

# 1 Corinthians 9 (Part 1): 1-23 • For the Sake of the Gospel

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1 Corinthians 9. In the first century church, there was a touchy issue, and it wasn't just limited to the people in Corinth. Paul talked about it when he wrote to the Romans as well. A touchy issue was whether or not it was right or wrong for Christians to eat meat from an animal that had been sacrificed to a pagan god. In other words, in an idol temple.

And some of the Christians believed it was very wrong and that you would be defiled if you ate that kind of meat. Other Christians had the knowledge to know that pagan gods are really no gods at all, and therefore, any meat that had been sacrificed to a pagan god, well it didn't affect the meat one iota, nor did it affect the believer when they ate it.

They were free because of their knowledge to go ahead and partake and eat of that meat, and they knew it wasn't going to be a problem. Frankly, the apostle Paul agreed with that second opinion. He had the knowledge also to know that pagan gods are no gods at all, and therefore to eat the meat, regardless of where it came from, wasn't going to be a problem.

But what Paul did have a problem with was those like himself who had the knowledge, flaunting that knowledge in front of those who did not yet have that knowledge, and thereby offending or causing to stumble those individuals who believed that it was wrong. Paul considered that to be uncaring and unloving and that's, obviously, just isolated to the Corinthian church, we never struggle with being unloving today or uncaring in any way.

I was just wondering to see what you thought about that. Some people are like, Yeah. Actually, we still struggle with this greatly, don't we? This message in this area of First Corinthians is still very pertinent to where we live. Paul, after talking about this, ended the last chapter with this statement: If food makes my brother stumble, I won't do it, I won't eat it.

And that was his conclusion, and that was a challenge to you and I, that if there's something that we're doing or have the freedom to do that is causing your brother or sister in Christ to stumble or to be offended, then he said, I'm

not going to do it. I will willingly set aside or lay aside my rights for them. I just won't do it. Now, please understand, if you've been following along with this study up to this point, don't think that just because you understand what Paul is saying in these chapters that you're necessarily ready to apply it. And the reason I say that is a little bit of a warning is because I have watched Christians over the years give a verbal acknowledgment to what Paul is saying here.

Oh yeah, so if my brother or sister is offended or potentially stumbled by something that I'm doing as a believer then I won't do it. Okay, I get that. I get it. And then it comes time to do it, and they're not willing, and they're like, pfft, forget that. I have rights. This is my right. I'm doing what I want. And then if we call them on it, or if we say, hey what you're doing in the expression of your freedom might not be taken very well by some people in the body of Christ who just don't understand.

They're like, pfft, that's their problem. They're just going to have to get over it. Time to grow up, you guys, sort of an attitude, rather than what Paul is saying here. When he says, listen, if eating meat causes my brother to have a problem, I won't do it. I won't eat it. At least around him. I mean, obviously if you do it in the privacy of your own home and nobody knows about it, who cares, right?

If it's a matter of freedom. Now again, we're not talking about anything immoral, unbiblical, illegal. We're talking about things that are kind of like those gray areas, those areas where the Bible doesn't address it in the Bible. You know, there was no condemnation in the Bible about the issue of eating meat that had been dedicated to an idol. There was nothing there, and yet some of the believers took it upon themselves to say that's wrong, whereas the other believers said, no, it's not wrong.

So now what are you going to do? Paul says, well, there's way more to this issue than just right and wrong as it relates to the meat, there's the issue of do you care? Do you care about your brother? And are you willing, therefore, to lay down your rights? Are you willing to do that? Don't think that you are. Don't assume that you are because I have watched over the years, as mature Christians face this issue of somebody having a problem with something they were doing, they just immediately just got all up in arms about it.

And they were like, forget that. It happens. This is, let me just say, this is a message for the mature. This is not a message, even mature believers are going to sometimes have a hard time with this.

Paul starts off in verse 1, he starts with 4 rhetorical questions. *“Am I not free? (He says) Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my workmanship in the Lord?” (ESV)*

And obviously the response to all of those is yes, Paul was free. Yes, Paul was an apostle. Yes, Paul had seen the Lord Jesus both on the road to Damascus when the Lord appeared to him in glory, and also, he'd been taken up to what he called the third heaven, heard inexpressible things. Paul talks about it in 2 Corinthians, and yes, the Corinthians were part of his apostolic workmanship.

And he's saying all these things to say, because I am an apostle, I have certain rights that are mine, that are afforded me as an apostle. As a Christian you have certain rights that are afforded you. Rights to do things and you're free to do those things. Paul's saying that's me too. I've got rights. He says in verse 2 he says,

*“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. <sup>3</sup> This is my defense to those who would examine me. <sup>4</sup> Do we not have the right to eat and drink?”*

He's talking about the right to eat and drink anything that he might otherwise want, because there are some people that say you can't eat that for whatever religious reasons. Some of you guys were raised in church situations where during certain times of the year you didn't eat certain things. You didn't eat meat or certain kinds of meat or something, and there's nothing in the Bible that says, don't do that. That's just the traditions of men. That's all.

And Paul knew enough, and I trust that you know enough now to know that you have the right to eat and drink what you want, even though there are some people that say you can't do that. One of the – drinking, drinking - a big bugaboo in the church for a long time. Thou shalt not drink. It's not in the Bible. Now, let me just say here that there are people who should never drink. Right? Like ever! Don't even go there, but that's because of their personal weakness.

Not because the Bible says, don't do it. Now the Bible says, don't be drunk. The Bible expressly condemns drunkenness, but you cannot make a case to say that the Bible says no alcohol ever. You just can't do it, you see, and Paul knew that. And so he was like: Hey, are we not free to eat and drink what we want? Of course we are. So are you. Now like I said, some of you shouldn't do it. Some of you can, and you can remain in control.

But you need to know something. There are some people in the body of Christ who look down on that and they think it's wrong for you to do it. Even if you are in control. Even if you've never, ever once lost control because of drinking, ever in your life, there are people, Christians, who believe that for you to take a single drink of alcohol, that is wrong with a capital W, right? You know that, right? Some of you might even be sitting here. Question is, what are you going to do now about it, those of you who have that freedom?

What are you going to do about that, brother or sister who thinks it's wrong? See this does apply to today, doesn't it? It does apply to what you put on your Facebook page. It does apply. Because, as Christians, we have to care. We can't get around not caring about what other people think, about what other believers think. And the sphere of influence today is much greater than it was in Paul's day. You had to physically be with Christians to influence their lives, good or bad back in his day. You don't anymore.

You've just got to be friends online, and they can see into your life. They can see into your living room, into your dining room. They can see what you do, what you watch, what you drink, what you eat. Am I telling you, you have to tie yourself up in knots? No, but you've got to care. You can't live your life in a bubble and just say, I don't care. Even in Paul's day, there were people that had a problem. He says, listen, don't we have the right to eat and drink, what, whatever we want? Of course we do. And then he goes on to say, verse 5,

*"Do we not (don't we) have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord (And that would be referring to Jude and James. He's talking about the sons of Joseph and Mary, half-brothers of Jesus) and (then also) Cephas? (Who is Peter)."*

He says, and he's giving us an insight that we wouldn't have known otherwise. Apparently, the brothers of the Lord, Peter and some of the other apostles, went around visiting some of those churches, and when they came to those churches, they expected and received from the churches hospitality, even for their wives. And you say, even for their wives. It was an expensive thing to offer hospitality back in those days.

It was a very costly thing, and for you to go to an area and have them take care of you was a costly endeavor, and they brought their wives along, which isn't a bad idea. I like traveling with my wife, always. She travels a lot without me, but that's, in fact she's, she was up this whole weekend doing a retreat in Cascade for Calvary Chapel, Nampa, or excuse me, Calvary Chapel Meridian.

And so yeah, she gets invited to do retreats all the time. I don't. That's cool. I'm fine with that, really, truly I'm not making a joke. Not really. But I liked the idea of taking my wife along with me and some of the guys did it back then and they expected to be taken care of when they did, and Paul says, don't we have that right too? Or he asked, is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?

You've got to understand. See, when Paul went to a town to minister the Gospel. First thing he did when he got there is he got a job. He started working. He was a tent maker by trade, you see. He would go to the, I assume the local tent maker, and probably just say, hey, I'm here for a while. Can I help you, and I'll pay my own way, but just, yeah, I'm here to help. I'm here to work.

And once the church got started, once the believers began to gather and they began to start a church, do you know what Paul would do then? He'd keep working. He kept working, even when there was a body of people that could have taken care of it, somebody could have done that. They could have paid his expenses or taken care of his meals or whatever. He didn't let them, and that was his choice.

But apparently there were some people in the Corinthian church who saw that Paul never took hospitality from the church, and they assumed that maybe that meant that he didn't deserve it. Maybe Paul doesn't deserve to be taken care of. When Peter comes, he just comes and we take care of him, even when he brings his little lady. But Paul, he never, Paul never asks for any support. Maybe that means he doesn't deserve any. Yeah, maybe that's it.

Paul writes this letter and goes, oh, I deserve it. I deserve it. I'm an apostle, just like they are. Have I not seen the Lord just like they did? Yeah. Haven't I been called as an apostle just like they were? Yeah. Am I not a free man? Yes. Did I not come and bring the Gospel to you? I mean, you are my workmanship. Says, yeah, you know. Now he goes on to use some examples. Starts with a military example. Verse 7.

*“Who serves as a soldier at his own expense?”*

Can you imagine? You get drafted into the army and then you've got to pay your way. You've got to pay for your meals. You've got to pay for all your equipment. You've got to pay. You don't just get that helmet. You've got to pay for it. Can you imagine? You get taken to bootcamp and they charge you? Wouldn't that be a weird system? And no, it's never done that.

They didn't even do it back in Paul's day. When you got brought into the army, you got given those things. They took care of you, but he's making the connection, if a soldier's in the army, the army takes care of him. It's just the way it goes. He uses, and then another example from agriculture and farming, he says in verse 7,

*“Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?”*

Gee, when you're a farmer, you plant a crop in the hopes of being able to benefit from it even if you don't. Now back in those days, if they planted a crop, they ate from that crop. Today, we have farmers who plant crops, and they never ever eat from it. They might, but they sell it. They still benefit from it.

They sell it to whoever, grain, soybeans, barley, whatever the thing there's growing, they benefit from it, even if none of it actually ends up on their table to feed their family. That's what Paul is saying. Good grief, who plants a crop and thinks, oh, this is fun. I'm going to invest in this and get nothing out of it. He says in verse 8,

*“Do I say these things on (just) human authority? (Now he's going to quote the law. He says) Does not the Law say the same? <sup>9</sup> For it is written in the Law of Moses, (He's going to quote Deuteronomy 25 here) “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.”*

And then he asks this, is it just oxen that God cares about? Is that all he's concerned about? He says, no, he certainly speaks this for our sake, verse 10, in fact he says,

*“...It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher (should) thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.”*

You go out and you work, and you expect to get paid for it. There's a natural sort of a compensation element involved in there. We all understand it. None of you go to work expecting nothing in return. He's simply making a point. Verse 11. Here's the question.

*“If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?”*

Notice how Paul goes back to use the example of agriculture but uses it now in a spiritual sense to say, if we have sown spiritually among you, is it too much to

ask that we reap a material sort of a harvest from the church? And so, what he's saying here in these, in this verse is that it's very proper that the Lord's servant, who gives themselves to the ministry of the work of the kingdom, should be supported by the church. And then he asks this question, verse 12, look with me there,

*“If others share this claim (or this) rightful claim (he calls it) on you, do we not even more?”*

Don't we deserve this? He says, we planted the church there, you guys wouldn't be Christians if it wasn't for me. If you give this support to other people shouldn't we deserve it even more? Well, and again, the answer is yes. Does this sound like a support letter to you? It does, doesn't it? Have you ever received those support letters? Somebody decides they're going to go somewhere and serve the Lord somewhere for maybe a period of time and so they send out a letter to everybody they know, and they tell them what's going on.

And you know when you get one of these, you can tell by the very first sentence that, okay they're going to hit me up for money. I get this, they're going somewhere, and they have to raise the funds to be able to go. Some of you may have done it just that way, and you can smell it a mile off. It sounds kind of like that's what Paul's doing here. I mean, he's giving them all the reasons why he deserves their support, and it sounds like he's coming to a place in this letter where he's going to say, so where is it? But he's not going to do that. In fact, he's setting this thing up for an exactly opposite reason than that. But he's going to make another point from another example. Verse 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?”*

He's talking about, even in the kingdom of Israel, under the temple, when people brought sacrifices to the temple, who gets the leftover meat? The priest! God put that into the Law. He said, alright, when you sacrifice an animal, some of the meat is burned up on the altar. Potentially some of it goes to the worshipper, particularly if it's a fellowship offering, and then the rest goes to the priest for them and their family. So that was God's provision for the priesthood, for those who served in the priesthood.

They get some of the meat from the sacrifice. Cool, huh? Works. Paul says, yeah, even God established this in the Law. Now look at this conclusion in verse 14.

*“In the same way, the Lord commanded (commanded is a strong word, but it says the Lord commanded) that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.”*

Wow, that's strong. And by the way, that command is for the body of Christ. It's not for the recipient. It's for the body. God has commanded that those who are part of the body take care of those who are spending all of their time proclaiming the Gospel and doing the work of the ministry. All right. Still sounds like a support letter, doesn't it?

I mean, he's laying it on thick. Listen, you guys, not only should you be, not only do I deserve your support, God commands it, right? And He's just laying this, He's laying this thick on the line. He has commanded you to give and to support those who do the work of the ministry. I mean, you can just see people reaching for their checkbook, right? Yeah, well, Paul's about to lower the boom. We better dig deep, as they say, right? Cause Paul's going to lay it on us here.

Now, please understand. When he says that God has commanded this support of church leadership, obviously that assumes that the church has the ability to support those full-time servants. There are many times when churches are very small, when they can't afford to support a pastor or anyone else for that matter, and so the pastor goes out and gets a job and he works what we call a secular position or he's tent making like Paul did.

He works that job to be able to pay his bills, support his family, and then gives his time to the work of the ministry. You guys do know, don't you, that of all the pastors, let's just take the pastors in the United States of America. You do know, don't you, the vast majority of them work outside the church. You do know that. You do know that we're even a rarity here. I mean, the average church in the United States of America is less than a hundred people.

You just hear about the mega churches and the bigger churches and that sort of thing, but that's not the rule at all. Most churches are pretty small and the guys who serve there, and the women for that matter as well, serve at their own expense. That's the majority of people, the majority of servants. Paul goes on to make his major point here. You guys thought maybe this was going to be a support letter. Look what he says in verse 15,

*“But I have made no use of any of these rights, (This support is a right of mine to get it. He says, but I've made no use of any of this. Look what he says) 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.”*



After all this, establishing the fact that I have a right and you have a commandment to do it, he goes, but I'm not writing a support letter to you. In fact, I would rather die than receive support from you guys because if that happened, you would be taking away my reason to boast. What is his reason to boast or what is his boasting in? That the Gospel is for free. That's it right there.

The Gospel is for free, and there were people that came along, and they just expected the Corinthians to give them money and support them while they were there. And Paul, just determined in his heart, in his ministry, he was going to ask for nothing. Why? Because he wanted to take away that excuse. That excuse that some people have. They just want my money.

Have you ever had someone say that to you like when you invite them to church or something like that. Oh, I'm not going to go to church. Oh, there is always asking for money. And you know what? There's some truth to that. There's some truth to that. There have been great excesses that have been done in the name of Jesus related to that, and of course you got the televangelists who everybody sees, but nobody, well, I'm going to edit that remark.

There are people who are very visible and they're asking for your money. When they're, and they're guilting you into given because we have to keep this. We've got 15 cities that are about to shut down and unless you give today, but there God wants to get the Gospel into those areas and they're telling you and stuff and so they guilt people into giving and then of course, there's those guys, man, I tell you, they are amazing who actually convinced people to give because they think they convinced people they're doing you a favor.

Yeah, you give money and God is going to bless you back and then call it your seed thing. You need to just plant some seed thing, and they'll, and they get all whacked and weird out and then they, and they're like, they love to be very animated and stuff and get people to give their money and you, if you just write that check right now or call this number and you give and God is going to bless you and stuff and people give by the scads to these guys and they're charlatans! They are charlatans, you guys!

Listen, if they really believe that giving got it back, they'd be giving money to you instead of asking you to give. They'd be saying, I'm going to write you a check if they really believe this stuff they were saying, goodness gracious. It's like, come on, don't get sucked into that, but the problem is they've made a pretty big splash, haven't they? And people, you talk to somebody, a coworker, a family member, something like that, and you say, hey, you're welcome to come with us to church.

I'm not going to church. All they want is your money. They're always asking for money. They're always talking about money. There are always every single, and Paul said, you know what? I am going to remove that criticism and I'm going to maintain the boast that I'm never going to ask for money. And he wanted to, I really believe Paul wanted to just pull that right out from under people that used it as an excuse. I don't want your money, sort of a thing.

It's kind of fun to be able to boast in the Lord, let me tell you, it really is. It's fun to be able to boast in the Lord that He takes care of His people. And honestly, let me boast in Jesus for a little bit.

In 25 years, we've never once taken an offering here at Calvary Chapel, Ontario, nor will we ever, at least not while I'm the senior pastor. We've never once taken an offering. Ever. The only thing we've ever talked about related to money is once a year we have our pie auction to help the kids go to camp, and the church doesn't get that money. The kids benefit from that money. Okay?

But, the rest of the time, the only time you hear us talking about money is when it comes up in the Scripture. In 25 years, some of you guys have been here that long. How many times have you heard me ask you for money? I haven't done it one time. Not once. And we're not going to start, right? You know why? It's just too much stinking fun boasting in God! It really is.

He's so good! He has so taken care of us as a church by laying it upon the faithfulness of God's people. We get people coming up to us going, how do you give around here anyway? They don't know. They haven't figured it out. I noticed you guys didn't pass a plate. How do you give here? It's like, well, there's these boxes, things back there. You can just put it in there if you want to. Oh, okay. And we just decided, we're just going to, God's going to have to lay it on people to give.

It's between them and Him. And, oh, it's so much fun. It really is because you can boast in God. Say, look what God did. We didn't do this. God did it. I understand what Paul's saying here.

A church, let me just say this. A church has a right to take an offering. They have a right and we get all kinds of groups coming in and saying, can we come in and do their ministry in your church and take a love offering for us and stuff, and we just go, well you can come in and minister, but we're not going to take an offering because we don't do that.

We'll just give. When groups come to us and they come to minister, remember we had that group, those former Mormons come here about a year or so ago, great ministry and just shared how God had brought them out of Mormonism, and they shared in music and the Word and stuff. And you'll notice if you were here, they usually, at churches, get a love offering, but we didn't do that. We just gave them an amount of money just right out of the coffers and they're fine with that, but it's really unusual.

I can tell, they're not used to having that happen and that sort of thing. But, it's just the way we decided to do it because we don't want to hit people up for money. In fact, did you notice Paul says, I would rather die than have anyone deprived me of this ground for boasting. And again, the ground for boasting is That he can do it for free, because look what he says in verse 16. He says,

*“For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. (Because, he says) necessity is laid upon me.”*

Or as the NIV says, I'm compelled to do that. See, Paul is saying, I didn't pick this. I don't think I would have picked this. God picked me. I was on my way to arrest some of you yahoo's and God just met me on the road, bright light, blinded me, knocked me to my knees, and He said you're an apostle boy. And he said, so I'm here because I got drafted, so, there's nothing to boast, right? He picked me up out of the crowd and said, you're my man, so, he says, I have nothing to boast there. I'm compelled to do this. In fact, he goes on to say in that verse,

*“Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”*

That means there is such a fire inside of me that, whoa if I don't do it, I can't hold back. Okay. So, on the other hand, verse 17, he says, *“For if I do this of my own will* (If I said, I'm going to go be an apostle, I'm going to go to apostolic school, and get a Master's in apostolic ministry. He says, no, if that's the way I did thing, well, then sure) *I have a reward, but if not of my own will,* (which is the way Paul was brought into the kingdom, he says) *I am still entrusted with a stewardship.* <sup>18</sup> *What then is my reward?* (What is his 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.”*

Paul considered this refusal on his part of support from the Corinthians as a reward in and of itself. And he was so delighted to give the Gospel for free, and he loved taking that excuse away from those who resisted the Gospel. And he said, I would rather die than do it any other way. Verse 19, he says,

*“For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.”*

What is he saying here? He's saying, there's lots of different kinds of people in this world, but rather than being a Lord over people, he says, I just try to relate to them where they're at so that I can win them to Christ. See, that was Paul's reason for living the way he lived for the sake of the Gospel. Look what he, he goes on, he kind of gives some specifics. Verse 20, he says,

*“To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews.”*

What does he mean by that? It's like, Paul, you became a Jew. What do you mean you are a Jew? In fact, earlier on he said, I'm a Jew of Jews, so what is he saying when around the Jews, I become a Jew? What he's saying is, as a Christian, I'm not subject to those Jewish cultural traditions any longer, but when I'm around Jews who are still walking in those Jewish traditional customs, I submit to them, around them.

Why? So as to create a bridge and open door and opportunity to minister to their hearts, to bring them to the knowledge of the Lord. If I walk into their life and I just say, oh you guys are still doing that. That's dumb. You ought to be free like me. You don't have to do that stuff anymore. You know, if that's the way he walks into the situation, that's not going to win anybody's heart. He says, when I'm with the Jews in all of their cultural, traditional trappings, I just walk in it with them. He goes on to say and when I'm with,

*“.. those (who are) under the law (now he's talking about Jews who are living to the Mosaic, like the Pharisee, he says, to those under the law) I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) (We know that, we're under grace. He said, why?) that I might win those under the law.”*

Now he's talking about, when I'm with people who are living according to the law, I don't just waltz in there like a bull in a china shop and demand that they live my way. I go in and live their way. Not because I'm under the Law, but because I want to create bridges. You guys remember when Paul got Timothy and started using him in the ministry of the Gospel? Remember, Timothy hadn't been circumcised, and Paul didn't want to create a barrier to ministry to the Jews, so he had Timothy circumcised.

It wasn't because it was the law demands it. It was because, hey man, we don't want to offend people, because when we're around Jews, we want to be able to have that bridge, that ability to minister to them. That's what Paul's talking

about, trying to do these things so as not to offend and so forth. He goes on, he says in verse 21,

*“To those outside the law (and that refers to Gentiles. This is not referring to like lawless people, like criminals, okay? He says to those outside the Law, people who don't know the Law, don't understand the Law of Moses. He says) I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but (I am in fact) under the law of Christ) (But the reason is so) that I might win those outside the law.”*

What Paul is saying here is, when I'm around people who don't know the law, I live like them. Not in any way that is going to be immoral or illegal or unbiblical, but I just, I live like them. I'm like them so that I might win them. Now listen, this has been used by people to go out and do all kinds of really sinful things because they're just being all things to all people. It's like, yeah, I like going out to the bars and getting drunk so that I can minister the Gospel.

I'll just be drunk right along with them sort of a thing. It's like, ah no, that's not what Paul's saying. Believe me, people have used it that way. They really, truly have. I have an excuse to be able to go and do this because Paul says he's all things to all people and when he's around the lawless, he acts like a lawless man. No.

Understand, Paul would never do anything to violate his walk with Jesus and the understanding of propriety, but he's saying to live and to walk with these people I'm relating to them where they are, so as to have a bridge of ministry and an opportunity to reach them for Christ. Verse 22,

*“To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak.”*

Who are the weak people? Now he's going back and talking about them. He's talking about the person who's weak in their conscience. This is the person. Who will not eat meat and doesn't think you should either. Or today, what is this today? This is the person who says you touch alcohol with your lips, you might just be going to hell. And if not, I'll tell you this much, it's definitely wrong.

Paul would say that that person is weak in their conscience. What does he say? When I'm around that person, around the weak I'm going to be like them. I'm going to, conform to where they're at so that I might win the weak. In fact, he says,

<sup>22</sup> “...I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.”

And here's the key verse of the entire chapter in case you were waiting for it. Verse 23,

*“I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.”*

Right there, guys. I do it all for the sake of the Gospel. That's why I live the way I do. I do it for the sake of the Gospel. That's why I hold back on some things. That's why I refrain from some things, even though I'm free to do them. Even though I have complete freedom in Christ, I hold back for the sake of the Gospel, for the sake of the kingdom, for the sake of people. That's why. This is, do you see how rare of a man the apostle Paul was?

Do you understand how opposite this is for the way we're told to live in this world? How are we told to live? Make ourselves happy, right? The goal is happiness. The goal is personal happiness. Hey, do whatever makes you happy, man. Right? How many times have you heard that? Just do what makes you happy. That's the refrain of the world and it stinks. Paul says, don't do what makes you happy. Do what makes other people happy. Why?

For the sake of the Gospel. Do you understand Christians? Paul is saying to you and I; he's challenging you and I, saying our lives are not meant to be lived for self. Our lives are meant to be lived for the sake of others, that they might be brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. That's why I refrain from doing some things, or I indulge in some things, so that I might create a bridge to minister the Gospel. I do, the way I live my life is all for the sake of the Gospel.

It's not about me. It's about them, you see. Do you see how opposite that is to our cultural sort of a mindset today, and how incredibly rare it is in the body of Christ to see people who live their lives in such a way as to care about other people and what they think and whether or not they're going to come to Christ or whether they're going to be stumbled by what I do or whether or not they're going to be offended or something?

Very, very different sort of an attitude. Please understand, this is not easy stuff here that we're talking about here today. We're not, I'm not, I don't expect you to go, it's like, hey, all right, now go and live a life of selfless existence. You need to understand that every fiber of your being wants to live for yourself. Every

molecule of who you are wants to live to please you, and you alone. That refrain of the world. Hey, that comes right in here that it is birthed in the heart of man.

Live in such a way as to make yourself happy. Don't point to the world and say those guys. No, point to your own heart. It's right inside all of us, so this idea of living selflessly instead of selfishly and living to please others, to love others, to care about others, this is completely contrary to our human heart.

It's just not the way we normally think, but it's the way we can think if we yield to the work of the Spirit in our hearts. The work that He wants to do to cause us to really, truly love one another as He loved us. Amen?