetites. If we are to pursue holiness we must recognize that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and that we are to glorify God with them.

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Michel Quoist, in his book *The Christian Response*, says, "If your body makes all the decisions and gives all the orders, and if you obey, the physical can effectively destroy every other dimension of your personality. Your emotional life will be blunted and your spiritual life will be stifled and ultimately will become anemic."

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Over 200 years ago Susannah Wesley wrote, "Whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind—that thing is sin to you."

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### Spiritual caution

Observe this was penned towards the close of the apostle's career. Full of years, and laden with trophies, he still thinks it necessary to keep war with the flesh. View him--

- I. As an aged man. There is no period in which the spiritual warrior may relax his training. Each season of life has its appropriate and dominant passion.
  - II. As an advanced Christian. Men may make great advances in religious knowledge, but be imperfect. Consider Paul's attainments in theology--yet still he struggles; he is still imperfect.
  - III. As an experienced minister. A minister may eloquently preach, and people be delighted to listen--to real blessings to which both he and they be strangers. Again, people may be converted, and yet their minister be a castaway. So parents, masters, teachers, may help others to Christ, yet never find Him themselves. Personal religion, including persevering conflict, essential to final salvation. (*Homilist*.)
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AN overweight woman, displeased with what she saw in the mirror, prayed, "Lord, why don't You take away my desire to eat?" But she heard this answer in her heart: "What would be left for you to do?" God doesn't make it easy for His children to develop character and overcome their weaknesses. He has so ordered the world that we must discipline ourselves in every area of life. To lose weight, we must discipline ourselves in matters of diet and exercise. If our goal is spiritual maturity, we achieve it through personal and corporate worship, fellowship with other believers, Bible reading and meditation, obedience, prayer, and worthwhile conversation and behavior. A young boy asked me to pray for him because he habitually failed to get his homework done. Bobby spent most of every evening eating junk food and watching television. I refused to pray with him because prayer alone wouldn't solve his problem. He needed self-discipline. I suggested, "Ask God to help you and then start disciplining yourself." Paul compared the Christian's life to that of an athlete who trains hard to win a prize. The coach tells the athlete what to do, but the athlete has to get out there and do it. Likewise, we must depend on God for His help, but we must also do our part—the difficult part of self-discipline.

—H V L

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**Utley** - This term "**disqualified**" is a metaphor related to breaking the rules of the athletic games and thereby being unable to win the contest (cf. 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7). It is from the root "to test" with a view toward approval (*dokimazōi*), but with the ALPHA PRIVATIVE, which negates it (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5). **This does not refer to Paul's salvation** (although it is used in this sense in 2 Ti 3:8), even though the previous paragraph seems to (cf. 1 Cor 9:19–23). This would violate too many other doctrinal passages by Paul, especially in Romans and Galatians. He is discussing in this paragraph his fear of being undisciplined and being rejected as a proclaimer of the gospel. The NT records several who were disqualified (cf. 1 Cor. 15:12; 1 Ti 1:20; 2 Ti 4:10). Paul wanted

evangelistic fruit from converts and churches. The training of young men for Greek games is mentioned in (1) *Ars Poetica*, 412 and (2) *Ad Martyres*, 3. It entailed ten months of strenuous physical, dietary, and social restrictions and regimens.

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### **F B Meyer - 1 Corinthians 9:27 Let I myself should be a castaway.**

Is it for one moment to be supposed that Paul really feared being cast away from the love and presence of God into the outer darkness with its weeping and gnashing of teeth? Surely not! Had he not said unmistakably that nothing could avail to separate him from the love of God which was in Jesus Christ! No, it is impossible to think such a thing. He knew too well that none of Christ's members can be amputated; none of his sheep perish.

The soul that to Jesus has fled for repose,  
He will not, He cannot, desert to its foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to take,  
He'll never — no, never — no, never forsake."

But when the apostle speaks of being a castaway, he means that he feared lest, after having proclaimed the rules of the contest to others, he should himself fail shamefully of the prize. And what was that prize? Certainly not forgiveness, nor eternal life; because these are not procured by any efforts of our own. These are not the prizes of agility or strength, but the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. What, then, is the prize? The context reveals it. It is surely the guerdon of winning souls; the blessed joy and crown of bringing to Jesus those who had otherwise never known Him.

But we may fall short of this. We may set others to do what we fail to do. We may appear before Christ with handfuls of withered leaves. We may yet be rejected. Esau missed the crown of his birthright; Moses the Promised Land; Saul the founding of a line of kings. We may miss utterly and irretrievably. God help us to watch and pray, and bring the body into subjection!

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### **Vance Havner - LEST I MYSELF BE A CASTAWAY**

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. 1 Corinthians 9:27.

Paul lived by rigid discipline, took no chances, was not shadowboxing but running the race in dead earnest, lest he be disapproved. God's servant is never safe from falling until he gets home. He gives God the benefit of every doubt, follows the rule "When in doubt, don't!" He denies himself things that may not be evil but may make it easier to sin. He makes no provision for the flesh and avoids what might not be dangerous for others but holds a built-in snare for him. A workman approved unto God, not a castaway disapproved!

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### **1 Cor. 9:27 A CASTAWAY- F B Meyer**

I invite your attention to a few words found in 1 Cor. 9:27: "Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Paul was too eager and too practical a man to dally with a bogy dread. Since then he intimates that it was his daily fear lest, after having preached to others, he might himself be a castaway, I suppose that there were but few hours in his life when this dread did not haunt him. After he had founded so many churches, written so many epistles, and exercised so wide, spread an influence, in his quiet moments he was perpetually face to face with this awful nightmare, that the day might come when he would be a castaway; and the thought drove him almost to madness. When he was traveling over the blue Aegean, when he was sitting making his tents, when he was engaged in dictating his epistles, the thought would come back and back upon his heart: "I may yet be a castaway."

Have you ever feared this? I am not sure that a man ever reaches his highest development without something of the element of fear, and I ask you now if in your life you know something of this haunting dread? May I confess to you that it has become a great dread of my own? and if many days pass, and no one writes to tell me of help derived from my ministry, and no one comes to join our church, and no one seems to be influenced by my life or word, I sit myself down and say:

"Good God, has the time come at last to me when for some reason I, too, am to be a castaway?"

And reverently, humbly, but most searchingly, I ask you, my hearer, whether it may not be possible that this very moment you are already a castaway.

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**Rod Mattoon - The word "castaway"** brings us to some important questions, "What causes a believer to be disqualified in his service or his race for Christ? Why would a Christian not be fit for service?"

## \* **Reasons for Disqualification**

### **1. The person is not qualified at all**

The Bible says we must be born again. If you are going to do the work of the Lord, then you must know the Lord of the work.

### **2. Not abiding in Jesus Christ**

It is difficult to serve the Lord when your heart is far from Him. D.L. Moody said, "God uses the man that is close to Him."

\* John 15:4 — Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

\* Matthew 15:8 — This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

### **3. Deficiency in spiritual maturity**

\* 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 — And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. 3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?.

### **4. The lack of training or preparation to serve**

God commands us to be prepared and to do our best to serve Him.

\* 2 Timothy 2:15 — Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

\* 1 Peter 3:15 — But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Lord Joseph Duveen, American head of the art firm that bore his name, planned in 1915 to send one of his experts to England to examine some ancient pottery. He booked passage on the ship Lusitania. Then the German Embassy issued a warning that the ocean liner might be torpedoed. Duveen wanted to call off the trip. "I can't take the risk of you being killed," he said to his young employee. "Don't worry," said the man, "I'm a strong swimmer, and when I read what was happening in the Atlantic, I began hardening myself by spending time every day in a tub of ice water. At first I could sit only a few minutes, but this morning, I stayed in that tub nearly two hours." Naturally, Duveen laughed. It sounded preposterous, but his expert sailed, and the Lusitania was torpedoed. The young man was rescued after nearly five hours in the chilly ocean, still in excellent condition.

Just as this young man, so Christians should condition themselves by practicing devotional discipline, behavioral discipline, and discipline in doing good. This is what Paul did in his own life. He disciplined and prepared himself to do what was right.

### **5. Poor spiritual or physical health can hinder your service**

\* 1 Corinthians 11:28-30 — ... But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

### **6. Being spiritually unclean disqualifies a person from service**

\* Psalm 66:18 — If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

\* Isaiah 59:2 — But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

### **7. A lack of interest in serving the Lord**

\* 2 Timothy 4:10 — For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

\* Revelation 2:4 — Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

\* 1 Timothy 5:15 — For some are already turned aside after Satan.

If you do something because no one else will do it, it's a job. If you are doing something to serve the Lord, it's a ministry. If you do just enough to get by, it's a job. If you do a task to the best of your ability, it's a ministry. If you quit a task because someone criticized you, it was a job. If you continue to serve, though opposed, it's a ministry. If you give up because no one praised you, it was a job. If you do the work because it needs to be done, it's a ministry. It's hard to get excited about a job. It is almost impossible not to get excited about a ministry.

Average churches are filled with many people, doing many jobs. Great churches are filled with many people who are involved in ministry. If your concern is just success, it's a job. If your concern is faithfulness to God, it's a ministry. People may say, "Well done," when you do your job. The Lord will say, "Well done," when you complete your ministry. Run your race and be a champion for Christ.

## **8. People do not serve when they are not present for service**

\* Hebrews 10:25 — Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Dawson Trotman said, "Don't be so busy in the kingdom that you don't have time for the King." Many folks today are so busy, that the Lord is crowded out of their schedules. Many opportunities of service are lost because Christians are not faithful in church.

## **9. Spiritual handicaps hinder people from serving**

\* 2 Timothy 2:4 — No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

Are there weights or entanglements in your life that are keeping you from serving Christ? God wants us to make up our minds and serve Him. There are three types of Christians who respond to the call of service:

1. Rowboat Christians — they have to be pushed wherever they go.
2. Sailboat Christians — they always go with the wind.
3. Steamboat Christians — they make up their minds where they ought to go and go there regardless of wind or weather.

## **\* Avoiding Spiritual Disqualification**

How do we avoid spiritual disqualification? How do we prevent the disruption of our race for Christ?.

### **1. A Single Master** (play and ponder Craig Smith's [Single Heart](#)).

Have one master, and make sure your master is the Lord. Yield to His Spirit each day.

\* Matthew 6:24 — No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

### **2. Superior Love for Christ**

Have a greater love for the Lord than this world.

\* 1 John 2:15 — Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

### **3. Spiritual Goals**

\* Philippians 3:14 — I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

### **4. Shun any Sin or Hindrances to Spiritual Growth**

\* Hebrews 12:1 — Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

### **5. The Scriptures need to be Obeyed**

\* 1 Peter 2:2 — As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:.

### **6. Self Denial needs to be Exercised**

\* 1 Corinthians 9:27—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.

If you are going to be a champion for Christ, then "self must be conquered and kept in check." The conflict between your will and God's will is a constant battle that you will face continually. If it is your desire to be used of God, then you need to learn to deny yourself. To deny oneself not only means in every moment of life to say "No" to self, but also "Yes" to God. To deny oneself means to dethrone self and to enthrone the Lord Jesus Christ as the master of your life.

The word "Kamikaze" is the Japanese word for "divine wind." Divine was the wind in the year 1281. Never was a typhoon more God-sent, if one were Japanese. The typhoon crushed the invasion fleet mounted by the ambitious Mongol emperor Kublai Khan (Marco Poli Kublai) in the wake of his conquest of China's Sung dynasty.

To take the wind out of the sails of the United States naval juggernauts, the retreating Japanese organized their own kamikaze in World War II....a suicide air force. Japanese pilots slammed their bomb-laden planes and themselves into American ships in the Pacific Ocean. Twelve hundred pilots killed themselves taking out thirty-four U.S. ships.

Today, we need "Christian Kamikazes" who will take the faith anywhere the "divine wind" blows regardless of the cost. It was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a pastor who was imprisoned by Adolph Hitler who said, "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die."



This is what eventually happened to him as he died for Christ in Germany.

\* Matthew 16:24 — Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

When Jesus used this picture of His followers taking up their crosses to follow Him, the disciples knew what He meant. Crucifixion was a common Roman method of execution, and condemned criminals had to carry their crosses through the streets to the execution site. Following Jesus, therefore, meant sacrifice, true commitment, the risk of death, and no turning back. Taking up the cross meant that death was imminent for the cross-bearer.

We are to live our lives for Christ each day as if it were our last. You never know, do you? Let me ask, "If this was your last day to live, what did you do with your life? Did you make it count for the Lord or have you wasted and thrown away your opportunities to serve Him?"

\* James 4:14 — Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

May we all accept Paul's challenge to be a champion for Christ. As preachers, may we be champions in the pulpit and conduct our church services in such a way that if Christ was sitting our pews, He would be blessed and enjoy our messages because He was honored and glorified and His Word was unashamedly proclaimed. Be a champion for Christ!

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Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.      2 Timothy 2:15

In Paul's exhortation, "Study to show thyself approved unto God," he encourages us to avoid the very thing he feared might happen to him personally; namely, that he might be set aside and no longer used in the Lord's service. He says in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "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." This word is a translation of the same Greek root rendered "approved" in 2 Timothy 2:15, only in 1 Corinthians 9:27 it appears in a negative form and means "disapproved." When the apostle speaks of his dread of being a "castaway," he is really thinking of the shame of being a "disapproved" one, not of being lost again. His fear is that he might not receive approval as a workman. He has service in mind, not salvation!

**I have been told that a huge block of stone lies in a Syrian quarry near Baalbek. It has been carefully cut, hewed, and squared. Sixty-eight feet long, fourteen feet high, and fourteen feet wide, its size is overwhelming. And yet, in spite of all the labor and effort which went into this gigantic piece of rock, there it stands. It was never fitted into that place in the temple for which it was intended! This massive stone seems to lift a voice of warning, repeating the words of the apostle, "lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."**

May we be faithful in our devotional life, obedient to the will of God, and zealous in our service for Him. In so doing, we will stand "approved"!

I want among the victor throng  
Someday to have my name confessed;  
And hear my Master say at last,  
"You stand approved, you did your best!"  
—Simpson

Serving the Lord is much like riding a bicycle—  
either you keep moving forward, or you fall down.

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**THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PAUL'S ATHLETIC ALLUSIONS** Jerry M. Hullinger (excerpt from his article = <https://www.galaxie.com/article/bsac161-643-07>) - In addition to the Olympic games many other athletic contests were spawned. Pápalas noted that "the Isthmian, Pythian, Nemean, Panathenaean and many lesser athletic festivals were established. Greeks who had not been able to afford trips to Olympia could now see first rate athletics in the vicinity of their own polis"...The games themselves were one of the great festivals of the ancient world and ranked only below the Olympic games in magnitude. "Corinth played host to the athletes and visitors at the Isthmian Games celebrated every other year. Next to the Olympic Games, which were held every four years, the celebrations at the Isthmia were the most splendid and best attended of all the national festivals of Greece. Preparation for these events occupied the attention of the citizens several months in advance, and when the throngs arrived to view the contests in the Isthmian stadium, the vendors and entertainers from Corinth were on hand to reap profit from the occasion." This festival drew thousands of people, both as competitors and spectators, from all over the empire. And the greater

athletes were honored in Isthmia by monuments, statues, and inscriptions. The glory of this spectacle is further illustrated by the sanctuary dedicated to Poseidon at Isthmia. In his guidebook to Greece Pausanias noted that the Isthmus belongs to Poseidon. In addition he wrote, "Worth seeing here are a theatre and a white marble stadium. Within the sanctuary of the god stand on the one side **portrait statues of athletes who have won victories at the Isthmian games**, on the other side pine trees growing in a row, the greater number of them arising up straight." The games consisted of foot races, horse races, chariot contests, jumping, wrestling, boxing, and throwing of the discus and javelin. Dio Chrysostom of Prusa, who was almost a contemporary of Paul, described a visit to the Isthmian Games. "When the time came for the Isthmian Games . . . all were at the Isthmus . . . And at that time it was that you could hear in the arena around the Temple of Poseidon any number of luckless sophists shouting and abusing each other, and their notorious students wrangling among themselves, and many authors reciting their silly compositions, poets declaiming their verses to the applause of their colleagues, magicians showing off their marvels, soothsayers interpreting omens, tens of thousands of lawyers twisting lawsuits, and no small number of hucksters peddling whatever goods each one happened to have for sale."<sup>10</sup> In light of the popularity and splendor of these games, it is no wonder that Paul used an abundance of athletic metaphors in his writings. They no doubt had a tremendous impact on his readers.<sup>11</sup> In fact Paul probably was in Corinth when the games of A.D. 49 or 51 were held. As Murphy-O'Connor suggests, "It can hardly be coincidence that Paul's first sustained development of this theme [athletics] occurs in a letter to the Corinthians."<sup>12</sup> A further reason that lends weight to the idea that Paul attended these games is his profession as a tentmaker.<sup>13</sup> Livy suggested that the games at Corinth were popular because of the geographical setting of the city. Because the Isthmus had the resources of two seas, it was a natural meeting place for many people.<sup>14</sup> Thus a ripe opportunity was in place for Paul. Every two years the city would host a multitude of people including athletes, delegates, visitors, and merchants. Paul could meet with the Jews in the synagogue on the Sabbath and come in contact with foreigners through his business as tentmaker. "At such occasions large numbers of tents would be needed to provide shelter for the crowds of visitors. . . . In April, or early May, when the Isthmian Games were held, the air is chilly enough to require shelter; and frequent showers and violent gusts of wind that buffet the Isthmian region make such shelter imperative. Paul and his companions would find plenty of customers."

#### **THE SPECIFIC ATHLETIC ALLUSIONS MADE BY PAUL THE FOOT RACE**

Paul referred to the foot race more often than the other athletic events (1 Cor. 9:24; Gal. 2:2; Phil. 2:16; 2 Tim. 4:7). The word used by Paul in this regard is τρέχω. In classical Greek this word meant to move quickly, to run, especially at a contest in the stadium.<sup>18</sup> In the Septuagint it meant to run (Gen. 18:7; 1 Kings 18:46), and in a figurative sense it was used of following the commandments of God (Ps. 119:32), or running into lies (61:4), or being immoral in the sense of "running in the way of immorality" (4 Mace. 14:5). In the New Testament τρέχω was used in a literal sense of Peter running to the empty tomb (Luke 24:12), and in the figurative sense of the Christian life being directed toward a goal (Phil. 3:14). The races took place in an enclosure of about six hundred feet in length called a στάδιον. Three kinds of races were held in these enclosures. "In the stade-race the competitors had to run a single length of the stadium, a distance of 192.28 meters. In the diaulos, which was the middle distance event at the ancient Olympics, they ran twice the length of the stadium, once in each direction, which means that they covered 384.56 meters. In the long-distance event, i.e., the dolichos, they had to run twenty-four lengths of the stadium, a total distance of 4614.72 meters."<sup>20</sup> Considering the stamina required by the long-distance event, it is probable that this is the running event Paul referred to in his epistles when he likened the Christian life to a race that comprises one's entire earthly life.<sup>21</sup> Paul told the Philippians to "press on toward the goal" (Phil. 3:14). The Greek word for goal is σκοπός which is most likely a reference to the square pillars located at each end of the track on which the runner could fix his eyes in order to run accurately as well as have something to encourage him. <sup>2 2</sup> Gardiner explained that "it is obvious that in a straight two hundred yards race the runner must have some point to fix his eye on if he is to run straight, and a post with a distinguishing mark would have been of great value as a guide."<sup>23</sup> The question has been raised as to how all the runners would be able to turn around one post at the end of the track and run back. This could have caused bumping, colliding, and foul play.<sup>24</sup> A possible solution to this problem has been suggested by Gardiner. "In the crowding at the turn a runner might easily lose three or four yards, a matter of vital importance for this distance, but of less importance in a three-mile race where the runners spread out rapidly... We may probably conclude then, that in the 'diaulos' each runner raced to and turned round his own post."<sup>25</sup>

#### **THE SERIOUS NATURE OF ATHLETICS**

Athletics in the Greco-Roman world were approached with great vigor and passion. This fact helps explain why Paul applied this imagery to the Christian life. In sporting events the goal of the athletes was not merely to take part but to win. To lose, in many cases, was a disgrace.<sup>26</sup> Pindar, a Greek poet of the fifth century B.C., noted that "the athlete delights in the toil and the cost."<sup>27</sup> And Philo wrote, "I know wrestlers and pankratiasts often persevere out of love for honor and zeal for victory to the point of death, when their bodies are giving up and they keep drawing breath and struggling on spirit alone, a spirit which they have accustomed to reject fear scornfully. . . . Among these competitors, death for the sake of an olive or celery crown is glorious."<sup>28</sup> The Stoic philosopher Epictetus (ca. A.D. 45-135) noted the same common belief. "In the Olympic Games you cannot just be beaten and then depart, but first of all, you will be disgraced not only before the people of Athens or Sparta or N<sup>o</sup>kopolis but before the whole world. In the second place, if you withdraw without sufficient reason you will be whipped. And this whipping comes after your training which

involves thirst and broiling heat and swallowing handfuls of sand."The word Paul used to depict this spirit is ἀγωνίζομαι (1 Cor. 9:25), which referred to an athletic contest ("engaging in a contest") or to any struggle.<sup>30</sup> In classical Greek the noun ἄγων was used in a number of ways: (a) a gathering, (b) a gathering place of the gods on Mount Olympus, (c) the "gathering" of ships in a harbor, and (d) a fight.<sup>31</sup> In the Apocrypha ἄγων occurred primarily in this fourth sense. <sup>32</sup> Paul's use of the word with athletic overtones could refer to an "expression of the contestants' manly discipline."<sup>33</sup> Stauffer described the force of this word in this way: "First is the thought of the goal which can be reached only with the full expenditure of all our energies . . . a passionate struggle, a constantly renewed concentration of forces on the attainment of the goal. . . . The struggle for the reward [demands] not only full exertion but also rigid denial. The final assault is so exacting that all forces must be reserved, assembled, and deployed in it. The final goal is so high and glorious that all provisional ends must fade before it. . . . If a man is not ready to set aside his egotistic needs and desires and claims and reservations, he is not fit for the arena."<sup>34</sup>

## THE CROWN

Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 9:25 that the reason he exerted himself in his ministry was so that he would obtain an incorruptible crown (στέφανος; cf. 2 Tim. 2:5; 4:8). In classical usage στέφανος originally referred to anything that encircled something else, such as a besieging army or the wall around a city. The usual meaning in secular Greek was a crown or wreath won at various athletic contests.<sup>35</sup> In the Septuagint the word στέφανος was used of a royal crown (2 Sam. 12:30) and of a festal ornament (Prov. 1:9; 4:9; Song 3:11; Isa. 28:1). In the New Testament the word occurs eighteen times (eight of which are in Revelation) and often refers to the prize of the athletic victor as a metaphor for the eternal reward of the faithful (1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Ti 2:5; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 3:11; 4:4,10). Because of this metaphor which stresses the crown of victory, some have distinguished between στέφανοι and διάδημα. As Trench wrote, "We must not confuse these words because our English word 'crown' stands for them both. I greatly doubt whether anywhere in Classical literature . . . στέφανοι is used of the kingly or imperial crown. . . . In the New Testament it is plain that the . . . στέφανοι whereof Paul speaks is always the conqueror's and not the king's."<sup>36</sup> While the words of Trench seem justified, Moulton and Milligan warned that though στέφανοι denoted a crown of victory, "it should be noted that the distinction between στέφανοι, crown of victory, and διάδημα, crown of royalty, must not be pressed too far as by Trench, for στέφανοι is not infrequently used in the latter sense."<sup>37</sup> The prize (βραβειον) Paul referred to in 1 Corinthians 9:24 and Philippians 3:14 was the crown of victory. Ringwald noted that the prizes given to winners in sporting events included crowns, money, oil, barley, and certain rights throughout the victor's home city.<sup>38</sup> Paul's references to the believer's prize seem to be related to conflict in the spiritual life, a prize that can be won only if one throws himself and his resources entirely into the struggle.<sup>39</sup> The mythology of the crown. In light of the fact that pine was the most common tree in the Isthmus region, the victors of the games were crowned with wreaths made from the branches of these trees. However, this material was also associated with an ancient myth in which a famous monster Sinis made travel unsafe. This monster received the nickname "Pityokamptos" from his habit of inviting travelers to a pine-bending contest. After the two had forced a tree to the ground, Sinis told the traveler to hold it down, but when the monster let go of it, the tree would spring up and toss the traveler to his death.<sup>40</sup> Another myth connected with the pine crown was told by Plutarch. "The pine, and why it was used for the crown at the Isthmian games, was the subject of a discussion at a dinner given us in Corinth itself during the games by Lucianus, the chief priest. Praxiteles, the official guide, appealed to mythology, citing the legend that the body of Melicertes was found cast up by the sea at the foot of a pine."<sup>41</sup> The value of the crown. Because of the hardship athletes endured in order to win a crown that would wither in a short time, the question naturally arises as to whether it was worth the effort employed to win it. Does this not weaken Paul's analogy of the crown in relation to the Christian life? Why refer to a crown as a reward for the believer, if it is short-lived? The answer to these questions lies in the fact that it was not the crown itself that was desired, but rather what the crown represented, for the "stephanos to be won at Olympia had only ideal worth."<sup>42</sup> This ideal worth can be seen in the works of classical writers. For example Herodotus recorded the response to the question of a Persian as to what prize was offered at the various events of the games. "They told him of the crown of olive that was given to the victor. Then Tigranes son of Artabanus uttered a most noble saying . . . when he heard that the prize was not money but a crown, he could not hold his peace, but cried 'Zounds Mardonius,' what manner of men are these that you have brought us to fight withal? 'Tis not for money they contend but for glory of achievement!"<sup>43</sup> Dio Chrysostom also wrote of the honor of the crowns. "*For the pillar, the inscription, and being set up in bronze are regarded as a high honor by noble men, and they deem it a reward worthy of their virtue not to have their name destroyed along with their body and to be brought level with those who have never lived at all, but rather to leave an imprint and a token, so to speak, of their manly prowess. You see what hardships these athletic competitors endure while training, spending money, and finally often even choosing to die in the very midst of the games. Why is it? If we were to abolish the crown for the sake of which they strive, and the inscription which will commemorate their victory at the . . . games, do you think that they would endure for even one day the heat of the sun?*" Also the victors were viewed as having acquired divine status. At the Olympic games leaves of olive trees were cut with a golden sickle from the most sacred olive trees before they were handed to the victor. "The victors were placed on the same level as the gods and entered into communion with them. This bond was clearly demonstrated in the temple of Zeus in Olympia, for Phidias represented Zeus wearing a crown of wild olive. When the victors were honored they wore the same mark of distinction as the god: a wreath woven from the evergreen branches of a wild olive tree."<sup>45</sup> The ceremony of the crown. On the last day of the games the victors were crowned in an elaborate ceremony. In the morning the victors, judges, and members of

the various groups proceeded in a solemn parade to the temple of Zeus, which was observed by all of the spectators who were present at the games. At the temple the judge, wearing a purple robe, placed the crown on the victor's head. Made from a single branch, the wreath which signified magical associations, linked the victor with the god at the moment it was placed on his head. This "was one of the great moments of [the victor's] life—he felt not only the pride and joy of victory but also the sense of pious awe induced by a divine sacrament. Certainly this was the case for as long as the sacred games retained their religious character."<sup>46</sup> Possessing this crown signified spiritual, emotional, financial, and social benefits. Yet as Paul wrote, as grand as this earthly attainment was, it paled in significance when compared to the heavenly reward for the faithful believer (1 Cor. 9:25).

## BOXING

Paul referred to the sport of boxing when he wrote, "I box in such a way, as not beating the air" (1 Cor. 9:26). The phrase "not beating the air" could refer to a boxer who is unable to make contact with his blows or to the practice of shadowboxing, which was a favorite method of training in antiquity.<sup>47</sup> In view of his reference in this verse to not running without a goal in mind, Paul was probably envisioning himself engaged in landing effective blows during a match. Unlike a shadowboxer, Paul was involved in the actual boxing match and thus bore the marks of that contest in his body. "Paul insists that in his religious struggles he is a genuine fighter and does not act like a shadow boxer who punches the air: 'I bruise my body and bring it into subjugation.' In other words, he bears the scars of contest on his frame."<sup>48</sup> This idea is in keeping with the historical data, for boxing was considered the most injurious of all sports. Paul had witnessed boxers engaged in this violent (and sometimes deadly) sport as they strapped their knuckles with leather strips in order to make the blows more punishing. Such allusions to this sport would bring these thoughts readily to the Corinthians' minds.<sup>49</sup> "Many of the contestants left the stadium with broken teeth, swollen ears and squashed noses; many sustained serious injuries to their eyes, ears and even their skulls."<sup>50</sup> Part of the reason for this is that there were no rounds in Greek boxing. The opponents fought until they were both too exhausted to continue, and they stopped for a breather only by mutual consent. But if this did not happen, "usually the fight went on until one of the two was incapable of fighting any more, or acknowledged defeat by holding up his hand."<sup>51</sup> Lucilius related the following account of the disfigurement that could take place in a boxing match. "O Augustus, this man Olympikos, as he now appears, used to have nose, chin, forehead, ears, and eyelids. But then he enrolled in the guild of boxers, with the result that he did not receive his share of his inheritance in a will. For in the lawsuit about the will his brother shows the judge a portrait of Olympikos, who was judged to be an imposter, bearing no resemblance to his own picture."<sup>52</sup> Perhaps Paul's reference to boxing showed his earnestness in his apostolic ministry. He wrote that his ministry was characterized by self-discipline (v. 27), and striving (v. 25), and marks of being involved in the actual battle (v. 26) rather than just standing on the sidelines

## DISQUALIFICATION

2 Timothy 2:5. Paul stated that one "is not crowned except he strive lawfully" (KJV). Νομίμως ("lawfully") means "in accordance with the rules or law of athletes, compete according to the rules."<sup>62</sup> This word occurs only once in the Septuagint and as an adjective ("lawful ways of living," 2 Mace. 4: 11).<sup>63</sup> In the New Testament it is used only twice and as an adverb (1 Tim. 1:8; 2 Tim. 2:5). An athlete had to "strive lawfully" in two areas. **The first was training and the second was in the contest itself, before which the athlete would take an oath.** The first was illustrated by Epictetus. "Give me proof, whether you have striven lawfully, eaten what is prescribed, taken exercise, heeded your trainer."<sup>64</sup> Epictetus described this training process at length. "You say 'I want to win at Olympia.' Hold on a minute. Look at what is involved both before and after, and only then, if it is to your advantage, begin the task. If you do, you will have to obey instructions, eat according to the regulations, keep away from desserts, exercise on a fixed schedule at definite hours, in both heat and cold; you must not drink cold water nor can you have a drink of wine whenever you want. You must hand yourself over to your coach exactly as you would to a doctor."<sup>65</sup> **The second area of "striving lawfully" related to an oath that would be taken by the athletes before the games began.** In this oath the contestant would affirm that he had trained in the prescribed manner and would observe the rules of his event. At Olympia, for example, Philostratus related how the athletes, along with their fathers, brothers, and trainers would swear that they would commit no foul play and that they had trained faithfully. "If you have labored so hard as to be entitled to go to Olympia and have banished all sloth and cowardice from your lives, then march boldly on; but as for those who have not so trained themselves, let them depart whithersoever they like."<sup>66</sup> Concerning the oath, Conybeare added that the athletes had to swear that they had been in training for ten months and that then they would practice in the gymnasium before the games under the directions of the judges or umpires.<sup>67</sup> Drees described the oath-taking ceremony in this way: "The oath-taking ceremony was then performed . . . in front of the statue of Zeus. This statue, which was called 'Zeus God of Oaths,' was most awe-inspiring. It seems that the athletes, their fathers and brothers and also their trainers were required to swear over the entrails of a boar that they would not cheat at the Olympic Games. The athletes were then called upon to give a further oath to the effect that they had carefully prepared for the games over a period often months."<sup>68</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:27. **What were the consequences for an athlete not "striving lawfully" or "according to the rules."** What were the results if he broke training or broke the rules during the games? He would not receive a crown (2 Tim. 2:5). Or to put it another way he would be disqualified from winning the prize (1 Cor. 9:27). The word Paul used for being disqualified is ἀδόκιμοβ. The antonym (δόκιμοβ) refers to what is "valid, recognized, approved or accepted" (Rom. 14:18; 16:10; 1 Cor. 11:19; 2 Cor. 10:18). Conversely ἀδόκιμα refers to what is

worthless, rejected, or proved to be a sham.<sup>69</sup> The idea of disqualification is seen in three incidents recounted by Pausanias. In the first he described a case with Apollonius, an Egyptian boxer from Alexandria, who arrived late for the Olympiad in A.D. 107. He said he was late because adverse winds had delayed his ship. But Heraclides, another Alexandrian boxer, was able to disprove this story by proving that Apollonius had really gone to the Ionian games to win prize money. Because of this, Apollonius was disqualified and Heraclides was pronounced the winner.<sup>70</sup> Pausanias also told of a case in which an athlete was disqualified and his crown was awarded to his competitor even though the competitor was dead.<sup>71</sup> Also Cleomedes was disqualified by the judges, went mad, returned to Asypalaea, and attacked a school of about sixty children by pulling down a pillar that held up the roof.<sup>72</sup> **The interesting point in relation to Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians (and elsewhere) is that Paul considered it a real possibility that he could someday be refused a crown from the heavenly Judge.** Just as an athlete could be refused a reward in the athletic contests by not abiding by the rules, so some Christians will be refused rewards if they do not run the race of life according to God's rules. Thus it is imperative that believers in the Lord Jesus strive to lead godly lives as earnestly as the ancient athletes trained and exerted themselves in the games.

## **SUMMARY**

This investigation leads to two notable conclusions regarding the Christian life. First, the dedicated Christian life consists not in a passive "letting go and letting God." Instead it requires an earnest, consistent striving, fueled by the grace of God. Second, being disqualified from reward is a real possibility for every believer. Thus the child of God must be careful to strive according to the rules (2 Tim. 2:5) in order to receive rewards from the Lord.