

A Pattern of Self-denial

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the service this morning. First morning, we're back in Sunday school after the summer break.
- ! It was a blessing as well. When we do something, do we ever stop to consider our motive for doing it?
- Never stop and think about what we're doing. Am I seeking to please self? Or am I desiring to glorify God in my actions?
- As Christians, we are to give honor and glory to God in all things.
- 1 Corinthians 10.31 says, Therefore, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. So whether it's work or pleasure, everything we do is to be done to glorify God.
- [1 : 2 2] And that is why our conduct is so critical. The flesh would want to glorify itself, to bring pleasure to itself without care for another.
- It's all about self. But we must bring that old nature down. Choose to walk in God's will and allow Him to do His perfect will in and through us.
- And when we do that, it is evident in our conduct and our reputation. And so, in our text, in the chapter, 1 Corinthians 9, we're looking at this morning, Paul teaches on denying self.
- Giving up our rights so that God receives the glory. And so, as we finish off this chapter, looking at the second half of it, Paul demonstrates this selflessness through sharing the gospel.
- As he thinks about his work, his life, what he was called to do. He uses sharing the gospel as the example on selflessness, on giving up self.
- [2 : 5 2] And the things that he brings out here is the fact that the gospel must be preached. As well as the attitude with which we bring the gospel.
- And as well, being personally prepared to share the gospel. So, I've titled the message this morning, A Pattern of Self-Denial.
- Thank you, Elliot, for reading the text for us here this morning. Looking at the first portion here, just a bit of a recap on the first half of chapter 9, I guess.
- Paul taught that ministers have a right to be freed up to effectively do the work that they have been called to do. And he gave examples, or he gave evidence from the law and the priestly system in the Old Testament.
- You know, that it was by God's design. And he finishes it off in chapter 14, or verse 14, that it is a command from the Lord.
- [4 : 0 8] Even so, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel. And so, verse 15 through 18 kind of continue that thought.
- Transitions into the rest of the chapter as well. And so, we'll look at those verses first of all. Paul says, Yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.

For if I do this willingly, I have a reward. But if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What is my reward then?

That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel. Paul is a great example of one who lived for the Lord.

Further on in 1 Corinthians, in chapter 11, verse 1, Paul says, Imitate me as I imitate Christ. As well in Philippians, and I'll turn to that one.

[5 : 40] Philippians chapter 3. Philippians 3, verse 17. Paul again writing.

He says, Brethren, join in my example. Join in following my example. And note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.

So Paul isn't wanting others to follow him, to worship him, but to follow his example.

As he was living for the Lord and walking with the Lord, his desire was for others to do the same.

He had great zeal for the Lord. And in our text this morning, Paul is, again, showing by example.

[6 : 46] He knew his rights, as he put forth in the first part of the chapter, you know, the right to eat and to drink, to take along a believing wife, and to, you know, to be full-time in the ministry, and to have others, to receive remuneration or maintenance for that work, that he could commit himself to it fully.

And so he knew, you know, from Old Testament that it was proper, that it was by God's design, that it was his will. And yet, Paul didn't force these rights on people.

No one would have an argument against him about preaching the gospel for personal gain. And so in that sense, the passage speaks regarding ministers or pastors, and yet, in a sense, all of us are ministers.

In Matthew chapter 28, Jesus speaking to the apostles just before he ascends to heaven, and he gives them the great commission to go into all the world and to share the gospel.

And now that commission is extended to every believer that comes to faith. So sharing the gospel, according to verse 16 in our text, it isn't optional.

[8 : 42] we know that it is commanded by Christ that we share the gospel with those around us, people that we come into contact with. And Paul uses the word necessity here, which by definition means that which must be and cannot be otherwise.

So it was necessity was laid upon him to preach the gospel. And it is that for us as well. It is a necessity. It has to be and it cannot be otherwise.

We have it to do. Whoa, if I do not preach the gospel, if I do not share the good news of salvation with others. So what does this have to do with denying self?

Well, of ourselves, how many of us would go out and share the gospel without the Holy Spirit indwelling us and prompting us to do so?

Basically speaking, going back to the state that we were in before we were saved, back into our old nature, would we share the gospel?

[10 : 10] We wouldn't and we didn't. It's not natural for us. Our flesh fights against it.

You know, and even after we've received our new nature, it's awkward or uncomfortable in the flesh to share Jesus with non-believers.

Thoughts like, you know, what will they think? What will they say? we fear being ridiculed or made fun of. You know that Jesus faced the same thing.

Just before His crucifixion, He was mocked and He was scorned. What if He hadn't gone through with what He came to do?

You and I wouldn't be here today. So we too must do what Jesus did. Fear God and not man.

[11 : 25] Put aside self and allow God to use us that He would be glorified. our text talks about rewards versus stewardships as well when it comes to sharing the gospel.

It says, one who shares it willingly receives a reward. Doing it unwillingly, we have to do it anyway.

But we lose out on the reward. Question for our youth this morning. How many of you like to do chores?

We see a show of hands. How many of you like doing chores? There's a few. Do we do them willingly?

Or do Mom and Dad have to tell us several times to do them? Which is more likely to get you a reward?

[12 : 43] when we go right away and do what we are told without complaining, it's a lot more fun doing it too.

And that is because our attitude is right. And who knows, maybe then there will be a reward for that. I think I'm setting up the parents to potentially have a lot of requests for rewards and good deeds being done.

But it is good and we desire to reward our children for doing good, right? And so being rewarded for doing the right thing isn't foreign to us.

Sharing the gospel with others is the right thing to do. God is not a harsh God.

It is His desire to bless us, to reward us. And whether it's a reward or a blessing here on earth in this lifetime, or if it's a treasure that is stored up in heaven, let's leave that up to the Lord.

[14 : 17] He knows what is in our best interest. All that matters is that we obey Him and say no to the flesh.

so much. So what does sharing the gospel look like? How do I go about it?

Paul had lots of experience in this and he gives us an idea on what his ministry looked like. in verses 19 through 23.

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more. 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, that I might win those who are under the law. to those who are without law, as without law, not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ, that I might win those who are without law.

[15 : 29] To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you. The key in this portion is in verse 19.

It says, For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more.

And he repeats that, he echoes that in the second part of verse 22. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

How was Paul's ministry so effective? His attitude. As an evangelist, he didn't come rolling into town with an almighty, holier-than-thou attitude.

[16 : 44] He didn't waltz in saying, listen up everybody, I'm an apostle, I'm going to be holding tent meetings here on the weekend, and you have to attend.

By the way, bring your wallet because I expect to be paid for the time I'm investing in you. So, it's not what he did. It's not an effective way of doing it.

How did Paul do it? It says he made himself a servant to all. He was a free man, wasn't in bondage to anyone, was no one's servant, servant, and yet he became a servant to all, that he might win the more.

You know, we can read in the book of Acts about Paul's missionary journeys, how he traveled to different places, and he would find work to support himself.

On the Sabbath, he would enter into the synagogues, and he would reason with the people. He would share Christ with them. One of the best examples is recorded in Acts chapter 18 when Paul goes to Corinth, the people that he is writing this letter to.

[18 : 12] When he goes there, he meets Aquila and Priscilla, a Christian couple, a couple that were tent makers, they made tents. And Paul is familiar with this type of work, and he works with them together in that trade.

And on the weekends, on the Sabbath, he goes and reasons with the Jews and the Greeks, Jew and Gentile alike. three groups of people that Paul mentions in his rounds of sharing the gospel.

Three different groups. He says, to the Jews, I became as a Jew in order to win over the Jews. Jews. That meant doing as the Jews do, being respectful of their ways, of their traditions, participating in them.

If he desired to bring the gospel to the Jews, to have them hear him, he needed to earn their respect. He writes also of those under the law.

I would refer to Jews as well. The next group that he talks about are those without law. By those, he would be referring to the Gentiles.

[19 : 48] To win them, he became like them also, to a certain extent. He respected their ways, and he was willing to observe their traditions as well, as long as it didn't mean sinning against God.

That was one place he wasn't willing to go, and that is where he drew the line. The last group that he mentions are the weak, meaning the weak in conscience.

And in part, here, he is definitely referring back to chapter 8. We've recently gone through, regarding those who would stumble if they saw others eating meat that had been offered to idols.

And here, too, Paul was willing to become like them, abstaining from things that were his right so that they might not stumble.

He gives the example in chapter 8 of abstaining from meat offered to idols. idols. There was those who would have the argument, it's my right, the idols are dead, they're useless, they can't do anything.

[21 : 06] This is only meat. Yeah, they've offered it to idols, but to me, it's just meat, that idol, it's only an idol that cannot do anything. I serve the Lord, this is meat is meat, I can eat it, right?

And yet, there were those weak in the faith who had just come out of that same system where they might have been worshipping these idols. And, well, no, that's meat offered to idols, I can't eat that.

And so, there's a weakness there, and seeing others taking part, eating in that meat, it would have brought offense to them, it would have caused them to stumble, thinking that, well, if they can do it, I can do it, and they might draw them right back into that idol worship.

And so, Paul, in the end of chapter 8, in the final verse, he says, therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat again, I'll never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

So, Paul, by example, willing to give up all the steak, all the ribs if it was going to cause someone else to stumble, he would give that up for the rest of his life.

[22 : 18] Self-sacrifice, willing to give up self so that others might not stumble. people. So, that is the idea, to give up my own rights, my own ways to gain favor with the people that I am in contact with, to find an inroad where I would have opportunity to share the gospel with them, to share Christ with them.

always the goal is finding opportunity to share the gospel with those that haven't heard it, that don't have Christ.

Christ, we have plenty of opportunity to exercise that in our neighborhoods, in the Grand Prairie region, many, many different cultures around us.

How can we best find a way to share the gospel with them? As Paul did, in all cases, make their acquaintance, get to know them, show interest in them, do the things that they do, as long as it doesn't sin against God.

And as they warm up to you and you begin to establish your relationship, God will be faithful. He will do his part and he will open a door for you to share the gospel.

[24 : 04] I think also of sharing the gospel with those in religious circles. Right away, we're thinking of sharing the gospel with those who have never heard the gospel before.

And yet, there's the other side. coming from my background, many of our backgrounds, Mennonite backgrounds, there's a lot of religion there.

We see the need for the gospel there. They need Jesus. How can I be a witness to them?

In the same way, by denying myself my rights and respecting them and their traditions, I won't win them over by pushing my ways upon them.

All that gets me is a door slammed in my face. So, it doesn't matter the people group.

[25 : 15] We have to give up self, go to them with an attitude of service, that they are important, and that we genuinely care about them.

And as we cultivate these relationships, God will give it opportunity to share the gospel. We can be sure of that. Verse 24, So, we close the chapter this morning talking about personal discipline.

It is important for us to deny self for the sake of the gospel, and yet the only way that we are able to do so is to be in the right place spiritually ourselves.

Paul gives the example of athletes, athletes disciplining themselves.

Sports and competing, competitions with one another, they are familiar to mankind. Corinth was no exception.

[27 : 02] The Isthmian Games were held close to Corinth every second year, and they were the second biggest sporting event in the world at that time, second only to the Olympics.

And so, we know that athletes, they spend considerable time training, conditioning their bodies physically in order to compete at the highest level possible, because they want to come in in first place.

And so, the examples we were given in our text are running a race and boxing. Scripture compares the Christian life to a race and a fight as well.

So, fitting examples. On the one hand, in the world, racers and boxers, they compete for a perishable crown.

So, in their day, the direct context would have been the laurel wreath that the winner would receive. It came from a plant or a tree with leaves on it, and it would, obviously, it's cut down, so it would wither and die in a short time.

[28 : 26] But in that moment, it was the coveted prize of everyone competing. The race of the Christian life is much different.

Where in the physical world, in a race, in a fight, there's one winner. In the Christian race, the race of the Christian life, there are many that run, and we are encouraged to run in such a way that we may win the prize.

Run with great effort. Run with zeal. Run with confidence. The difference is that in this race, the Christian life, each one who runs well wins.

There isn't only one winner. All who run well win. Paul speaks again of this race in 2 Timothy, in chapter 4.

2 Timothy 4, verses 7 and 8. It says, I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.

[30 : 01] Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day, and not to me only, but also to all who have loved his appearing.

So this crown that we pursue, it is imperishable. It is everlasting. For it is eternal life. Life in the very presence of God.

what it will be like on that day to have Jesus Christ, our Lord, handing out crowns to each one who ran well.

Verse 26 in our text. Therefore, I run thus, not with uncertainty. Thus I fight, not as one who beats the air.

But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

[31 : 15] Paul says, this is how I run. Not with uncertainty. Speaking of running within the lines of Christian conduct, having full assurance of salvation, knowing who the righteous judge is who stands at the finish line, waiting to crown me.

Thus I fight, not as one who beats the air. There's no practice fighting. Spiritual battles are real.

Fight them in the power of the Lord, clothed in his armor. Remember, Jesus claimed the victory over the enemy.

In him, in the power of his might, we too will claim victory. And so, the key to self-discipline is bringing the body into subjection.

Paul is speaking of the flesh here, of checking fleshly desires, breaking down strongholds of sin, the things that would keep us from running well.

[32 : 50] the flesh. The flesh, our old nature, resists and fights against the Spirit of God. If self is sitting on the throne in our heart, and it is allowed to remain there, the discipline will be lacking.

As Paul says, we will be disqualified. Sin has to be dealt with. We are called to be light, to be lights.

Sin is a dark stain, and it must be removed for our light to shine. Sin has to be light. Sin has to be light.

Sin has to be light. We can't shine the light to others if our own way is still darkened. Self has to go. To run well, God must rule in our hearts.

When He is on the throne, then we run well, as our eyes are focused on Him.

[34 : 04] If we look away for a moment, as Peter did, we begin to sink. Keep your eyes on the Lord. Run well and with confidence. Serve one another. Share the good news of the gospel of Christ with all you meet.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank You for this morning. We thank You for Your great love for us, for Your Word to us, to teach us.

And Father, may You teach us again this morning. Teach us to deny self, to take up our cross daily, to follow You, to keep our focus on You, and to let You reign supreme in our life.

Father, help us to be excited and to bring the good news of the gospel to those who haven't heard it, who haven't found the Lord and Savior of our life, Jesus Christ.

[35 : 23] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.