

Winning the Race for Lost Souls 1 Corinthians 9:14-27

Introduction:

1. Paul enjoyed using the illustration of athletics when trying to emphasize a point. He does this once again in verse 24. He draws from a concept that the Greeks of Corinth could understand - the Olympic Games. vs. 25
2. But what is Paul trying to teach in this text? What is the race that we are in? When you take this **text** apart from its **context**, you can end up with all kinds of false ideas.
3. The context is clear - Paul is talking about **proclaiming** the gospel (vs. 16, 18) and **reaching** people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. vs. 19-23
4. This is why we are left on this earth. We are in a race, a fight, a contest, warfare. The battlefield is this evil world we live in and the prize is the precious souls that live in this world. Our adversary is Satan. **Ephesians 6:11-12**
 - We are attempting to penetrate enemy territory with the gospel of Jesus Christ, bringing people to Jesus. **Acts 26:18**
 - Satan is attempting to keep people in darkness. **2 Corinthians 4:4**
5. We are in a race that is life or death for millions of people. Do you know people that are not saved? Where does Satan want to see them in eternity? In hell. Where do you want to see them? In Heaven. This is the race we are in with our adversary!
6. How can we win the race for lost souls? This is the subject of our text. Paul brings out three key points.

First, it will take a giving heart. vs. 14-18

1. As we mentioned last week, the Corinthians had been very negligent in their responsibility to take care of Paul's physical necessities. He had faithfully preached the gospel and taught them God's Word, and they hadn't given a dime to help Paul.
2. Paul lays out a vital principle - if somebody is laboring to teach you spiritual things and feed your spirit, you have a responsibility to give of your material resources to meet the needs of the ministry. vs. 11
3. Paul uses the Old Testament priests as an example of this principle in verse 13.
 - The priests were sustained physically through the tithes, offerings, and sacrifices of the people of Israel.
 - While Paul does not follow this illustration through by making the Old Testament system of tithes and offering incumbent on the Corinthians, he does teach that the **principle** still holds true for today. vs. 14
 - Those who give their lives to preaching the gospel and laboring in the Word and teaching spiritual things should derive their living from the gospel. How? Through the giving of God's people.
 - We are not under the Jewish law system of giving, but grace should produce a response greater than the law, should it not?
4. The gospel cannot move forward and penetrate enemy territory without money. Paul knew this. Paul had necessities. When churches wouldn't give to Paul, he had to make tents (**Acts 18:3**) which took away time that he could have been preaching the gospel.

5. The Corinthians were greedy and stingy with regard to Paul, which meant Paul had to find resources elsewhere in order to preach the gospel. **2 Corinthians 11:7-9**
6. There is a **cost** involved in getting the gospel out to the lost. When God's people have giving hearts, we can take leaps and strides in this race for lost souls. When God's people are stingy in their giving, the cause of Christ is greatly hindered.

Second, it takes a servant's heart. Vs. 19-23

1. This passage has been misused and mishandled by so many churches that want to validate a worldly mindset to ministry. Their philosophy is that we must appeal to the carnal, worldly nature in order to have a platform to speak the gospel.
 - In other words, "Let's become more like the world in order to reach the world."
2. This is not at all what Paul was advocating in this text. This would contradict clear teaching he gave in other portions of Scripture. **Romans 12:2; Ephesians 5:11; Philippians 2:15**
 - Maybe even the Corinthians had misappropriated Paul's teaching because he very strongly teaches in his second letter that believers should be separate from this evil world system. **2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1**
3. What does Paul mean when he says "...unto the Jews I became as a Jew..."? vs. 20
 - In context, he is speaking of his willingness to not eat offensive meat. 8:13
 - Even though Paul knew that he was free (vs. 19) from the law, Paul would gladly submit to the dietary restrictions of the law when he was trying to reach Jews with the gospel. Paul would gladly lay aside his rights so as to not knowingly offend them.
4. Paul was a Jew. Most likely there were meats such as pork that Paul did not personally care for, but when Paul was with Gentiles he would eat their meat so as not to offend them. vs. 21
5. When Paul refers to the weak in verse 22, he is referring to those with a weak conscience (8:7). Paul did not want to do anything or lead them to do anything that would defile their conscience and hinder himself in reaching them with the gospel.
6. Paul made himself a servant of all. Why would he lay aside his personal rights and take on such a servant's heart? The answer is in verses 19 and 23. He did it for the gospel's sake. He wanted to win the race for lost souls!
7. Does this contradict other Scriptures such as **Galatians 1:10** or **Ephesians 6:5-8**?
 - Not at all. We do not compromise the gospel or sound doctrine in order to please or serve people. This would be serving others in the wrong way. We are, first and foremost, the servant of Christ.
 - But we should possess servants' hearts towards others and not knowingly offend people. As we serve others, we are doing it as unto the Lord for the advancement of the gospel.