

1 CORINTHIANS 9:19–27, TO THE CHURCH OF GOD

¹⁹Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. ²⁰To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ²¹To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

²⁴Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

²⁵Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. ²⁶Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. ²⁷No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Discussion Questions (Choose a manageable number to discuss)

1. What (1 Cor. 8:4, 8) was the narrower concern about which the Corinthians had questioned Paul?
2. What right (Mark 7:19 parenthetical sentence; Gal. 5:1) had Paul declared for believers in Jesus Christ?
But what larger concern (1 Cor. 8:9 and 9:12) did he insist on including in his response to the Corinthians' question?
3. How (v. 20) did Paul approach his freedom in Christ when interacting with those still tied to Jewish law-keeping? (See Acts 16:1–3 and 21:17–26.)
4. How (v. 21) did Paul approach his freedom when interacting with pagan culture?
5. Think about the parenthetical sentence in v. 21. From what aspect of the law had believers been set free?
What aspect of the law remained binding?
6. Who were “the weak” of verse 22a?
What was Paul's response (8:13) to their overly sensitive consciences?
7. Pastor Josh Moody cautioned that when lifted out of context, the words of verse 22b can be construed to justify funky extremes. Of what current examples are you aware?
8. On the other hand, he maintained, these words validate exercising “a certain flexibility” in bringing the gospel to where people are. When he served as a missionary in the Republic of Georgia, how did Pastor Josh relate to alcohol consumption?
How did he shift while visiting a nearby Muslim nation?
9. What about our church do you suspect might place *unnecessary* stumbling blocks in front of unbelievers on the path to becoming a Christ-follower?
10. How is a willingness to remove inessential obstacles (v. 23) intertwined with realizing the full effect of the gospel in our lives?
11. How (v. 24) do we “run in such a way as to get the prize”?
What form may the strict training (v. 25) required to qualify for the victor's wreath take?