

1 Corinthians 9

1 Corinthians 9
Tape #8144
Pastor Chuck Smith

Shall we turn in our Bibles now to 1 Corinthians chapter nine. Paul asked a series of rhetorical type questions, which he is really not expecting an answer. But the answer is so obvious, it needs not to be answered. *Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?* Now to be an apostle in those days, you were required seeing the risen Christ. Paul in another place as he talked about his apostleship, said have I not seen the risen Lord? They also had to have works that manifested the fact that they were apostles, most generally, the working of miracles through their lives, through their prayers. So Paul declares that his works among the Corinthians was a witness to his apostleship.

He said, ²*If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.* You are my witnesses of the apostleship. You are my living epistles that are known and read of all men. Your faith in Christ, the work that God did there in Corinth, though others may not look upon me as an apostle, the work that I did while I was there with you is certainly a testimony to my apostleship.

Now, he said my answer to them, ³*My defense to those who examine me is this:* Evidently in the letter that Paul received from Corinth, there was a challenge by some of his apostleship.

It's an interesting thing, there is this kind of a doctrine or tradition of the apostolic succession of the laying on of hands. The Catholic Church and the Episcopal Church make a big issue over this. When a man is ordained to the ministry, the bishops or the elders lay their hands on that man to ordain him for the ministry. But the man, the bishop, who lays his hand upon you, had hands laid on him by his bishop, who had hands laid on him by his bishop, who had hands laid on him by his bishop, back, back, back, back, back, who had hands laid on him by Peter, the apostle. So there is this apostolic succession of the laying on of hands as the bishop lays hands on you sort of like dominoes, back to Peter. So you see the apostolic succession, you see all these hands coming from Peter to you. Thus the anointing comes from Peter. So it's an important thing. So they often will question, well who gave you the authority to minister? Who gave you the authority to baptize people?

Now the Mormon people declare they are one of the only true churches today because they only have apostles. None of the other churches have twelve apostles, but they have twelve apostles. And that only the apostles have the authority to ordain someone to minister the sacraments of the church. So unless you were ordained by the twelve apostles of the Mormon Church, you really don't have any right to baptize anybody or to administer any of the sacraments of the church. These who put a big thing on this apostolic succession of the laying on of hands, much the same. The question is always, who gave you the authority to do these things? Who gave you the authority to baptize someone? Who gave you the authority to break bread with someone, to administer the sacraments of the church? It's interesting to me that when John was baptizing the Jordan River, that was the question the Pharisees asked him. Who gave you the authority to baptize? They also asked Jesus, by what authority do You do these things? So my answer is the same as John and Jesus, nobody, but the Lord! You know, Paul said, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. So here he is saying, my answer to them that do examine me as far as, where did you come from? Who gave you the authority, you know, to claim apostleship and so forth?

My answer to them is, ⁴*Do we have no right to eat and drink?* That is, haven't we the power to be supported because of our work in the ministry?

⁵*Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?* Now the other apostles were married. When they would go they would take their wives with them, thus the churches would not only support the apostle who came, but they would take care of the wife too. They would provide for both the apostle and his wife. Do we have no right to take along a

believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of our Lord and Peter? Now the brothers of our Lord, James and Jude, they were also apostles in the early church. And of course with Cephas or Peter, we have the same rights that they do, Paul said. I can do this. I can be married. I could have a wife. It would be right then that we would be taken care of, by the churches where we minister.

⁶*Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?* In other words, we're apostles. God has called us to the ministry. We are exercising our ministry. Haven't we a right to be supported like the other apostles are supported in the ministry?

⁷*Who ever goes to war at his own expense?* In other words, who pays, you know, for himself. If you are in the Army, you are being paid by the government to go to warfare. To be trained and all. You don't have to enlist and then pay for boot camp, and pay for your advanced training and all. That is all taken care of because of the fact that you are a soldier or you are a marine or you are a sailor or you are an airman.

Who ever goes to war at his own expense? *Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?* In other words, as Paul said elsewhere, the laborer is worthy of his hire. If you plant a vineyard, you have the right to enjoy the fruit of the vineyard. If you are keeping sheep or the flock, the goats, you have a right to drink the goat's milk.

He said, ⁸*Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also?* ⁹*For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain."* Now, when they were threshing the corn, that is the corn of wheat, it's the wheat kernels, they had this threshing instrument. They would put this wheat out on this flat rock, then the ox would go back and forth over this wheat with the instrument tied behind it, sort of a drag, then, it would knock off all of the husks from the wheat. The law said that you are not to muzzle the ox that treads out the corn. That is, it's out there. It's working. It's laboring. Thus it has a right to eat some of that wheat. So don't muzzle the ox that treads out the corn.

Is it oxen God is concerned about? Does God only take care of oxen? Are they more important to God than man?

¹⁰*Or does He say it altogether for our sakes?* (Paul answers his own question,) *For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope,* (In other words, when you labor for the Lord, you have a hope.) *and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.*

So Paul said, ¹¹*If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?* Paul said to the Galatians that they should communicate unto those who teach them in the Word in every good thing. Encouraging them to communicate to those who are teaching them in the Word. Here he declares to you, if we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If you support us, if you take care of our physical needs.

¹²*If others* (the other apostles, Peter and the others, the brothers of Jesus and all) *are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more?* In other words, I'm the one that established the church there. I'm the one that was the minister to you. If you are sending money to support the apostles in Jerusalem, shouldn't I have a right also to be supported by you?

Nevertheless we have not used this right, Paul sets up the case that you ought to be supporting me, but then he says, I don't want it. I haven't used this power.

but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. ¹³*Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple,* (When the priests would minister in the temple, as the people would bring their sacrifices to be offered by the priests, as the sacrifice was roasting, the priest had a portion of it given to him. When he set out the bread in the temple, the shewbread, then he was to eat of the shewbread. He ministered the things of the Spirit but he also received of those things that were offered. That was part of the law. They that minister about holy things live of the things of the temple.)

and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? ¹⁴*Even so the Lord has commanded* (this is God's command) *that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.* In other words it isn't wrong to be supported by the church if you are ministering to the church.

⁵*But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; (I*

like this. Paul says, look, I have every right. And he proves that he has every right. Now I'm not proving this so that you will support me because I don't want your support. And that's not why I have written this to you. It's just to correct the things that were being said about him.)

for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void. I'd rather be dead, he said, than to take a nickel from you. He glorying now, glorying in the fact that I didn't charge you for my labor, for my services. I didn't take from you. I came to give to you freely. I came to minister not to be ministered to.

Now it seems like there are always those ministries that exist for their own support. Whenever you hear them they are always asking to be ministered to. They always send you a preaddressed return envelope with their letter. They are always soliciting your support. It seems that they exist to be supported by the people.

Whereas there are other ministries that seek to minister and never make any issue about support. I thank God that we are able to minister to you freely and that we never have to talk to you about supporting the ministry. I'm sort of like Paul is this manner. I thank God that we've been able to just minister to you and not have to worry our support. And so I like it. I can say these things not because I'm looking for something from you because I don't need anything from you. My Father is extremely wealthy. He takes good care of me. It is just a blessing to be able to serve Him. So I can talk to you like Paul, very freely on these issues because I don't have an agenda. I'm not trying to, you know, pressure you or solicit you to help me. So better for me, he said to die than that anyone should make by boasting void.

For the first seventeen years before we started Calvary Chapel, in the ministry, I like Paul, worked with my own hands in order to support the family, so I could stay in the ministry. I'm glad for that. For the first two years that I started Calvary Chapel here, I worked apart from the church to support the needs of the family. And God blessed! And God is always taking care of us. When the Bible says my God will supply all of your needs according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus, I looked at every opportunity that God gave me to work as God supplying my need. I've done all kinds of work in order to support the family while I answered the call of God in my heart to the ministry.

I've worked in funeral homes. I've done first calls. I'm sort of a jack of all trades in the funeral industry. I sang when they needed a soloist. I preached when they needed a preacher. I drove the flower car. I drove the family car. I got five bucks per body when I would have to go out and pick somebody up in the middle of the night. And quite often when the boys needed tennis shoes, I'd get a call in the middle of the night. Go pick up a body. I'd get up, rub my eyes and say, thank You, Lord, You've provided for the boy's tennis shoes, you know. Sometimes there would an accident and I would get three or four bodies. We were really in the chips then.

But God has blessed. God has blessed us so much. I have more than I could ever want. God has been gracious and has supplied all of our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. I'm thankful for this because of the way God has blessed, people could very easily point at me and say, well yeah, you know, he gets a good salary and benefits, you know. Who wouldn't want to be in the ministry? Well, I thank God that for close to one half my ministry, I had to work in order to provide for the needs of the family. And thus I paid my dues and no one can really accuse me of serving the Lord just to make a living, but it's from my heart that I've always served God.

But Paul said, ¹⁶*For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!* Paul had God's call upon his heart to preach the gospel. He said, that I am preaching the gospel is not any glory to me. Woe is me if I don't! I preach out of necessity because God has put His call upon my heart to preach the gospel.

He said, ¹⁷*For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.* So for Paul it was a sacrifice. It was not something that he particularly enjoyed, but it was of necessity because of God's call upon his heart.

¹⁸*What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.* Now he said, I have the power or the authority as an apostle to be supported. But I don't abuse that power. I make the gospel of Christ without charge. I

freely give! I love that!

¹⁹*For though I am free from all men, That is, I'm not depending upon them for my support. I know how to work. I know how to make a living. I don't depend upon men for my support. Yet, he said, I've made myself a servant unto all. I'm free of all men! I don't have any obligations because they have supported me. I'm free of all men.*

And yet Paul said, *I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;* His great desire was just to win men to a commitment to Jesus Christ.

So, ²⁰*and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews* (He could talk their language. He could converse with them about their culture, about their customs. He could keep strict Kosher when he was with the Jews. He knew the things that were required, so when he was with the Jews, he kept Kosher with them. He followed their dietarian Sabbath laws in order that he might gain the Jews.); *to those who are under the law* (the judaizers, the Pharisees), *as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law;* ²¹*to those who are without law* (that is to the Gentiles), *as without law* (then he qualifies this) *(not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ)*, In other words, the moral law of God naturally, that stands. The Ten Commandments, they stand. But this law of Christ, the law of love, and this is the law by which Paul lived, love and consideration for others. So those that are without the law I was as without law, that is he didn't worry what he ate, whether or not it was totally Kosher. *that I might win those who are without law;*

²²*to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak.* He could talk their lingo. He could identify with them.

I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. So I have become a servant. I've learned how to adapt because my desire is to just win men for Christ.

²³*Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.* All of this for the sake of Christ, for the sake of the gospel!

Now, ²⁴*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.* The Boston Marathon is interesting to watch. It is interesting to watch the start of the Boston Marathon. The thousands of people that start jogging up the street when the gun goes off. Now many of the people in the Boston Marathon have no intention of winning. It's not even in their mind to win. Many of them who run have no intention of finishing the race. All they want is the tee-shirt that says, I ran in the Boston Marathon. So they drop out rather readily. They'll take a few miles, then kick out and wear the tee-shirt. Of all of the thousands that begin the Boston Marathon, there is only going to be one winner. Probably the one who has trained the hardest, committed himself more fully. When he starts the race, he has in his mind the intention of winning. He has devoted himself to this. He has eaten it. He has slept it. It is all that he has thought about, the day that I start that Boston race. The day that I hear the sound of the gun. The day that I start running, I'm determined that I am going to win. All of the training and the exercise, the discipline, the torture that he has put his body through, that running until you ache and then continue running until the ache is gone. That running until you feel that you can't put another foot in front of the other foot, and then you get your second wind. But he has done it, over and over and over again, in his training because he is determined that he is going to win.

And so Paul said run in such a way that you may obtain it. In other words, in the Christian walk, in the Christian life, there are some who are in the race, but they have no intention of winning the race. Sure, I'm a Christian. But they have never made any sacrifice. They have never gone through any real discipline, real training. They are just in the race. And some, the least little discouragement and they are ready to drop out of the race, but Paul said, run to win! How much of an effort are you giving for the gospel of Jesus Christ? How much are you giving of yourself? How much are you putting in to run this race?

In the Book of Hebrews, we are told we should lay aside every weight and sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Laying aside every weight, every encumbrance. As Paul said earlier, all things are lawful for me but all things are not expedient. It's getting rid of those things that aren't expedient, things that aren't necessary.

They are extra baggage.

As we were going through and were at that point, we pointed out, if you were say, running the hundred meter race in the Olympics, and you came out to set yourself in the blocks, and you were wearing a pair of cowboy boots, people would think you were crazy. You can't run with cowboy boots. You need light, spiked shoes. You want to get the best traction. And you want them to be as light as possible. They have track shoes that weigh about thirteen ounces. You want to lay aside every weight. You want to strip down. You don't want to wear a heavy overcoat, a backpack, laying aside every weight! Yet, we see Christians in the Christian race and they are loaded down with all kinds of junk, baggage. And they are trying to run the Christian race, loaded down with baggage. So we are encouraged, we're exhorted, laying aside every weight and sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the goal! Paul, when he was writing to the Philippian church said (Phil. 3:14), I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. I'm giving it every thing I've got because I want to win! Paul said, run to win. They that run in a race run all, but only one is going to receive the prize. Run to win! So run that you might obtain, the prize, the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!

²⁵And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Mastery is the word for "prize" in the King James. Now that's wrestling, training for wrestling. Paul is talking about the Greek Olympics here, the races that are run in the Olympics. I think Paul was a sport's fan. He often used analogies that related to sports activities and are related to the Olympics. I wouldn't be surprised but what Paul didn't watch a lot of the Olympic events. I think he was a sport's fan. At least I think that because it excuses me. But the fact that he uses these analogies, and it shows a familiarity with the whole sports scene. Those who are training for wrestling in the Olympics, are temperate in all things. That is, they make a lot of sacrifices. They are very careful with their diet. They work out with the weights. They are in training, rigorous training. They are putting their bodies through a tremendous ordeal.

And Paul said, *Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown*, Now in those days in the Olympics, if you won in your wrestling match, the Olympics, you had the honor and the glory of being known as an Olympic champion. You became famous. People sort of "oohed and aahed" over you when you would go places. You were well known as an Olympic champion. But when you would come before the judges seat to receive your reward, it was not a financial reward. What they would do is to put a laurel wreath or a pine bough wreath on your head. All of that pain, training, discipline, to get a pine bow put on my head? Paul sort of makes a point of this. If they are willing to go through all of that discipline just for a corruptible crown. The green pine bough is going to turn brown before long. The needles are going to fall off. And yet they put in all of that exercising, all of that discipline, all of that sacrificing of desserts and things like that, just to get a pine bough on their head.

but we for an imperishable crown. If they are willing to go through for that for a corruptible crown, Paul's argument is very powerful, how much more should we be willing to go through the discipline of the Christian life in order that we might gain an incorruptible crown?

Run to win! Get in this race to win! Be willing to make the sacrifices that are necessary to be a winner because the crown that we receive is not a corruptible crown. We're laboring. We're running. We're wrestling for an incorruptible crown, the crown of righteousness, which the Lord our righteous judge shall give! And not to me only but to all those who love His appearing.

So as Paul was coming towards the end of his race. He had been sentenced to death by Caesar Nero. He wrote to Timothy and said the time of my departure is at hand. But I have fought a good fight. I have finished the racecourse and I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, our righteous judge shall give to me. But not to me only but also to all those who love His appearing. Paul won the race! And now he was looking forward to standing before the judge's seat and receiving his crown of righteousness, which the Lord was going to give to him.

Therefore he said, ²⁶*Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty.* That is, he had a goal--to win! It wasn't, well, I'll run until I get tired. I'm going to win this race. I'm going to give it all I've got! I'm going to put everything into it that I have!

Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. (Not as a shadow boxer.)²⁷*But I discipline my body and bring*

it into subjection, That is, I live a disciplined life. I keep my body under subjection.

There is an internal war that goes on in the life of every believer. It is a striving for the masteries over your life. The determining whether you are going to live after the Spirit or after the flesh. And these two are warring against each other, warring for your mind, warring for your attention, warring to master over you. And your life is either being mastered by your flesh and your fleshly desires, or it's being mastered by the Spirit and your spiritual desires. Ruled and governed by the Spirit, or ruled and governed by the flesh. And it's a battle. It's not one that you are going to win just hands down, easily! It's a constant battle in our Christian experience of whether or not, I'm going to react after the flesh or react after the Spirit. Whether I am going to walk after the flesh or walk after the Spirit. Whether I'm going to deny myself to take up the cross and follow Jesus or I'm going to live for the flesh and indulge myself in fleshly things. Too many Christians are as those in Corinth, who have not disciplined themselves, spiritually. They are not consistent in their spiritual exercise. And we are exercised through the Word of God, through reading the Word. We are spiritually exercised through prayer, through communion with God, but these people are not disciplined in their Bible reading. They are not disciplined in their prayer life. They are sort of just coasting, just cruising.

But Paul said, I keep my body under. Why? Because my body wants to get rule over my mind. It wants to be on top. It wants to control my life. And it's so easy. So many people are controlled by their body appetites. They rule in a person's life. When the body rules, you have the mind of the flesh. That is, you are always thinking about the appetites of the body. You are ruled by your body appetites.

But Paul said, the mind of the flesh is death. Now in contrast to my physical needs, the body needs, that want to rule over me, the Spirit of God also wants to rule and wants my spirit to rule. So that I will be thinking of Spiritual things, my relationship with God, walking with Him, worshipping Him, fellowshiping with Him, learning of Him through the Word, spending time talking to Him, seeking His counsel and advice, seeking His fellowship, walking in fellowship with Him. And when the Spirit rules, I have my mind controlled by the Spirit and thus the mind of the Spirit, which the Bible said, is life, and joy and peace.

Now Paul said, I discipline myself. Actually, I keep my under my body, literally is I beat myself and give myself a black eye to keep my body under. I have a real fight with my body. Don't we all? We all have a real fight with our fleshly desires that want to rule over us. But Paul disciplined, to bring it into subjection, to bring it under the rule of the Spirit.

lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. Having preached the gospel, if I allow my flesh to rule over me, to begin to govern me, I might be cast away.

The word in Greek is *adokimos*. The word *adokimos* means to be approved. And several times in the New Testament this word, *adokimos*, is translated, approved. Approved of God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed. Putting the "a" in front of the *dokimos* gives it a negative. A is a negative prefix in Greek, like our non, negative prefix in English, the "a" is a negative prefix in Greek. So you have *theos*, God. You have *atheos*. You get it? You have the atheist. You have *gnosko*, to know. You have *agnosko*. Or you have agnostic, not to know. So you have the word, *dokimos*, approved. Put the "a" in front of it and you have not approved. So I discipline, I keep my body under. I keep it in subjection lest having preached to others, I myself should become disqualified or disapproved from the race. This meant a lot to Paul. He was very serious about it. The commitment that he made. He wanted to make sure with them that they knew that he wasn't in just cruising. He wasn't in it for the money, for the support. He said, he labored, working with his own hands. He told them, when I was present with you and I had needs, I was not chargeable to any man. For that which was lacking to me or the brothers which came with me from Macedonia, supplied. And in all things I've kept myself from being burdensome unto you and so I will keep myself. Paul went around making tents, in order to support himself in the ministry, unless people would say, he did it for the money. And he loved that, the fact that he could support himself and the fact that could boast. I'm not in it. And I have proved it! You know, I love it!

The Friday night outreach that we are going to have at Irvine Meadows. There won't be an offering taken. You bring your friends with you. They say all they want is the money. They will be surprised. They won't be able to give even if they want to. There will be no offering taken. We're not there to get an offering.

We're there to bring the gospel to people who desperately need to know Jesus Christ for they are going to be lost. And so we love it that we can give the gospel freely and we take care of the expenses. No one can accuse us of just having this outreach gathering thousands of people in order that we might milk them for funds. They can't make that accusation.

And so with Paul, and that's the way Paul ministered. That's the way Jesus told us to minister. He said, freely you have received, freely give! So Paul so labored for Christ, not taking money from them but in it to win, giving it everything he had, because he knew that his payment was coming later when he would stand before the Lord. The Lord would reward him for the labor that he had wrought for Jesus Christ. And he would much rather it be that way.

Father, we thank You for Paul, the apostle and the example that he has set. We thank You for Jesus Christ and the example that He set. For He said He didn't come to be ministered to, but He came to minister. Lord, may we follow these examples. And may we give ourselves freely to one another, to minister to the needs of each other, to reach out in the hand of love, to help, to live, to encourage, to strengthen. Make us like You Lord. You were a servant. Make us one, too. And Lord, forgive us, for the lackadaisical way in which we have run this race. Help us that we might indeed, lay aside every weight and run with patience this race that is set before us. That we be determined to give it all we've got. In Jesus' name. Amen.