

## All Things to All Men (1Co 9:19-23)

- I. Overview.
  1. Being free from all men, but a servant to all.
  2. Becoming *as* a Jew to the Jews.
  3. Becoming *as* a Gentile to the Gentiles.
  4. Becoming *as* weak to the weak.
  5. Being all things to all men to save some and be a partaker of the gospel with them.
- II. Being free from all men, but a servant to all. (1Co 9:19)
  1. Paul begins this chapter by asking the rhetorical question: am I not free? (1Co 9:1)
  2. This answer is obviously "yes" as Paul states in verse 19.
  3. How was Paul free from all men?
    - A. Paul was free from sin by Jesus Christ. (Rom 6:18 c/w Rom 6:22-23)
    - B. Paul was free from the law of sin and death. (Rom 8:2)
    - C. All Christians, whether bond or free, are free in one way or another. (1Co 7:22)
    - D. Paul was free from the bondage of the law of Moses. (Gal 4:21 - Gal 5:1)
    - E. Paul was free from the bondage of lies and ignorance. (Joh 8:31-32)
    - F. Paul was bought with a price by Christ and was not to be the servant of men (1Co 7:23), but rather the servant of God. (Tit 1:1; 1Pe 2:16)
  4. Though Paul was free from all men, he became a servant unto all.
    - A. He did this so that that they might be made partakers of the gospel with him. (1Co 9:23)
    - B. Paul was the servant of men for Jesus' sake. (2Co 4:5)
- III. Paul's strategy of gaining men for Christ: meeting them where they are.
  1. Jesus was a example of this Who was a friend of publicans and sinners. (Mat 11:19)
  2. Paul was a soul-winner, and he that does so is wise. (Pro 11:30)
    - A. Wise - 1. a. Having or exercising sound judgment or discernment; capable of judging truly concerning what is right or fitting, and disposed to act accordingly; having the ability to perceive and adopt the best means for accomplishing an end; characterized by good sense and prudence.
    - B. Paul was a *wise* masterbuilder of the church. (1Co 3:10)
  3. Sometimes winning souls requires the use of craftiness and guile. (2Co 12:16)
    - A. Crafty *adj.* - Skilful, dexterous, clever, ingenious. a. Of persons or their faculties, etc.
    - B. Guile *n.* - 1. Insidious cunning, deceit, treachery.
    - C. Insidious *adj.* - 1. Full of wiles or plots; lying in wait or seeking to entrap or ensnare; proceeding or operating secretly or subtly so as not to excite suspicion; sly, treacherous, deceitful, underhand, artful, cunning, crafty, wily.
    - D. Cunning *n.* - 1. 1. Knowledge; learning, erudition. 2. The capacity or faculty of knowing; wit, wisdom, intelligence. 3. Knowledge how to do a thing; ability, skill, expertness, dexterity, cleverness.
  4. Being wise (*having the ability to perceive and adopt the best means for accomplishing an end*), Paul made himself "all things to all men" (1Co 9:22) so that he could reach them where they were and save some of them temporally.
  5. Notice that Paul became *as* unconverted Jews, unconverted Gentiles, and weak people; he didn't *become* them.
    - A. As - *adv.* - II. 3. Of quantity: In that degree; to that extent...(in or to which)... Expressing the Comparative of Equality: as good as gold; as wise as

fair; as strong as ever; as soon as you can; and in innumerable proverbial similes, as black as jet, as brave as a lion, etc.

B. To the degree and extent that he could, Paul became like them.

6. We would be wise to follow Paul's example. **(1Co 11:1)**

IV. Becoming as a Jew under the law to the Jews under the law. **(1Co 9:20)**

1. Paul was a Jew. **(Act 22:3)**

2. But Paul was no longer in the Jews' religion. **(Gal 1:13-16)**

3. Being a Jew by nationality and lineage, Paul could still be *as a Jew to the degree and extent* that he was not compromising his Christianity.

A. Even after his conversion, Paul still had a burden for the Jews who were his kinsmen. **(Rom 9:1-4)**

B. Even after all they did to him, he still identified himself as an Israelite. **(Rom 11:1)**

C. Paul went into the synagogues of the Jews on many occasions which he used as platform to preach the gospel. **(Act 13:14-16; Act 14:1; Act 17:1-2; Act 17:10-11; Act 18:4,7-8)**

D. Paul would even have Timothy become *as a Jew* to gain the Jews. **(Act 16:1-3)**

E. Paul even went so far as to go into the temple with some believing Jews which had taken a vow and was purified with them in the temple and a sacrifice was offered for them. **(Act 21:18-26)**

i. These were believing Jews who were still zealous of the law **(Act 21:20)**.

ii. This was during the transitional time when the New Testament was in effect, and the Old Testament was *technically* abolished **(2Co 3:13)**, but while the temple stood it was *practically* decaying and waxing old and was ready to vanish away **(Heb 8:13)**.

iii. During that time, the Jews could still make non-sin offerings, but they couldn't make sin offerings since there remained no sacrifice for sins after Jesus' final sufficient sacrifice for sins. **(Heb 10:8-14)**

iv. There had been rumors floating around which said that Paul was teaching the Jews which were living among the Gentiles that they should forsake the law of Moses, not circumcise their children, and not walk after the customs of the Jews. **(Act 21:21)**

v. There were four Jews there that had apparently taken the vow of a Nazarite **(Act 21:23-24)** which required a man to shave his head and offer sacrifices at the end of the vow. **(Num 6:2,5,18-20)**

vi. James asked Paul to go with those Jews into the temple and purify himself with them and be at charges with them while they shaved their heads, so that everyone would know that Paul walked orderly as a Jew and kept the law. **(Act 21:24)**

vii. Paul did purify himself with them and entered into the temple where an offering was made for everyone of them. **(Act 21:26)**

viii. It must be assumed that the sin offering that was part of the Nazarite vow **(Num 6:13-14)** was not offered since Paul and these other men were Christians, but only the burnt offerings, peace offerings, meat offerings, drink offerings, or wave offerings **(Num 6:14-17,20)** were offered for them.

ix. Since Paul was a Jew and he could still keep parts of the ceremonial law, he became *as a Jew* to the Jews to gain the Jews. **(1Co 9:20)**

- V. Becoming as them that are without law (Gentiles) to them that are without law.
1. *Them that are without law* are the Gentiles. (**Rom 2:12-14**)
  2. *Them that are without* also refers to unbelievers who are outside the church. (**1Co 5:12-13**)
  3. Paul became *as* a Gentile to the Gentiles so that he could identify with them.
    - A. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. (**Rom 11:13**)
    - B. When Paul preached Christ to the Gentiles, he didn't use the same manner as he did with the Jews by going to the law to show that Jesus was Christ, he rather reasoned with them from creation.
      - i. In Lycaonia, when the heathen there thought that he and Barnabas were gods, they reasoned with them that they should turn from their vanities (idols) and serve the living God who made all things and who does good to all and provides for their needs. (**Act 14:15-17**)
      - ii. In Athens, Paul became *as* the Gentiles he was debating with by reasoning that God is the creator of everything (**Act 17:24**), and needs nothing since he gives to all men life, and breath, and all things (**Act 17:25**).
        - a. He then went on to quote one of their own poets to prove from their own culture that we are the offspring of God (**Act 17:28**) and therefore God can't be an idol made by men (**Act 17:29**).
        - b. Having reasoned from creation and their own writings, Paul then springboarded from that into preaching the gospel of repentance. (**Act 17:30-31**)
  4. Paul was unto the Gentiles *as* one without law, but he had not become without law to God; he was still under Christ's law (**1Co 10:21**), the perfect law of liberty (**Gal 6:2 c/w Jam 1:25**).
  5. Though Paul became *as* a Gentile to win the Gentiles, he did not use the tactics of the Catholic church and *become* a heathen to convert Gentiles.
    - A. ""To convert and civilize her new subjects she descended to their level and employed the means in keeping with their notions and customs" (*History of the Church of God*, 407)." - (*Catholicism Against Itself, Abridged Edition*, 110)
    - B. ""Among other directions, he (Pope Gregory "the great" - CEW) advises them not to destroy the temples, but only the idols of the false gods, and to consecrate to the worship of the true God the buildings still fit for use, 'in order,' as he wisely said, 'that the people seeing you respect the monuments to which they are accustomed, and may more readily come to them'" (*General History of the Catholic Church*, by Darras, II, 188 - See *Life of St. Patrick*, 73)" - (*Catholicism Against Itself, Abridged Edition*, 78-79)
    - C. ""*The Church assimilates and sanctifies Roman Civilization* - From its foundation the Church had gradually absorbed the best of the life, the organization, the institutions, the laws, the learning, and whatever else of good and worthy there was in the Roman Empire" (*History of the Church of God*, 378-379)." - (*Catholicism Against Itself, Abridged Edition*, 79)
    - D. ""It has been and always will be the intent and tradition of the Apostolic See, to make a large allowance in all that is right and good, for the primitive traditions and the special customs of every nation" (*Great Ency. Letters of Leo XIII*, 308)." - (*Catholicism Against Itself, Abridged Edition*, 80)

- E. "It is interesting to note how often our Church has availed herself of the practices which were in common use among pagans" (*Externals of the Catholic Church*, 156)." - (*Catholicism Against Itself, Abridged Edition*, 80)

VI. Becoming as weak to the weak.

1. *The weak* are those who are weak in faith, conscience, and mind.
2. Weak *adj.* - Wanting in moral strength for endurance or resistance; lacking fortitude or courage, strength of purpose or will; unsteadfast, wavering.
3. Paul devoted the whole chapter of Romans 14 to dealing with those who are weak in faith and how we should receive them and bear with them. **(Rom 14:1)**
  - A. Some characteristics of weak brethren are:
    - i. Their consciences will not allow them to eat meat (flesh), but only herbs. **(Rom 14:2 c/w Rom 14:14)**
    - ii. They esteem one day above another. **(Rom 14:5-6)**
    - iii. They are not at ease drinking wine. **(Rom 14:21)**
  - B. If they go against their conscience and eat or drink something they are convinced is wrong to consume, they are sinning, not doing it by faith. **(Rom 14:20,22-23)**
  - C. Paul's commandment for strong and mature Christians who are dealing with weak Christians is to:
    - i. Not despise them. **(Rom 14:3)**
    - ii. Not judge them. **(Rom 14:10,13)**
    - iii. Not put a stumblingblock in front of them and offend them by eating or drinking something in their presence that their conscience is not at ease with. **(Rom 14:13,15,21)**
4. Paul taught the same principle in **1Co 8:4-13** and **1Co 10:23-33** with regard to eating things sacrificed to idols.
  - A. To those who are strong, there's only one God and an idol is nothing. **(1Co 8:4-6)**
  - B. Therefore, there would be nothing wrong with him eating meat in a idol's temple because an idol is nothing and the meat is just meat. **(1Co 8:8,10; 1Co 10:27)**
  - C. But to the person with a weak conscience, they would eat it as a thing sacrificed to an idol and would sin against their conscience. **(1Co 8:7)**
  - D. If they saw a strong Christian eating meat sacrificed to an idol, they would be emboldened to do it and go against their conscience and wound it. **(1Co 8:10-11)**
  - E. Paul's instruction is therefore to not let your liberty become a stumblingblock to those who are weak. **(1Co 8:9 c/w 1Co 10:28-29,32)**
5. We should comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, and be patient towards all men. **(1Th 5:14)**
6. To the weak, Paul would become *as weak*, so as to not offend them and to gain and save them. **(1Co 8:13; 1Co 10:33)**

VII. Paul was made *all things to all men* that he might by *all means* save some. **(1Co 9:22)**

1. These are clearly qualified "alls".
  - A. When it came to converting souls, Paul was running in a race and striving for the mastery to obtain a crown. **(1Co 9:24-25)**
  - B. But in order to obtain the crown, one must strive *lawfully*. **(2Ti 2:5)**
  - C. Paul was not without law to God, but under the law to Christ. **(1Co 9:21)**
  - D. Therefore when Paul was made *all things to all men* that he might by *all means* save some, he was not made:

- i. A fornicator to the fornicators.
- ii. A sodomite to the sodomites.
- iii. An adulterer to the adulterers.
- iv. A murderer to the murderers.
- v. A thief to the thieves.
- vi. A blasphemer to the blasphemers.
- vii. A liar to the liars.

E. The end never justifies the means if it requires sinning to do it.

F. Jesus was a friend of publicans and sinners, but He wasn't a publican or a sinner. (**Mat 11:19**)

VIII. The end goal: saving some and being a partaker of the gospel with them. (**1Co 9:23**)

1. The purpose of the gospel is to bring life and immortality to light. (**2Ti 1:10**)

2. The purpose is to bring people into the church so that they can have fellowship with us and with Jesus Christ. (**Act 2:41-42; 1Jo 1:3; Eph 3:9**)

A. Partaker - 1. One who takes a part or share, a partner, participator, sharer.

B. Fellowship - 1. a. Partnership; membership of a society. b. Participation, sharing (in an action, condition, etc.); 'something in common', community of interest, sentiment, nature, etc.

IX. Practical applications for us today.

1. We should meet people where they are -- either spiritually, personally, culturally, or demographically.

2. Find common ground with people and start there and don't focus on our differences. Consider the following things that we agree with the following groups about.

A. Baptism with Baptists.

B. Election and predestination with some Presbyterians, Protestant Reformed, and old-school Lutherans.

C. Monotheism and deity of Christ with Catholics.

D. Amillennialism with Catholics and some protestants like the Church of God.

E. King James Bible with some Baptists, Protestants, and cults like the Mormons.

F. Eternal security with some Arminians.

G. Monotheism and Jesus being a great prophet with Muslims.

H. Christmas and Easter being pagan with the Jehovah's Witnesses.

3. Be a country boy to the country boys and a city slicker to the city slickers.

4. Identify with the liberals on civil liberties and non-intervention foreign policy; and with conservatives on taxes, spending, and limited government (which is what they all supposedly stand for).

5. If you want to be interesting, you must be interested.

6. "You must have a good time meeting people if you expect them to have a good time meeting you." - (Dale Carnegie, How to Win Friends and Influence People)