

Series: 1 Corinthians  
Title: For the Gospels Sake  
Text: 1 Cor 9: 19-23  
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**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. 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; 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. 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. 23: And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with *you*.**

The apostle Paul, when he was dead in sins, was very religious. He persecuted the church, compelling men to believe as he did or else. But after Christ arrested him on the road to Damascus, gave him life and faith in Christ, all of that changed.

Having all in Christ, the apostle Paul was free from all. So is everyone who has been made to believe on Christ for all.

We are free from sin—"For he that is dead is freed from sin." (Rom 6: 8)

We are free from the dominion of sin and free the yoke of old covenant law—"sin shall not have dominion over you for ye you are not under the law but under grace." "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter." (Rom 6: 14)

God's saints are free from condemnation, free from the law of sin and free from death—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." (Rom 8: 1-2)

In our text, Paul especially means that he was free from the yoke and bondage of men—"If the Son therefore shall make you free ye shall be free indeed." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Jn 8: 36; Gal 6: 14)

Every true believer is complete in Christ—that is what it is to be free.

So knowing he had liberty in Christ, Paul made himself servant unto all men—why?—**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.**

Paul had that burden for lost sinners that Christ gives his people. Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. That is the desire Christ puts in the hearts of his servants. Paul said, "19:...I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.... 22:...that I might by all means save some. 23: And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

Paul was not trying to merely make men moral—he wanted to see them be made holy by Christ dwelling in them. Christ in a sinner will result in morality but it is better because it is from a holy heart in a state of holiness. To tell dead sinners how to be moral is like telling a blind man how to see. He may go through the outward motions but he still blind. A man may become moral outwardly but he is still corrupt in nature and dead in sins and unrighteous before God.

Neither was Paul desiring to make proselytes, to baptize and or to create church members. The one mission of Christ's church is to preach Christ and him crucified. We are to declare that Christ is the Son of God and the Son of David—GodMan. We are to declare he is the representative of his people who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Our message is that Christ was made under the law to redeem God's elect from the curse. He said, "I lay down my life for the sheep"—for his particular people. He finished the work. Christ purged his people of our sins, he justified us, and he made us the righteousness of God in him. He lives at God's right hand—Head of his church. He is sending his gospel and calling out his lost sheep. He shall lose none. When the last one is brought into the fold, he is coming again and we shall all be with him in the new heavens and new earth.

Our second charge is to pray for Christ to send the Holy Spirit to bless his word to the hearts of his people. We are to wait on him to do so—only he can give life to dry bones! He said, "But I will be enquired of by you for this!" So we pray for his blessing upon the word to send the Holy Spirit and create his people anew. We ask him to preserve us and finish what he has begun as he promises.

Paul's desire—and our desire—is to see sinners made a new creation by Christ, by God's grace, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that God might receive all the glory.

**Proposition:** So for the sake of the gospel of Christ—Christ's glory—and the salvation of Christ's redeemed—when it came to things indifferent, Paul set aside his liberty and made himself a servant to all.

**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;** [in some of the earliest translations it says "though not under the law.']

This is a passage which is easily misunderstood and has been. Paul was NOT pretending to agree with men when he really did not. He did not humor lost sinners in their vain works. He did not make the Jew feel better than the Gentile or vice versa so as to put confidence in race or face or place or any will, worth, work of sinners

He means when it came to things indifferent, he made sure that indifferent things did not become the focus. Paul made sure something indifferent would not distract his hearers from hearing the gospel of Christ crucified.

For example, Timothy's mother was a Jew and his father a Greek. People knew it. Therefore, so that it would not become a hindrance to the Jews from hearing the gospel of Christ, Paul circumcised Timothy.

Acts 16: 1: Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father *was* a Greek: 2: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. 3: Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. 4: And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. 5: And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Circumcision avails nothing nor uncircumcision but a new creature. Paul and Timothy knew that. Timothy was made new by Christ. He was free from circumcision, free from the law. No one was telling Paul or Timothy they must be circumcised to be saved. The text says Paul had him circumcised because of the Jews because they all knew his father was Greek. Paul merely did it so that it would not become an issue and

distract them from hearing the gospel when they came to the Jewish synagogues to preach. And God blessed it, “so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.”

On the other hand, when men insisted upon something that was indifferent as a matter of necessity to salvation then Paul told them “No, Christ has freed us from the law!” For instance, on another occasion, when men insisted that Titus be circumcised or he could not be saved, Paul refused. Be sure to notice why.

Galatians 2: 3: But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: 4: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: 5: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

For the sake of the gospel, Paul circumcised Timothy so men could hear the gospel of Christ without a matter of indifference becoming a distraction. For the sake of the gospel of Christ, when men insisted Titus be circumcised Paul said no, “that the truth of the gospel might continue.” He would not let a matter of indifference become the focus in either situation.

So when he says to the Jew I became as a Jew he is not saying he preached a different message. He preached Christ and his full free redemption from the law to everyone. He is saying I did not let a matter of indifference become the issue.

When he was with the Jews who knew Jewish law—he preached “Christ as the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes.” When he was with Jews who thought they were elect by natural birth, he declared “they are not all Israel which are of Israel, but the children of promise are counted for the seed.”

He could more easily use the law with a Jew to show him how the law was shadow of things to come but Christ is the express image. Christ is our great High Priest. Christ is our spotless Lamb of God. Christ is our Altar. Christ is our Mercy Seat. Christ has entered into the true holiest of holies. Now we have access by Christ through faith in him. The old is done away with now that Christ is come.

**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.**

These were the Gentiles, the Greeks who did not have the old covenant law of Moses. Paul did not preach on the law of Moses at Athens. It would have done no good. He met them were they were in their vain superstition and idolatry and love of learning all of which he called ignorance.

Acts 17: 23: For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. 24: God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; 26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: 28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. 29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device. 30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31 Because he hath appointed a

day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Let me repeat: Paul is not saying he did not preach Christ to everyone alike—he did! He is saying that “for the sake of the gospel” he laid aside whatever liberty he had and did not make an issue out of things indifferent. He is further illustrating what we saw in chapter 8 and chapter 9.

Yet, among the Gentiles, if someone tried to bring the law in or make an issue of race, he said, “No!” For instance, at Antioch, among Gentiles, when the apostle Peter moved from eating with the Gentiles to the table with his Jewish brethren, Paul rebuked him because it created division—by his action Peter put emphasis on law and race, compelling the Gentiles to live as do the Jews. Paul said,

Galatians 2: 14: But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?... 16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified....19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. 21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Though he became as one without law, Paul, like all believers, was always under the rule of Christ, led of the Holy Spirit, constrained by Christ’s love, walking by faith and the law is not of faith. We see it by the fact that he never ceased declaring the gospel even to those without the old covenant law because he was constrained by the law of Christ to do so!

### **1 Corinthians 9: 22: To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak:**

This is what he spoke of in chapter 8. We know:

1 Corinthians 8: 8: Meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. 9: But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak....13: Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

### **1 Corinthians 9: 22...I am made all things to all men,**

He always preached Christ. But wherever he was, he put himself in their place and sympathized with them, for the gospel’s sake. He thought with himself, were I a Gentile, how would I hear this? As a Jew what do I need to be taught? Young or old, weak or strong, rich or poor, master or a servant, which prejudices will be stronger and so on. And as the Holy Spirit guided him, he laid aside his liberty if need be or he insisted upon it if need be. He used the scriptures that would be helpful to them. He used illustrations they would understand. For instance, here is speaking to Corinthians—they were big into sports—so next he uses a sports illustration. A few weeks ago I was in Iowa, I used a few farming illustrations.

### **1 Corinthians 9: 22...I am made all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some. 23 And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with *you*.**

This is the three-fold reason Paul would not let things indifferent take the forefront:

1. “For the gospel’s sake”—for Christ’s glory—that the good news of Christ and him crucified might be heard without Paul’s liberty becoming a distraction—but if they compelled him to set aside his liberty he said, “No.” He did it that they might here of the sovereign electing grace of God in Christ, of the particular redemption accomplished by Christ for all the elect, and of the necessity of the irresistible grace of the Holy Spirit which brings us to rest in Christ. He laid aside his liberty because he knew Christ is All and he would have other sinners hear that good news without hindrance.

2. “That I might by all means save some.” Paul knew he could not save anyone. He knew the excellency of the power is of God and not of us. But he wanted to see Christ save his lost sheep. The salvation of sinners was more important to him than being denied his rights. So he laid aside his liberty and preached Christ.

3. “That I might be partaker thereof with you.” Paul desired to be partaker of Christ with those Christ saved through his gospel. Christ makes us partaker of the divine nature together because that is how we are made one in Christ. Without this oneness in Christ and by Christ we have no fellowship with one another. As apostle John said, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John 1: 3)

I pray God make us abound more and more in this love and desire to see Christ honored, to his sheep called out and to have more abounding fellowship. God, use us and teach us to be servants to all that we might preach this gospel to all!

**Amen!**