

Mosaic economy. Paul is careful to point out that his adaptation to the "outlaw" status of the Gentiles did not lessen his "inlaw" status with God. It is another way of saying that he is not an antinomian in any sense whatsoever. He recognizes his "grace position" to be one of vital requirement and not license. With all this, he could still take his stance with the Gentiles to win them!

- c. Christians. The "weak" is a reference to the brethren. They are slenderly confirmed and are of the sort previously mentioned (chap. 8). Until they were secured from lapses, he would seek to gain them. A tremendous extension of his concern! It is the climax of his plea for loving concern. If the principle of empathy were ever taught in the Bible, it is in these verses.

NOTE The perfect tense of the verb is used for "I am made." Previously the aorist was used (cf. "I became" vv. 20, 22). This is his abiding position with all. Why? Unto their ultimate salvation. To him, no observance, was too irksome; no prejudice too absurd; no requirement too stupid to prevent him from lovingly and tenderly considering it unto the salvation of the persons involved.

Conclusion Just how far should one go "on account of the Gospel?" Paul states that all he has written in this section of his manner of conduct is "for the sake of the Gospel." From where he sits, this is worthwhile sacrifice. A related purpose is expressed in the final phrase: "that I might be a partaker of it (salvation) with you." The word "partaker" means a "fellow-partaker" and notes that Paul wanted to enter into the joy of salvation with all the groups with which he accommodated himself. There can be no more worthy sacrifice than expressed here (v. 23). Amen.

THE BOOK OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

"Worthwhile Sacrifice"

I Corinthians 9:15-23

Introduction

1. With everyone crying for his "rights," it is not a very popular concept to speak of "sacrifice." However, this is the kernal of genuine Christianity!

2. Paul has argued in this section for his position as an apostle in the technical sense (9:1-14). Being such, he claims rights attendant therewith. Boldly, however, he is willing to forgo these rights so as not to hinder the Gospel (v. 12). More than that, Paul avers that: a. He has not used any of his rights. The perfect tense of the verb (v. 15 a) is remarkable for it affirms his settled rule of conduct. b. He has not written to gain from them. The current exposition of the situation is not designed to incite a change on the part of the Corinthians toward Paul. The epistolary aorist verb "written" explains this.

3. All this self-abnegation and refusal to exercise rights has sound reasoning as a base. The whole claim of Paul is that it just must be this way. He is no martyr for a cause, but acting in consistent agreement with a set of circumstances which make it utterly impossible to conduct himself otherwise. These circumstances are three in number:-

1. The glory of Paul's PREACHING. vv. 15-17

Both in the English and Greek of these verses, there is a chain of four explanatory "fors" which form the argument here Paul's preaching:-

a. Admits conviction. v. 15b. Although strong feeling brings some disorder into Paul's grammar and constructions, it is quite obvious what he is driving at. He begins by saying that he would rather die than be dependent upon the Corinthians for pay. He ends by saying absolutely, he will never be so dependent. This is done with his emphatic declaration: "My boast no one shall make void." "void" means empty and is only used by Paul in the NT.

b. Denies reception. v. 16a. The simple preaching of the Gospel holds no form of glory for Paul.

The act of preaching carries with it no cause for glorying. This is a sort of maxim for all Christian workers.

c. Imposes condemnation. v. 16b. The third "for" in the series raises the point that is true of every true preacher. He is a pressed man. The verb "laid upon" is virtually passive and means a task has been put on him by authority. He is not a volunteer, but his commission comes by a divine determination. The "necessity" is not a blind cruel fate, but a matter of compulsion sourced in Sovereign grace! If Paul did not obey the divine call, his disobedience would be linked with condemnation and misery--that is the significance of the word "woe." It would be a blessing if all modern preachers felt as Paul in this matter!

d. Supports commission. v. 17. The argument here is the completion of the chain of "fors" which give an explanation of Paul's preaching. The whole point of his discussion is that he has no cause for glorying in the act of preaching if he does it by constraint. The first part of the verse poses a situation which is not true of Paul--he does not preach willingly! If he were one who preached by free-will, he would have a right to recompense or reward (this word is correlative to "glory" of vv. 15, 16). But the true turn of events is that he preaches due to a "dispensation" or stewardship being laid upon him (cf. Eph, 3). Stewards, among the ancients, belonged to the class of slaves (cf. Luke 12:42, 43). A slave completed his task and had no recompense to expect; he would simply have been punished if he had not done it. By virtue of his mode of calling, Paul was saying: "I do a slave's work and no more!"

NOTE: The juncture to which Paul has come is this: He preaches and has a glory in it which he will never forfeit. It is, however, not in the act of preaching nor in connection with his call. These matters are related to his slavery unto Christ. But there is more. Study on!

2. The glory of Paul's CHOOSING. v. 18.

Here is the acme of Paul's argument. He has wound up

his arm and thrown his pitch. If preaching per se carries no glory, how then can he maintain a glory for which he would die (v. 15)? It comes by his:-

a. Use of the Gospel. The verb "abuse" is a strengthened one which suggests the notion of using the utmost. Here in the negative the idea is that Paul will not use to the full his rights in the Gospel. This portion which he fails to use is the area of his ministry which gives it the character of free-will which is wanting to it by nature, i.e. from the mode of its origin.

b. Offer of the Gospel. This is Paul's glorying, recompense, and reward. The particle "that" is not a simple word, but one which indicates the aim or goal which is ever before the apostle. What is it? To make the Gospel a matter of costlessness. He was free to do this and he did it! He chose to do it this way and it was a part of his freedom. What a fantastic arrangement and how clearly it demonstrated his heart desire to sacrifice his "rights" for the sake of the Gospel.

3. The glory of Paul's WORKING. vv. 19-22

There is no question about the freedom which Paul sustains to Corinth or any other group. But this does not argue for an isolationism. He was willing to sacrifice his liberty rather than use it and thus compromise the salvation of someone. His freedom from any entangling dependence made it possible for him to be bound to a great number for their ultimate salvation. The principle enunciated guides his conduct (v. 19) and shows how many he can reach (vv. 20-22). Note the groups with whom he works:-

a. Jews. The proper name "Jew" is anarthrous and designates the category of people rather than specific individuals. They are "under the law." Proselytes might also be included with the latter expression. The italicised words of the KJV should be included in the text. Paul makes it absolutely certain that no one finds him in conflict with a legalism of any sort!

b. Gentiles. These are described as being "without the law." Gentiles never were subject to the