

BRIARCLIFF CHURCH

Small Group Study Guide: 1 Corinthians

Week of October 6 (Week 10)

1 Corinthians 9: Christian Freedom



1 CORINTHIANS 9: SUMMARY

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul teaches us that exercising our rights is not always the best course of action for the Gospel. He exemplifies self-denial and sacrifice for the benefit of others, showing us that the true calling of a Christian is to prioritize others' spiritual needs over our own comfort. Paul also reminds us that the Christian journey requires discipline and focus, like an athlete training for a race. The eternal prize is far more valuable than any earthly reward, urging us to keep our bodies and minds in check to not lose sight of our spiritual goal. (Bible Hub, 1 Corinthians 9: Summary).

OBSERVING & APPLYING THE TEXT

Asserting Apostolic Rights (1-6)

1. Paul raised several rhetorical questions in 1 Corinthians 9, what do you think is his key argument?

2. In verses 1-2, the word "apostle"/"apostleship" appears three times. What do we make of the occurrence of this word?

Reflection: How can the modern church apply Paul's attitude towards his rights for the sake of the Gospel?

Defending the Right to Material Support (7-14)

3. In arguing for his right/Christian liberty, to what did Paul appeal to make his case? Read verses 4-14.

Reflection: How can you be more mindful of others in the way you exercise your Christian freedom?

Voluntary Surrender of Rights (15-23)

4. Despite the rights Paul could claim/demand he decides to forego them (vv. 12b, 15-23). Why do you think Paul chose to refuse the rights he could rightfully claim?

Reflection: "One cannot properly promote the gospel any other way. To promote this way – by dying to self-interest, giving up all insistences upon the sacredness of one's rights, and striving to win as many as possible – is to follow Christ crucified, who died, literally, to his self-interest, gave up all insistence upon the sacredness of his very real rights, and set himself to win men and women from every people, tongue and tribe and nation" (D. A. Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons from 1 Corinthians*, 154). How does Paul's willingness to forego his rights challenge your perspective on your personal rights and privileges? How does the principle of denying oneself for the Gospel's sake apply to your life?

Reflection: How do you relate to Paul's strategy of becoming "all things to all people" in order to save some? What are practical ways in which you can become "all things to all people"?

Running the Spiritual Race (24-27)

5. What is the thrust of Paul's argument in verses 24-27? Why is this important according to v. 27?

Reflection: Runners and athletes will go to extreme lengths for a transitory prize and a reputation that lasts only momentarily. Christian are invited to exercise restraint and self-control on the journey that leads to lasting glory. What does the phrase "disciplining his body to keep it under control" mean in the context of your life?

PRAYER

PRAYER GUIDE

October 7-11, 2024

Read 1 Corinthians 9

Monday: 9:1-2 *"Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord."* Lord, thank you for the Christian liberty I have but help me that I may be careful not to flaunt my credentials and demand my right either as a believer or a minister of the gospel.

Tuesday: 9:6 *"Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel."* Lord, I pray for the many ministers of the gospel around the world (especially in India) who struggle to make ends meet because they are not paid enough and at the same time, face ridicule of not trusting God to provide for them if they do another job alongside ministry.

Wednesday: 9:12 *"If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ."* Lord, I confess that there are situations when I am so tempted to demand my Christian right as Paul says, "If others ... do not we even more? But help me, Lord to be like Paul who restrained himself as he says, "We have not made use of this right" but "endured." Remind me constantly that the demand to my right can be "an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ."

Thursday: 9:22b & 23 *"I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings."* Lord, give me the wisdom and the courage to "become all things to all people" in non-moral areas to win people to Christ unto salvation for the unbelievers and edification for those who are weak in their faith.

Friday: 9: 27 *"But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified."* Lord, help me to recognize that the temptations of laziness, indulgence, and all kinds of sins come through my body, so help me Lord to "discipline my body and keep it under control."