

**Men's Sunday Night**  
**The Book of 1 Corinthians**  
**Christian Conduct**  
**Lesson 8 - 1 Corinthians 9**  
**"Personal Priorities"**

In the previous chapter, Paul pointed to the example of Christ and laid down the principle that we should do nothing that would offend another Christian, especially weaker Christians. In this chapter, he points to himself as an example of one who had privileges, but, for the Gospel's sake, did not use them. Keep in mind that he is still dealing with the problem of meat offered to idols. "Certainly, we have privileges as Christians," he states, "but we must never use our privileges in such a way that we will hinder the Gospel." While in Corinth, Paul worked with his own hands and took no support from the church. He willingly laid aside even the privilege of marriage.

Every Christian needs to govern his or her life "with eternity's values in view." For Paul to set aside his personal privileges meant discipline and hard work. His illustration from the Greek games was familiar to his readers, for the famous Isthmian Games (similar to the Olympics) were held near Corinth. The contestants had to discipline themselves and lay aside even good things in order to win a prize. If athletes can give up their rights in order to win a fading olive-leaf crown, certainly Christians can lay aside privileges to win an eternal crown. Only one athlete could win each event at the Isthmian Games, but all Christians are given the opportunity to win Christ's approval.

Paul's fear of becoming a castaway had nothing to do with his salvation. He is not talking about salvation but Christian service. We are not saved by running the race and winning; we run the race because we are saved. The word "castaway" means "disapproved, disqualified"; it is translated "not well pleased" in 10:5. Paul compares himself to the herald who called the athletes into the arena, yet who himself did not pass the tests to be a contestant. Paul was not afraid of losing his salvation but of losing his reward for faithful, sacrificial service.

**Read 1 Corinthians 9:1-6. Pray and answer the following questions:**

Paul begins this chapter by defending his apostleship. In our society, people are expected to stand up for their rights and watch out for themselves. God's way is just the opposite. Although we have rights, there are certain values and priorities that take precedence over our rights. These include not hurting a brother or sister in Christ, not causing others to stumble, and above all, doing what God has called us to do. We are to live with humility and love, placing God and others above ourselves.

1. What proofs did Paul use to show that he was a genuine apostle?
2. Why was seeing the risen Christ so important?
3. What rights did Paul waive to be an apostle?
4. What are some of your rights and freedoms as a Christian?
5. How can today's church apply Paul's attitude towards his rights for the sake of the Gospel?

**Read 1 Corinthians 9:7-18. Pray and answer the following questions:**

An exhausted mother pulls herself out of bed to care for her crying baby. A pastor interrupts his vacation to comfort a grieving family. A doctor leaves a lucrative practice to become a missionary. The apostle Paul knew well what it meant to give up his rights for the sake of ministering to others. We will now see how his example applies to the church today.

6. How can we show our love to unbelievers while refusing to participate in activity that is of the world?

7. Why is it helpful as believers to be extra sensitive in what we do and what we say in public?

8. What advantages and disadvantages can you see in regards to someone providing their own financial support while doing ministry?

9. What can you do to support those in ministry?

**Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-27. Pray and answer the following questions:**

Paul had a remarkable history of spreading the gospel message throughout many lands and in the midst of various cultures. His success was due partly to his flexibility and his willingness to take risks in moving beyond his own culture. For example, he wrote, *“To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews.”* Paul had unusual skills in distinguishing between the nonessential and the essential as he proclaimed the gospel. He willingly adapted to the culture of his listeners, and he did so without compromising the gospel. Paul declared in verse 22, *“I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.”*

10. Why was Paul so successful in spreading the gospel in so many cultures?

11. What should you do to be assured of finishing your life well?

12. How can neglecting spiritual disciplines (such as prayer, Bible study, and worship) disqualify a Christian from having an influence on unbelievers?

### **Life Application**

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. Write your insights down for review and group discussion

#### **“The Great Christian Race of Faith” – *Hebrews 12:1-2***

*“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

This is one of the most stirring passages in Scripture, a passage that is written for the purpose of stirring us to run and to keep on running in the Christian race of life. What is the Christian race? It can be described in many ways.

- It is the race for heaven.
- It is the race for life, for both abundant and eternal life.
- It is the race to live with God forever.
- It is the race for perfection, a perfect life and world in which there is no suffering, corruption, evil, or death.
- It is the race for righteousness and justice—for a perfect world of godliness.
- It is the race for the Promised Land, the eternal land where we can live forever with God.
- It is the race to live in the new heavens and earth with God forever and ever.
- It is the race to know God, to commune and fellowship with God both now and forever.