

“For the Gospel’s Sake”

1 Corinthians 9:1-27

Everything done by us as individuals, and by us as a corporate body of believers (the local church), is to be done for the glory of God and the way to truly glorify God in all that we do is get the gospel of Jesus Christ to those that need it (the unsaved), as well as to those that already have it (the church).

The Apostle Paul finds himself having to defend his authority as an apostle to the church in Corinth and he does so with a call to the gospel. He declares to the church in this letter that all he does he does “for the gospel’s sake.” The question to be asked for the church today, especially the leadership of the church, is what we do, both individually (in our own personal lives) and as a church, done for the “gospel’s sake?”

This portion of the letter seems to be an extension of the end of the previous portion (chapter eight). He is continuing on with the teaching that all he did in Corinth was for the sake of others, and as verse thirteen ended, if it would make his brother to stumble in their faith he was not willing to do that thing that would have that outcome even if he had the right (biblically and morally) to do so. He approaches the next issue addressed to him by the church with that in mind.

Verse three is a critical verse for this portion of the letter – it demonstrates the justification, so to speak, for he has to say in his own defense. There are those that say we shouldn’t defend ourselves, and that is especially said of the pastor/teacher, it seems. It is taught, and believed, that the pastor is to be like Jesus when He stood before the accusers

at His trial and didn't answer their accusations. The problem with that argument is that not only is it not valid according to the preponderance of scriptural evidence, it is completely misunderstanding the trial Jesus faced. He did, in fact, answer the charges that were brought against Him when He was ordered to by the high priest (the judge of the trial, so to speak) – He did defend Himself when it was legally appropriate to do so (Matt. 26:63-64).

Some say this verse belongs to the preceding two verses (Alford, Clarke, etc.), while others have it with what follows. Some translations of the Bible (as is the text of the KJV, NASV, ISV, and others) end in either a comma or colon, demonstrating that it goes with what follows, while others end in a period, showing it could be either way. It doesn't matter to the interpretation of the verse – I hold that it is for both what preceded and what follows, thus making it that critical verse.

The word for "answer" (ἀπολογία) is where our word "apologetics" comes from and is one that means a reasoned statement or argument. "The words are forensic; and the apostle considers himself as brought before a legal tribunal, and questioned so as to be obliged to answer as upon oath" (Clarke). The word for "examine" (ἀνακρίνω) is a combination of two words that mean to discern or judge (in this context). The Apostle Paul spends a good deal of time with his reasoned argument as to both why he deserves to be recognized as an apostle, and, more to the extent of the context, as to why he had the authority (literally, the right) to expect financial remuneration from the church. His defense is to answer those that were calling the very truth of the Word of God and the gospel into question and using his own personal choices against him as evidence.

There are going to be times when we will face the

need to defend ourselves when what we are being accused of is going to call into question the work of the Lord in our lives and bring shame to His name.

I. SOME WILL QUESTION OUR MINISTRY – VS. 1-2

A. When questioned, our response will, at times, necessitate a defense of our authority (specifically speaking of the pastor/overseer in the context).

B. He asks four somewhat rhetorical questions in verse one – questions that the answer should have been obvious and known to the church. It appears, however, that there was some question as to the purpose of his ministry, and the authority he had to teach them (which, more to the point, would mean they would have to follow – something they may not have been inclined to do at this point). It is this foundation that he lays in defense of his authority that will be needed, at times, in the ministry today.

1. First question (and the one upon which the others are built) – “Am I not an apostle?” This is an issue he was confronted with on numerous occasions, and he defended it more than once.

a) The word “apostle” – ἀπόστολος – is one that simply means to send. It is used synonymously at times with presbutés – messenger or ambassador. “The Lord chose the term apostoloi to indicate the distinctive relation of the Twelve Apostles whom He chose to His witnesses because in Classical Greek the word was seldom

used. Therefore, it designates the office as instituted by Christ to witness of Him before the world. It also designates the authority which those called to this office possess." (Zodhiates)

"An apostle was one that was immediately sent by Christ, and had his authority and doctrine directly from him, and had a power of working miracles from him, in confirmation of the truth of his mission, authority, and doctrine; all which were to be found in the author of this epistle, who did not thrust himself into this office, or take this honour to himself, of which he always judged himself unworthy, but was "called" to it according to the will, and by the grace of God..." (John Gill)

- b) We may not have apostles, as those were in Scripture, and that particular office may not exist today in its New Testament form (we could say a church-planter missionary would fit the New Testament apostle to some degree), but we are still commissioned with the same purpose – to preach the gospel.

Acts 9:15

15 But the Lord said unto him, **Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:**

Acts 13:2

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

2. "Am I not free?"

- a) "Free within the limits of delegated authority" (Morgan). "Free as a Christian from Mosaic ceremonialism as much as any Christian and yet he adapts his moral independence to the principle of considerate love." (Robertson)
- b) He is pointing out to them that he was at liberty to do and to teach what he deemed necessary for the church under the authority of Christ for he was one of His apostles. This was to counteract their defense of the position they had taken that they were free to do what they wanted, including sin, because they had liberty in Christ.

"Before he proceeds any further in his purposed matter of things offered to idols, he would show the cause of all this evil, and also take it away. That is, that the Corinthians thought that they did not have to depart from the least amount of their liberty for any man's pleasure. Therefore he propounds himself for an example, and that in a matter almost necessary. And yet he speaks of both, but first of his own person. If (he says) you allege for yourselves that you are free, and therefore will use your liberty, am I not also free, seeing I am an apostle?" (Geneva Bible notes)

- c) We, today, in the true New Testament church, need to be very cautious in our use of Christian liberty that we don't use it to satisfy our own desires. We are free, as the Apostle Paul was, but we are under the same "law of liberty" as all other believers.

[James 1:25](#)

²⁵ But whoso looketh into the perfect law

of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

James 2:12

¹² So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

- d) Within the greater context of the chapter, he was also pointing out to the leadership of the church that he was free to abstain from labor outside of the ministry, as the other apostles obviously had done (seen in the next several verses).

“The ‘liberty’ referred to here is doubtless the privilege or right of abstaining from labor; of enjoying as others did the domestic relations of life; and of a support as a public minister and apostle. Probably some had objected to his claims of apostleship that he had not used this right, and that he was conscious that he had no claim to it. By this mode of interrogation, he strongly implies that he was a freeman, and that he had this right.” (Barnes)

3. “Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?”

- a) This is the one that would have brought into question his apostleship as it was determined or defined in the New Testament period.
- b) It could be that the leadership at Corinth were following the speech by Peter recorded in Acts 1:15-22, where he proposed that the only one qualified to be an apostle would be one that was with Him from beginning to end (as the other 11, and Judas Iscariot were). Based on Paul’s own

inspired writing, this assumption was wrong, and the choosing of Matthias seems to have been in error. Paul himself seems to indicate this in 1 Cor. 15:8 where he says that Jesus was seen of him, "as one born out of due time."

- c) Considering the writings of Paul as a whole, and the obvious approval of God on his ministry as one of the 12 Apostles, the only part of the portion of Acts 1 that seems to give things that would prove apostleship is that an apostle needed to simply have seen Jesus bodily. If being taught by him was also required, he would have fit that prerequisite as well, for it is likely that what is referred to in Gal. 1:15-18 in the mention of Arabia is where Paul received his revelations and teaching from Jesus.

(1) He saw Him on the road to Damascus.

Acts 9:3-5

³ And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

⁴ And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, **Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?**

⁵ And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, **I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.**

(2) He saw Him in Corinth when he founded the church.

Acts 18:9-10

⁹ Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, **Be not afraid, but**

Speak, and hold not thy peace:

10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

(3) *He saw Him in the dungeon in the castle in Rome.*

Acts 23:11

11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, **Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.**

4. "Are ye not my work in the Lord?"

- a) If there was any question as to whether he had the authority to teach them the truth of Christ it would have been the very fact that they received the message of the gospel from him. He not only brought them to Christ, he spent a year and a half teaching them – and now they were questioning his authority? He seems more than a little upset about that.
- b) This question (and what is recorded in the next verse) shows that those that should be the closest to us, those upon which we have a direct effect with their spiritual teaching, can, and too often do, turn against us and question that authority.

Acts 18:8–11

8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, **Be not afraid, but speak, and**

hold not thy peace:

¹⁰ For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

¹¹ And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

C. In verse two he expands on his defense of his apostleship, pointing out the Corinthian believers that if he was a true apostle to any church, it would have been them – they themselves were the proof (seal) of that very apostleship.

1. The word "seal" (σφραγις) is one that refers to a signet-ring that would have been used to make an impression in melted wax to indicate the source of what was sealed.
2. The believers in the church as individuals, and the church as a whole, were to all those that would question his authority, and in the case of the use of the word "seal," his authenticity, proof that he was truly a biblical apostle.
3. By application today, the proof that we are what God wants us to be is the fruit that we bear for Christ.

Galatians 5:22–23

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Conclusion to this point: What about us? If we are examined by our neighbors, our friends, our co-workers, our families, would we be able to make a reasoned argument for why we should be considered a follower of Christ? Do we have the characteristics of an apostle, as one sent with a message to the lost? Do we use our liberty in Christ to further His kingdom, or ours? Do those around us sense that we have been with Christ, that we know Him in a personal way? Do they see our work in the Lord?

II. SOME WILL QUESTION OUR MOTIVATION – VS. 3-18

A. When questioned, our response should be that we are motivated by nothing more than the gospel. Even though we may have liberty (the right) to do something (as seen in chapter 8, as well as earlier in our study of First Corinthians) it isn't always advisable to do so, and if it will cause a weaker believer to stumble, or if it will cause an unbeliever to reject the gospel, we need to make sure we take that into account when we feel the need to exercise those rights in Christ.

B. It would seem that, in the letter Paul received from the Corinthians for which this letter is a response, the question was raised as to why some (of the pastor/elders of the church in Corinth) were taking a financial gain from them when he did not. In response, he illustrates his previous point regarding not doing anything that would cause his brother to stumble in their faith.

A point needs to be made here regarding the one, right interpretation of this text. Considering the point he makes in verse one regarding his authority as an Apostle, Paul is addressing a particular issue. He uses the word "gospel" ten times in these verses, and it seems to be a specific point. If there is any specific thing this points to it is that of what we term "missionaries" today – those whose intent purpose and ministry is to preach the simple truth of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ to those that have not heard. This is one text that can be used for the financial support of missionaries. That this is not just dealing with the 12 Apostles is clear by the inclusion of Barnabas in the argument (he was not one of the Twelve). Barnabas is, however, called an "apostle" in Acts 14:14 because he was sent forth by the church – used in its technical definition (Acts 13:3) – so that would indicate that the term had grown past the original twelve. Having been commissioned by the Lord Himself (Acts 9) to preach the gospel, Paul is uniquely qualified to be a true apostle (and, as far as I'm concerned, one of the Twelve – the one to have taken Judas Iscariot's place rather than Mathias).

[Acts 14:14](#)

¹⁴ Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

[Acts 13:3](#)

³ And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

To a broader application, we can apply this

text to those that devote their lives to the ministry of the Word of God to those that have received the gospel – Galatians 6:6 and 1 Timothy 5:17-18 point to this. Verse thirteen of this text before us also shows it has a broader application when the work of the priests in the temple is invoked.

Galatians 6:6

⁶ Let him that is taught in the word communicate [share] unto him that teacheth in all good things.

1 Timothy 5:17-18

¹⁷ Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

¹⁸ For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.

The Apostle Paul chose not to accept gifts of support so that he did not hinder the gospel's affect on the lost in the very early infancy of the church, but as can be seen from 2 Cor. 12:13, even he knew that might have been in error.

2 Corinthians 12:13

¹³ For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

C. No matter what others say about what the minister does (be it a missionary taking the gospel to those that have not heard, or a pastor equipping the saints in a church), there are reasons given in this letter to the Corinthian believers that establish the biblical principal of remuneration (money paid for work or a

service).

D. Along with those principles are reasons for them – those reasons are given in verses four and five. Part of the Christian leader’s motivation is given here, and even if it is questioned, the right is still there to expect these things.

1. Verse four – Do we not have the right to eat and drink – to have those basic needs met like everyone else that works hard at their job?
 - a) “Have we not power” – “Is it so, that we have not power... It may perhaps be used as pointing out a matter of *right*, which any would have had on the same conditions... (Alford)
 - b) “To eat and drink” – “at the cost of the churches” (Alford): not with any reference to the eating of things offered to idols, nor to Jewish distinctions of clean and unclean” (Alford).

Adam Clarke says this: Meat and drink, the necessities, not the superfluities, of life, were what those primitive messengers of Christ required; it was just that they who labored in the Gospel should live by the Gospel; they did not wish to make a fortune, or accumulate wealth; a living was all they desired.

Barnes makes this observation: To be maintained at the expense of those among whom we labor. Have we not a right to demand that they shall yield us a proper support? By the interrogative form of the statement, Paul intends more strongly to

affirm that they had such a right. The interrogative mode is often adopted to express the strongest affirmation. The objection here urged seems to have been this, "You, Paul and Barnabas, labor with your own hands. Act_18:3. Other religious teachers lay claim to maintenance, and are supported without personal labor. This is the case with pagan and Jewish priests, and with Christian teachers among us. You must be conscious, therefore, that you are not apostles, and that you have no claim or right to support." To this the answer of Paul is, "We admit that we labor with our own hands. But your inference does not follow. It is not because we have not a right to such support, and it is not because we are conscious that we have no such claim, but it is for a higher purpose. It is because it will do good if we should not urge this right, and enforce this claim." That they had such a right, Paul proves at length in the subsequent part of the chapter.

2. Verse five – Do we not have the right to be married and have a family, and to be able to care for them effectively?

a) "To lead about" – to take around as a companion

(1) Again, staying with that one right interpretation of this dealing with the ones that preach the gospel to the lost (as missionaries do today), they had a right to have their wives (and families) with them as they traveled, and an expectation of financial support to enable them to do so.

(2) By application today, the pastor has the same right, and considering the work

that many pastor's wives do, the church would be far less than it is without them.

"Today, pastors' wives are partnering with their husbands in key areas of ministry; they are using their gifts and skills that they might have used in the market place. Yet, these remarkable women of faith are rarely recognized for their efforts. One of the most neglected groups in all of Christendom is the pastor's wife. At times being the pastor's wife can be the most isolated and lonely place on earth. A large percentage of pastors' wives say that they're lonely." (Tony Evans)

NOTE: There has been a push in the last few years to have a "Pastor's Wife Appreciation Month" as a separate time than that of "Pastor Appreciation Month" (which was established some years ago as October). The consensus seems to be consolidating into March as that month.

I have never wished to draw attention to myself or my family unless it had a direct impact on the ministry in which the Lord put us. With that in mind, I wish to draw attention to my wife this morning (and no, I did not plan this to coincide with her being gone, but I believe the Lord did). Quite honestly, and quite literally, if it weren't for my wife we would not be here today. There is no way I could do what is done here without her. When I was asked in the pulpit committee meeting when we were first here what part my wife would play, I said that although the church was calling me as the pastor, it was a

package deal, so to speak. I wanted to make sure no undue expectation was put on her by the church but that they could expect her to be involved in my ministry – in whatever capacity was needed.

My wife endures a good deal that is unseen by most. Being so far from the kids and grandkids is hard on her. Yes, it was our choice and no, we have no intention of changing that, but it still is difficult. When I'm having a bad day, she gets to share in that time. When things aren't going good, she is the one to listen to me "vent." She makes sure that everything is done that she can do so that I can do my job.

So, when the Apostle Paul asks the question in defense of his ministry, and in defense of his motives, he simply makes the case that he has the right (even though he didn't have a wife at this point) to have his wife by his side – the same right and privilege all ministers should have and one that no church should ever take for granted.

- b) "A sister, a wife" – a believing wife; a wife that is a believer; a sister as a wife (this indicates that a man called into the ministry was to make sure he chose a faithful Christian woman for his wife.

(1) The term "sister" is pointing to the principle that the wife of an apostle (and by application, a pastor) must be a Christian. This was relative at the time, considering how many new converts there were in the church and that not all of the spouses would have been converted at the same time (an

issue that was addressed in chapter seven), and it seems that some of the leaders even had unconverted wives.

- (2) *The term "wife" is self-explanatory – this is in contrast to those that may make a decree or dogma that exempts pastors from being married. This also would contradict the idea that a woman can be a pastor or teach in a position that a pastor would have (pastoral authority, in other words).*
- (3) *There is a somewhat corresponding text in the Pastoral Epistles relating to the wives of the leadership of a church that will add some light on this point (specifically said of a deacon's wife but the implication in that text is also for the pastor's wife).*

1 Timothy 3:11

¹¹ Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.

- (a) "Grave" – This word means to be honest, to be venerable, or when the life is tried, or when trials come, one is to be found honest – also translated "dignified" and "reverent"
- (b) "Not slanderers" – this comes from the same word as does the word "devil" (in fact, it's translated "devil" 35 times in the New Testament) – where we get our English word "diabolical" (by definition, evil as from the devil). It means false accuser – translated by some as "malicious gossips." The pastor's wife is to be as supportive of the

church as the pastor.

(c) "Sober" – this word is different than the one in verse two relating to the pastor. It is the same, however, as the word "vigilant" in that verse. This word means to be temperate, abstinent, especially in respect to wine; hence, sober in mind, watchful, circumspect. This speaks to the point that the pastor's wife is to be so in control of her person that her mind is not clouded over with a preoccupation as one that is drunk would be.

(d) "Faithful in all things" – this one is self-explanatory. When it's all said and done, the wife of the pastor is to be found to have been a faithful companion to her husband, and faithful in her duties to the Lord and to the church. This point shows that, as a helper alongside her husband, she is to be found faithful in all she does so as to not bring shame and reproach to her husband, to the church, and, most importantly, to the Lord.

c) "And as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?"

(1) *"The brethren of the Lord" is speaking of His earthly brothers (some say this can also be cousins, or near kinsman, but a verse in Matthew seems to indicate otherwise as a connection is made with Mary, His mother) – James, Joses, Simon, and Judas.*

[Matthew 13:55](#)

⁵⁵ Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

- (a) James is most likely the leader of the church at Jerusalem and would have presided over the first church council held in Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts 15.

Acts 15:13

¹³ And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

- (b) There is much speculation on his identity, and this is not the place to go into all the details on the issue. What is important in this context is that whoever the brethren of the Lord were, they were known well enough by those in the church at Corinth for them to be used as an illustration (and it might be added that they were not all apostles, and most likely would have been simply leaders in the church).
- (c) "And Cephas" – this was Peter, a significant figure in the church and already used as an illustration in chapter three.

Concluding remarks: No matter what your service to the Lord, whether it is in "full-time" Christian service, lay leadership in the church, or just being a faithful servant to the Lord in help to the church, we are all motivated by

different purposes and those motivations may be called into question from time to time. If we feel the need to defend those motivations, make sure we do so with Scripture.

For the ladies here that serve, maybe along side your husbands, or by yourself, you have a major part in what the Lord can do, both in this church and then through this church to the world.

[Philippians 4:3](#)

³ And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.

Part 3

E. Right doctrine – vs. 6-10

“Have not we power to forbear working?” Do we not have the right to not work a secular job and expect remuneration for the work we do in the ministry (particularly, there in Corinth in not just planting the Word, but in teaching it as well)?

Whatever we do for the Lord, whatever our service dictates we do, it needs to be done with the “right doctrine” – the right teaching. That teaching comes from experience, Scripture, and the sense God gave us.

So, where does this right come from?

1. The laws of nature (and man) – vs. 7

a) “Who goeth a warfare any time at his own

charges?" – the Apostle Paul seemed to be familiar with the laws and rules that governed society in the Roman Empire at the time (he being a Roman citizen allowed him education and access to this information), and he knew that the soldiers were paid for their service and were not expected to serve for free. **They may have not been paid much but their basic needs were met.**

- b) "Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof?" They may have planted to sell their produce but they took enough of what they grew to sustain their own needs.
- c) "Who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" Same as previous point – they didn't raise animals just for the marketplace.

2. The Mosaic Law – vs. 8-9

- a) He next points out that not only does nature (and man's laws) dictate pay for service (remuneration) but the Levitical Law does as well.
- b) Deuteronomy 25:4 (in the section of the book that covers a variety of regulations): "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn." (Paul repeats this in 1 Tim. 5:18.)

"The leaving the ox unmuzzled when treading out the corn was in order that the animal might be free to eat of the grains which its labor severed from the husks. This prohibition, therefore, was dictated by a regard to the rights and claims of animals employed in labor; but there is involved in

it the general principle that all labor is to be duly requited, and hence it seems to have passed into a proverb, and was applied to men as well as the lower animals (cf. 1Co_9:9; 1Ti_5:18). The use of oxen to tread out the corn and the rule of leaving the animals so employed unmuzzled still prevail among the Arabs and other Eastern peoples." (Pulpit Commentary)

c) He then asks another rhetorical question: "Doth God take care for oxen [only]?"

(1) If God takes care of the oxen in His Law (which carries the same weight as any other commandment in His Law), then shouldn't His ministers, His servants, also be cared for?

(2) There is a greater application of this text than just "full-time Christian workers." Bringing the argument of the Levitical Law into this text, Paul is making a case that all laborers, no matter their trade, are to receive just compensation for their labor. If we are employers, it is not only ethically and morally right to pay our employees the best we can, but it is biblically mandated from Scripture.

(3) That said, within the context, this is just another argument made for the just compensation of those that labor in the Word of God.

3. The laws of logic and reasoning – vs. 10

a) The logical conclusion then is that the worker is working with the expectation of being compensated for his labor.

- b) Vs. 10 is joined with vs. 9, and is the conclusion to the point: did God put in the Levitical Law this practice only for the sake of the oxen (the animal) or is it for a greater purpose as well? Obviously, it is there for more than the animal – it lays down that position of reward for labor as the reasonable conclusion.
- c) These verses draw the conclusion that there should be remuneration for the man who labors in the Word of God, as he sows the seed of hope, and “plows” (does the work to make sure the seed can grow – watering and fertilizing, or feeding, is involved in that “plowing”) that seed of hope, it is only reasonable that he partakes from the plants it produces – benefit from his labor.

F. Right discipline – vs. 11-14

“Is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?” (vs. 11) The Apostle and his team had the right to certain level of expectation from the church. We see in our text that they didn’t exercise that right in the church at Corinth, but he lays down the reasons why he could have (and God put that there for us today in the true New Testament church).

1. An expectation of “carnal” provision in place of the “spiritual” provision the Apostle and his team gave to the church – vs. 11.
 - a) The key to this portion of the letter seems to be in this verse in the question proposed of “if we...[then]” – the requirement for remuneration, and the requirement for all pastor/teachers, whether supported

financially or not, is to provide the church with its spiritual needs.

(1) *The word "spiritual" (thing) is that that nourishes the spirit of man – beginning with salvation and building from there on the outcome of the Holy Spirit's work in the life of the believer.*

Galatians 5:22–23

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

(2) *"By spiritual things the apostle [means] the doctrine and sacraments of the gospel; which are called spiritual things, because they come from heaven, they affect the soul and spirit of a man, they tend to make men spiritual, they prepare the soul for heaven. (Poole)*

(3) *τὰ πνευματικά - spiritual things, Christian knowledge, faith, love, etc., inasmuch as these are the blessings which, proceeding from the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22), become the portion of believers through the sower's work of preaching the gospel (Matthew 13:3 ff.). Heinrich Meyer*

b) With the church's provision of spiritual food – not just in the planting of the seed (which is what Paul, Silas, and Timothy did – 2 Cor. 1:19), but in the "watering" of it as well (which was a term used for the work involved in nourishing the seed, working the ground so it would produce, etc. –

which is what Apollos did in the church at Corinth – 1 Cor. 3:5-7), there was the expectation of the church ministering of their “carnal things.”

1 Corinthians 3:5–7

⁵ Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

⁶ I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

⁷ So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

(1) “[C]ontrasted with these [spiritual things] are τὰ σαρκικά, [carnal things] the things which have nothing to do with the Holy Spirit, but belong to the lower sphere of man’s life, to his sensuous, corporeal nature, such as food, clothing, money, etc.” (Heinrich Meyer)

(2) This clause regarding carnal things is introduced with the words, “is it a great thing.” Paul is simply asking, “Is it so hard to understand, or is it such a big undertaking that is expected of you?”

Albert Barnes says this:

Is it to be regarded as unequal, unjust, or burdensome? Is it to be supposed that we are receiving that for which we have not rendered a valuable consideration? The sense is, “We impart blessings of more value than we receive. We receive a supply of our temporal needs. We impart to you, under the divine blessing, the gospel,

with all its hopes and consolations. We make you acquainted with God; with the plan of salvation; with the hope of heaven. We instruct your children; we guide you in the path of comfort and peace; we raise you from the degradations of idolatry and of sin; and we open before you the hope of the resurrection of the just, and of all the bliss of heaven; and to do this, we give ourselves to toil and peril by land and by sea. And can it be made a matter of question whether all these high and exalted hopes are of as much value to dying man as the small amount which shall be needful to minister to the needs of those who are the means of imparting these blessings?" Paul says this, therefore, from the reasonableness of the case. The propriety of support might be further urged:

- (a) Because without it the ministry would be comparatively useless. Ministers, like physicians, lawyers, and farmers, should be allowed to attend mainly to the great business of their lives, and to their appropriate work. No physician, no farmer, no mechanic, could accomplish much, if his attention was constantly turned off from his appropriate business to engage in something else. And how can the minister of the gospel, if his time is nearly all taken up in laboring to provide for the needs of his family?
- (b) The great mass of ministers spend their early days, and many of them all their property, in preparing to

preach the gospel to others. And as the mechanic who has spent his early years in learning a trade, and the physician and lawyer in preparing for their profession, receive support in that calling, why should not the minister of the gospel?

- (c) People in other things cheerfully pay those who labor for them. They compensate the schoolmaster, the physician, the lawyer; the merchant, the mechanic; and they do it cheerfully, because they suppose they receive a valuable consideration for their money. But is it not so with regard to ministers of the gospel? Is not a man's family as certainly benefited by the labors of a faithful clergyman and pastor, as by the skill of a physician or a lawyer, or by the service of the schoolmaster? Are not the affairs of the soul and of eternity as important to a man's family as those of time and the welfare of the body? So the music-master and the dancing master are paid, and paid cheerfully and liberally; and yet can there be any comparison between the value of their services and those of the minister of the gospel?

2. An expectation of being treated as fairly as they treated others – vs. 12.

- a) "If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather?"

(1) The word "others" has been given much attention by biblical scholars down

through the ages and no real consensus has been drawn. From the greater context of the letter, going back to chapter 3, it would be a safe understanding of the point to consider these to be teachers that came after Paul and his team established the church and had moved on. They would have been the pastor/teachers (or elders, if you would) of the various local churches throughout the city.

(2) Whether they were good teachers or false teachers, as some regard them, the point is still the same – if they had the right to expect, and accept, remuneration for their labor in the Word, then Paul and his team could expect the same.

b) “Nevertheless” – he now gets to the point he was making in this text – that he did not exercise the clear right (“power” - ἐξουσία) he had for support.

c) He said, rather, that he (they) chose not to use the power (right) but instead endured both physical suffering of doing without as well as the further burdening that working a secular job, as we would say, would have caused he and his team.

d) They did it all “lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.”

(1) This speaks to the carnality of the church at the time of this writing – again, pointing back to chapter 3 where he addressed their carnality.

(2) It also speaks to the culture of Corinth in particular – they simply didn’t want

to do anything that would possibly cause a hinderance to the gospel.

3. An expectation that the church could, and would, follow precedent set long before in the Old Testament priesthood – vs. 13-14

a) Vs. 13 points to a principle from the Old Testament tabernacle (and then Temple) worship and ministry – Numbers 18:8-32 gives in detail what was to be given them.

(1) There are two competing views of what is meant in this verse – some say it speaks of two parts of the same office (that of the high priest) and some say it the first part speaks of the Levites and the second part speaks of the high priest. The latter of these two seems the most congruous and logical as to the point being made, and as it relates to the text it is pointing to in the book of Numbers.

(2) "Do ye not know that they which minister [this word means to work or labor about holy things live of the things of the temple?" – the ESV reads, "Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple...?"

(a) This is what the Levites did. Remember, the Levites and the house of Aaron, the high priest, received no portion in Israel as an inheritance – "Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel" (Num. 18:20).

(b) "Live of the things of the temple" – the word for "live" (ἔσθίω) means to eat or consume food. This is one reason some think this whole verse speaks of the high priest and not the Levites – their portion was part of the tithe rather than a portion of the offerings given, which was specifically said to belong to the high priest and his famil.

(3) *"And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?" – ESV says: "And those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings" – speaks of the high priests work as the attendant at the altars (brazen altar in the outer court, altar of incense in the holy place, and the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies).*

b) Vs. 14 then makes the comparison to the church – "even so" – just as the priests (and the Levites, as those employed in the service of the Lord) were spiritual leaders of the Old Testament and were financially supported, so ought the spiritual leaders of the church be supported.

(1) *"Even so hath the Lord ordained" – it wasn't just an opinion, or a good business model, or even a right ethical or moral issue – this is a direct command of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, found when He sent the disciples out to minister.*

Matthew 10:9-10

9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,

10 Nor scrip for your journey, neither

two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

Luke 10:7

⁷ And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

"Just as God gave orders about the priests in the temple, so did the Lord Jesus give orders for those who preach the gospel to live out of the gospel (ek tou euaggeliou zein). Evidently Paul was familiar with the words of Jesus in Mat_10:10; Luk_10:7. either in oral or written form. He has made his argument for the minister's salary complete for all time." (Robertson)

(2) *The word for "live" (ζῶω) in this verse is different than the one in verse 13, where it meant to eat. Here, the word means, in the context given, "to sustain life, to live on or by anything" (Zodhiates), to make a living.*

(3) *The expectation for the New Testament church spiritual leader, because of the nature of life in that age compared to the nomadic way of life in the Old Testament wilderness wanderings, constituted a furthering of support beyond just food, so to speak.*

All this has been given in order for the church to know what is expected of them by the Lord. So, the question then becomes, how is this money to be found to

“pay the preacher?” Again, following on the principles of the Old Testament tabernacle (and, later, the Temple), it comes from the tithes and offerings of God’s people.

Galatians 6:6

⁶ Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

Although we don’t give statement of giving requirements as some denominations and churches do, it is still required of Scripture that the church give of their “carnal things” (of their income and living) in order to care for the pastor and his family.

Conclusion to this point: One of the reasons for the judgment on Israel in the Old Testament is they chose not to give as the Lord required. After the captivity and the return to the land, the children of Israel did the very same thing, and God condemned them for it (as found in Malachi 3). Even though we are in the Age of Grace and God won’t judge His church the same way, there are blessings missed for not giving as we ought. Some say tithing was Old Testament, and maybe that was true, but just as the “paying the preacher” principle is built upon the Old Testament support for the workers in the Tabernacle and Temple (Levites and priests), so also is the way in which that support is gathered – through the faithful giving of God’s people. I don’t say much about giving but I want us to understand that it is still a biblical principle and God will bless those that give – that’s a promise from God

Himself.

Malachi 3:10

¹⁰ Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

If we want blessings from the Lord, then we need to be obedient in all that we can be.

G. Right determination – vs. 15-19

There's a change of note in verse 15. In the prior texts that relate to the issue of financial support, Paul is using the third person plural pronoun (we or us) when referencing himself in the context. He now, in this text, and following, changes to first person singular – I or me. It seems to go back to the beginning of the chapter where the Apostle is defending his apostleship and with what he says here and following, is dealing with that personal defense.

1. Determined not to take glory from the Lord – vs. 15-16
 - a) These two verses, if none else do, should give every pastor, Bible teacher, preacher, and every born-again child of God pause when we think we are better than anyone else. Nothing we do is to be done for our glory or honor – ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!
 - b) The first part of verse 15 illustrates a point he makes more than once to the Corinthians and also to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 3:8-9) – that he didn't say any of

this to garner anything for himself, or for his team.

- c) In the latter part of the verse he demonstrates his resolve to preach the gospel at any cause in pointing out that he, in all honesty, would rather die than to cause anything to reproach the name of Christ or hinder the gospel's message and affect – “for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.”

(1) *"Than that any man" – whether good or bad, whether positive or negative, whatever man does, whatever man may say about the motivation behind what we do, we should never let that hinder us from serving Christ in what He has given us to do. Paul chose to not take financial remuneration (support) in order to be unhindered, but his point is, whether taken or not, nothing that can be done to us should stop us from preaching the gospel.*

(2) *"Should make my glorying [boasting] void" – or to make it empty, of no value, of no affect. The glorying he is speaking of here is not taking anything from Christ and glory due Him, there is no pride involved in this. The Apostle is pointing to the privilege he has in preaching the gospel and the fact that he has the ability to do it without charge is to him something he can point to and say it is all because of Christ. His calling, his apostolic appointment was from Him – and he wasn't about to let anyone falsely accuse him of something and make that glorying of no affect and hinder the gospel's reach.*

d) Vs. 16 – Although he can glory in his privilege to point people to Christ and glorify Him, he himself, by anything he has or has not done, has nothing to glory in, nothing for which he can boast. Just preaching the gospel does not give one the right to boast – just being a soul-winner and being used of God to bring many to Christ gives us nothing to brag about. It's all for Him.

(1) "For necessity is laid upon me" – an impelling force which should not be resisted was put upon him long before on the Road to Damascus, and he was compelled to pursue that call until he died.

(2) "Yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" – judgment be upon me if I ever stop, or stray from, preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. Whether one is a missionary presenting the gospel message to those that have never heard, or a pastor who is teaching the deeper truths of what the gospel represents to the saints of God so we can, in turn, give the message of hope to those around us, if we ever stop doing what we have been given to do it is as if we are under a pronouncement of judgment from God Himself.

Let me make a comment here: the preaching of the "gospel" that the Apostle is speaking of here is primarily the simple truth of the death, burial, and resurrection. Within all the teaching he did at Corinth, and with any pastor of any church, whether a new church plant in a land where the

gospel has never been, or in a church that is well established with many that know the Scriptures, the simple gospel message still needs to be preached. If it is not – if the simple gospel gets set aside for a relevance-based message, or a culturally-accented sermon, or any other venue that “muddies the water” of the truth, then this pronouncement of woe is upon them for they no longer can be considered a preacher of the gospel.

Isaiah 6:5

⁵ Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

Luke 9:62

⁶² And Jesus said unto him, **No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.**

2. Determined to serve willingly and without charge – vs. 17-18
 - a) Vs. 17 – if Paul preached of his own will, or his own accord – if he preached without a call of God on his life, without the power of the position, then he, by all rights would have, and should have, taken a “reward” (μισθός) – pay for service, wages. But he didn’t preach of his own accord but rather quite involuntarily (“against my will”), he had a stewardship (“dispensation”) that he was entrusted with and he had no real choice in the matter if he was going to remain faithful to the Lord.

(1) *The word for "dispensation" (the words "of the gospel" were added by the translators for clarity) is the Greek word "οἰκονομία" and it literally means to be a manager of a household. In this case, it was a spiritual stewardship Paul was entrusted with of managing the gospel ministry as properly and faithfully as he could. This goes back to 1 Cor. 4:1-2:*

1 Corinthians 4:1-2

¹ Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

² Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

(2) *This is true of every pastor today as well (goes back to the previous verse in the clause "woe is unto me...").*

Titus 1:7

⁷ For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

b) Vs. 18 goes back to the issue of "reward" (μισθός) and the question is asked by the Apostle, that, if he is obligated by duty to preach the gospel, what reward should he look for in this service? His answer is the basis of all that he did in his service for the Lord – both in Corinth and everywhere else.

(1) *"That when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge"*

(a) Only time in the New Testament

that this Greek word is used – comes from two words: the negative privative “aleph – A,” and “δανάνη,” a word meaning expense or cost. So, literally, without expense or cost.

- (b) His reward was that he would, while preaching, render the gospel without cost (i.e. what reward have I in prospect that induces me to preach gratuitously) ... (Alford). The reward is seen as a negative of sorts – his reward was that he would be able to hear done by his Lord and Savior, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant,” which was far more of a reward than any money he could make for doing his duty.
 - c) “That I abuse not my power in the gospel” – that was his reward – to know that the gospel would be unhindered by anything he did, including taking financial support even if he had a right to (which he established previously that he did).
3. Determined to be, as always, a servant to all – vs. 19 (as Jesus was – “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister...”
- a) This verse is a progressive transition verse, taking the thought of his voluntary service to how he went about accomplishing that service.
 - b) We will look at this further in the next point.

Conclusion to this point: Why do we do what we do for the Lord? Is it for recognition by man? Is it for a,

“Good job,” “Nice work” – is it for the “thank you” that we get here or is it for the one we receive from the Lord then?

Pleasing Men or Serving Christ

A railway gatekeeper, who one cold night required every passenger to show his ticket before passing through to the train, and was rewarded with considerable grumbling and protesting, was told: “You are a very unpopular man tonight.” “I only care to be popular with one man,” was the reply, “and that is the superintendent.” He might have pleased the passengers, disobeyed orders, and lost his position. He was too wise for that; his business was to please one man—the man who hired him, gave him his orders, and rewarded him for faithfulness, and who would discharge him for disobedience. The servant of Christ has many opportunities to make himself unpopular. There are multitudes who would be glad to have him relax the strictness of his rules. If he is their servant, they demand that he should consult their wishes. But if he serves them, he cannot serve the Lord. “No man can serve two masters.” He who tries to be popular with the world, will lose his popularity with the Lord. He will make friends, but he will lose the one Friend who is above all others. He will win plaudits, but he will not hear the gracious words: “Well done!”

III. SOME WILL QUESTION OUR METHODS – VS. 19-27

A. When questioned, our response should be to simply keep doing what is right.

B. Methods out of service – vs. 19-23

1. Bound – vs. 19

a) The primary method he used, and ironically, one for which he was criticized, was that of binding himself in service to all he came in contact with – both saved and, as this text demonstrates, the unsaved.

b) “For though I be free from all *men*” – keeping within the context, this is speaking of being free from the pressure of anyone that would attempt to make him feel like he owed them something because he was being “paid” for his services. In that culture, as it is today (and has been down through history), there is the connection made between employee and employer, so to speak. It would have been a natural thing for those that provided for his support to expect certain things from him and he knew that’s what they would think. So, in order to be able to serve the Lord without hinderances, he chose to be “free from all.”

c) “Yet have I made myself servant unto all”

(1) *The word “yet” is used as a conjunction in this verse, connecting (conversely) back to the words “for though” – in contrast to the freedom (liberty) he had to do what he felt was best, he chose to bind himself to another type of service – that of ministry to all.*

- (2) *The word for "servant" here is a word (δουλόω) that means more a slave than a mere servant. It is derived from a word that means to enslave – and that is the way the Apostle is using it. It is found in seven verses the New Testament and is translated by the words "bring (or brought) into bondage," "become (became) servants," "given to," and "made servant."*
- (3) *He "enslaved himself" to the servitude of all those that need the gospel, and it was they who had the say (with the Holy Spirit's leading) in what he did – not anyone that paid him to do what he chose to do.*

"None had any claim on him because they maintained him; yet he reduced himself to the condition of a servant, both by serving all men without requiring even maintenance from them and by complying with their prejudices in all cases where he could without violating God's will." (Lipscomb)

Note to be made here: the pastor is under the same servitude of which Paul is speaking. We are to be "enslaved" to the ministry – both in getting the gospel to the lost and (more specifically for the pastor) equipping the saints and building up the spiritual lives of the believers. The pay is inconsequential to the responsibility. The pay is as much to be a blessing to the giver as it is to bless the one to whom it is given. The pastor is not bound to answer to a board or a hierarchal structure (although there is a case to be made for

accountability for sure). His sole purpose is the obedience to Christ and the service of others.

(4) Albert Barnes gives these three points that demonstrate this well:

(a) I labor for them, or in their service, and to promote their welfare.

(b) I do it, as the slave does, without reward or hire. I am not paid for it, but submit to the toil, and do it without receiving pay.

(c) I do it, as the slave does, without reward or hire. I am not paid for it, but submit to the toil, and do it without receiving pay.

(5) "Unto all" – as he was free from all that could hold anything over him and only had the Lord to serve, he put upon himself the burden of binding himself, enslaving himself, to the "all" of the world around him – the "all" of the unsaved that needed to hear the gospel wherever he was.

1 Corinthians 10:33

33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

Matthew 20:26–28

26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

d) "That I might gain the more"

(1) *We get the expression "win them" from the words "might gain" (all one word in the Greek). When we "win" someone to Christ, the kingdom of God is "gaining" and the kingdom of the devil is "losing."*

(2) *The sense of the verb "might gain" (κερδήσω) is one of possibility – a thing may or may not happen. Within the possibility, the hope is to win lost souls to Christ, so it uses a tense of the verb (aorist) that indicates this action (in this case, existing at a certain point – past, present, or future).*

(3) *"The more" – Alford interprets this as "the largest number." And he, rightfully so, points this back to the question in verse 18 of "What is my reward then?" as the answer to the question – "the more."*

1 Thessalonians 2:19–20

19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

20 For ye are our glory and joy.

(4) *"That I may gain, if not all, yet the greater part" (Zodhiates).*

2. Became – vs. 20-22a

He chose to put himself in a position that

would allow him to become whatever was needed, within the confines of Scripture, in order to see the lost come to Christ through the clear preaching of the gospel.

a) To the religious lost – vs. 20

(1) *"The Jews" – nationally; "under the law" – Jews religiously. In most cases in the New Testament when this type of comparison is made (between Jews and Gentiles), the concept of the "Jews" points to the religious crowd, especially when it is connected with "the law."*

(2) *There is no real consensus on what is meant between "the Jews," and "those under the law." John Wesley has perhaps the clearest explanation of this, and one that seems to express the nature of the text:*

To the Jews I became as a Jew - Conforming myself in all things to their manner of thinking and living, so far as I could with innocence. To them that are under the law - Who apprehend themselves to be still bound by the Mosaic law. As under the law - Observing it myself, while I am among them. Not that he declared this to be necessary, or refused to converse with those who did not observe it. This was the very thing which he condemned in St. Peter, Gal 2:14.

Galatians 2:14

14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest

after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

b) The non-religious lost – vs. 21

(1) *"Without law" – either no religion as Gentiles or those that worshipped false gods.*

(2) *He makes it clear he is not saying that a believer is free to do whatever he wants and use reaching the lost as an excuse for sin – "being not with law to God, but under the law to Christ."*

(3) *Scofield: "The expression is peculiar and might be literally rendered, 'not lawless toward God, but inlawed to Christ.' ... It is another way of saying, 'not under the law, but under the rule of grace.' Rom. 6:14.*

Galatians 6:2

² Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

2 John 5

⁵ And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

Romans 6:14

¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

c) The non-caring lost – vs. 22a – "weak" – literally means without strength, without ability. Shows the importance of our work

in the presentation of the gospel, as well as the necessary work of the Holy Spirit drawing them in grace (John 6:44, 65).

(1) *There are some good scholars that say this is speaking of the weak Christians and gaining them back from the destructive path they have been led down by those that were a stumblingblock to their faith, but that doesn't fit in the context here. Some think this to be just a restatement of the previous two verses – showing, whether religious or not, they are "those who had not strength to believe and receive the Gospel" (Alford). I don't believe either are entirely correct. It is fairly clear that this is speaking of a separate group of lost people that the Apostle was working with in winning them to Christ.*

(2) *Paul's own example is instructive, as showing how far this method of action may be rightly carried. He accommodated himself to the prejudices and preferences of men so far as he could without sacrificing truth and righteousness, in order to win them to Christ. In other words, he sacrificed personal rights and personal liberty of action rather than to insist upon them when they stood in the way of winning any man, or set of men, to the Lord. As an example he earnestly contended that the law of Moses was no longer binding; yet he observed it as fully as he could, consistently with the law of Christ, for the purpose of conciliating the Jews and obtaining from them a favorable hearing of the gospel. He did this not that he might be personally*

popular with any man, but that by doing so he might throw no obstacle in the way of their giving the gospel a favorable hearing. (David Lipscomb)

3. Blessings – vs. 22b-23

a) He did all that he did for the gospel's sake to secure souls for the kingdom.

b) "I am made all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some" – this is in no way saying do whatever we need do, even if it means compromise, to win someone to Christ. The Bible cannot contradict itself, so the "all" in this text can only mean "all" (or, any) of the things that would be allowed within the confines of Scripture. All does mean all, but, as with other encompassing words in any language, the context will indicate how far the "all" goes.

(1) *"All things (παντα) to all men (τοις πασιν, the whole number) by all means (παντως)" – "all things I do on account of the gospel" (Alford).*

(2) *"I am made" – the tense of this verb (second perfect) points to a completed action once and for all – he was made, at the time of his "Damascus Road" experience, and subsequent call to the ministry, a minister of the gospel and he could do none else.*

(3) *"All things to all (men)" – whatever he had to do within the confines of Scripture, whatever sacrifice he had to make, he would do for the sake of the gospel.*

(4) *"By all means" – in any and every way – "Not in the sense of sacrifice of principle, but by the operation of a wide-reaching sympathy, which enabled him, without compromising his own convictions, to approach all men from their most accessible side."*
(Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges)

(5) "Save some"

(a) We have no power to save anyone – that's not what is being taught in this text.

(b) The word "save" in the epistles "predominately means to rescue and preserve from that spiritual death which is common to all men because of Adam's sin" (Zodhiates). That is what is meant in this text, but Paul is not saying we save them, but, coupled with the principle of winning them to Christ, we have a part in their salvation only in as much as we are the instruments of their coming to a knowledge of Christ.

(c) Paul would use all means at his disposal in hopes of seeing as many as possible come to Christ, even if it is only "some" of the many. He would do what he had to do to rescue as many from damnation as he could (which is literally what is meant by "save some").

c) "This I do for the gospel's sake" – the "this" is pointing back to the issue of reward and pay, and the context of what that involved.

d) "That I might be partaker thereof with you"
– and in securing as many souls as he could by whatever means he could, he was securing a blessing for himself in knowing he would have crowns to cast at Jesus' feet.

(1) *"That I may be a joint partaker thereof"*
– *"Literally, That I may become Corinthians-partner with others in the gospel. The point is that he may be able to share the gospel with others, his evangelistic passion"* (Robertson).

(2) *There's a word here (αυτου) that is a word that points to self – "that I myself"*
– *he's inserting himself dynamically into the point to show that he had a stake in what happened with the church in Corinth.*

(3) *"Partaker thereof with"* – *συγκοινωνος*
– *comes from two words:*

(a) *Σὺν* – denotes union – with or together, by association, companionship, etc.

(b) *Κοινωνός* – a partner, companion – as Robertson put it: "Paul does not wish to enjoy the gospel just by himself."

Conclusion to this point: What have we bound ourselves to for Christ with the goal of winning people to Christ? What have we become for the sake of others? What blessing is our goal in our service for the Lord? Too many of those that are revered today as spiritual leaders within Christianity have this whole concept completely wrong – either out of ignorance of

what the Bible actually says, or, more likely, choose to disregard what they know, or intentionally manipulate the Word of God to their own advantage. They choose to use what they have to bless themselves first without much regard for the lost, and when they do put efforts into "trying to reach the lost," the efforts are not to bind themselves to the lost, nor to become poor, or weak, or live like those they are trying to reach – it is done to make themselves look better. That is what's wrong with the church today (even good churches) and that's the cause for the global epidemic of the systematic destruction of true, biblical faith in Christ.

C. Methods out of sacrifice – vs. 24-27

1. Knowing what's at stake – vs. 24-25

Simply put, our testimony and the cause of the gospel is at stake.

- a) "Know ye not" – this illustration he uses of games is something for which the Corinthians (as a people – saved and unsaved) would have been very familiar.

"The Isthmian games, in which the foot race was a leading one, were of course well known, and a subject of patriotic pride to the Corinthians, who lived in the immediate neighborhood. These periodical games were to the Greeks rather a passion than a mere amusement: hence their suitability as an image of Christian earnestness." (J-F-B)

- b) "That they which run in a race" – or, properly, racecourse

(1) *The word for "race" here (στάδιον) is one from which our word "stadium" comes. It is in the singular in this verse and is used for "a stadium or an arena in which public games were held, the track in the arena, or as a metonym for the race run on the track. The arena was so-called because the Olympic course was a stadium in length" (Zodhiates).*

In every other case it is used in the New Testament (five other times) it is translated "furlongs" (in the KJV), a measure of distance equal to 606.75 of our feet.

"From the fact that the race-courses were usually of exactly this length, the word was applied to the race-course itself. The position chosen for the stadium was usually on the side of a hill, which would furnish a natural slope for seats; a corresponding elevation on the opposite side, being formed by a mound of earth, and the seats being supported upon arches. The stadium was oblong in shape, and semicircular at one end; though, after the Roman conquest of Greece, both ends were often made semicircular. A straight wall shut in the area at one end, and here were the entrances and the starting-place for the runners. At the other end was the goal, which, like the starting-point, was marked by a square pillar. Half-way between these was a third pillar. On the first pillar was inscribed excel; on the second, hasten; on the third, turn, since the racers turned round the column to go back to the starting-point." (Vincent)

(2) *The word for "run" (τρέχω) is descriptive of the race they were in.*

c) "Run all" – all run to win

d) "But one receiveth the prize"

(1) *There was only one winner, and everyone ran to win because they knew the consequences of losing. In that day, in those races, it was not uncommon for the losers of a race to pay dearly, either financially or physically, at times even with their lives. Some of the runners were slaves but it was also a common thing for the wealthy to participate in the games.*

(2) *"The prize" – the word used here (βραβεῖον) is used only one other time in the New Testament – Phil. 3:14. The prize was only received by one competitor – there were no second or third place "winners." Either you won or you lost.*

"The isthmus of Corinth was the scene of the Isthmian games, one of the four great national festivals of the Greeks. The celebration was a season of great rejoicing and feasting. The contests included horse, foot, and chariot-racing; wrestling, boxing, musical and poetical trials, and later, fights of animals. The victor's prize was a garland of pine leaves, and his victory was generally celebrated in triumphal odes called epinikia, of which specimens remain among the poems of Pindar. At the period of Paul's epistles the games were still celebrated, and the apostle himself may very probably have

been present. At the same time, he would have been familiar with similar scenes in Tarsus, in all the great cities of Asia Minor, especially Ephesus, and even in Jerusalem.” (Vincent)

e) “So run, that ye may obtain” – run to win the victor’s crown. The illustration Paul uses here is one that demonstrates to the believer, and to the church as a whole, the importance of running the race we are in with the purpose of winning the prize, the crown.

f) “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.”

(1) *“Every man” (πάς) – all, everyone – not gender specific and not speaking of just pastors or the leadership of the church.*

(2) *“That striveth for the mastery” is all one word in the Greek - αγωνίζομαι. This was the regular word used in ancient Greek for contending in the arena or on the stage. It’s a word that means struggle or conflict. It’s translated “fight” in 1 Tim. 6:12 where Paul told Timothy to, “Fight the good fight of faith.”*

(3) *“Is temperate in all things” – in order to win the race and win the prize one must be careful to maintain his life in such a way as to not be overwhelmed with anything that would distract him from his goal.*

(a) The word used here (εγκρατεύομαι) is only used here and in 1 Cor. 7:9 where it is translated “cannot contain.” It is used in the

Septuagint in Gen. 43:31 where it is used of Joseph when he confronted his brothers in Egypt, where it is translated "refrained himself."

- (b) The word means to maintain self-control, to exercise self-restraint.

The candidate for the races was required to be ten months in training, and to practice in the gymnasium immediately before the games, under the direction of judges who had themselves been instructed for ten months in the details of the games. The training was largely dietary. Epictetus says: "Thou must be orderly, living on spare food; abstain from confections; make a point of exercising at the appointed time, in heat and in cold; nor drink cold water nor wine at hazard." Horace says: "The youth who would win in the race hath borne and done much; he hath sweat and been cold; he hath abstained from love and wine" ("Ars Poetica," 412). Tertullian, commending the example of the athletes to persecuted Christians, says: "Coguntur, cruciantur, fatigantur." "They are constrained, harassed, wearied" ("Ad Martyres," 3). Compare 2Ti_2:5. (as found in Vincent's)

- g) "Now they do it to obtain an corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible" – the competitors in games race to win something tangible, something they can put their hands on, something they can

see. For the believer, in the race we are in for souls, and for the sake of the gospel, we are competing against an unseen force with weapons that "are not carnal" – that can't be seen or handled – to win an "incorruptible crown," a prize that is not tangible, that cannot be seen, or handled, but that is far more worthy. The question is, what are we competing to win?

Ephesians 6:12

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

2 Corinthians 10:4

4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

(1) There are several specific "crowns" that we can receive when we stand before the Lord and account for our life as a believer (the good – the sin has already been judged).

(a) The incorruptible crown, or the victor's crown - given to those who master the old nature – 1 Cor. 9:25-27

(b) The crown of rejoicing - given to soul-winners

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

²⁰ For ye are our glory and joy.

- (c) The crown of life - given to those who successfully endure persecution – Rev. 2:10

Revelation 2:10

¹⁰ Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

- (d) The crown of righteousness - given to those who especially love the doctrine of the rapture – 2 Tim. 4:8

2 Timothy 4:8

⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

- (e) The crown of glory - given to faithful pastors – 1 Pet. 5:2-4

1 Peter 5:2-4

² Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

³ Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

⁴ And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a

crown of glory that fadeth not away.

2. Knowing what to use and how to use it – vs. 26-27a

- a) "I therefore" – because of the illustration he used and the point he made from it in the previous verses – the runner in a race running to win – he then tells the church at Corinth, and the leadership of the church in particular, how to obtain the prize.
- b) "So run, not as uncertainly" – The Apostle uses himself as an example here, as he often did, to show that one can run a race properly and within the boundaries of the course (within the confines of Scripture) and still win.

(1) This is the only time in the New Testament this Greek word is used (σδῆλωσ). It is a word that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to use, one he would have been familiar with from with his knowledge of the games of the day. It is defined by Spiros Zodhiates as, "irresolutely, without attending to the prescribed marks or lines, without exposure to the spectators who were there to judge the race or the performance." Henry Alford says this: "without any sure grounds of contending or any fixed object for which to contend; both these are included."

(2) He is saying he did not run outside the bounds, he did not perform outside of the approved norms, he competed lawfully and properly. This is something we are to always maintain in our Christian life.

- c) "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air"
- (1) *This is not shadow boxing, as we would think of it (although that is a common application and one that can be made). There is a more contextual application to be made by this.*
 - (2) *"The allusion is not to a σκιαμαχία or rehearsal of a fight with an imaginary adversary...but to a fight with a real adversary (viz. here, the body) in which the boxer vainly hits into the air, instead of striking his antagonist" (Alford).*
 - (3) *Just as the runner ran to win and did what was necessary to compete faithfully and honestly but competed to win; so also does a boxer fight to win. Paul is saying, in his fight with the forces of evil, he didn't swing and miss – that wasn't his goal. It wasn't just fighting to stay alive – he fought with every intent of landing blows and doing harm to the enemy.*
- d) "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection" – this goes back to being "temperate in all things" and refocuses on maintaining a good testimony.
- (1) *"Keep under" (ὑπωπιάζω) - literally, "bruise the face under the eyes," so as to render it black and blue; so, to chastise in the most sensitive part...literally, "bruise the face under the eyes," so as to render it black and blue; so, to chastise in the most sensitive part. (J-F-B)*

Romans 8:13

¹³ For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

1 Peter 2:11

¹¹ Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

(2) *"My body" – both the physical body, with its fleshly nature; as well as the spiritual aspect, maintaining a right spirit.*

(3) *"And bring it into subjection"*

(a) Only time the form of this word (δουλαγωγέω) is used. It is a compound word – the word for "servant" we saw in verse 19, and the word for lead or bring. Literally, to bring into servitude – to be a slave driver.

(b) We are to make sure our physical body is driven by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God rather than base instincts and nature.

3. Knowing the consequences of failure – vs. 27b

a) "Lest that by any means" – just as he would use all that he could within the confines of Scripture to win souls, he wanted to make sure there was "no means" that would cause him to fail.

b) "When I have preached to others" – goes back to preaching the true gospel message

to the lost. It can be said that the application for the church at Corinth here, and its leadership, is that they need to make sure there are “no means” that will distract from teaching the whole counsel of God.

c) “I myself should be a castaway”

(1) He wasn't concerned for anyone else here – he couldn't answer for them. He could only answer for himself and he took that seriously.

(2) The word for “castaway” (αδόκιμος) is also a compound word. It is the word for acceptable with what is called the “alpha privative” – a negative particle at the beginning of the word which negates what follows. Literally, not acceptable, or not approved.

(3) “I myself may prove rejected. An examination of the victorious combatants took place after the contest, and if it could be proved that they had contended unlawfully, or unfairly, they were deprived of the prize and driven with disgrace from the games...So the Apostle, if he had proclaimed the laws of the combat to others, and not observed them himself, however successful he might apparently be, would be personally rejected as αδόκιμος [a castaway] in the great day. And this he says with a view to shew them the necessity of more self-denial, and less going to the extreme limit of their Christian liberty...” (Alford).

Conclusion: This entire chapter, and for that matter, all of the Apostle Paul's work was done "for the gospel's sake." The same should be said of every true believer of every generation, no matter position or standing either in the church or in society itself – all we do should be done for the sake of getting the message of hope in Christ to the world.

We have a life to live, just like he did – we have family to help, friends to fellowship with, a job to do (or work to be done), life to enjoy as God allows – but through all of the life we live we are to maintain that burden for fulfilling the Great Commission of taking the gospel to the world. There is nothing wrong with enjoying the things God has given to us – after all He said He gives all things to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17). By all means, enjoy life in Christ – but do it with that burden of knowing there's a job to do for Christ.