

“All Things To All People”

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

November 19, 2017

VIDEO: *“I Want To Be Different”*

INTRO: Welcome... Miraculous Metamorphosis 47

➤ That song is from last week... picking back up...

➤ **The Holy Spirit:**

- Supernaturally unifies us **Vertically**
- Supernaturally unifies us **Horizontally**
- Supernaturally unifies us **Missionally**

VERTICAL

John 14:15 *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. **16** And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever...”*

Acts 19:2 *“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”*

1 John 2:3-5 = *By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected.*

HORIZONTAL

1 Corinthians 12:13: *"For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body— whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."*

Romans 8:5-6, 11 *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace..... 11If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*

1 Corinthians 12:7 *To each is given the manifestation (aka "gift") of the Spirit for the common good.*

Ephesians 4:1-6 *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

Acts 2:42-47 *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... [47b](#) ...And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

Missionally

Matthew 28:18-20!

Matthew 16:18 = “I will build my church”

John 16: [7](#)Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: *it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. [8](#)And when he comes, he will convict the world...*

Acts 1:8 WITNESS "Witness" in Acts 29X...

***** BE-ing the Beatitudes = witness**

- Poor in spirit
- Mourn
- Meek
- Hunger/Thirst after Righteousness
- Merciful
- Pure in heart
- Peace-makers
- Persecuted for Righteousness

***** Sharing the Fruit of Spirit = witness**

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-control

***** BE-ing salt/light... = witness**

Ephesians 2:8-10 *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (cf. Ephesians 6:10ff)*

T/S: Okay... so where do we go from here?

I've got a few new questions:

- Do YOU really want to change/BE different?
- WHY do you want to change/BE different?
- How MUCH do you want to change/BE different?

BIG IDEA: Biblical disciples of Jesus Christ change in order to participate in the Great Commission of God!

We meet people at the point of their spiritual need in order to deliver gospel hope.

- Spiritual “need” vs. cultural “wants”
- **Key: Divine vs. Demographic “glue”**
 - Divine = Koinonia & Homothoomadon
 - Demographics = religious moose lodge

QUOTE: “The early church was filled with Christ-followers who lived contrary to the social norms. They chose to invite, invest, & include those who looked and/or lived differently than themselves. All that mattered was a common commitment to have Christ as Lord... When we recognize the gospel’s potential for touching every life, it will change how we too approach disciple-making in our own communities.” - DisciplesPath

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

¹⁹ *For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.*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; 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. 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.

²³ ***I do all things for the sake of the gospel***, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

PREVIEW: How "much" do you want to change?

- I. **Intensely** (degree)
- II. **Internally** (self)
- III. **Externally** (world/culture)
- IV. **Missionally** (Find the Lost, Grow the Found)

I. How **INTENSELY** do you want to change?

- Are you a basically "good person?"
- Not too bad?
- Complacent Christianity is an oxy-moron!
- With each step I take closer to God...
 - He's bigger & I'm smaller
 - The greater the distance I see between us

II. How **INTRINSICALLY** do you want to change?

VIDEO: Skit Guys: *"God's Chisel"*

- You're His "original masterpiece"

- You're His "original mission"
 - You're His "original missionary"

***He doesn't sanctify us to sterilize us... No!
God sanctifies us to multiply us – Amen!*** - JDP

Miraculously Missional Metamorphosis...

Changes:

- Apathy to Action
- Selfish to Service
- Here to Heaven
- Temporary to Eternal
- Successful to Spirit-full
- Staying to Going
- Good to God
- Sometimes to Always
- Balance to Obedience
- Saul to Paul
- Rich Young Ruler to Zacheous
- Go to church vs BE the Church

III. How EXTERNALLY do you want to change?

Romans 8:14

“For all who are LED by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”

(Steven, Philip, Peter, Paul... Hebrews 11...)

- WE the Church is plan A... there is no plan B!
- Look at Paul's example from thru Acts 16-17...
 - Strengthening churches...
 - Back to Lystra...
 - Guided by the Spirit
 - Over to Macadonia
 - Throughout Philippi
 - Into Thessalonica...
 - With the Bereans...
 - On to Athens... Acts 17

IV. How **MISSIONALLY** do you want to change?

Missional METAMORPHOSIS... 10 miraculous changes:

1. God's grace
2. Agape love
3. Faithful obedience
4. Christ-like humility
5. Personal empathy
6. Holy "works in-progress"
7. Spiritual growth
8. Worshipful witness
9. Biblical Discipler
10. God's glory

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:1...

"Follow me as I follow the Lord!"



One FAITH. One FAMILY. One FOCUS.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will BE My witnesses (locally, regionally, and globally)." – Acts 1:8

One Question: *WHAT DO YOU WANT?*
One Offer: *COME AND SEE.*
One Promise: *TRUTH IN LOVE!*

Our Truth-in-Love Distinctives: We are...

1. Responding to grace & repenting of sin...
2. Trusting the Bible & obeying God's Word...
3. Growing in-Christ & living Spirit-led...
4. Praying for guidance & following by faith...
5. Dying to self & carrying our cross...
6. BE-ing the Church & loving one another...(*truly* loving one another)
7. Equipping the saints & exemplifying supernatural unity...
8. Ministering as ambassadors & discerning matters shrewdly...
9. Worshipping God vertically & experiencing Him horizontally...
10. Proclaiming the Gospel (*no matter what*) & fishing for men...
11. Making disciples-warriors & winning spiritual-warfare...
12. Loving our King & serving His kingdom!

This is what Jesus meant when He said John 20:21

**“Who & what do YOU want to be... and
to/for whom?”**

VIDEO: *“I Will Trust”*

Let's Pray!

CONNECTING WITH EVERYONE

“The work of being a disciple & disciple-maker means helping everyone find what you have found, receive what you have received, and live like you are trying to live within God’s kingdom... and forming relationships is a key part of sharing the gospel.”

Everyone shares a common need of salvation!

See Paul’s example in 1 Corinthians 9:19ff

- Paul found his identity in Christ & the gospel
- Paul’s Christ-likeness led to being a servant of all
- Paul sought out opportunities to serve the gospel
- Paul was BOTH/AND “fluid and faithful”
- Paul did NOT blend or balance into syncretism!

SERVING WITH PURPOSE

Paul always had a purpose in mind when he took part in the work of disciple-making. He wanted Christ to be exalted, and he wanted to participate in God’s grace being poured out to others.

- 1 Corinthians 9:23 = “Now I do all this because of the gospel, so that I may share in the blessings.”
- QUOTE: “That raises an important question: what gets you up and going in the morning?”

What drives you to do the things you do? What motivations have made you the person you are?

- What are your biggest dreams???

NOTE: Paul said he did what he did because he wanted to “share in the blessings” of the gospel... Think about that for a minute.....

- QUOTE: “When you commit to being a disciple maker, you do so because you’ve decided that the gospel is enough. It’s enough to change your life, and it’s enough to change the lives of others.”
- QUOTE: “When you do whatever it takes to be all things to all people so that some might be saved, you’re a partner with God in His work!”

CLOSE:

Paul added a powerful thought & truth to this passage:

- 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!”
- The Reformers put it this way: (“5 Solas”)
 - We trust the authority of SCRIPTURE alone
 - We are saved by GRACE alone
 - Thru FAITH alone
 - In CHRIST alone
 - To the GLORY of GOD alone

- Here's the "way to win the prize"
 - The Great Commandments
 - The Great Commission
 - The Great Conflict
 - The Great Christian
 - The Great Church

Verse 19. *For though I be free.* I am a freeman. I am under obligation to none. I am not bound to give them my labours, and at the same time to toil for my own support. I have claims like others, and could urge them; and no man could demand that I should give myself to a life of servitude, and comply with their prejudices and wishes, as if I were a slave, in order to their conversion. Compare [1 Corinthians 9:1.](#) [1 Corinthians 6:12.](#)

From all men. **ΕΚΠΑΝΤΩΝ.** This may either refer to all *persons* or to all *things*. The word *men* is not in the original. The connexion, however, seems to fix the signification to *persons*. "I am a freeman. And although I have conducted [myself] like a slave, yet it has been done voluntarily."

I have made myself servant unto all. Greek, "I have enslaved myself (εμαυτονεδουλωσα) unto all." That is,

(1.) I *labour* for them, or in their service, and to promote their welfare.

(2.) I do it, as the slave does, without reward or hire. I am not paid for it, but submit to the toil, and do it without receiving pay.

(3.) Like the slave who wishes to gratify his master, or who is compelled from the necessity of the case, I comply with the prejudices, habits, customs, and opinions of others as far as I can with a good conscience. The *slave is subject to the master's will*. That will must be obeyed. The whims, prejudices, caprices of the master must be submitted to, even if they are *mere* caprice, and wholly unreasonable. So Paul says that he had voluntarily put himself into this condition, a condition making it necessary for him to suit himself to the opinions, prejudices, caprices, and feelings of all men, so far as he could do it with a good conscience, in order that he might save them. We are not to understand here that Paul embraced any opinions which were false in order to do this, or that he submitted to anything which is morally wrong. But he complied with their customs, and habits, and feelings, as far as it could lawfully be done. He did

not needlessly offend them, or run counter to their prejudices.

That I might gain the more. That I might gain more to Christ; that I might be the means of saving more souls. What a noble instance of self-denial and true greatness is here! How worthy of religion! How elevated the conduct! How magnanimous, and how benevolent! No man would do this who had not a greatness of intellect that would rise above narrow prejudices; and who had not a nobleness of heart that would seek at personal sacrifice the happiness of all men. It is said that not a few early Christians, in illustration of this principle of conduct, actually sold themselves into slavery in order that they might have access to and benefit slaves-an act to which nothing would prompt a man but the religion of the cross. Comp. [Romans 1:14](#).

(*) "servant" [Galatians 5:13](#)

13 *For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*

Verse 21. *To them that are without law.* To the Gentiles, who have not the law of Moses. [Romans 2:12,14](#).

As without law. Not practicing the peculiar rites and ceremonies enjoined in the law of Moses. Not insisting on them, or urging them; but showing that the *obligation* to those rites had been done away; and that they were not binding, though when among the Jews I might still continue to observe them. [Acts 15:1](#) and following: and the argument of Paul in [Galatians 2:11-18](#). I neglected the ceremonial precepts of the Mosaic law, when I was with those who had not *heard* of the law of Moses, or those who did not observe them, because I knew that the binding obligation of these ceremonial precepts had ceased. I did not, therefore, *press* them upon the Gentiles, nor did I superstitiously and publicly practise them. In all this, Paul has reference only to those things which he regarded as in themselves *indifferent*, and not a matter of conscience; and his purpose was not needlessly to excite the prejudice or the opposition of the world. Nothing is ever gained by *provoking* opposition for the mere sake of opposition. Nothing tends more to hinder the gospel than that. In all things of *conscience* and *truth* a man should be firm, and should lose his life rather than abandon either; in all things of indifference, of mere custom, of prejudice, he should yield, and accommodate himself to the modes of thinking among men, and adapt himself to their views, feelings, and habits of life, that he may win them to Christ.

Being not without law to God. Not regarding myself as being absolutely without law, or as being freed from obligation to obey God. Even in all this, I endeavoured so to live as that it might be seen that I felt myself bound by law to God. I was not a despiser, and contemner and neglecter of *law, as such*, but only regarded myself as not bound by the peculiar ceremonial law of Moses. This is an instance of Paul's conscientiousness. He would not leave room to have it supposed for a moment that he disregarded all law. He was bound to God by law; and in the conduct to which he was referring, he felt that he was obeying *him*. He was bound by higher law than those ceremonial observances which were now to be done away. This passage would destroy all the refuges of the Antinomians. Whatever privileges the gospel has introduced, it has not set us free from the restraints and obligations of law. That is binding still; and no man is at liberty to disregard the moral law of God. Christ came to magnify, strengthen, and to honour the law, not to destroy it.

But under the law to Christ. Bound by the law enjoined by Christ; under the law of affectionate gratitude and duty to him. I obeyed his commands; followed his instructions; sought his honour; yielded to his will. In this he would violate none of the rules of the moral law. And he here intimates, that his grand object was to yield obedience to the law of the Saviour, and that this was the governing purpose of his life. And this *would* guide a man right. In doing this, he would never violate any of the precepts of the moral law, for Christ obeyed them, and enjoined their observance. He

would never feel that he was without law to God, for Christ obeyed God, and enjoined it on all. He would never feel that religion came to set him free from law, or to authorize licentiousness; for its grand purpose and aim is to make men holy, and to bind them everywhere to the observance of the pure law of the Redeemer.

(*) "being not without law" [1 Corinthians 7:22](#)

Verse 22. *To the weak.* [Romans 15:1](#). To those weak in faith; scrupulous in regard to certain observances; whose consciences were tender and unenlightened, and who would be offended even by things which might be in themselves lawful. He did not lacerate their feelings, and run counter to their prejudices, for the mere sake of doing it.

Became I as weak. I did not shock them. I complied with their customs. I conformed to them in my dress, habits, manner of life, and even in the services of religion. I abstained from food which they deemed it their duty to abstain from; and where, if I had partaken of it, I should have offended them. Paul did not do this to gratify himself, or them, but to do them good. And Paul's example should teach us not to make it the main business of life to gratify ourselves: and it should teach us not to lacerate the feelings of others; not to excite their prejudices needlessly; not to

offend them where it will do no good. If truth offends men, we cannot help it. But in matters of ceremony, and dress, and habits, and customs, and forms, we should be willing to conform to them, as far as can be done, and for the sole purpose of saving their souls.

I am made all things to all men. I become all things; that is, I accommodate myself to them in all things, so far as can be done with a good conscience.

That I might by all means. παντως. That I might use every possible endeavour that some at least might be saved. It is implied here that the opposition to the gospel was everywhere great; that men were reluctant to embrace it; that the great mass were going to ruin, and that Paul was willing to make the highest possible exertions, to deny himself, and practise every innocent art, that he might save *a few at least* out of the innumerable multitudes that were going to death and hell. It follows from this,

(1.) that men are in danger of ruin.

(2.) We should make an effort to save men. We should deny ourselves, and give ourselves to toil and privation, that we may save some at least from ruin.

(3.) The doctrine of universal salvation is not true. If it were, what use or propriety would there have been in these efforts of Paul? If *all* were to be saved, why should he deny himself, and labour and toil to save "*SOME?*" Why should a man make a constant effort to save *a few at least*, if he well knew that all were to be saved? Assuredly Paul did not know or believe that all men would be saved; but if the doctrine is true, he would have been quite as likely to have known it as its modern advocates and defenders.

(*) "weak" Romans 15:1, [2 Corinthians 11:29](#)

(*) "I am made" [1 Corinthians 10:33](#)

(*) "that I might" [Romans 11:14](#)

Verse 23. *For the gospel's sake.* That it may be advanced, and may be successful.

That I might be partaker thereof with you. You hope to be saved. You regard yourselves as Christians; and I wish to give evidence also that *I* am a Christian, and that I shall be admitted to heaven to partake of the happiness of the redeemed. This he did, by so denying himself as to give evidence that he was truly actuated by Christian principles.

[Verse 24](#). *Know ye not*, etc. In the remainder of this chapter, Paul illustrates the general sentiment on which he had been dwelling—the duty of practicing self-denial for the salvation of others—by a reference to the well-known games which were celebrated near Corinth. Throughout the chapter, his object had been to show that in declining to receive a support for preaching, he had done it, not because he was conscious that he had no claim to it, but because by doing it he could better advance the salvation of men, the furtherance of the gospel, and, in his peculiar case, ([1 Corinthians 9:16,17](#),) could obtain better evidence, and furnish to others better evidence that he was actuated by a sincere desire to honour God in the Gospel. He had denied himself. He had voluntarily submitted to great privations. He had had a great object in view in doing it. And he now says, that in the well-known athletic games at Corinth, the same thing was done by the *racers*, ([1 Corinthians 9:24](#),) and by *wrestlers*, or *boxers*, [1 Corinthians 9:25](#). If *they* had done it, for objects so comparatively unimportant as the attainment of an *earthly* garland, assuredly it was proper for him to do it to obtain a crown which should never fade away. This is one of the most beautiful, appropriate, vigorous, and bold illustrations that can anywhere be found; and is a striking instance of the force with which the most vigorous and self-denying efforts of Christians can be vindicated, and can be *urged* by a reference to the conduct of men in the affairs of this life. By the phrase, "know ye not," Paul intimates that those games to which he alludes, were well known to them, and that they must be familiar with their design, and with the manner in which they were conducted. The games to

which the apostle alludes were celebrated with extraordinary pomp and splendour, every fourth year, on the Isthmus which joined the Peloponnesus to the main land, and on a part of which the city of Corinth stood. There were in Greece four species of games: the Pythian, or Delphic; the Isthmian, or Corinthian; the Nemean, and the Olympic. On these occasions persons were assembled from all parts of Greece, and the time during which they continued was devoted to extraordinary festivity and amusement. The Isthmian or Corinthian games were celebrated in the narrow part of the Isthmus of Corinth, to the north of the city, and were doubtless the games to which the apostle more particularly alluded, though the games in each of the places were substantially of the same nature, and the same illustration would in the main apply to all. The *Nemean* games were celebrated at Nemæa, a town of Argolis, and were instituted by the Argives in honour of Archemorus, who died by the bite of a serpent, but were renewed by Hercules. They consisted of horse and foot races, of boxing, leaping, running, etc. The conqueror was at first rewarded with a crown of olive, afterwards of green parsley. They were celebrated every third, or, according to others, every fifth year. The *Pythian* games were celebrated every four years at Delphi, in Phocis, at the foot of Mount Parnassus, where was the seat of the celebrated Delphic oracle. These games were of the same character substantially as those celebrated in other places, and attracted persons not only from other parts of Greece, but from distant countries. See *Travels of Anacharsis*, vol. ii. pp. 375-418. The *Olympic* games were celebrated in Olympia, a town of Elis, on the

southern bank of the Alphiss river, on the western part of the Peloponnesus. They were on many accounts the most celebrated of any in Greece. They were said to have been instituted by Hercules, who planted a grove called *Altis*, which he dedicated to Jupiter. They were attended not only from all parts of Greece, but from the most distant countries. These were celebrated every fourth year; and hence, in Grecian chronology, a period of four years was called an Olympiad. See Anacharsis, vol. iii. 434, seq. It thus happened that in one or more of these places, there were games celebrated every year, to which no small part of the inhabitants of Greece were attracted. Though the apostle probably had *particular* reference to the *Isthmian* games celebrated in the vicinity of Corinth, yet his illustration is applicable to them all; for in all the exercises were nearly the same. They consisted chiefly in leaping, running, throwing the discus or quoit, boxing, wrestling, and were expressed in the following line:

αλμαποδωκειηνδισκονακονταπαλην

Leaping, running, throwing the quoit, darting, wrestling.
Connected with these were also, sometimes, other exercises, as races of chariots, horses, etc. The apostle refers to but *two* of these exercises in his illustration.

They which run. This was one of the principal exercises at the games. Fleetness or swiftness was regarded as an extraordinary virtue; and great pains were taken in order to excel in this. Indeed, they regarded it so highly, that those who prepared themselves for it thought it worth while to use means to burn their spleen, because it was believed to be a hinderance to them, and to retard them in the race. (Rob. Cal.) Homer tells us that swiftness was one of the most excellent endowments with which a man can be blessed.

"No greater honour e'er has been attain'd,

Than what strong hands or nimble feet have gain'd."

One reason why this was deemed so valuable an attainment among the Greeks was, that it fitted men eminently for war as it was then conducted. It enabled them to make a sudden and unexpected onset, or a rapid retreat. Hence the character which Homer constantly gives of Achilles is, that he was swift of foot. And thus David, in his poetical lamentations over Saul and Jonathan, takes special notice of this qualification of theirs, as fitting them for war.

**"They were swifter than eagles,
Stronger than lions."-[2 Samuel 1:23](#)**

For these races they prepared themselves by a long course of previous discipline and exercise; and nothing was left undone that might contribute to secure the victory.

In a race. ενσταδιω. In the *stadium*. The stadium, or running-ground, or place in which the boxers contended, and where races were run. At Olympia the stadium was a causeway 604 feet in length, and of proportionable width. (Herod. lib. 2. c. 149.) It was surrounded by a terrace, and by the seats of the judges of the games. At one end was fixed the boundary or goal to which they ran.

Run all. All run who have entered the lists. Usually there were many racers who contended for the prize.

But one receiveth the prize? The victor, and he alone. The prize which was conferred was a wreath of olive at the Olympic games; a wreath of apple at Delphi; of pine at the Isthmian; and of parsley at the Nemean games.-*Addison*. Whatever the prize was, it was conferred on the successful champion on the last day of the games, and with great solemnity, pomp, congratulation, and rejoicing.

"Every one thronged to see and congratulate them; their relations, friends, and countrymen, shedding tears of tenderness and joy, Lifted them on their shoulders to show them to the crowd, and held them up to the applauses of the whole assembly, who strewed handfuls of flowers over them."

(Anachar. iii. 448.) Nay, at their return home, they rode in a triumphal chariot; the walls of the city were broken down to give them entrance; and in many cities a subsistence was given them out of the public treasury, and they were exempted from taxes. Cicero says that a victory at the Olympic games was not much less honourable than a triumph at Rome. see Anachar. iii. 469, and Rob. Cal., art. *Race*."

When Paul says that but one receives the prize, he does not mean to say that there will be the same small proportion among those who shall enter into heaven, and among Christians. But his idea is, that as they make an effort to obtain the prize, so should we; as many who strive for it then lose it, it is possible that we may; and that therefore we should strive for the crown, and make an effort for it, as if but one out of many could obtain it. This, he says, was the course which he pursued; and it shows, in a most striking manner, the fact that an effort may be made, and should be made, to enter into heaven.

So run, that ye may obtain. So run in the Christian race, that you may obtain the prize of glory, the crown incorruptible. So live, so deny yourselves, so make constant exertion, that you may not fail of that prize, the crown of glory, which awaits the righteous in heaven. Comp. [Hebrews 12:1](#). Christians may do this when

(1.) they give themselves wholly to God, and make this the grand business of life;

(2.) "when they lay aside every weight," ([Hebrews 12:1](#)), and renounce all sin and all improper attachments;

(3.) when they do not allow themselves to be *diverted* from the object, but keep the goal constantly in view;

(4.) when they do not flag, or grow weary in their course;

(5.) when they deny themselves; and

(6.) when they keep their eye fully fixed on Christ ([Hebrews 12:2](#)) as their example and their strength, and on heaven as the end of their race, and on the crown of glory as their reward.

(*) "So run, that ye" [Philippians 2:16](#), [3:14](#), [1 Timothy 6:12](#), [2 Timothy 2:5](#)

Verse 25. *And every man that striveth for the mastery.* [αγωνιζομενος](#). That *agonizes*; that is, that is engaged in the exercise of wrestling, boxing, or pitching the bar or quoit. [Luke 13:24](#). The sense is, every one who endeavours to obtain a victory in these athletic exercises.

Is temperate in all things. The word which is rendered "is temperate," ([εγκρατευεται](#),) denotes abstinence from all that would excite, stimulate, and ultimately enfeeble; from wine, from exciting and luxurious living, and from licentious indulgences. It means that they did all they could to make the body vigorous, active, and supple. They pursued a course of entire temperate living. Comp. [Acts 24:25](#), [1 Corinthians 7:9](#), [Galatians 5:23](#), [2 Peter 1:6](#). It relates not only to indulgences unlawful in themselves, but to abstinence from many things that were regarded as *lawful*, but which were believed to render the body weak and effeminate. The phrase, "in all things," means that this course of temperance

or abstinence was not confined to one thing, or to one class of things, but to every kind of food and drink, and every indulgence that had a tendency to render the body weak and effeminate. The preparations which those who proposed to contend in these games made is well known, and is often referred to by the classic writers. Epictetus, as quoted by Grotius, (in loco,) thus speaks of these preparations. "Do you wish to gain the prize at the Olympic games? consider the requisite preparations and the consequence. You must observe a strict regimen; must live on food which is unpleasant; must abstain from all delicacies; must exercise yourself at the prescribed times in heat and in cold; you must drink nothing cool, (*ψυχρον*;) must take no wine as usual; you must put yourself under a pugilist, as you would under a physician, and afterwards enter the lists." (Epict., oh. 35.) Horace has described the preparations necessary in the same way.

**Qui studet optatam cursu contingere metam
Multa tulit fecitque puer; sudavit, et alsit,
Abstinuit Venere et Baccho.-*De ARTE Poet.* 412**

**A youth who hopes the Olympic prize to gain,
All arts must try, and every toil sustain;
The extremes of heat and cold must often prove,
And shun the weakening joys of wine and love.-*Francis***

To obtain a corruptible crown. A garland, diadem, or civic wreath, that must soon fade away. The garland bestowed on the victor was made of olive, pine, apple, laurel, or parsley. That would soon lose its beauty and fade; of course, it could be of little value. Yet we see how eagerly they sought it; how much self-denial those who entered the lists would practise to obtain it; how long they would deny themselves of the common pleasures of life, that they might be successful. So much temperance would heathens practise to obtain a fading wreath of laurel, pine, or parsley! Learn hence,

(1.) the duty of denying ourselves to obtain a far more valuable reward, the incorruptible crown of heaven.

(2.) The duty of all Christians, who strive for that crown, to be temperate in all things. If the heathens practised temperance to obtain a fading laurel, should not we to obtain one that never fades?

(3.) How much *their* conduct puts to shame the conduct of many professing Christians and Christian ministers. *They* set such a value on a civic wreath of pine or laurel, that they were willing to deny themselves, and practise the most rigid abstinence. *They* knew that indulgence in WINE and in luxurious living unfitted them for the struggle and for victory; they knew that it enfeebled their powers, and

weakened their frame; and, like men intent on an object dear to them, they abstained wholly from these things, and embraced the principles of total abstinence. Yet how many professed Christians, and Christian ministers, though striving for the crown that fadeth not away, indulge in wine, and in the filthy, offensive, and disgusting use of tobacco; and in luxurious living, and in habits of indolence and sloth! How many there are that WILL not give up these habits, though they know that they are enfeebling, injurious, offensive, and destructive to religious comfort and usefulness. Can a man be truly in earnest in his professed religion; can he be a sincere Christian, who is not willing to abandon anything and everything that will tend to impair the rigour of his mind, and weaken his body, and make him a stumbling-block to others?

(4.) The value of temperance is here presented in a very striking and impressive view. When even the heathens wished to accomplish anything that demanded skill, strength, power, rigour of body, they saw the necessity of being temperate, and they were so. And this *proves* what all experiment has proved, that if men wish to *accomplish* much, they must be temperate. It *proves* that men can do more without intoxicating drink than they can with it. The example of these Grecian *Athletæ*-their wrestlers, boxers, and racers-is *against* all the farmers, and mechanics, and seamen, and day-labourers, and *gentlemen*, and *clergymen*, and *lawyers*, who plead that stimulating drink is necessary to enable them to bear cold and heat, and toil and exposure. A

little *experience* from men like the Grecian wrestlers, who had something that they wished to do, is much better than a great deal of philosophy and sophistical reasoning from men who wish to drink, and to find some argument for drinking that shall be a salvo to their consciences. Perhaps the world has furnished no stronger argument in favour of *total abstinence* than the example of the Grecian *Athletæ*. It is certain that their example, the example of men who wished to accomplish much by bodily rigour and health, is an effectual and irrefragable argument against all those who plead that stimulating drinks are desirable or necessary in order to increase the rigour of the bodily frame.

But we. We Christians.

An incorruptible. An incorruptible, an unfading crown. The blessings of heaven that shall be bestowed on the righteous are often represented under the image of a crown or diadem; a crown that is unfading and eternal, [2 Timothy 4:8](#); [James 1:12](#), [1 Peter 5:4](#), [Revelation 2:10](#), [3:11](#), [4:4](#). The doctrine here taught is, the necessity of making an effort to secure eternal life. The apostle never thought of entering heaven by indolence, or by inactivity. He urged, by every possible argument, the necessity of making an exertion to secure the rewards of the just. His *reasons* for this effort are many. Let a few be pondered.

(1.) The work of salvation is difficult. The thousand obstacles arising, the love of sin, and the opposition of Satan and of the world, are in the way.

(2.) The *danger* of losing the crown of glory is great. Every moment exposes it to hazard, for at any moment we may die.

(3.) The *danger* is not only great, but it is *dreadful*. If anything should arouse man, it should be the apprehension of eternal damnation and everlasting wrath.

(4.) Men in this life, in the games of Greece, in the career of ambition, in the pursuit of pleasure and wealth, make immense efforts to obtain the fading and perishing object of their desires. Why should not a man be willing to make *as great* efforts at least to secure eternal glory?

(5.) The value of the interest at stake. Eternal happiness is before those who will embrace the offers of life. If a man should be influenced by anything to make an effort, should it not be by the prospect of eternal glory? What should influence him if this should not?

(*) "incorruptible" [2 Timothy 4:8](#), [James 1:12](#), [1 Peter 5:4](#), [Revelation 2:10](#), [3:11](#)

Verse 26. *I therefore so run.* In the Christian race; in my effort to obtain the prize, the crown of immortality. I exert myself to the utmost, that I may not fail of securing the crown.

Not as uncertainly; ουκαδηλως. This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It usually means, in the classic writers, *obscurely*. Here it means that he did not run as not knowing to what object he aimed. "I do not run at hazard; I do not exert myself for naught; I know at what I aim, and I keep my eye fixed on the object; I have the goal and the crown in view." Probably also the apostle intended to convey this idea, "I so live and act that I am sure of obtaining the crown. I make it a great and grand point of my life so to live that there may be no room for doubt or hesitancy about this matter. I believe it *may* be obtained; and that by a proper course there may be a constant certainty of securing it; and I so LIVE." Oh, how happy and blessed would it be if all Christians thus lived! How much doubt, and hesitancy, and despondency would it remove from many a Christian's mind! And yet it is morally certain that if every Christian were to be only as anxious and careful as were the ancient Grecian wrestlers and racers in the games, they would have the undoubted assurance of gaining the prize. Doddridge and Macknight, however, render this, "as not out

of view;" or as not distinguished; meaning that the apostle was not unseen, but that he regarded himself as constantly in the view of the judge, the Lord Jesus Christ. I prefer the other interpretation, however, as best according with the connexion and with the proper meaning of the word.

So fight I. ΟΥΤΩΠΥΚΤΕΥΩ. This word is applied to the boxers, or the pugilists, in the Grecian games. The exercise of boxing, or fighting with the fist, was a part of the entertainment with which the enlightened nations of Greece delighted to amuse themselves.

Not as one that beateth the air. The phrase here is taken" from the habits of the pugilists or boxers, who were accustomed, before entering the lists, to exercise their limbs with the gauntlet, in order to acquire greater skill and dexterity. There was also, before the real contest commenced, a play with their fists and weapons, by way of show or bravado, which was called σκιαμαχια, a mock-battle, or a fighting the air. The phrase also is applicable to a missing the aim, when a blow was struck in a real struggle, and when the adversary would elude the blow, so that it would be spent in the empty air. This last is the idea which Paul means to present. He did not miss his aim; he did not exert himself and spend his strength for naught. Every blow that he struck *told*; and he did not waste his energies on that which would produce no result. He did not strive with rash, ill-advised, or uncertain blows; but all his efforts were

directed, with good account, to the grand purpose of subjugating his enemy-sin, and the corrupt desires of the flesh-and bringing everything into captivity to God. Much may be learned from this. Many an effort of Christians is merely beating the air. The energy is expended for naught. There is a want of wisdom, or skill, or perseverance; there is a failure of plan; or there is a mistake in regard to what is to be done, and what should be done. There is often among Christians very little aim or object; there is no *plan*; and the efforts are wasted, scattered, inefficient efforts; so that, at the close of life, many a man may say that he has spent his ministry or his Christian course mainly, or entirely, in *beating the air*. Besides, many a one sets up a man of straw, and fights that. He fancies error and heresy in others, and opposes that. He becomes a *heresy-hunter*; or he opposes some irregularity in religion that, if left alone, would die of itself; or he fixes all his attention on some minor evil, and devotes his life to the destruction of that alone. When death comes, he may have never struck a blow at one of the *real* and dangerous enemies of the gospel; and the simple record on the tombstone of many a minister and many a private Christian might be, "Here lies one who spent his life in beating the air."

(*) "beateth" "striket"

Verse 27. *But I keep under my body.* υπωπιαζω. This word occurs in the New Testament only here and in [Luke 18:5](#),

"Lest by her continual coming she weary me." The word is derived probably from *υπωποιν*, the part of the face under the eye, (*Passow*;) and means, properly, to strike under the eye, either with the fist or the cestus, so as to render the part livid, or, as we say, black and blue; or, as is vulgarly termed, to give any one a black eye. The word is derived, of course, from the athletic exercises of the Greeks. It then comes to mean, *to treat any one with harshness, severity, or cruelty*; and thence also so to treat any evil inclinations or dispositions; or to subject one's self to mortification or self-denial, or to a severe and rigid discipline, that all the corrupt passions might be removed. The word here means, that Paul made use of all possible means to subdue his corrupt and carnal inclinations; to show that he was not under the dominion of evil passions, but was wholly under the dominion of the gospel.

And bring it into subjection, δουλαγωγω. This word properly means, to reduce to servitude or slavery; and probably was usually applied to the act of subduing an enemy, and leading him captive from the field of battle; as the captives in war were regarded as slaves. It then means, effectually and totally to subdue, to conquer, to reduce to bondage and subjection. Paul means by it, the purpose to obtain a complete *victory* over his corrupt passions and propensities, and a design to gain the mastery over all his natural and evil inclinations.

Lest that by any means. [1 Corinthians 9:22](#). Paul designed to make every possible effort to be saved. He did not mean to be lost, but he meant to be saved. He felt that there was danger of being deceived and lost; and he meant by some means to have evidence of piety that would abide the trial of the day of judgment.

When I have preached to others. Doddridge renders this, "lest after having served as a herald to others, I should myself be disapproved;" and supposes that there was allusion in this to the Grecian *herald*, whose business it was to proclaim the conditions of the games, to display the prizes, etc. In this interpretation, also, Macknight, Rosenmuller, Koppe, and most of the modern interpreters agree. They suppose, therefore, that the allusion to the games is carried through all this description. But there is this difficulty in this interpretation, that it represents the apostle as *both* a herald and a contender in the games, and thus leads to an inextricable confusion of metaphor. Probably, therefore, this is to be taken in the usual sense of the word *preaching* in the New Testament; and the apostle here is to be understood as *dropping* the metaphor, and speaking in the usual manner. He had preached to others, to many others. He had proclaimed the gospel far and near. He had preached to many thousands, and had been the means of the conversion of thousands. The contest, the agony, the struggle in which he had been engaged, was that of preaching the gospel in the most effectual manner. And yet he felt that

there was a *possibility* that even after all this he might be lost.

I myself should be a castaway. This word ([αδοκιμος](#)) is taken from *bad metals*, and properly denotes those which will not bear the test that is applied to them; that are found to be base and worthless, and are therefore rejected and cast away. The apostle had subjected himself to trials. He had given himself to self-denial and toil; to persecution and want; to perils, and cold, and nakedness, and hunger. He had done this, among other things, to give his religion a fair trial, to see whether it would bear all these tests-as metal is cast into the fire to see whether it is genuine, or is base and worthless. In doing this, he had endeavoured to subdue his corrupt propensities, and bring everything into captivity to the Redeemer, that it might be found that he was sincere, and humble, and devoted Christian. Many have supposed that the word "cast-away" here refers to those who had entered the lists, and had contended, and who had then been examined as to the manner in which they had conducted the contest, and had been found to have departed from the rules of the games, and who were then rejected. But this interpretation is too artificial and unnatural. The simple idea of Paul is, that he was afraid that he should be disapproved, rejected, cast off; that it would appear, after all, that he had no religion, and would then be cast away as unfit to enter into heaven.

From the many remarks which might be made from this interesting chapter, we may select the following:

(1.) We see the great anxiety which Paul had to save souls. This was his grand purpose; and for this he was willing to deny himself and to bear any trial.

(2.) We should be kind to others; we should not needlessly offend them; we should conform to them, as far as it can be done consistently with Christian integrity.

(3.) We should make an effort to be saved. Oh, if men made such exertions to obtain a corruptible crown, how much greater should we make to obtain one that fadeth not away!

(4.) Ministers, like others, are in danger of losing their souls. If *Paul* felt this danger, who is there among the ministers of the cross who should not feel it? If Paul was not safe, who is?

(5.) The fact that a man has preached to many is no certain evidence that he will be saved, [1 Corinthians 9:27](#). Paul had

preached to thousands, and yet he felt that after all this there was a possibility that he might be lost.

(6.) The fact that a man has been very successful in the ministry is no certain evidence that he will be saved. God converts men; and he may sometimes do it by the instrumentality of those who themselves are deceived, or are deceivers. They may preach much truth; and God may bless that truth, and make it the means of saving the soul. There is no conclusive evidence that a man is a Christian simply because he is a successful and laborious preacher, any more than there is that a man is a Christian because he is a good farmer, and because God sends down the rain and the sunshine on his fields. Paul felt that even his success was no certain evidence that he would be saved. And if Paul felt thus, who should *not* feel that after the most distinguished success, he may himself be at last a cast-away?

(7.) It will be a solemn and awful thing for a minister of the gospel, and a *successful* minister, to go down to hell. What more fearful doom can be conceived, than after having led others in the way to life; after having described to them the glories of heaven; after having conducted them to the "sweet fields beyond the swelling flood" of death, he should find himself shut out, rejected, and cast down to hell! What more terrible can be imagined in the world of perdition than the doom of one who was once a minister of God, and once esteemed as a light in the church and a guide of souls, now

sentenced to inextinguishable fires, while multitudes saved by him shall have gone to heaven ! How fearful is the condition, and how solemn the vocation, of a minister of the gospel!

(8.) Ministers should be solicitous about their personal piety. Paul, one might suppose, might have rested contented with the remarkable manner of his conversion. He might have supposed that that put the matter beyond all possible doubt. But he did no such thing. He felt that it was necessary to have evidence day by day that he was then a Christian. Of all men, Paul was perhaps *least* disposed to live on past experience, and to trust to such experience. Of all men, he had perhaps most reason to trust to such experience; and yet how seldom does he refer to it, how little does he regard it! The great question with him was, "Am I *now* a Christian? am I living as a Christian should *now*? am I evincing to others, am I giving to myself daily, constant, growing evidence that I am actuated by the pure principles of the gospel, and that that gospel is the object of my highest preference, and my holiest and constant desire?"

Oh, how holy would be the ministry, if all should endeavour every day to live and act for Christ and for souls with as much steadiness and fidelity as did the apostle Paul!

(*) "I keep" [Romans 8:12](#)

(*) "castaway" "rejected"

Barnes' Notes on the New Testament.

[9:19](#). Paul had not shackled the exercise of his rights in the area of food and drink alone (as he had intimated the knowledgeable Christians should do, [8:9-13](#)), but he had applied it to numerous facets of his ministry so that **though** he was **free** (*eleutheros*; cf. [8:9](#); [9:1](#)) he voluntarily became a **slave** (cf. [Phil. 2:6-7](#)) for the good of others ([1 Cor. 10:33](#)) whom he wanted **to win** ([9:22](#)).

[9:20](#). Though Paul was primarily an apostle to the Gentiles ([Gal. 2:8](#)), he never lost his concern for the salvation of his own people ([Rom. 9:3](#)). He made it his custom to seek out the synagogue in each town he entered ([Acts 17:2](#)) in order **to win the Jews** ([Rom. 1:16](#)). No verse points out more starkly Paul's own consciousness of what he was, both before and after meeting Christ. Before, he was the Jew's **Jew**, faultless with regard to legalistic righteousness ([Phil. 3:6](#)). Afterward, he was a new man ([2 Cor. 5:17](#); [Gal. 2:20](#)), who had found in Christ the righteousness he had sought ([Rom. 10:4](#); [1 Cor. 1:30](#)). He was still a Hebrew ([2 Cor. 11:22](#); [Phil 3:5](#)), but he was no longer a Jew living according to the

Law (**I... am not under the law**). Still, he was willing to subject himself to the scruples of the Jews (e.g., [Acts 21:23-36](#)) in order to gain a hearing for the gospel and **to win** them to Christ. Yet he never compromised the essence of the gospel at the heart of which was salvation by faith, not works ([Gal. 2:16](#); [Eph. 2:8-9](#)) and freedom from legalism ([Gal. 2:4-5](#)).

9:21. In contrast to the Jews, "those under the Law" ([v. 20](#)), **those not having the Law** were the Gentiles. Among Gentiles, Paul was willing to abandon past scruples of a morally indifferent sort, such as eating meat offered sacrificially to a pagan god ([10:27](#); cf. [Acts 15:29](#)), in order **to win** Gentiles to Christ. But though Paul was a forceful advocate of liberty ([Gal. 5:1](#)), he did not suggest he was an advocate of libertinism (cf. [1 Cor. 6:12-20](#)). He was still under authority, but not to the Old Testament Law. He was responsible to God (cf. [3:9](#)) and Christ (cf. [4:1](#)) and was enabled by the Spirit to fulfill the law of love ([Rom. 13:8-10](#); [Gal. 5:13-25](#)), the opposite of lawlessness (cf. [Matt. 24:12](#) where lawlessness drives out love). **Christ's law** ([Gal. 6:2](#)) was to love God and man ([Mark 12:30-31](#)), which law Paul obeyed ([1 Cor. 10:31-33](#)).

9:22. In his references to Jews and Gentiles in the preceding verses, Paul explained his voluntary restraint of freedom in order to reach unbelievers with the gospel. Some suggest that **the weak** in this verse refers to Jews and Gentiles together in a state of unbelief and so was intended to summarize Paul's previously stated convictions (cf. [Rom. 5:6](#) where "the weak" are also called "the ungodly"). It is more

likely, however, that Paul was referring explicitly to the weak Corinthians described in 1 Corinthians [8:9-11](#) (cf. Jew, Greeks, and the church of God in [10:32](#)). His concern **to win** them was not in the preliminary sense of justification as in the case of unbelieving Jews and Gentiles ([9:20-21](#)) but to win the Corinthians in terms of sanctification and maturity in Christ (cf. [Matt. 18:15](#))—and so to **save** them for God's ongoing work in their lives (cf. [1 Cor. 5:5](#); [8:11](#)). Paul's condescension to the scruples and customs of **all men** (cf. "everyone" in [9:19](#)) found application on a momentary case-by-case basis since it would be impossible to satisfy simultaneously the penchants of both Jews and Gentiles alike.

[9:23](#). Paul voluntarily did this in order to gain the widest possible hearing for **the gospel** and so to **share in its blessings** as God's fellow worker ([3:9](#)), reaping the joyful harvest of many won to Christ (cf. [John 4:36](#)).

[9:24-25](#). Paul's commitment to this course of ministry did not come easily. It required personal discipline (**strict training**) like that of an athlete who strove for supremacy in his field (cf. [15:10](#)). To that end Paul willingly gave up certain privileges which might otherwise be his to enjoy so that he could win **the prize**. The prize for Paul was not the temporary **crown** (*stephanon*) bestowed by men (in the biennial games near Corinth the "crown" was a pine wreath) but the eternal **crown** bestowed by Christ ([3:13-14](#); [2 Cor. 5:10](#)). Paul's crown would be the consummation of the reward ([1 Cor. 9:18](#)) he partially enjoyed, the opportunity to

glory before Christ in those he had been able to win ([2 Cor. 1:14](#); [Phil. 2:16](#); [1 Thes. 2:19](#)).

[9:26-27](#). Paul's dictum of becoming "all things to all men" ([v. 22](#)) could have been construed as the aimless capitulation of an unprincipled man. But it was just the opposite! Every move made in the course of his race was calculated to further his pursuit of the prize (cf. [Phil. 3:13-14](#)). Every blow struck was meant to land squarely on his opponent and send him reeling from the contest (cf. [Eph. 6:12](#); [James 4:7](#)). To achieve this, Paul would not let his body master him (cf. [1 Cor. 6:12](#)); sometimes he denied even its demand for rightful privileges and pleasures ([8:9](#)) for a greater good ([10:33](#)).

Paul was competing well himself and had called many to join him (the word *preached* is *kēryxas*, the noun form of which signified a herald who summoned contestants to a race), but that did not guarantee him a victorious finish. He held out the possibility that even he could **be disqualified for the prize**. The single Greek word translated by that phrase (*adokimos*) literally means "unapproved." In other contexts it was applied to the unsaved (e.g., [Rom. 1:28](#); [Titus 1:16](#)). Here Paul was not addressing the issue of salvation, nor for that matter was even the prize specifically in mind. Rather, he seemed concerned with continuance in the race. Like the brother who had indulged in immorality ([1 Cor. 5:1-5](#)), Paul's life could be cut short by the disciplinary disapproval of God. God had disciplined in the past ([10:6-10](#)), was disciplining in the present ([11:30-32](#)), and would discipline in the immediate future ([5:5](#)). Paul was concerned that some might not be able to say with him one day, "I have fought the

good fight, I have finished the race" ([2 Tim. 4:7](#)), but would find themselves cut off in the midst of the contest by the disciplinary action of God.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

[9:19](#). The apostle's self-denial and accommodation of himself to the weakness and prejudices of others was not confined to the point of which he had been speaking. He constantly acted on the principle of abstaining in things of no intrinsic importance, from insisting on his rights.

[9:20](#). **To the Jews I became as a Jew.** That is, he acted as they acted, he conformed to their practices, observed the law, avowing at the same time that he did it as a matter of accommodation. Wherever it would fairly have been inferred from his compliance that he regarded these Jewish observances as necessary, he strenuously refused to comply.

[9:22](#). To the weak he became like a weak person; he accommodated himself to their prejudices so that he might win them over to better views. And he wanted the Corinthians to do the same.

I have become all things to all people. This generalizes all that had been said. It was not to this or that group that he was conciliatory, but to all sorts, and as to all matters not intrinsically affecting salvation, so that he might **by any means save some**.

9:25. Exercise self-control. He controls himself in all things. He exercises self-denial in diet, in bodily indulgences, and by painful and protracted discipline. The ancient writers abound in rules of abstinence and exercise to be observed by competitors in preparation for the games.

9:26. Aimlessly. The Greek word may mean 'inconspicuously,' not like someone unseen but like someone on whom all eyes are fixed. Or more probably the idea is, not like someone running uncertain where or for what he is running. A man who runs uncertain as to his course of object runs without spirit or effort.

A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

He Specifies Other Things, in Which He Had Denied Himself for Other Men's Spiritual Interest and Salvation

9:19-23

The apostle takes occasion from what he had before discoursed to mention some other instances of his self-denial and parting with his liberty for the benefit of others.

I. He asserts his liberty (v. 19): Though I be free from all men. He was free-born, a citizen of Rome. He was in bondage to none, nor depended upon any for his subsistence; yet he made himself a servant to all, that he might gain the more. He behaved as a servant; he laboured for their good as a

servant; he was careful to please, as a servant to his master; he acted in many cases as if he had no privileges; and this that he might gain the more, or make the more converts to Christianity. He made himself a servant, that they might be made free.

II. He specifies some particulars wherein he made himself a servant to all. He accommodated himself to all sorts of people.

1. To the Jews, and those under the law, he became a Jew, and as under the law, to gain them. Though he looked on the ceremonial law as a yoke taken off by Christ, yet in many instances he submitted to it, that he might work upon the Jews, remove their prejudices, prevail with them to hear the gospel, and win them over to Christ.

2. To those that are without the law as without law that is, to the Gentiles, whether converted to the Christian faith or not. In innocent things he could comply with people's usages or humours for their advantage. He would reason with the philosophers in their own way. And, as to converted Gentiles, he behaved among them as one that was not under the bondage of the Jewish laws, as he had asserted and maintained concerning them, though he did not act as a lawless person, but as one who was bound by the laws of Christ. He would transgress no laws of Christ to please or humour any man; but he would accommodate himself to all men, where he might do it lawfully, to gain some. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and so, one would have thought, might have excused himself from complying with the Jews; and yet, to

do them good, and win them over to Christ, he did, in innocent things, neglect the power he had to do otherwise, and conformed to some of their usages and laws. And though he might, by virtue of that character, have challenged authority over the Gentiles, yet he accommodated himself, as much as he innocently might, to their prejudices and ways of thinking. Doing good was the study and business of his life; and, so that he might reach this end, he did not stand on privileges and punctilios.

3. To the weak he became as weak, that he might gain the weak, [v. 22](#). He was willing to make the best of them. He did not despise nor judge them, but became as one of them, forbore to use his liberty for their sake, and was careful to lay no stumbling-block in their way. Where any, through the weakness of their understanding, or the strength of their prejudices, were likely to fall into sin, or fall off from the gospel into heathen idolatry, through his use of his liberty, he refrained himself. He denied himself for their sakes, that he might insinuate into their affections, and gain their souls. In short, he became all things to all men, that he might by all means (all lawful means) gain some. He would not sin against God to save the soul of his neighbour, but he would very cheerfully and readily deny himself. The rights of God he could not give up, but he might resign his own, and he very often did so for the good of others.

III. He assigns his reason for acting in this manner ([v. 23](#)):
This I do for the gospel's sake, and that I may be partaker thereof with you; that is, for the honour of Christ, whose the

gospel is, and for the salvation of souls, for which it was designed, and that he and they might communicate in the privileges of it, or partake together of them. For these ends did he thus condescend, deny himself as to his liberty, and accommodate himself to the capacities and usages of those with whom he had to do, where he lawfully might. Note, A heart warmed with zeal for God, and breathing after the salvation of men, will not plead and insist upon rights and privileges in bar to this design. Those manifestly abuse their power in the gospel who employ it not to edification but destruction, and therefore breathe nothing of its spirit.

Paul Shows What Animated Him to This Course, Even the Prospect of an Incorruptible Crown

[9:24-27](#)

In these verses the apostle hints at the great encouragement he had to act in this manner. He had a glorious prize, an incorruptible crown, in view. Upon this head he compares himself to the racers and combatants in the Isthmian games, an allusion well known to the Corinthians, because they were celebrated in their neighbourhood: "Know you not that those who run in a race run all, but one obtaineth the prize? [v. 24](#). All run at your games, but only one gets the race and wins the crown." And here,

I. He excites them to their duty: "So run that you may obtain. It is quite otherwise in the Christian race than in your races; only one wins the prize in them. You may all run so as to obtain. You have great encouragement, therefore, to persist constantly, and diligently, and vigorously, in your course.

There is room for all to get the prize. You cannot fail if you run well. Yet there should be a noble emulation; you should endeavour to outdo one another. And it is a glorious contest who shall get first to heaven, or have the best rewards in that blessed world. I make it my endeavour to run; so do you, as you see me go before you." Note, It is the duty of Christians to follow their ministers closely in the chase of eternal glory, and the honour and duty of ministers to lead them in the way.

II. He directs them in their course, by setting more fully to view his own example, still carrying on the allusion.

1. Those that ran in their games were kept to a set diet: "Every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things, [v. 23](#). The fighters and wrestlers in your exercises are kept to strict diet and discipline; nay, they keep themselves to it. They do not indulge themselves, but restrain themselves from the food they eat and so from the liberties they use on other occasions. And should not Christians much more abridge themselves of their liberty, for so glorious an end as winning the race, and obtaining the prize set before them? They used a very spare diet, and coarse food, and denied themselves much, to prepare for their race and combat; so do I; so should you, after my example. It is hard if, for the heavenly crown, you cannot abstain from heathen sacrifices."

2. They were not only temperate, but inured themselves to hardships. Those who fought with one another in these exercises prepared themselves by beating the air, as the apostle calls it, or by throwing out their arms, and thereby

inuring themselves, beforehand, to deal about their blows in close combat, or brandish them by way of flourish. There is no room for any such exercise in the Christian warfare. Christians are ever in close combat. Their enemies make fierce and hearty opposition, and are ever at hand; and for this reason they must lay about them in earnest, and never drop the contest, nor flag and faint in it. They must fight, not as those that beat the air, but must strive against their enemies with all their might. One enemy the apostle here mentions, namely, the body; this must be kept under, beaten black and blue, as the combatants were in these Grecian games, and thereby brought into subjection. By the body we are to understand fleshly appetites and inclinations. These the apostle set himself to curb and conquer, and in this the Corinthians were bound to imitate him. Note, Those who would aright pursue the interests of their souls must beat down their bodies, and keep them under. They must combat hard with fleshly lusts, and not indulge a wanton appetite, and long for heathenish sacrifices, nor eat them, to please their flesh, at the hazard of their brethren's souls. The body must be made to serve the mind, not suffered to lord over it.

III. The apostle presses this advice on the Corinthians by proper arguments drawn from the same contenders.

1. They take pains, and undergo all those hardships, to obtain a corruptible crown ([v. 25](#)), but we an incorruptible. Those who conquered in these games were crowned only with the withering leaves or boughs of

trees, of olive, bays, or laurel. But Christians have an incorruptible crown in view, a crown of glory that never fadeth away, an inheritance incorruptible, reserved in heaven for them. And would they yet suffer themselves to be outdone by these racers or wrestlers? Can they use abstinence in diet, exert themselves in racing, expose their bodies to so much hardship in a combat, who have no more in view than the trifling huzzas of a giddy multitude, or a crown of leaves? And shall not Christians, who hope for the approbation of the sovereign Judge, and a crown of glory from his hands, stretch forward in the heavenly race, and exert themselves in beating down their fleshly inclinations, and the strong-holds of sin?

2. The racers in these games run at uncertainty. All run, but one receives the prize, [v. 24](#). Every racer, therefore, is at a great uncertainty whether he shall win it or no. But the Christian racer is at no such uncertainty. Every one may run here so as to obtain; but then he must run within the lines, he must keep to the path of duty prescribed, which, some think, is the meaning of running not as uncertainly, [v. 26](#). He who keeps within the limits prescribed, and keeps on in his race, will never miss his crown, though others may get theirs before him. And would the Grecian racers keep within their bounds, and exert themselves to the very last, when one only could win, and all must be uncertain which that one would be? And shall not Christians be much more exact and vigorous when all are sure of a crown when they come to the end of their race?

3. He sets before himself and them the danger of yielding to fleshly inclinations, and pampering the body and its lusts and appetites: I keep my body under, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away ([v. 27](#)), rejected, disapproved, *adokimos*, one to whom the *brabeutēs*-the judge or umpire of the race, will not decree the crown. The allusion to the games runs through the whole sentence. Note, A preacher of salvation may yet miss it. He may show others the way to heaven, and never get thither himself. To prevent this, Paul took so much pains in subduing and keeping under bodily inclinations, lest by any means he himself, who had preached to others, should yet miss the crown, be disapproved and rejected by his sovereign Judge. A holy fear of himself was necessary to preserve the fidelity of an apostle; and how much more necessary is it to our preservation? Note, Holy fear of ourselves, and not presumptuous confidence, is the best security against apostasy from God, and final rejection by him.

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible.

Ver. 19.—Well expounded in [Gal 5:13](#), compared with [1 Cor 9:1](#).

Ver. 20.—Keeping the great feasts and observing vows, circumcising Timothy, [but not Titus].

Ver. 21.—“*Under law*” in both cases. Too absolute to say that without the article “*law*” in general, and with the article, *the Mosaic law*, are meant. Truer statement in Cremer, *Lexicon*: “The article is usually wanting where stress is laid not upon its historical impress and outward form, but upon the conception itself; not upon *the law* which God gave, but upon *law as given by God*, and as, therefore, the only one that is or can be. So especially in passages where the article is alternately found and omitted, [Rom 2:14-15](#), etc. But that νόμος without the article also means the law which was given to Israel, is clear most manifestly from [Rom 5:13](#)” (pp. 430, 431). Augustine’s “law” for a Christian life, “Dilige, et quod vis fac,” is not *practically* enough. Christian liberty is within the bounds of the will of another—*Christ “the Lord.”* And this is now the great law of “*God*”: “Be ye under the law and will of The Son, Christ.” (Cf. [John 4:29](#).)

Ver. 22. **All ... all ... all ... some.**—If only he could have said “*all*” in the fourth instance! But some will “perish for whom Christ died” ([1 Cor 8:11](#)); no great wonder, then, if some are not saved for whom Paul preached, and used this holy, self-sacrificing versatility, but all in vain! Obviously “*all things*” has its limits. “To do wrong can *save* no one” (Beet).

Ver. 23.—“That I may obtain, in company with these whom I hope to save, the blessings promised in the Gospel” (Beet). Good exposition in [1 Tim 4:16](#).

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1 & 2 Corinthians.

9:19 *a servant*. By choice, Paul 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. [Prov. 11:30](#)).

9:20 *became as a Jew*. 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. [Rom. 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. [Rom. 9:3](#); [10:1](#); [11:14](#)). For examples of this identification with customs of the Jews, *see notes on* [Acts 16:3](#); [18:18](#); [21:20-26](#).

9:21 *those... without law*. This refers to Gentiles. Paul was not suggesting the violating of God’s moral law, but, as he explained, not being lawless toward God, but abiding by the law of Jesus Christ (cf. [James 1:25](#); [2:8](#), [12](#)).

9:22 *weak*. Paul stooped to make the gospel clear at the lower level of comprehension, which he no doubt had done often while dealing with the Corinthians themselves (cf. [2:1-5](#)). ***all things... all means*.** Within the bounds of God’s Word, he would not offend the Jew, Gentile, or those weak in understanding. Not changing Scripture or compromising the

truth, he would condescend in ways that could lead to salvation.

[9:24-27](#) Liberty cannot be limited without self-control, since the flesh resists limits on its freedom. Here, Paul speaks of his personal self-control.

[9:24](#) *race*. The Greeks enjoyed two great athletic events, the Olympic games and the Isthmian games, and because the Isthmian events were held in Corinth, believers there were quite familiar with this analogy of running to win.

[9:25](#) *temperate*. Self-control is crucial to victory. *crown*. A wreath of greenery given to the winner of the race. Cf. [2 Timothy 4:8](#); [1 Peter 5:4](#).

[9:26](#) *not with uncertainty*. Four times he has mentioned his goal of winning people to salvation ([vv. 19, 22](#)). *beats the air*. Paul changes the metaphor to boxing to illustrate the point that he was no shadow boxer, just waving his arms without effect (cf. [1 Tim. 1:18](#)).

[9:27](#) *discipline*. From a term meaning literally “to hit under the eye.” Paul knocked out the bodily impulses to keep them from preventing him from his mission of winning souls to Christ. *disqualified*. Another metaphor from the athletic games. A contestant who failed to meet basic training requirements could not participate at all, much less have an opportunity to win. Paul may be especially referring to such fleshly sins that disqualify a person from preaching and leading the church, particularly being blameless and above

reproach in the sexual area, since such sin is a disqualification (*see notes on [Ps. 101:6](#); [1 Tim. 3:2](#); [Titus 1:6](#)*).

The MacArthur Bible Commentary.

Seven Costs **to Being an** **Evangelistic Leader**

By LifeWay Leadership

November 10, 2017

By Thom Rainer

The topic of evangelism has grown strangely quiet in many churches. Pastors are not talking about it. Other church leaders aren't talking about it. Members aren't talking about it.

And if we aren't talking about evangelism, you can be assured many of us aren't doing evangelism.

There are likely many explanations for the death of evangelism in our churches. Among them is the stark reality that many of our church leaders, pastors and others, are not intentionally evangelistic.

Why is that?

Though it is not an excuse, we must acknowledge that the pastors and other church leaders pay a high cost when they become intentionally evangelistic. Sometimes it just seems

easier to keep our mouths shut about the gospel. Look at these costs to being an evangelistic leader in a local church.

1. **It is spiritual warfare.** Satan and his demonic horde do not want people to know the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though the manifestations of demonic opposition are many, you can be assured the evangelistic leader will confront such opposition again and again.
2. **You will be viewed as narrowed minded.** John 14:6 does not sit well with culture. Though Jesus Himself said He was the only way, truth, and life, leaders will be rejected and opposed for such “narrow-minded” thinking.
3. **Something else must be sacrificed when you are an evangelistic leader.** Your time is limited. You have sermons to prepare. You have hospital visits to make. You have counseling appointments. You have way too many meetings. And hardly a day goes by without a new and unexpected crisis arising. You must sacrifice something else to take time to share the gospel with others.
4. **Some of your members will complain.** You have some church members who will complain about anything that does not serve them personally. It may be headed under the passive-aggressive guise of “I’m not being fed,” but you can be assured some of your members will oppose your leadership in evangelism.
5. **New converts will be seen as threats or inconveniences in your church.** True story. In one of the churches I served as pastor, a lady tried to get me

fired because the “new people” were “messing up our church.” New Christians are needy. Some longer-term members don’t like to give up their comforts for others.

6. **Discussing theology is easier than doing theology.** I wish we spent an equal amount of time sharing the gospel as we do talking and debating theology. Yes, we need to take bold stands for the truth. But we don’t need just to stand there; we need to do and go.

7. **You will have to break out of your holy huddles.** It’s more comfortable hanging out with people who are like us and who believe like we do. But you will not have that luxury if you become an intentional evangelistic leader in your church. You will discover new relationships with non-Christians, which means you can’t spend all your time with Christians.

There is a cost to being an evangelistic leader in your church.

But the benefits are far greater.

They last through eternity.

Thom Rainer serves as the President of [LifeWay Christian Resources](#).

***He doesn't sanctify us to sterilize us... No!
God sanctifies us to multiply us – Amen!*** -JDP

