

LIVING FREE, LIVING BOUND

GOD'S GRACE FOR AN IMPERFECT CHURCH: A STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS · 1 CORINTHIANS 9:1-23 · JUNE 23, 2024 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

"I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings." (1 Corinthians 9:22b-23)

Paul and the Rights of the Apostles

- What it means to be an "apostle" (9:1-3)
- The Corinthian critique of Paul (9:3; 3:1-4; 4:1-13; Acts 18:1-4)
- The apostolic right to adequate ministry support (9:4-12a, 13-14)

Paul's Example on Navigating Rights, Freedom, and the Gospel

- Paul serves the gospel, clearing the way for the message to be heard (9:12b)
- Paul incarnates the gospel, forgoing apostolic rights so the free message is proclaimed freely (9:15-18)
- Paul 'missionalizes' the gospel, standing in solidarity with all so the message can be not only heard but received (9:19-23)
- Paul's example to the Corinthian church in conflict about Christian freedom and exercise of rights (8:9)

Learning from Paul's Example

- Choose a worthy destination
- Choose wise guides
- Choose the way you will walk

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When have you seen someone let go of what is their right in order to serve someone or give someone what they need?
2. This week we continue our preaching series, "God's Grace for an Imperfect Church" by looking at 1 Corinthians 9:1-23. Whether on your own or with others, begin your study in prayer, asking God to speak to you through this study and then read that text aloud.
3. *Background: Throughout this letter, Paul is attempting to bring the Corinthians back to Jesus the crucified Messiah at the heart of the gospel message. This has implications for how Paul*

1. *lives as an apostle and also how the Corinthians are to live with one another.*
2. How would you summarize what Paul is describing as the nature of being an apostle in 9:1-3?
3. In the previous chapter where Paul explored how the Corinthians should support one another in their freedom or rights to eat food sacrificed to idols. In verses 4-6, what rights does Paul have as an apostle that he is foregoing?
4. What other examples does Paul offer in verses 7-10 and 13-14 where workers survive based on the results of their work?
5. How does Paul describe his approach to his rights to financial support in verse 12 and 15?
6. Have you ever encountered someone whose life powerfully displayed the gospel even without words? On the opposite side, have you ever met someone whose way of living robbed the gospel message of its worth? How have you dealt with this in your own life?
7. The Corinthians looked down on Paul for working with his hands as a literal tentmaker while with them (see Acts 18:1-4), which didn't convey the status they expected of an apostle. Why does Paul say he has foregone his right and set aside status in verse 15-18?
8. How would you say Paul's life and approach to ministry as described in verses 19-23 echoes the self-giving love of Jesus the crucified Messiah?
9. What is one thing God speaking to you personally through this study? If you are with a small group, discuss that with one another and then pray about what you shared. If you are on your own, write it down, pray about it, and share this with someone during the next few days.

DIG DEEPER

This week dig deeper in one or more of the following ways:

- Memorize 1 Corinthians 9:22b23: *"I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."*
- This week, prayerfully consider one way God might be calling you to step forward as a witness to Christ in the life of someone else. Pray for that person and for an opportunity to share Christ. Is there anything you may need to "forego" in order to share the gospel?
- Explore these additional resources:
 - F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*
 - N. T. Wright, *Paul: A Biography*