



On Christian Liberty: The Joy of Slavery for the Sake of the Gospel
1 Corinthians 9
#1669 December 6, 2009 AM
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I. Introduction

A. The (False) Debate – “To contextualize or Not to contextualize” (read from “Putting Contextualization in its Place”)

II. Proposition

A. Though in Christ Christians are free, love demands that we willingly forsake our rights when they become obstacles to the gospel and that we work hard to identify with the people to whom we are ministering the gospel.

III. Exposition

A. **As Christians, we are free in Christ to enjoy certain rights in the gospel (9:19a).**

1. Paul as an example of Christian freedom: the right to be compensated for gospel ministry (9:1-14).
 - a. Paul had the right to refrain from working for a living in order to proclaim the gospel (9:1-14).
 - 1). Arguments from natural order (9:7), Scripture (9:8-10), Temple service (9:13-14).
 - b. Summary declarations (9:12a, 14).
2. Yet, Paul made no use of these rights and he is not writing to gain these rights (9:15).
 - a. Because he did not want to put an obstacle in the way of the gospel (9:12b).
 - 1). Paul wanted to preach the gospel without obligation and without strings (9:16-18).
3. We are to imitate him as he imitated Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1; cf. Phil 3:17)!
 - a. What are some freedoms/rights we have that may be obstacles to reaching differing peoples?
 - 1). Music? Clothing? Traditions? Language?

B. Love demands that we deny our rights and become slaves of all in order to win more to Christ (9:19b-23).

1. Missiologists call this contextualization: moved by love, we forsake our rights when they become obstacles to the gospel and serve those whom we are trying to reach with the gospel!
 - a. Paul's Example (9:19-22)

- b. Paul's Parameters – the word of God (9:21)
 - c. Paul's Reason - The gospel (9:22-23)
 - 1). Paul was simply imitating Christ (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:14-18).
 - 2). Paul was participating in the gospel, the sufferings of Christ (Phil 3:7-11).
2. What contextualization is NOT! NOT an excuse to become like the world (cf. Rom 12:2; Gal. 5:13-15).
- a. Contextualization is more about removing obstacles to the gospel & identifying with people groups.
 - b. Read David Sills – “Reclaiming Contextualization”
3. What might contextualization look like for us?
- a. **Identify, as much as Scripture allows, with the people you are trying to reach!**
 - 1). ILLUS: Paul and Timothy – circumcision (Acts 16:1-5)
 - 2). Sills – Aspects we should contextualize: language, music style/instruments, clothes, etc.
 - b. **Identification requires you forsake your rights/freedoms to become servant of all!**
 - 1). One example: Music – my horizons were broadened this past week.
 - 2). Are you willing to forsake music, clothes, traditions (i.e., Dubai), language, foods for the gospel?

IV. Conclusion:

- A. What will it cost to deny yourself and become a slave to all?
 - 1. Definitely cost you some freedoms – you can still practice your freedoms privately (Rom. 14:22).
 - a. ILLUS: Romania, Panama, Mexico
 - 2. It may cost you your life! BUT what is it costing you right now?
 - a. Prayer cards in the bulletin – will you fast for unbelievers? Fill out cards together!
- B. What does it require of us to become slaves to all for the sake of the gospel?
 - 1. Contextualization is hard/diligent work. It takes self-control (9:24-25) and constant discipline (9:26-27).
- C. What is at stake? The gospel and our participation in it by imitating Christ and sharing in His sufferings (9:23; cf. 1 Cor. 11:1; Philippians 2:5-9; Heb. 2:14-18).

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