

“We Did Not Use This Right”

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“If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.” (1 Cor. 9:12)

Read 1 Cor. 9:15-23

This is an interesting paragraph. Paul’s point is those “Who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel” (v. 14). Yet, if such a "right" becomes an obstacle to the preaching of the gospel of grace, then “He would make no use of any of these rights” (v. 15). By so doing “He became all things to all people, in order that by all means he might save some” (v. 22).

Verses 19-23 provide an interesting perspective as to how Paul viewed the ministry of preaching the gospel and of reaching people. Paul knew that he was “free from all” (v.19), but he gave up the right of freedom and made himself a servant of all. What adjustments of accommodation did Paul make?

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| • To the Jews | I became a Jew |
| • To those under the law | I became as one under the law |
| • To those outside the law | I became as one outside the law |
| • To the weak | I became weak |

Every time Paul accommodated to the culture or status of individuals, he did so “in order to win” people. Four times Paul uses the word “win” in 1 Corinthians and all four occurrences are in chapter 9:19, 20, 21, and 22. Paul had a passion to share with people of all cultures and religious backgrounds the blessings of the gospel (v.23).

Paul lived as one under the law, though he himself was not under the law, in order to reach those under the law (v.20). The cultural adaptation of the apostle Paul to those under the law did not deal with the aspects that denigrated the cross. His adaptation was in areas of ethnicity and cultural taboos. In many ways, modern missionaries fall into this same scenario. There are many areas where missionaries must adapt to the ethnicity and cultural actions of the people they are endeavoring to reach “in order that they may share with them in the blessings of the gospel” (v.23). By so doing, “They become all things to all people, that by all means they might save some” (v.22).

Consider our own ethnicity and cultural climate. Ministry opportunity and expression must adapt to the culture in which we find ourselves. For example, our youth ministry (DV8) has developed a skate boarding ministry. It is an area that ministers to the culture of youth. Driven 2 One is an expression of WBC that ministers to the culture in which we live. Neither one of those ministries violates Scriptural dictates. The women’s and men’s ministry are ministry adaptations to the current culture of our society.

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The message of the cross must never be tampered with or adjusted. The venue through which the cross is preached can and must change as the culture around us changes. Missionaries do this all the time. They adapt to the culture without compromising the cross.

Paul's thoughts in chapter 9 can be seen against the backdrop of chapter 8. To the weak, Paul would not eat the meat offered to idols (8:13). As we endeavor to take the message of the cross into our local, national, and global community, let us not compromise the message but let us aggressively adjust our means as we penetrate deeply into the culture of those we are seeking to reach.

As a fellowship, "Let us become all things to all men, so that (we) may by all means save some. (We) do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that (we) may become a fellow partaker of it." May the ministries of WBC be an aggressive expression of a ministry that proclaims the person of Christ through cultural diversity with an abandonment of personal rights and preferences.