

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Wed. Eve. Bible Study - 5/18/16

Growing In The Christian Life

By All Means, Save Some

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9: 1 - 27

Paul's Rights as an Apostle

¹Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? ²Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. ³This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. ⁴Don't we have the right to food and drink? ⁵Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? ⁶Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living? ⁷Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? ⁸Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing?⁹For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain."¹⁰ Is it about oxen that God is concerned? ¹⁰Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. ¹¹If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? ¹²If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ. ¹³Don't you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? ¹⁴In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. ¹⁵But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me, for I would rather die than allow anyone to deprive me of this boast. ¹⁶For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! ¹⁷If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. ¹⁸What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.

Paul's Use of His Freedom

¹⁹ Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. ²⁰ To 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. ²¹ To 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. ²² To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³ I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

The Need for Self-Discipline

²⁴ Do 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. ²⁵ Everyone 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. ²⁶ Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. ²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

The verses which give us the theme for this study are recorded in 1 Corinthians 9: 22-23. They were penned by the apostle Paul, and they reveal to us the consuming passion of his life and ministry, which should be the great concern of every Christian. Paul lived, and was willing to die, for the salvation of souls. There was a constant burden resting upon him that others might be saved; he longed for their salvation and he was willing to go to any trouble or inconvenience in order that they might be saved. Like John Knox, who later cried, "O God, give me Scotland or I die!" the burden of Paul's prayers was, "O God, give me souls or I die!" Whether he was working or resting, at home or abroad, in season or out of season, this man must at all costs seek the salvation of the lost - take a good look at **Romans 9: 1-3 and 10: 1**. Do we share this consuming passion for the salvation of souls? Have we any real concern to see men and women saved? Are we doing anything to get them saved? It is so easy to be engaged with many other matters, secondary matters, and to be failing in this great and supreme objective. Notice this:

1. THE SUPREME OBJECTIVE IN EVERY CHRISTIAN'S LIFE SHOULD BE THE SALVATION OF SOULS

If we are the Lord's, then the one great business of your life and mine should be the salvation of souls. This was the master passion in our Savior's life (Luke 19: 10; John 9: 4; 1 Timothy 1: 15). He came to seek and to save lost men and women, and He has

commissioned us to do the same (John 20: 21). We are saved to serve (Ephesians 2: 10).

- **(1) This should be the supreme objective in your life and mine.** To win souls is to be the matter of first importance. Is this the supreme business of my life, of my church? A Christian or a church may be thoroughly evangelical without being at all evangelistic. It is so easy to become inward looking and not outward reaching; to "hold firmly to the trustworthy message" (Titus 1:9), without "holding out the word of life" (Philippians 2: 16).
- **(2) This should be the objective of every Christian;** of not just a few Christians, but of all - look up Acts 8: 4, and notice that it was the rank and file members of the church who "preached the word wherever they went", and not the apostles (verse 1). This is the New Testament pattern for evangelism, and this is what is needed today.
- **(3) The objective is the salvation of souls.** Men are lost, they need to be saved, and only the Lord Jesus can save them (Acts 4: 12). Our objective is that they should be forgiven (Acts 13: 38); born again (John 3: 5); justified (Romans 5: 1); and led into all the fullness of God's great salvation - look up Romans 15: 29.

2. EVERY SOUL WE TOUCH IS TO BE REGARDED AS A POTENTIAL CHRISTIAN

Paul says, "all men" (1 Corinthians 9: 22). Yes, God loves all (John 3: 16), and Christ died for all (2 Corinthians 5: 15), so Paul had proclaimed the gospel to all whom he could reach. See what he says in Acts 20: 26; he had faithfully proclaimed the gospel to all the souls he had met - **look up Ezekiel 3: 18**. If we are faithful like this, how will it work out practically? It will mean being on the watch for souls all the time. In the home, in business, while travelling, in our letter-writing, on holiday - at all times and in every circumstance we must be ready to present the claims of Christ to those who need Him - **look up 1 Peter 3: 15**.

3. WE ARE TO ADOPT EVERY MEANS AVAILABLE TO SECURE THE SALVATION OF SOULS

Think of the Savior's journey from Heaven to earth, and to Calvary's cross, to secure your salvation and mine (2 Corinthians 8: 9); see Him travelling a special route in order to save a poor sinful woman (John 4: 4), and through her many others (John 4: 39-42). Study the parable of Luke 15: 4-24, and notice the concern of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit over the lost sheep (verses 4 - 7), the lost silver (verses 8 - 10), and the lost son (verses 11 - 24). What have we denied ourselves in order that one lost sinner might be saved? If we would get others in, then we must put ourselves

out! This will call for sacrifice, persistence and determination, but it will result in success (Psalm 126:6).

What means should we adopt? The most important thing is that we should be at the disposal of the Holy Spirit. He will then lead us as to the methods to adopt in soul-winning. He will certainly lay upon us a burden of prayer (Romans 10: 1), and He will direct us to the needy souls whom He has prepared to receive our testimony (Acts 8: 26, 29 and 30). He may lead us to speak or to use carefully chosen tracts or portions of scripture; He will enable us to "steer" our conversations into the right channels so that we may speak of our Lord (Psalm 107:2); but the important thing is for us to be really in touch with Him - look up Proverbs 8: 34.

4. THE MOST ANY SERVANT OF GOD CAN DO IS TO SAVE SOME

Paul preached the gospel to many who rejected it. A fisherman never catches all the fish available; he only catches some, and sometimes none (Romans 11: 14). But God's plan is that we should all have the joy of saving at least some precious souls - make a careful study of 2 Corinthians 1: 14; 1 Thessalonians 2: 19. In these verses the apostle is referring to those whom he had led to the Lord, who were now in Christ's presence, but whom he would rejoice over one day when he also went to be with the Lord.

5. THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL IS DEPENDENT UPON THE OBEDIENCE OF THOSE WHO ARE ENTRUSTED WITH IT

Read verse 23 prayerfully. There is a real sense in which the gospel is failing today. Why is this? Is it because so few Christians are really obeying the great commission of the Lord Jesus - Matthew 28: 19? The gospel is still the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes (Romans 1: 16) - but see what **Romans 10: 14-15** says! ¹⁴ "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"