

9:15 “For my part I have used none of these rights, nor have I written these things that they may be applied in my case. For it would be better for me to die than for anyone to deprive me of my boast! 16 For if I preach the gospel, I have no reason to boast, because I am compelled to preach—and woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! 17 For if I do this willingly, I have a reward, but if unwillingly, I am entrusted with a commission. 18 What then is my reward? To preach the gospel and offer it free of charge and not make full use of my rights in the gospel.

19 Although I am free from all and not anyone’s slave, I have made myself a slave to everyone, in order to win more people. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; to those under the law, like one under the law—though I myself am not under the law—to win those under the law. 21 To those who are without the law, like one without the law—though I am not without God’s law but under the law of Christ—to win those without the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some. 23 Now I do all this because of the gospel, so that I may share in the blessings.” **(1 Corinthians 9:1, 4-6, 15-23—CSB)**

Fulfilling our God-given commission to make disciples requires the maturity, obedience of self-limitation. Our commitment to the gospel will lead us to lovingly limit ourselves in matters that hinder the growth of believers (1 Corinthians 8) and the evangelization of unbelievers. Paul summarized this in vs. 19, our outline:

“For though I am free from all men . . .” (cf. 8:1-9:1-14)

- In matters of conscience, he limited his freedoms to not harm believers (1 Corinthians 8)
- In areas of gospel offense, he limited himself to be able win unbelievers (cf. Romans 14:1-15:5)
- He did this, even though he was free to . . . (9:1-11)

“I have made myself a slave to all . . .” (cf. 15-18)

- His Authority as an Apostle did not exempt him from self-limitation. “If others have this right to receive benefits from you, don’t we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right; instead, we endure everything so that we will not hinder the gospel of Christ.” (vs. 12; cf. 1)
- In order to make disciples, share the gospel, Paul laid aside very personal freedoms (marriage, financial support . . .)

“. . . so that I may win more.” (cf. 19-23)

- He was committed to Christ and His gospel (cf. Romans 1:1-11; Philippians 1)
- He was culturally sensitive to different peoples: Jews—cultural and orthodox—secular and social nobodies . . .
- He did all this so that more people would “call upon the Lord” (cf. Romans 10; cf. 2 Timothy)

Paul was simply following the example and commands of Jesus:

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” Luke 9:23

“But I tell you not to resist an evil person. If someone slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also . . .” Matthew 5:39

“When the ten disciples heard this, they began to be indignant with James and John. Jesus called them over and said to them, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions act as tyrants over them. But it is not so among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you will be a slave to all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:41-45—CSB