**I HAVE BECOME ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE**

1 Co 8:1-9:27

Key verse 9:22.

“To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.”

**Introduction**



In this passage Paul talks about food sacrificed to idols and his apostleship and right. Dealing with the matters, Paul teaches how we should use our right and shows his example. Through this we can learn the godly way to exercise our right and how we can help people to be saved. Especially Paul’s remark to become all things to all men to save them all, we may pick up his desire in our mission field.

**1. Read verses 8:1-13. What does Paul say about food sacrificed to idols? (1-6) Why shouldn’t we put weight on the matter of eating food? (7-8) Why should we be careful about exercising our rights? (9-12) What is Paul’s decision about eating food? (13)**

**1-1.** **Read verses 8:1-13.**

Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that “We all possess knowledge.” But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. 2 Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. 3 But whoever loves God is known by God.

4 So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “There is no God but one.” 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.7 But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. 8 But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.

9 Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol’s temple, won’t that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? 11 So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. 12 When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall.

**1-2.** **What does Paul say about food sacrificed to idols? (1-6)**

***Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that “We all possess knowledge.” But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. 2 Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. 3 But whoever loves God is known by God. 4 So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “There is no God but one.” 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.***

· There was argument about food sacrificed to idols, offered on pagan altars. Some meat left over from a sacrifice was sold in the market place. Some Christians didn’t want to eat the food considering it as unclean food. But other Christians were not bothered by eating such food with the knowledge that the idol is nothing and considered the sacrificed food as just mere food.

· But knowledge puffs up while love builds up- knowledge could make us proud and let us hurt others. But love builds up others. The knowledge with love can benefit others.

· Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. But whoever loves God is known by God.- We should know the limitation of our knowledge and be humble instead of being proud. Those who loves God and love others with his love toward God are recognized and accepted by God. God recognizes those who love as his own.

· Any good knowledge that doesn’t remain in love doesn’t have true value. Knowledge should be presented in love.

· “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “There is no God but one.” For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

· There were many Greek and Roman gods. But all of them were man made and never existed.

· There is only one God. He is the only God. All things came from God and we live for him.

· There is one Lord, Jesus. All things came through him and we live through him.

· All things even food came from God and exist for him and sacrificing food to the idols doesn’t cause any change to the food. It still mere food from God and we can eat freely as free men because we were bought at a price thanks to Jesus.

**1-3.**  **Why shouldn’t we put weight on the matter of eating food? (7-8)**

***But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. 8 But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.***

· But not everyone possesses the right knowledge about idols and food.

· Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. Consequently they think that in eating meat sacrificed on pagan altars they have involved themselves in pagan worship and thus have sinned against Christ.

· But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. Food itself doesn’t affect our relationship with God at all. If we don’t eat the food, nothing negative thing happen and even if we eat the food it doesn’t help at all for our relationship with God.

**1-4.** **Why should we be careful about exercising our rights? (9-12)**

***Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol’s temple, won’t that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? 11 So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. 12 When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.***

· Even if we have right to do things freely, we should be careful about exercising the right because it could cause stumbling block to those who have weak faith and conscience.

· We should consider how our exercise of right could affect others instead of thinking about my benefits only. If our exercising right can damage others, we better not to exercise the right.

· ***10 For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol’s temple, won’t that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols?*** - Some believers with a weak conscience could eat food sacrificed to the idols even though they don’t have knowledge and strong faith being influenced by others. They don’t eat with confidence and freedom rather eats with uncertainty and sense of guilty that they are compromising with idol worship which is wrong to them.

· ***11 So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. -*** Even though they don’t intend to hurt others with their knowledge, they can be damaged seriously. Those who have weak conscience could get hurt on their conscience with the sense of guilt.

· Eating meat offered to idols when they feel it is wrong tends to blunt their conscience, so that doing what is wrong becomes much easier.

· For whom Christ died. We could ignore those who don’t have knowledge or strong faith. Also we could consider hurting other brothers and sister lightly but we should remember that they are so precious ones whom Jesus sacrificed his life for.

· ***12 When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. -*** If we hurt other believers, we are sin against Christ because believers belong to Jesus as part of his body.

**1-5.**  **What is Paul’s decision about eating food? (13)**

***Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall.***

· Apostle Paul decided refrain from eating meat sacrificed even though he had knowledge and right not to cause stumbling block to other believers.

· Paul made such decision out of love. It is not easy to give up own right especially he wants to enjoy the right but Paul considered other’s interest first before his interest.

· Paul showed example how to exercise knowledge and right in love.

**2. Read verses 9:1-18. How does Paul argue his apostleship? (1-2) What is his defense about his rights as an apostle? (3-10) Why did Paul speak of having more rights in terms of his relationship to the Corinthians? (11-14) Why didn’t Paul use his rights? (15-18)**

**2-1. Read verses 9:1-14.**

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? 2 Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.3 This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. 4 Don’t we have the right to food and drink? 5 Don’t we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord’s brothers and Cephas[a]? 6 Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? 8 Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn’t the Law say the same thing? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.”[b] Is it about oxen that God is concerned? 10 Surely he says this for us, doesn’t he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. 11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? 12 If others have this right of support from you, shouldn’t we have it all the more?But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.13 Don’t you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? 14 In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting. **16** For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! **17** For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. **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.

**2-2 .How does Paul argue his apostleship? (1-2)**

***Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? 2 Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.***

· Some at Corinth (2Co 12:11-12) and elsewhere(Gal 1:15-2:10) questioned Paul’s genuine apostleship. To certify his apostleship Paul gives this proof.

· Am I not free?– Paul had spiritual freedom and had right just as any Christian had. He had freedom to do whatever he wants to do.

· Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? – Paul saw Jesus directly (Acts 9:1-9).

· Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

· The Corinthian believers were the fruit of Paul’s ministry work. His ministry produced true spiritual fruit for the Lord which should confirm to them that he is indeed an apostle. The work of Holy Spirit in Corinthian was the perfect proof that God worked through Paul approving his work and apostleship.

**2-3. What is his defense about his rights as an apostle? (3-10)**

***This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. 4 Don’t we have the right to food and drink? 5 Don’t we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord’s brothers and Cephas[a]? 6 Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? 8 Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn’t the Law say the same thing? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.” Is it about oxen that God is concerned? 10 Surely he says this for us, doesn’t he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest.***

· This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. Don’t we have the right to food and drink? – Paul argues that he has right to receive support for food and other practical needs from the church.

· Don’t we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord’s brothers and Cephas? – Some apostles, Jesus’ brothers and Peter had wife and traveled together for mission journey. And churches provided them with financial support for their daily living and other practical need.

· Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?- They had full right to receive support from church for their ministry work.

· Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? – Even in the world workers receive reward for their labor.

· Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn’t the Law say the same thing? – Even the Law requires that workers should be paid for their labor.

**2-4. Why did Paul speak of having more rights in terms of his relationship to the Corinthians? (11-14)**

***If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? 12 If others have this right of support from you, shouldn’t we have it all the more?But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.13 Don’t you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? 14 In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.***

· we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? – They sown spiritual seed which is more precious than any other things. They deserved to receive support more than anyone else.

· But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.- Paul didn’t use their right not to hinder the gospel.

· They were some people who wanted to take advantage of the work. Also some people could misunderstand about the purpose of preaching the gospel when gospel preachers received financial support. Paul wanted to avoid anything that could hinder gospel not using his right.

· In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel- At the temple priests received their living for their work. He applied the same principle to the gospel workers.

· It was the Lord’s command that gospel preachers should receive their living from the people who received the gospel.

· Paul had full confidence about his right to receive support from church for his living.

**2-5. Why didn’t Paul use his rights? (15-18)**

***But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting. 16 For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! 17 For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. 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.***

· But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me, for I would rather die than allow anyone to deprive me of this boast. – Paul didn’t use his right at all. He mentioned not to tell them to support him. He resolved that he would never receive support for his work. It was his boast not to receive the support for his preaching work.

· For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. – Even though he preached the gospel without receiving support he couldn’t boast he was compelled to preach the gospel by God. He took the mission that he should carry out as his divine duty that couldn’t neglect.

· He was compelled to preach the gospel by the Holy Spirit not by himself. So he couldn’t stop preaching. Even though he worked but it was by God’s grace. **But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me (1 Co 15:10)**

· If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. – If he preached the gospel voluntarily he could get reward but he was simply discharging his duty. So he didn’t request any reward from the church.

· What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.- Paul considered preaching the gospel without any reward as his reward.

**3. Read 9:19-27. Why did Paul make himself a slave to everyone? (19) Why did Paul become all things to all people? (20-23) What is Paul’s advice for our spiritual race? (24-25) How did Paul discipline his body to win the prize?(26-27)**

**3-1. Read 9:19-27.**

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. 24Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. 27 No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

**3-2. Why did Paul make himself a slave to everyone? (19)**

***Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible***

· Not only did Paul not use his right to material support in preaching the gospel but he also made himself a slave to everyone to bring different kinds of people to Christ.

· Instead of keeping his right, rather he served others as their slaves to win them. It was true glory and honor for him before God. The true greatness before God is not enjoying our right but serve others sacrificing ourselves.

· We can win people by serving them just as slave serves his master.

**3-3. Why did Paul become all things to all people? (20-23)**

***20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.***

· To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. – Paul was free from the law but acted as if he was bound to the law to win the Jew. (Acts 16:3, 21:17-29) He gave up his freedom to win those who were still bound to the law.

· To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law- To those who didn’t have the law Paul became like one who didn’t have the law under the Christ’s law, the gospel of Jesus to win them. It was not big deal for him to become like Jews or gentile once he could win them.

· He didn’t act according to his preference but according to other’s preference.

· To the weak I became weak, to win the weak.- The weak are those who have weak faith and weak conscience. Not to hurt them Paul restricted himself from his freedom to win the weak.

· I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel,that I may share in its blessings.

· Paul became all things to all people to save some people and share the blessings of the gospel with many. He was ready to give up anything and do anything once he could save people and share the gospel of Jesus.

· We could have difficulty sharing the gospel with others because we don’t want to give up something or do something that should be done to help others.

**3-4. What is Paul’s advice for our spiritual race? (24-25)**

***Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.***

· In a race only one gets the prize of the first place. To win the prize the runners did all their best to run faster. Paul encouraged the believers to do their spiritual race just as the runners ran in the race. We need to run with this kind attitude. Lazy and easing going runner cannot win the prize. We have to run with great passion and zeal and do our best.

· Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

· The runners for Olympic game went through 10 months very tough training before the game. They had to restrict themselves for food, entertainment, and sleep and other things.

· The prize for the winner in the game was crown made of olive tree leaves and flower. It was great honor for them but the crown withered soon.

· But the crown we receive last forever.

**3-5. How did Paul discipline his body to win the prize?(26-27)**

***Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.***

· Runner should have clear goal and direction. We have to have clear goal and direction for our spiritual race.

· The boxers did practice beating the air by themselves before the game. But we need to have clear target that we strike.

· The target of our boxing is our body. Paul did strike a blow to his body and made it his slave. He fully controlled his body, the desire and sinful nature of his body so that he may not lose the prize that God prepared for him in heaven.

**Conclusion**

We should exercise our knowledge and right in love even giving up our right for the benefits of others instead of using it for our benefits only. We have rights. Paul had right as a disciple but he sacrificed his right and became all things to win people. He even became a slave to everybody. This is true love and the best example how to use our right. May God help us even to sacrifice our right and become all things to all people so that we may win many souls to be saved.

**One word, “I become all things to all people.**