

1 Corinthians 9:16, 21, & 27, “Lessons in Liberty”

So, we are turning back to Chapter 9:16-27, because we have some unfinished business. Yes, we have heard a message last week uniting the entirety of the chapter together concerning how we might win in Christian conflict, today we need to come back, because a couple of these verses are just too important not to bring back up. And that all coalesce together into one greater point about general lessons in liberty. Let's PRAY & READ

It is often thought that freedom and liberty means that you can do what ever you want to do. I am free and no one can stand in my way. There are at least 4 problems with that line of thinking:

1. **We are Sinners** - Who want to do and actually do 'do' bad things! Just because you want to do something doesn't mean you are free to do it! The terrible incidents of this past week prove that! We are not free to do whatever we want b/c we are Sinners!
2. **We are Relational** - That is, even when something isn't necessarily sinful, we are still not free to do whatever we want because we need to think of the people around us! Is that thing theirs, well we can't just take it! Will my actions affect/hurt them? Then we are not free to do it! We live in community!
3. **We are Creatures** - Meaning we have been created by God! And for God to create us necessarily means we have purpose, just in the same way we create and make things for a purpose: tools, cups, shirts, etc. And as it would be absurd for the thing we to create to insist upon it's freedom to repurpose itself (the cup to become a shirt), it is far more than absurd but down-right wrong for us as creatures to buck God's purpose for us! We are not free to rebel against God's purpose for us! We are His Creatures!
4. **We are Redeemed** - yes, by the blood of the Lamb of God, from our sin, but all the more so now to live for God! We were sinners and used to live for ourselves, even though God created us! But now, the redemption of Jesus Christ has freed us from our sins, so that we might live for God! We can't just do what we want, not only because we are sinners, because of others and because we were created—we have been bought with a price, therefore we must Glorify God with our bodies! We are Redeemed!

All this brings us right exactly back to the thought about **true freedom**. True freedom means you have been freed! This was a huge revelation to me in the discussion of free will, that within Christendom many argue. Some say we have a free will, and I say no, we don't have a free will to do whatever we want, but we have a freed will, freed from sin to live for God! And that's true freedom, to live for God! Amen?

Ah, but what would God have us to do? Specifically to glorify Him? What have we been freed to do? In addition to what we've already said in past weeks, we get a couple of really good lessons in liberty from Paul's own life here in Chapter 9 to which we need to return. He told us to consider his example and that we shall do today for 3 more lessons on liberty. So the question is, What Have We Been Freed to Do?

I. Freed to Proclaim (the Gospel)

- A. Observe: Here we are looking at vv. 16-18. Now this is an interesting place to look to support our point that we have been freed to proclaim the Gospel, because from the outset it looks as if Paul is talking about being...
 1. **Bound to Proclaim (Guilt/Duty)** - v. 16, *“For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.”* Paul felt as if some compelling necessity lay upon his life to proclaim the Gospel. And to think of where this came from, we could think of **guilt** concerning his former manner of life, how he, same word here, *“compelled”* Christians to blaspheme the Lord by persecuting them seeking to destroy the

church. He felt compelled by the guilt of his sinful past to proclaim the Gospel. We could also think of Paul feeling just like some OT prophet, who being commissioned by God possessed this inner burden, obligation, or **duty** to proclaim, as even he goes on to use OT language of judgment and Woe, should he dare not proclaim, *“for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.”* Paul is saying here he is bound to proclaim the Gospel. ->And in a similar less official sense, we, too, have been commissioned and are bound to proclaim the Gospel. Though we be not prophets or Apostles, far be it from us who have known and have experienced the freeness of the Gospel of Grace dare not proclaim it! We, too, are bound to proclaim! Do you proclaim the Gospel?

2. **He GETS to Proclaim (Purpose/Calling)** - And yet, though he and we are bound to proclaim, that is not the motivation from which we do it, but rather why we dare not stop proclaiming! No, the reason why we do proclaim the Gospel isn't really to be found in us at all, whether we willing to do it or whether we are forced as v. 17 says. Really, as what becomes apparent in v. 18, the real wage, blessing, reward, is that **we get to do it for free!** What? v. 18 *“What then is my reward? That, when I preach the Gospel [or proclaim, an informal sense of the word to preach], I may offer the Gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the Gospel!”* That is, Paul accepted no payment from his hearers because, yes, on one hand they would be given a real-life example of just how free the Gospel to believe in (as free as my preaching!). But also, one the other hand, Paul did it because he understood the true nature of the free Gospel and the purpose for which God has called him to proclaim—is that He gets to do proclaim a Great Free Gospel for free! He has been freed to proclaim!
- B. Interpret: **Freed to Proclaim the Gospel** - And see the same is true for us. We aren't ever going to be Apostles, but we need to ask the question, do we have a calling? Has the Lord set us apart in His grace to be His? Did not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus come to us freely and set us free from our sin? YES! Why do you think that happened? Give me one reason why? So that we, too with Paul, might proclaim the great free Gospel to others! We have been freed to proclaim the free Gospel of God!
- C. Support: **1 Peter 2:9** - And for support, I turn to one of my favorite verses in 1 Peter. It's such a rich verse, and hear what it says, 1 Peter 2:9, *“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;”* Why has the Lord Jesus brought you out of sin, freed you from sin? What liberty do you now have? To proclaim the excellencies of Him, and what is more excellent than the Good News of the Gospel!
- D. State: **You Have Been Freed to Proclaim the Gospel!**
- E. Relate: Now, I get it, this is a bit distant from our everyday life, and especially so because the enemies of the Gospel, Satan and the flesh, want to bind us up again not to proclaim it. So that when we get in the presence of a non-believer, we feel as if our lips all tied up and we cannot proclaim the Gospel. But we are forgetting in that moment the freedom of the Gospel and our calling to proclaim it! We get to do it! I'm talking about joy here brothers and sisters!
- F. Illustrate: **My Wife** - So the other night my wife shared with something that just blew my mind. It was after a social event, and I was confessing that I just wasn't feeling very social, and part of it had to do with my own insecurities and partly because I was tired and partly because I don't always think the best concerning others (yep, I'm a sinner). But she said she never feels that way during a social event because she is just so excited about who she gets to meet! She goes into an event not worrying about her own insecurities or cynical about having to talk to more people, but thinking, 'O, what a joy I get to meet and make connections with new and more people!' That blew my mind, and I prayed in my heart when I heard that, "Lord, change my heart next time". But I want you all to do more than that this morning. I want you to hear Paul's excitement about having the opportunity to

share the Gospel freely to others, to see them freed themselves from sin, and I want you to pray, Lord, would you change that in me? Let me see the joy of sharing the free Gospel of Grace!

G. Reiterate: And why? Because you have been **freed to proclaim the Gospel**

II. Freed to Obey (the Lord)

- A. Observe: Here we jump in mid-stream of the next section, vv. 19-22, as Paul talks about becoming all things to all men so that he might win some, and we are looking at v. 21, *“to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law.”* And Paul is saying something very interesting here about Christian freedom. On the one hand, Paul is saying...
1. **I am Free from the Law** - He becomes like a Gentile who does not know the law at nor observe it, so that He might win them over to Christ. At the same time he quickly adds, on the other hand
 2. **I am Still Bound to the Law** - *“though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ.”* Though he becomes like the Gentiles without law, he does so in such a way that doesn't throw out or disregard the law of God. And why? Because he is still under the Law of Christ!
- B. Interpret: **Freed to Obey** - How can a Christian be both free from the law but still bound to it? That answer is all bound upon in that one word Paul says at the end of the statement—Christ. Not that Christ is opposed to God, but how Christ came not to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it (Matt 5:17). And part of His fulfilling it was in His grace for us as a gift, to be our righteousness for us—the blessed imputed righteousness of Christ! But that's not all. The other way Christ came to fulfill the Law was to make us obedient to it! Not by works of the law, but by faith! See when you are freed from sin, and made righteous by faith, and what does a righteous person do? Live for themselves? No, that is sin again! No, all the more now being freed you are to live for God/Christ! And what does that look like? It looks like obeying God! Not according to the standards and traditions of the ceremonial legal code of the OT, but that you live for what fulfills it—the Love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself! See faith and the righteousness of Christ propels us to obey God and to live for Him! You have been Freed Christian to Obey the Lord!
- C. Support: **The Book of Romans** - And to support this thought I would have you consider the Book of Romans, a wonderful theological book of the Bible. If you had to give the once over main idea of the book of Romans what would it be? I would argue it's **Romans 1:5**, *“through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, ...”* Paul is doing more than just asking for money from the Romans to help the Jews in Jerusalem, the majority interpretation for the book. No, he desires to the Gentile Romans come to obey God for the sake or glory of God. And the way to do that isn't through works, works of the law, which he dismantles in the book, but only through faith. And as they come to believe in Christ (Ch 1-11), that faith in Christ will lead to obedience to Him (Ch 12-16)! To the effect Paul concludes in 16:24-25, with his glorious doxology, *“Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; ...”* They have been set free by faith to obey Christ! and so have you, Gentile!
- D. Apply: **Is This the Way You Look at Obedience?** - Obedience is not a cool word, and it is that way because Satan would have you see it that way! Oh, but obedience is way cool to God, even better than even sacrifice, He told Saul! And it is exactly the faith-filled-freedom that we see in Jesus—obedience! Are you obeying the Lord God, Christian?
- E. Reiterate: **You Have Been Freed to Obey!**

III. Freed to Fight (for the Freedom of Others)

A. Observe:

1. **Fighting** - That's what vv. 23-27 are all about. Whether it's the running metaphor in vv. 24 & 26a or the boxing metaphor in vv. 26 & 27. It's all about Fighting...but also...
2. **Fighting with Focus** - v. 24 to win; v. 25 an imperishable wreath; and in such a way that requires v. 26, not aimlessness as if running "*without aim*" or "*beating [pointlessly] the air*"; but with a "discipline" or fixed determination. These verses are about fighting with focus.
3. **But Why Fight?** - What's this got to do with Paul, his liberty and others? The answer is found in v. 27, "*but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.*" Paul is comparing his ministry of become all things to all persons for the sake of ministering the Gospel to them as fighting, fighting with purpose, and actually a two-fold purpose, one for others ("preaching the Gospel"), but then also for himself (so as not to "be disqualified"). In other words, Paul is a driven like an athlete to work and train hard even subject himself to personal affliction all that he might both proclaim the Gospel to others all the while not being disqualified himself!
4. **But How Would He Be Disqualified?** - That is hard to process. Is Paul saying that if he doesn't proclaim/preach the Gospel that he will lose his salvation? No. Rather he is saying what he already said in v. 23, "*I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.*" And yet what does that mean?

B. Interpret: **Freed to Fight** - Well, see for Paul, he didn't just see salvation in Jesus as this personal isolated event, whereby once he was freed from his sin and imputed the righteousness of Christ, that he is all good to go and there's nothing else for him to do. No, as we have already argued in this sermon, Paul understood that he was freed for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel to others and obeying the Lord! Yet what he is saying here, is that Paul knows his freedom given to him by Christ has automatically and necessarily entered him into the race of his life, which isn't for his own salvation, no, never, that is given freely by Christ! But this race in which he gets to fight tooth and nail now for this Great Gospel to be known by others throughout the whole earth! This is the cosmic fight for the freedom of salvation for others! And to do this, he must remain focused and disciplined in his fighting, lest he somehow render himself unfit for the race! Paul is talking about how now he has by Christ been made free to fight for the freedom of others! But, beloved, we, too, are in that same fight, sure not as a 4 or 5 star general like an Apostle, but as a soldier of the cross! We are to fight for the freedom of others in the Gospel!

C. Illustrate: **OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom)** - So, here, is this not at least the right reason we engage in warfare as a country? To stand up against tyranny and the proclamation of freedom! This is what won me over and sent me into Iraq, to fight for the freedom of others! And as great as that is or was, do you know what's even better, fighting for an eternal freedom for others, and fighting on behalf of King Jesus who is Just and Righteous! We are His soldiers and we fight by laying our liberties down and disciplining ourselves that the Gospel may free more!

D. Apply: **What are You Doing in the Fight?** - Perhaps you have been fighting for a while now and if you're honest with yourself and others, you are a little war-torn and beaten down and your fight isn't as strong as it used to be! You used to fight hard for the freedom of others in Christ, and now you are tired! Beloved, take up the sword of the Spirit, your helmet of salvation, your breast plate of righteousness, your belt of Truth, and your shield of faith and get back in there and fight!

E. Reiterate: **You were Freed to Fight for the Freedom of Others!**