



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

The First Epistle to St. Paul to the Corinthians

Chapter 9

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Introduction

- After warning in chapter 8 that the improper exercise of liberty might lead to the damnation of the weak, St. Paul now illustrates how he was willing to exercise restraint even when it came to the liberties as an apostle
- Though he had the right to have a wife and be supported (1-14), he freely chose not to exercise these rights
- One reason was so he might be able to freely serve (15-18), and because he desired to save others (19-23)
- There was also the realization that self-restraint was a necessary quality to assure his own salvation (24-27)!

A Pattern of Self-Denial (9:1-18)



- Two reasons:
 - ❖ To answer those, the Judaizers, who belittled his authority as the other apostles
 - ❖ To enforce upon the church, by his example, self-denial for the benefit of others
- Am I not free: He had spoken of Christian liberty
- He was free also, and an apostle who had seen the Lord (Acts 9:27), and hence, could witness to his resurrection (Acts 1:21,22)

A Pattern of Self-Denial (9:1-18)



- The existence of the church at Corinth, founded by him, proved that he was their apostle, at least
- My answer to them who examine my apostleship is that you are the seal of mine apostleship
- Do we have no right to eat and drink?: To live at the charges of the churches we have founded?
- Peter (Cephas) was a married man
- Other apostles had wives
- He had this liberty as well as others

A Pattern of Self-Denial (9:1-18)



- Who are the brethren of the Lord? (the sons of Joseph or his cousins)
- He and Barnabas worked with their own hands to sustain themselves while preaching
- Others were sustained, had not they the same right?
- Soldiers were paid while on a campaign; but he and Barnabas were Christian soldiers

A Pattern of Self-Denial (9:1-18)



- The husbandman ate of the vineyard; but they worked in the vineyard of the Lord
- The feeder of the flock drank of its milk, but they were feeders of the flock of God
- I speak thus not merely according to human judgment, but with the sanction of the divine law
- For it is written in the law of Moses (Deut 25:4)
- In the East the grain is trodden out by the cattle and the people do not muzzle the cattle to this day

A Pattern of Self-Denial (9:1-18)



- Is the animal the ultimate object for whose sake this law was given? No
- God does care for the lower animal (Ps 36:6; Mt 10:29), but it is with the ultimate aim of the welfare of man, the head of animal creation
- He who plows ought to plow in hope of reaping
- He who threshes in ought to eat the fruit of his labors
- Spiritual things: preached the gospel

A Pattern of Self-Denial (9:1-18)



- Carnal things. An earthly support
- If others enjoyed this privilege of earthly support, then his right would be greater than that of these
- He had supported himself lest he should hinder the gospel by giving an occasion of offense
- He now shows that the temple teaches the same lesson
- The priests and Levites are sustained by the temple offerings

A Pattern of Self-Denial (9:1-18)



- A part of the sacrifice was consumed on the altar and a part was awarded to the priests
- It was the Lord's ordinance that those who preach the gospel should be sustained by the church (Mt 10:9,10)
- They had neither sustained him, nor did he now write to them to have them do so
- He was fully resolved not to change his course
- It were even better for him to die than to do so

A Pattern of Self-Denial (9:1-18)



- He preached because he was Christ's servant
- He was therefore under necessity, as a servant
- Woe was upon him if he obeyed not
- In this, then, he had no right to boast
- But if he refused a support from the churches when he had liberty to receive it, that might make a ground of boasting
- If he preached voluntarily, he might then claim an earthly reward

A Pattern of Self-Denial (9:1-18)



- But if (as is the case) involuntarily by the constraining grace of God; I have had a stewardship entrusted to me
- So he can claim no reward, seeing that he only has done that which was his duty to do and to incur the woe if I fail in it
- What is my reward? by making the Gospel without charge I might "win the more
- Abuse: that I use not to the full my power



Serving All Men (9:19-23)

- He shows why he used this self denial, in order that he might gain souls, he was willing to become the servant of all, and to deny himself all things
- With Jews he lived as a Jew in order to reach them
- He observed their distinctions of meats, kept feasts (Acts 18:21), and circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:3)
- He observed the law to reach those who kept law



Serving All Men (9:19-23)

- To them that ate without law, as without law, though in the sight of God keeping His law, he came not as an enforcer of the law of Moses
- He spoke to Gentiles from a Gentile standpoint, as at Athens (Acts 17:22-31)
- To the weak became I as weak: he adapted himself to their weakness as he had directed the strong (1 Cor 4:10) at Corinth to do



Serving All Men (9:19-23)

- I am made all things to all men: While steadfastly keeping Christ's law he adapted himself to all men in the hope of gaining them
- All this self denial had in view a single goal: the promotion of the gospel
- Would that all Christians adapt themselves to all classes, in order to reach them?
- Partaker of the Gospel: blessings promised at Christ's coming with those thus gained



Striving for a Crown (9:24-27)

- He had spoken of self denial in order to secure gospel success.
- He now enforces the need of sparing no effort, self denial or exertion, to win the crown
- The Corinthians were familiar with the races in the stadium
- Only one, the foremost, received a prize
- Hence the lesson, so run, that you may obtain: do better than all others if possible



Striving for a Crown (9:24-27)

- Everyone who strive in the games for the prize pursues a course of self-control, and exercises himself very systematically
- All this effort was made for a corruptible crown
- But we an incorruptible: We run for a crown that never fades (1 Pet 5:4)
- Not with uncertainty: Not as one who had no definite goal before him
- His eye was fixed upon the heavenly prize



Striving for a Crown (9:24-27)

- The first figure is of a runner with a definite object; the second is taken from the boxer who strikes the air instead of his competitor
- St. Paul puts a skillful aim into his blows
- But I discipline my body: He controls his body by self denial for Christ
- Bring it into subjection: It shall not be his master, but his servant
- Disqualified: Refused the prize of the crown



Conclusion

- What two things helped to verify Paul's apostleship?
- What were two things that the apostles had the right to do?
- What arguments does St. Paul make to justify preachers receiving support?
- Why did St. Paul choose not to accept support?
- Why was St. Paul willing to make himself a servant to all?
- What two athletic events did St. Paul compare with the Christian life?
- Why was St. Paul so concerned about exercising self-control?