

The Gospel Delivery
1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Good Morning.

I want you to imagine for a moment, becoming a missionary named Gulliver, to the land of Lilliput.

As you visit this foreign land, you soon discover the people of this land are very concerned with trivial matters.

These folks even have political debates over which end of an egg to crack open.

These people dress different than you do, have different cultural realities than you do, listen to different music, and even disagree with your political views.

But, you want them to hear the Gospel of Christ, to be forgiven of their sins and inherit eternal life.

How can you reach them with the Good News of the Gospel?

I have an idea; first you should buy them the right clothing, instruct them in music theory, and finally you should belittle them about their political views until they finally agree with you

After all, I bet that is what Robert Morrison, the first Missionary to China, did when he wanted to reach them with the Gospel.

Please open your Bibles to two places, first turn to ***Galatians 2*** place a book mark there and turn to ***1 Corinthians 9***

Last time Paul spoke about denying ourselves, as he started with his **status as an Apostle**.

Paul explained how he laid down his **rights** as an Apostle so he asks the Corinthians to let go of their rights and exercise love instead of their liberties.

Paul was a Tent maker by trade, so for most of his ministry, so he didn't rely on the Churches financial support.

We ended talking about self denial as a Christ follower; self denial begins by removing me off the throne of my heart and placing the true King, Jesus Christ on His rightful throne.

Jesus tells us to deny ourselves, to subject our own desires and will to God's will; and when we deny the flesh, the Lord will grant us Abundant Life as we enjoy deeper fellowship with Him.

And now today, we will talk about reaching people where they are; with the Gospel of Christ.

I. Winning souls.

Read *1 Corinthians 9:19-23*

Paul felt so free in Christ that he was able to set aside all of his rights, so he could serve all people.

Instead of using his freedom **selfishly**, and causing others to stumble with his liberties, Paul desired to see people saved.

Paul clearly states his mission statement as he discusses how he used his freedom to accomplish the mission of the Gospel.

Turn over to *Galatians 2*.

In *1 Corinthians 9* Five times Paul says his aim is to win people

1. *"that I might win the more."*
2. *"that I might win the Jews ."*
3. *"that I might win those under the law."*
4. *"That I might win those who are without law."*
5. *"That I might win the weak."*

When Paul said, *"To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win the Jews"*, was he contradicting what he said elsewhere?

Read *Galatians 2:11-16*

Please go back to *1 Corinthians 9*

When Paul was with Gentiles, he did not observe the Jewish rituals, because it had been decided at the Jewish council in *Acts 15* the Gentiles did not have to observe Jewish law.

Acts 15:24 Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law" to whom we gave no such commandment

Acts 15:25 it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

Acts 15:26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 15:27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth.

Acts 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:

Acts 15:29 that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. NKJV

Chuck Smith said, “Paul sought to win people to Jesus Christ by being sensitive to their needs and identifying with them.

“We should try to reach people where they are today and expect to see changes *later*.” (Chuck Smith)

Notice, “*I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*”

This is not saying Paul’s message changed or that he compromised Biblical values; but Paul did not allow his **cultural** bias to interfere with reaching people for Christ.

We must determine the difference of what comes from culture and what is biblical when expecting things from a believer’s life.

We can’t insist every Christian in the world to behave like we do

Paul was not a man pleaser, nor a politician, but he was sensitive to know where his audience was coming from.

Paul also knew if he was not careful; those he was evangelizing could pull him down, instead of him influencing them for Christ

This is why Paul said to this church in *1 Corinthians 15:33* ***Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."*** NKJV

The method of reaching people with the Gospel changes in order to reach people where they are; but, the Gospel **message** never changes, because Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Gordon Fee said, *"This passage has often been looked to for the idea of 'accommodation' in evangelism, that is, of adapting the message to the language and perspective of the recipients.*

*"This has to do with how one lives or **behaves** among those whom he wishes to evangelize."* (Fee)

Don't let your lives and your lips preach two **different** messages.

The biggest difference between the Jews and Gentiles was the laws and the covenants, and Paul was careful with his Christian liberties as he recognized his audience.

Our approach can change, but there is only one way to the Father; because sin is sin, and God is holy; so a person must be born again to go to heaven.

Warren Wiersbe said, *“Our Lord followed the same approach. To the highborn Jew, Nicodemus, He talked about spiritual birth; but to the Samaritan woman, He spoke about living water.*

Jesus and Paul were flexible and adaptable. Neither Jesus nor Paul had an inflexible formula” in every situation.” (Wiersbe)

Again Paul had a lot of freedoms that could have stumble either Jews or Gentiles... vs. 23 ***“Now this I do for the gospel's sake”***

Paul knew his witness for Christ would be damaged if he did not demonstrate love and concern for people, by reaching them where they were for Christ.

The word Gospel means Good News and when we boil it down to its most basic meaning within scripture, it is the doctrine of imputation.

The doctrine of **imputation**, says our sins are transferred to Christ on the cross and His righteousness is transferred to us by faith that is trust, in His finished work on Calvary's cross.

Romans 4:20 He (Abraham) did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,

Romans 4:21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

Romans 4:22 And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."

Romans 4:23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him,

Romans 4:24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,

The bottom line of the Gospel is found in ***1 Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,***

1 Corinthians 15:4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. NKJV

II.Run the race.

Read ***1 Corinthians 9:24***

Paul used competition 12 times within his letters; with examples of runners, boxers, gladiators, chariot racers, and trophies.

The Corinthian Christians would have been very familiar with the original Greek Olympics, so it stands to reason why Paul would use the metaphor of a race here in this verse.

Paul is explaining there is only one first place winner in a race who receives the prize, so run as if you want to receive the prize.

Just ask anyone who runs in competitions; in order to win the race, training and discipline is needed.

Wiersbe said, “*An athlete must be **disciplined** if he is to win the prize. Discipline means giving up the good and the better for the best. The athlete must watch his diet as well as his hours.*”

Training and discipline is needed to live the way Jesus intended

Only Greek citizens could compete in the Olympic Games; so only a citizen of heaven can run the race Paul is describing here.

So Paul is referring to people who are already saved by grace through faith in Christ; Paul is not speaking about a competition in order to get saved.

A Christian does not train and discipline in order to **earn** heaven; but, a Christian disciplines as a thankful response to the One who gave His life; we live for Christ from a heart of love.

Self effort never pleases the Lord, **but neither** does **laziness**.

The Lord deserves **excellence** in all we do for Him; in our worship, in our service and in our evangelism; but we are co-laborers with the Holy Spirit in order to accomplish the task.

We do not serve the Lord empowered by self, but instead, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit and offer Him our best as we work with and for Him; not giving Him our leftovers.

III. Receive the crown.

Read *1 Corinthians 9:25*

Temperate in this context refers to how the Roman athletes had to train for ten months before being allowed in the games.

Temperate means self-controlled; Strong's concordance says these were athletes, who in preparing for the games **abstained** from unwholesome food, wine, and sexual indulgence. (G1467)

Paul is reassuring these Christians that they will receive a crown that will not perish. Olympians may receive gold, silver, or bronze, but we will receive a crown that lasts forever.

1 Peter 1:18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,

1 Peter 1:19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. NKJV

The Bible speaks of 5 different crowns for those who faithfully serve Jesus: the imperishable crown, crown of rejoicing, crown of righteousness, the crown of glory, and the crown of life.

Revelation 4:6 Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. NKJV

Revelation 4:9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

Revelation 4:10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

Revelation 4:11 "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created." NKJV

They fall down in humble submission and worship and lay their crowns down at the feet of Jesus, who really earned the crowns.

When we get to heaven and we are all around the glassy sea, there will be four steps to our worship.

- a. They give **Glory**, honor and thanks.

Psalm 107:8 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men,

Psalm 107:9 for He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things. NIV

- b. They confessed His attributes while worshipping.

He is eternal, all powerful, all knowing.

- c. Fall down in **humble** submission and worship.

Every creature ever born will either fall down in worship at His throne willingly, or they will fall down in worship at the Great White throne judgment, as they realize Jesus is Lord of all.

Philippians 2:10 at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

Philippians 2:11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. NKJV

By laying their crowns before the Lord; they are testifying it is only by God's grace and what He has done, they are overcomers

d. The Victory **belongs** to and comes from the Lord.

Again, it is only by God's grace and what He has done, that we will receive any reward in heaven.

Because Christ alone is worthy and we can only be fruitful when we abide, allowing His life to fill ours,

...we cast our crowns before Him in recognition that all we have done worthy of earning a crown, was by only His grace.

Wiersbe said, *"In order to give up his rights and have the joy of winning lost souls, Paul had to discipline himself.*

*"That is the emphasis of this entire chapter: Authority (rights) must be **balanced** by discipline."* (Wiersbe)

IV. Bring my body into submission.

Read *1 Corinthians 9:26-27*

Paul said, *"I run thus: not with uncertainty"* Paul knew exactly why he did what he did, and why he lived the way he lived.

Some people don't know whether they are coming or going, but seem determined to get there in a hurry.

Alabama sang, "***I'm in a hurry to get things done***"; *I'm in a hurry to get things done; oh, I rush and rush until life's no fun.*

All I really gotta do is live and die; but I'm in a hurry and don't know why"

Some people simply go through their daily life; working, eating, and sleeping and seem to repeat these things endlessly; with no apparent **purpose** except to do it all over again the next day.

Paul said in ***Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. NKJV***

Paul had an eternal perspective, so he counted this life as dead and his new life was going to be **lived** for Christ's kingdom.

Notice, "***Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.***"

When the champion returned from the first Olympic Games, it was said that his own dog couldn't recognize him!

First-century boxing was a brutal activity, which is why it might be a strange metaphor to use with regards to the Christian life!

"one who beats the air" is the picture of wasting time; think about holding a five year back with your hand on their forehead as they are swinging.

Paul was committed to giving up his freedoms and rights, not just with lip service or for no reason.

Paul was competing to win people to trust in Jesus.; he was intentional with his Christian witness, living like time was short.

Paul is instructing Christians to be committed to their faith in Christ just like a dedicated athlete is to their sport.

J. Vernon McGee said, *“Paul said he is not shadowboxing. He is not playing at this thing. He is not playing **church**. This is real.”*

To truly experience the Abundant Life, we must live our faith out loud and on purpose, knowing our goal and our calling.

We have died to this world system and we now have new marching orders in Christ.

We don't have to look too hard around our world today to know there's a war going on, and it's not a fight for the faint-hearted.

We know that if we are truly going to follow Jesus in this world that it is going to cost us everything that we have.

Like a good boxer, if our commitment to Christ is firm and if we train hard with self-control, we will endure the trials of this life and will survive until the last round is over.

Like Paul told Timothy, we also will receive the imperishable crown if we have fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith.

“Become disqualified” is **not** speaking of losing salvation, but rather not completing the task the Lord called the Christian to.

Wiersbe said, *“At the Greek games, there was a herald would announce the names of the contestants and cities of the winners.*

They would announce the names of those who were disqualified.

Paul saw himself as a “herald” and a “runner.” He was concerned lest he get so busy trying to help others in the race that he ignore himself and find himself disqualified.

Only one runner could win the olive-wreath crown in the Greek games, but every believer can win an incorruptible crown when he stands before the judgment seat of Christ.”

V. Practical Application.

The people from Lilliput dress different than you do, have different cultural realities than you do, listen to different music than you do, and even disagree with your political views.

All people need to hear and receive the Gospel, to be forgiven of their sins against the Lord and inherit eternal life.

How can you reach them with the Good News of the Gospel?

Paul knew exactly where he had come from and why the Lord saved him; he knew his commander, and his marching orders.

Jesus instructed Paul to preach the Gospel; when the Lord instructed Ananias to help Paul after his conversion...

Acts 9:15 "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. NKJV

What is the universal call Jesus instructed us to follow?

Acts 1:8 you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." NKJV

We are called to be witnesses of not only the free gift of salvation; but also of His power displayed in our changed lives.

Because Paul was convinced of his call to preach the Gospel, he became a **servant** to all to accomplish his mission.

Because Paul was convinced of his call to preach the Gospel, he met people **where** they were at in life.

1 Corinthians 9:20 to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; NKJV

As I give my testimony, depending on the person I am speaking to and their situation, I share certain parts of my history.

It is not that I hiding my past or unwilling to share, it is that I want to be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit and share the things that will cause the person to look to Christ for salvation.

When I share the Gospel, I make sure it is based upon scripture and telling a dead person how to have New Life in Christ.

My goal is not to change their culture or anything else; my goal is to tell them of Jesus' free gift of salvation which only comes by grace alone through faith in Christ alone

And the reason I do any of this is the same reason Paul did it...

Because Paul was convinced of his call to preach the Gospel, he **ran** in a way that he might please the Lord and receive a prize.

We didn't follow Christ for entertainment or because we wanted to look good or simply because we wanted to improve ourselves.

J. Vernon McGee said, "*Paul said he is not shadowboxing. He is not playing at this thing. He is not playing **church**. This is real.*"

Self effort never pleases the Lord, **but neither** does **laziness**.

The Lord deserves **excellence** in all we do for Him; in our worship, in our service and in our evangelism; but we are co-laborers with the Holy Spirit in order to accomplish the task.

Paul knew what he believed and his life was proof of his faith; so he disciplined himself and ran in a way to obtain a prize.