

Unity Over Worship (1 Cor 8-11)

“The Responsibility of Working for the Lord Pt 2” 1 Cor 9:15-27

- **Not Using One’s Rights (v. 15)**

Paul makes it clear that he had the right to demand payment for his services as the Apostle to the Corinthian church. But he chose not to use those rights so that others may not impinge on the flourishing of the ministry. Paul wanted to “boast” or celebrate the work to which the Lord had called him. This celebration involved making sure people heard the gospel and not some other message clearly. For whatever reason, Paul taking money *from them* would hinder that boast.

- **Preaching was Paul’s duty whether he was paid or not (vv. 16-17)**

It sounds like Paul is contradicting himself with what he just said. Paul means “boast” in its most arrogant sense here. He does not celebrate the fact that *he* preaches the gospel but that the Lord gave him the obligation to preach it. This is why he says, “woe” if he does not preach. God would hold him accountable and punish him if he chose not to do what God had told him to do. Preaching the gospel saved Paul’s life. This is why he is rewarded for it. Doing what God tells us to do is the most rewarding thing in the world.

- **The reward of the message (v. 18)**

Paul explains, he has given the gospel freely, he received it freely and gives it in the same manner. Thus, he does not make full use of his authority to demand payment, though it is owed. He wants all in Corinth to know the Lord without the feeling of obligation or making him feel obligated in preaching. Paul’s reward is the lives he saved.

- **Becoming all things to all people (vv. 20-22)**

Paul explains his methodology for getting people saved. He adapts his preaching for different contexts, sacrificing his own preferences in the process. To Jews, he is like a Jew. To non-Jews, he is like a non-Jew. To those who are weak, he became like those who are weak. He was adaptable. But in whatever way he approached it, he did it knowing he would only be able to win “some.” Paul was willing to sacrifice his pay to win some people, to keep them faithful to Christ.

- **The reward for a disciplined life (vv. 23-27)**

Paul proclaims the gospel for the gospel’s purposes. He realizes his call is much bigger than he is. So, he is willing to sacrifice that God’s plans may come to fruition. To sacrifice, he explains that it takes discipline like an athlete. Those who run do so to win, they do whatever it takes. And Paul is not running with no goal or punching the air just to punch. But Paul metaphorically beats himself into submission. The word used for “keep under” is the word to give someone a black eye. Paul makes his body do what it needs to do to please God, even if his body doesn’t want to do it. And he does it so he won’t be disqualified from receiving his reward. It is most certainly possible to declare faith to others and not believe. It is possible to proclaim holiness and be unclean. It is possible to preach the gospel and not be saved by the gospel that one preaches.