

1 Corinthians Study 13

Read 1 Corinthians 9:15-27

KEY VERSE—

“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more.” (9:19)

SUMMARY—

Having established his right to receive support for his work, since he is an apostle and servant of the gospel (9:1-14), Paul now turns to explain why he did not exercise that right (9:15-27). He chose not to receive anything from them so he could exercise his right of self-sacrifice for them (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:14-15; Philippians 2:17). Paul stressed his motives for preaching (9:15-18). He chose to sacrifice his liberties in order to serve all men (9:19-23). His example of discipline and self-control showed them how such really did benefit the cause of Christ (9:23) and even Paul himself (9:27). Then he uses an illustration from athletics to stress the need for such self-discipline (9:23-27). “The isthmus of Corinth was the scene of the Isthmian games, one of the four great national festivals of the Greeks. The celebration was a season of rejoicing and feasting. The contests included horse, foot, and chariot racing; wrestling, boxing... The victor’s prize was a garland of pine leaves... At the period of Paul’s epistles the games were still celebrated, and the apostle himself may very probably have been present” (Vincent, vol. III, p.235).

QUESTIONS—

- 1) What did Paul want to be able to boast in (9:15)? How would taking support from them have made his boasting void?
- 2) Is this boasting of Paul’s a bad and arrogant thing?
- 3) Explain Paul’s reason for preaching (9:16-17). Is that what he had set out to do since his youth?
- 4) What was it that so strongly compelled Paul to do the work of preaching the gospel (9:16; cf. Jeremiah 20:9)?

5) How could it be that even though he was a free man in Christ, Paul had no freedom to choose whether or not he would preach the gospel (9:17)?

6) With or without support Paul was compelled to preach (9:16-18). He could not glory in his choice to preach because it was thrust upon him. Is he complaining?

7) Being entrusted as a steward (9:17), who was he seeking to please—the Corinthians or someone else (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:4)? What was his reward (9:17)?

8) What benefits did Paul perceive in not receiving support from the Corinthians when preaching among them?

⇒ 9:15—

⇒ 9:18—

⇒ 9:19-23—

9) If Paul was free, why did he make himself a slave to all men (9:19; 10:33)?

10) Describe some of the ways Paul appealed to his Jewish audience (9:20; cf. Acts 16:3; 18:18; 20:16; 21:26; 23:6).

11) Describe some of the ways Paul appealed to his Gentile audience (9:21; cf. Acts 13:42-49; Galatians 2:11-21; 3:28). Is Paul saying that he gave up being bound by any law or by a specific law?

12) Were the Gentiles under no law at all (cf. Romans 2:12-16)? What does he mean?

13) Describe some of the ways Paul appealed to his weak audience (9:22; cf. 8:7-13; Romans 14:1-15:3).

14) What reasons does Paul give for acting this way with his own liberties (9:19,22-23)? Is he saying “do whatever it takes to win people at any cost”?

15) What is the ultimate goal Paul points us to (9:24-27)? What is the price to achieve this goal?

16) In what ways is the illustration of the athlete appropriate to describe the Christian race (9:24-25)?

17) What kind of crown was Paul running and fighting for (9:25; cf. 2 Timothy 2:5; 4:6-8)?

18) What was his greatest fear (as it should be ours) (9:27; cf. 10:1-12)?

19) Is Paul talking about mastering his own unlawful desires or his lawful desires? Or could he be talking about both?