

I Corinthians 9:15-27 – Summary

A. Outline

1. Party Spirit in the Church, chs 1-4
2. Moral Disorders in the Church, chs 5-7
3. Social Relations in the Church, chs 8-11
 - a. The Use of Christian Liberty, ch 8
 - b. The Apostle's Example, ch 9
 - i. He Defends His Apostleship & Rights, (1-6)
 - ii. His Right to Support, (7-14)
 - iii. The Reason for His Self-Denial, (15-18)
 - iv. His Method and Motivation, (19-23)
 - v. The Real Reward, (24-27)
 - c. A Warning Example, the Israelites in the Wilderness, ch 10
 - d. Decorum in Public Worship, ch 11
4. Spiritual Gifts in the Church, chs 12-14
5. Fundamental Doctrine of the Church, ch 15
6. Conclusion of the Letter, ch 16

B. The Reason for His Self-Denial (15-18)

1. **Paul's Boast (15)** – But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things that it may be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one. (See 2 Corinthians 11:7ff)
 - a. Paul forewent his rights as apostle & evangelist in the case of the founding of the church at Corinth so there could be no criticism of the gospel of Christ.
 - b. This was a service in which he took joy or exulted (“boasted”), to have been able to give them the gospel totally freely by his own efforts.
2. **Paul's Compulsion (16-17)** – ¹⁶ For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. ¹⁷ For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me.
 - a. There was little else about which he could feel the same way, for preaching the gospel was a non-optional requirement laid upon him
 - b. He could choose to do it willingly or unwillingly but not to avoid doing it.
3. **Paul's Reward (18)** – What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel
 - a. The joy or exultation (“boasting”) he had by freely giving the gospel to the people of Corinth, was for Paul a special reward or privilege.

C. His Method and Motivation (19-23)

1. **Self-Made Slave (19)** – For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more.
 - a. Paul had previously encourage those free to remain so (by prudently avoiding falling into debt & bond-slavery) 7:23; he practised this himself
 - b. Yet he was a bond-slave of Christ by the infinite debt for his salvation
 - c. But he adopted a slave attitude towards all men to win them to Christ.
2. **Slave Methodology (20-22)** – ²⁰ And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; ²¹ to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. ²² To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some.
 - a. Paul, though no longer bound by Jewish tradition, would observe tradition when witnessing to Jews, so a not to prejudice them against the gospel.
 - b. Paul, would keep the intent of the law, but not let Jewish separatism and practices isolate him from Gentiles to whom he gave the gospel message.
 - c. Paul would not exercise liberty regarding foods, say, if that was going to keep a person from coming the Christ.
 - d. He made himself a voluntary slave in his actions so as to win people to Christ.
3. **Slave Motivation (23)** – And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it.
 - a. His motivation was determined by what would enhance the gospel.
 - b. Partaking (sharing) the gospel doesn't end with a person's conversion.

D. The Real Reward (24-27)

1. **Spiritual Athletics (24-25)** – ²⁴ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. ²⁵ And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.
 - a. Paul uses physical athletics (running, boxing) here & elsewhere to illustrate the spiritual; was this maybe a human skill God captured for His purposes?
 - b. Two contrasts were pointed out between physical & spiritual athletics:
 - i. The perishable wreath for the first; the imperishable (crown), the other
 - ii. Only one winner in the first; all can win in the second.
2. **Paul, Spiritual Athlete (26-27)** – ²⁶ Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; ²⁷ but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.
 - a. Spiritual athletics, like physical, needs exercise, discipline, self-control
 - b. Disqualified ('a castaway'): not loss of salvation, but a tarnished record.