

1 CORINTHIANS

9:18-27 | STUDY GUIDE

Enslaved

1 CORINTHIANS 9:18, "What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel." (ESV)

- Paul outlines his approach
 - Verses 20-22 often misunderstood
 - To the Jew → became a Jew
 - To those under the law → I became as one under the law
 - To those outside the law → under the law of Christ
 - To the weak → I became weak
- Paul has been accused of being hypocritical
 - No compromise: "I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings." (1 Corinthians 9:23, ESV)
 - Paul's approach is not one of contradiction, but of growth
 - Paul is a real person—his progression in ministry is marked by his evolution and willingness to adapt himself to his calling
 - Consider Saul the Pharisee vs Paul the Apostle (Acts 22:3)

1 CORINTHIANS 9:24, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it." (ESV)

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- Paul's determination is unwavering
 - He refuses to be deterred by physical ailments, distractions, or the opinions of others
 - 2 Corinthians 11:23-28

1 CORINTHIANS 9:25, "Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable." (ESV)

- Greek athletes & wreaths
 - Isthmian Games = pine wreath
 - Sacred to god Poseidon

1 CORINTHIANS 9:26, "So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air." (ESV)

- Life without purpose is meaningless
 - "I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind." (Ecclesiastes 1:14, ESV)

1 CORINTHIANS 9:27, "But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified." (ESV)

- Practice what you preach
- Just as an athlete could be disqualified for not following the rules, so too could Paul's ministry be disqualified

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, Timothy Brookins, *Corinthian Wisdom*, Stoic Philosophy, and the Ancient Economy, Craig Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, N.T. Wright, *The New Testament in Its World*