

All Things to All Men

1Co 9:18 *What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.*

1Co 9:19 *For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.*

Paul says that he does not preach the Gospel for financial security. He preaches it without placing obligations on anybody. He offers the Gospel free to everyone that he might gain more for Christ.

1 Corinthians 9:19 Mirror Word *So in a sense I am free from anyone's expectation or management; yet I have voluntarily enslaved myself to all people. This beats any other motivation to influence people.*

What if our love for people was the only motive behind our ministry? How effective would that be? Many times we show acts of kindness in order to get people's attention. We do it in order to make our ministry known, to promote our own agenda! I read a book called "Three Cups of Tea." This book was about a man who was the son of missionaries living in Africa. He climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro as a young boy and became an avid mountain climber. As he progressed into adulthood he traveled to various climbing mountains, one of them being in Pakistan. While on a climbing expedition there, he became disoriented and consequently became lost during a violent snowstorm. He was rescued by a group of Pakistanis from a small village and for six weeks they took care of him and nursed him back to health. After recovering he vowed to help those who helped him by building schools for girls in Pakistan. He subsequently sacrificed his time and finances doing just that. At one point, someone became jealous of the money being poured into the project and challenged his right to be involved in Pakistan. He was tried in a court of law. In Pakistan, if anyone is caught trying to "westernize" the people of Pakistan, they can be prevented from entering the country. Although

he built the schools for the girls, he did not dictate to the people what curriculum they were to use nor did he tell them how to run them. He left that up to the local people. The investigation showed that he had no ulterior motive for helping the people other than the fact that he just loved them. What a testimony!

We are often more in love with our agenda or “doctrine” than we are with people. When we fall in love with people and just minister to them because we love them, walls of separation fall down. We draw them to the love of God and God does the rest.

Paul set aside his doctrinal differences and his pride and powerfully ministered the love of God to the people that he encountered in his day. He saw all people equally important and included by God. Doctrinal issues did not cause him to see people with an "us and them" mentality.

1Co 9:20 *And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;*

1Co 9:21 *To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.*

1Co 9:22 *To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

1 Corinthians 9:22 Mirror Word *I am so persuaded about every person's inclusion in Christ that I desire to be everything I need to be in order to win everyone's understanding of their union with Christ. . .My mission is to be exactly what is required of me in every possible situation to bring salvation to every kind of person, whoever they are! (Traditionally translated, "'in order to save some;" I do not believe that this is what Paul is saying here! The word, **tis**, can also suggest every single kind.)*

1 Corinthians 9:23 Amplified Bible *And I do this for the sake of the good news (the Gospel), in order that I may become a participator in it and share in its [blessings along with you].*

Paul wanted the people, not their money. He did not want anyone to have any excuse to reject his message. The pleasure of declaring the Gospel of Christ at no expense is what motivated him!

What is our agenda for sharing the Gospel? Do we have a hidden agenda, or are we just in love with people? We often think that it is our job to correct everyone's doctrinal errors. That often causes people to put up walls in their defense

Romans 14:1 *Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.*

2 *For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.*

3 *Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.*

4 *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.*

Our job is to love one another in the same manner that Jesus has loved us-without condition. When we lead people to the God that loves them, and they sense that they can run to Him in confidence, God will do the rest. **Romans 4:12-16**