

## All Things for the Sake of the Gospel

1 Cor. 9:19-23

### Introduction:

1. Nothing is of any more importance than one's relationship with God.
  - a. It is important for us personally. I certainly don't want to miss eternity in the presence of God.
  - b. But it is also important to us that others arrive at home safely too. To focus on one's own salvation to the neglect of others is incongruent with the very nature of the kingdom of God.
2. In the passage that we have just read Paul indicates that his personal actions affect the salvation of others. He says that he would run the race in a way that he might get there himself and that others might too (24-27).
3. Are you living your life in a way that leads others to the Lord or is your life a distraction to them?

### Discussion:

- I. This passage is set in a context dealing with eating things sacrificed to idols (8:1-10:33).
  - A. Idols are nothing. There are really no gods associated with idols. There is only one God. Idol gods are imagined gods. They are not real. Therefore to eat meat sacrificed to something that really does not exist means nothing.
    1. BUT some have conscientious objection to doing this because of their past experiences with idolatry.
    2. Paul's instruction, "Don't eat meat if it causes your brother to stumble, that is, if he encourages him to violate his conscience."
    3. What is effective to the gospel may affect what you eat. You may have to restrict your diet for the sake of the gospel.
  - B. Out of this context Paul discusses various liberties. He insists that we should not insist on exercising our liberties, but that we should give consideration to what is effective in helping others in their relationship with the Lord (1 Cor. 9).
    1. A right to a believing wife. Relational sacrifice is appropriate for the sake of the gospel.
    2. A right to refrain from work and to take a living from his preaching. Financial sacrifice is often necessary for the benefit of the gospel.
    3. The people of the world demand their rights, but for Paul it is more about what helps win people for the Lord and not about what is good for him.
    4. All of this requires discipline (9:23-27). I fear that not many of us are willing to restrict ourselves, not many are willing to inconvenience self for the sake of saving some.
- II. In chapter 10 Paul calls attention to some of Israel's mistakes.
  - A. They were all baptized into Moses, but with most of them God was not well-pleased.

They were laid low in the wilderness.

1. They investigated the land that God had promised to give to them.
    - a. They saw it as quite prosperous.
    - b. They saw the people's that lived in the land, their fortified cities, their strength and concluded, "We are not able." "We became like grasshoppers" (Num. 13:30ff).
    - c. They cried and wept and said, "Would that we had died in Egypt."
  2. Wandered in the wilderness for 40 years.
- B. But even before this, after coming out of Egypt, they had made a golden calf and began to worship it (Ex. 32:6; 1 Cor. 10:7).
1. They craved evil things.
  2. They sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. Their worship was focused on their entertainment and pleasure.
- C. At Peor they were invited to the worship of false gods (Num. 25:1ff).
1. "The people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab."
  2. The Lord said to Moses, "Execute the leaders in broad daylight." Moses and others were weeping at the doorway of the tent of meeting.
  3. Apparently while this was going on, one of the sons of Israel brought in a Midianite woman and took her into his tent. Phinehas was so outraged he took a spear and pierced them through. This stopped the plague that had broke out among the people.
  4. What are they craving? Relationship with the peoples of the world.
- D. They tried the Lord (Num. 21:5ff).
1. They spoke against God and Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. There is no food and no water and we loathe this miserable manna."
  2. God sent serpents among the people.
  3. Do you think this means we should control our appetite for the good of kingdom of God?
- E. They grumbled against Moses and Aaron and accused them of causing the death of the people (Num. 16:41ff). This was in regard to the earth opening up and swallow up Korah, Dathan and Abiram who had questioned Moses and Aaron's leadership.
1. A plague broke out among the people. 14,700 died.
  2. Aaron stopped the plague by making atonement for the people.
  3. Do you grumble against the word of the prophets?
- F. These were written for our instruction that we should not do what they did, craving evil things. Craving evil things leads to destruction (10:6ff).
1. 23,000 fell in one day (v. 8) at Peor. Craved relationship with the peoples of the world.
  2. Many died as a result of the incident with the serpents. Craved better eats.
  3. 14,700 died from the plague, not counting those destroyed by the earth opening up and swallowing up Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Korah, Dathan, Abiram craved better position. People grumbled against Moses and Aaron.

III. As shares in the body and blood of Christ we cannot partake of the table of demons (10:14-22).

- A. This is a call to come out and be separate from the world.
- B. Relationship with the Lord is exclusive.
- C. What this means is that I must do all things for the sake of the gospel.
  - 1. My relationship with the Lord is the number one priority.
  - 2. Even down to what I eat is to be controlled by what is effective to winning the lost.
  - 3. Everything is to be done to the glory of God.
    - a. My relationships to people in the world are subjugated to the will of God.
    - b. My relationships to my brethren are subject to the will of God.
    - c. My entertainment is subject to the will of God.
  - 4. I am subject to the will of God.
- D. All things for the sake of the gospel.

Conclusion:

- 1. Are you disciplining your life in recognition that your relationship with God is the top priority?
- 2. Are you disciplining your life in recognition that other's relationship to God trumps what is convenient to you, what is desirable to you, what is pleasant to you?
- 3. Are you living your life for the sake of the gospel?