

## **By all Means Save Some**

1 Corinthians 9: 16-23

We are privileged to have an in depth look at the ministry of the apostle Paul. He has shared his heart and desire with the church at Corinth concerning his philosophy for ministry.

We need to understand that Corinth was a difficult place to minister. It was a Greek city, the capital of Achaia. Its shores provided two natural harbors and Corinth was a shipping paradise. It was a well known commercial center. Along with the commerce came an abundance of immorality. The people were known for their immoral lifestyles. This corruption had found its way into the church.

Paul was forced to address many problems at Corinth within this first letter to them. He dealt with division, false worship, strife over leadership, worldly wisdom and living, immorality, and marriage. In the preceding verses Paul was forced to defend himself and his ministry.

It appears that Corinth was a society much like ours today. Paul was not deterred by the challenges he faced. He was determined to press on for the glory of God and the souls of men. I am interested in the phrase that Paul made in [V.22 – that I might by all means save some](#). This seems to be the theme for Paul's ministry. I want to look at the [principles](#) of his ministry and consider the challenge he presents: [By all Means Save Some](#).

**I. The Foundation of Paul's Ministry (16-18)** – There are four aspects that Paul reveals concerning his ministry that are foundational.

**A. His Calling (16)** – [For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!](#) Clearly there was a call from God to preach the gospel. Most students of the Bible are familiar with the encounter that Paul had with the Lord on the Damascus road. From that moment on Paul had faithfully followed the Lord and preached the gospel.

- This was not of his choosing or desire. Paul was climbing the ladder of success with the Pharisees when the Lord changed his plans. Paul was not planting churches and preaching of his own design; he was simply following the call of God and seeking to fulfill the work he was asked to do.
- Any type of ministry must be based upon the call of God. He has a plan for each of our lives. Many times it is not what we thought it would be, but God has a plan nonetheless. You may not be a preacher, a deacon, or a Sunday school teacher, but that doesn't mean that God doesn't have a plan.

- We must ensure that we are following the call of God instead of the call of man or society. Many ministries have ended in failure because there was no call of God. If it is of the Lord, He will make it clear and provide a way!

### **B. His Comprehension** (16a) – *For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of:*

Paul had been called of God. He was a preacher of the gospel. His life had been used in miraculous ways for the glory of God.

- He had planted churches, pastored people, performed miracles, and was well known wherever he went. Paul states even with all of that he had no reason to glory or claim any credit for himself. He was simply an instrument that was used in the mighty hand of God. He knew it wasn't about him.
- We need a touch of Paul's humility and comprehension in our day. We live in a "me" centered society. Often people are willing to labor for the Lord if they can have a front-row seat. They are willing to work within the church as long as everyone is aware of what they are doing.
- We are no better than the apostle Paul. Even though God may choose to use us, we have nothing to glory in ourselves. If our work or the work of this church as a whole amounts to anything, it will be by the good hand of God!

**C. His Constraint** (16c) – *for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!* Paul declared that he had no choice in the matter. He was called of God to preach and he had to do so! *Necessity was laid upon him.* This has the idea of *being pressed, compelled, constrained, required, or bound by duty.* Paul was saying that his life could be used for no other purpose than to preach the gospel. Preaching and serving the Lord consumed his life. When he woke each day, preaching was on his mind.

- I wonder how many of us here today feel constrained to serve the Lord and accomplish His will. How many of us feel as if we must serve the Lord? How many view it as their main purpose in life? I am not speaking merely out of obligation because we know we should, but out of desire and a passion to serve the Lord and fulfill His calling.
- Many in our day feel pressured to do a lot of things, but sadly serving the Lord and sharing His grace with a lost and dying world isn't one of them.

**D. His Concern** (17-18) – Here Paul reveals some concern regarding his ministry. It was actually two-fold.

**1. Personally** (17) – *For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.* On the surface this verse is confusing, but it is really quite simple. Paul had a personal obligation to preach the gospel. If he did as the Lord

commanded willingly, then there would be a reward. If he did so against his will, then he would still be responsible for the outcome of his ministry. The word **dispensation** means “a *stewardship, a trust; one who has been entrusted to manage an estate.*” Regardless of his attitude, he was responsible. He was entrusted with the gospel and expected to preach it.

- We too have been entrusted with the gospel. All who are saved have an obligation to be a witness for Christ. If we do it willingly, God will reward us. If we neglect our work or do it with a heart of contempt, we are still responsible for the call upon our lives. **Rom.11:29 – For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.**

**2. Publicly (18)** – **What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.** This was in regard to Paul’s compensation from the church. There were those who thought that he shouldn’t be paid for preaching. Paul determined to preach without compensation rather than give anyone opportunity to bring reproach to him or the gospel.

- Each of us ought to be concerned as to how we represent the Lord, His church, and His message. The world is watching and we have a wonderful Savior to represent to those who don’t know Him.

## **I. The Foundation of Paul’s Ministry (16-18)**

**II. The Focus of Paul’s Ministry (19-22a)** – **V.19** gives insight to Paul’s attitude concerning his ministry. **For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.** He was not bound by their whims and desires and yet he humbled himself to serve them. There are three groups that Paul chose to serve.

**A. The Religious (20)** – **And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;** In Paul’s day there were still many Jews who sought to hold the traditions and rituals of the law. He did not live contrary to God’s law, but living under grace he was no more bound by the law. However, if keeping a ritual or tradition that wasn’t contrary to Scripture would help him reach a Jew, he became as a Jew. He wasn’t afraid to submit to their demands to reach them.

- There is an important lesson for us here. Our churches are filled with tradition. Tradition is fine, but tradition isn’t Bible. Just because others choose to do things a little differently is no sign that they are out of God’s will. We may have to lay aside some of our tradition in order to reach some religious people who have never trusted the Lord in salvation. We must not condemn others because their approach is different than ours. If we offend because of tradition, we may lose an opportunity to witness.

**B. The Rebellious** (21) – [To them that are without law, as without law, \(being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,\) that I might gain them that are without law.](#) The text is clear that Paul didn't live without the law. He lived under the law of Christ. He did not indulge in sin to reach the sinner, but he made himself available to them. He gained their respect and earned their friendship.

- We have a tendency to categorize people and judge them based on our perception. We sometimes feel that certain people are beyond the reach of God. The Lord doesn't expect or want us to live as they do or participate in their sin, but He does desire and expect us to present ourselves and the gospel to them in a manner that isn't intimidating. Jesus ate with sinners and reached out to many who were ungodly. That is who He came to save. It is possible to bridge gaps and earn a friendship to become an effective witness. Judging won't do it, but love will.

**C. The Reluctant** (22a) – [To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak:](#) There were many in Paul's day that were steeped in tradition. The Jews couldn't let go of the law; the gentiles couldn't release their false gods and immorality. Many had a hard time grasping the truths of the gospel. Paul never gave up. He continued to share the gospel and presented it in a way that they could understand. He made himself weak to reach the weak.

- This particularly spoke to me. I was raised in church. The truths of the gospel are dear to my heart. I have no trouble embracing them, but there are those around us who were not blessed to have been raised in church. We must not condemn them for their lack of understanding. We must present the gospel, over and over again if necessary, and not give up.

## **I. The Foundation of Paul's Ministry** (16-18)

### **II. The Focus of Paul's Ministry** (19-22a)

### **III. The Fullness of Paul's Ministry** (22b-23)

**A. His Desire** (22b) – [I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.](#) Paul did all of the things he did for one purpose: that he might win souls to Christ. That was his desire; that was his goal for living.

- Is that our hearts desire? Do we really care if the lost are saved? Are we willing to inconvenience ourselves and submit to God for the souls of men?

**B. His Discernment** (22b) – [I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.](#) There is a key word in this passage. Paul was made all things to all men that he might

save **some**. Paul knew that everyone he shared the gospel with would not receive it. Everyone would not believe in Christ. There would be those who chose to reject the grace of God.

- This is a truth that we often don't want to consider. It is sad, but it is true. [Mat.7:14](#) – **Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.** This brings me to our last point.

**C. His Dedication** (23) – [And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.](#) Paul was already looking ahead to his next convert. He knew that all wouldn't believe, but some would. He had no way of knowing who the next one would be. All he knew to do was keep sharing the gospel and leave the drawing to the Holy Spirit. He was not discouraged or defeated because some rejected his message.

- Some are going to refuse our witness. Not everyone that we share the gospel with will be saved, but that can't stop us from telling all that we can of Christ our Lord. How can we know whether the next person we share the gospel with will reject or receive Christ? There is too much at stake! The next one just might receive the offer. We must continue to tell of the grace and mercy of our Lord.

I know that we don't have any apostles here today, but there are believers. Are you committed to the cause of Christ? Are you willing to be used of God to by all means save some? If so come and seek the help of the Lord.