



## **“Run to Win” 1 Corinthians Chapter 9:**

### **Opening Prayer:**

**Father God, we come before You in the powerful name of Jesus. Thank You for Your Word that challenges us, shapes us, and calls us higher. Please I ask, Holy Spirit, speak clearly today. Remove complacency. Ignite passion. Help us live with eternal purpose. And Lord, if anyone listening does not yet know You, draw them to salvation today. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

### **Historical Setting:**

Corinth was famous for the Isthmian 👉 **ISTH-mee-un** Games .... second only to the Olympic Games in reputation. “The Isthmian 👉 **ISTH-mee-un** Games were athletic festivals held near Corinth on the Isthmus 👉 **ISS-muss** of Corinth.

The name comes from that narrow strip of land, and the games were famous competitions in honor of Poseidon, 👉 **poh-SIGH-dun** much like a major Greek athletic championship.” Athletes trained rigorously for competition.

Discipline, endurance, and self-control were admired qualities.

Corinth was a city shaped by competition and status. Honor mattered, personal rights were fiercely guarded, and recognition was highly valued.

In chapter 8, Paul taught that love sometimes limits freedom. In chapter 9, he

uses his own life to show what that looks like.

He gave up his rights for the good of the gospel, and then he compares the Christian life to a race. This chapter teaches us about sacrifice, discipline, and living for eternal reward.

## 1. Paul's Apostolic Rights (1 Corinthians 9:1-6):

**1 Corinthians 9:1-6(NIV) 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? <sup>2</sup> 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.**

**<sup>3</sup> This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. <sup>4</sup> Don't we have the right to food and drink? <sup>5</sup> 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? <sup>6</sup> Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?**

Paul begins with symbolic questions:

**“Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?....”** (Vs.9:1)

Paul had legitimate rights as an apostle.

Verse 4-6 shows he had the right to:

- . Financial support
- . Food and drink
- . Marriage
- . Relief from manual labor

He was not inferior to other leaders.

- He had authority.
- He had freedom.

But what he does next is powerful.

## **2. The Right to Support .... But Not Using It (1 Corinthians 9:7-14):**

**1 Corinthians 9:7-14(NIV) <sup>7</sup> 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? <sup>8</sup> Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? <sup>9</sup> 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? <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? <sup>12</sup> 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.**

**<sup>13</sup> 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? <sup>14</sup> In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.**

Paul explains that workers deserve compensation:

**“The worker deserves his wages.”** (9:14 NIV)

Even the Old Testament taught this:

**“....Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.....”** (9:9 NIV)

Paul establishes clearly .... he had the right to financial support.

But then he says:

**“.....But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.”** (9:12 NIV)

- Paul chose sacrifice over comfort.
- He chose impact over income.
- He chose gospel advancement over personal entitlement.

### **3. A Compelled Calling (1 Corinthians 9:15-18):**

**1 Corinthians 9:15-18(NIV) <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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! <sup>17</sup> If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the**

***trust committed to me. <sup>18</sup> 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 says:

**“.....Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”** (9:16 NIV)

- This was not a job.
- It was not a hobby.
- 👉 **It was a “calling”.**

Paul was compelled by Christ. Verse 18:

**“What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge...”** (Vs.18)

Paul found his reward in seeing lives transformed by the gospel.

➤ That speaks directly to us as a church.

👉 Are we serving Christ only when it fits our comfort and schedule, or are we serving Him out of deep conviction that He is worthy of our all?

#### **4. Becoming All Things to All People (1 Corinthians 9:19-23):**

**1Corinthians 9:19-23(NIV) <sup>19</sup> Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.**

➤ This section is powerful.

**“Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.”** (9:19 NIV)

Paul was free, yet he chose to serve.

- He was not forced by man, but moved by love.
- He was willing to lay down personal rights, preferences, and comforts so that others might hear the gospel.
- He adapted his approach without compromising the truth.
- His message never changed, but his method often did.

**Why?**

👉 Because his great desire was to see as many people as possible come to Christ.

Verse 22: **“....I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.”** (v.22)

Paul was flexible in method ....  
But firm in message.

He did not change the gospel.  
He changed his approach.

➤ So, Why did Paul do this?

**“I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.”** (9:23 NIV)

👉 The driving passion of Paul's life was souls.

## **5. Run to Win (1 Corinthians 9:24-27):**

Let us read God's Word.....

**1Corinthians 9:24-27(NIV) <sup>24</sup> *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. <sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. <sup>27</sup> 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.***

Now Paul turns to imagery that would have been deeply familiar to Corinth.

The city was closely connected to the Isthmian 🖐️ **ISTH-mee-un** Games, so the people understood athletic training, self-control, endurance, and the drive to win.

When Paul speaks of running a race, he is drawing from something they knew well,

using it to show that the Christian life must be **lived with purpose, discipline**, and the **desire to finish well**.

**“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.”**

(9:24 NIV)

Christianity is not passive. It is not a life of aimless drifting.

➤ It calls for purpose, effort, and focus.

Paul’s point is that believers should live with the same seriousness and determination that a runner has in a race, pressing forward with the desire to honor Christ and finish strong.

Verse 25: **“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last...”**

Athletes trained for temporary glory.

👉 We run for **eternal reward**.

Verse 26–27: <sup>(v.26)</sup> **“Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly... <sup>(v.27)</sup> I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave...”**

Paul practiced spiritual discipline.

He did not want to be disqualified ....

👉 Not from salvation

But from effective **service and reward**.

## Application for Today:

Chapter 9 challenges us in three areas:

### 1. Are You Clinging to Your Rights?

In our culture, we defend our rights fiercely.

- But Jesus laid down His rights.
- Paul laid down his rights.
- 👉 Love often requires surrender.

## 2. Is the Gospel Your Passion?

Paul said, “....**Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel.**”<sup>(v.16)</sup>

Paul was not merely interested in the gospel.

- He was gripped by it.
- He carried a deep sense of calling and urgency.

Preaching Christ was not something he did only when it was convenient. It was the burden of **his heart** and **the mission of his life**.

That raises an important question for us:

- **Are we compelled?**

Are we moved by the reality that people need Jesus?

- **Or are we comfortable?**

In your daily life, having it easy, routine, and the distractions of life does it caused us to lose our burden for souls?

👉 Paul lived with a holy urgency because he knew the gospel is the **power of God for salvation.**

### **3. Are You Running to Win?**

The Christian life requires discipline:

- . Time in the Word
- . Prayer
- . Self-control
- . Evangelism
- . Faithfulness

Athletes train daily.

👉 Believers must grow daily.

Are you running aimlessly?  
Or with purpose?

### **The Eternal Perspective:**

- The athletes competed for a perishable prize.
- We compete for an **imperishable crown.**

- For believers one day, we will stand before Christ.

Not to determine salvation

👉 But to evaluate faithfulness.

- Did we run well?
- Did we endure?
- Did we sacrifice?
- Did we share the gospel?

### **Invitation to Be Born Again:**

Perhaps someone listening today realizes something.

👉 You cannot run the Christian race until you enter it.

- You may be religious....  
But you have never surrendered to Christ.
- You may admire Jesus .....  
But you have not trusted Him.

The gospel that Paul was compelled to preach is this:

- Jesus Christ died for sinners.
- He rose from the dead.
- He offers forgiveness and eternal life.
- You cannot earn it.
- You cannot train your way into it.
- You must receive it from Jesus as a free gift....

👉 To be born again means:

- . Admit you are a sinner.
- . Turn from your sin.
- . Trust in Jesus Christ alone.
- . Receive His grace.

👉 If you are ready,.... right now,.... pray this from your heart:

Let us Pray....

**Lord Jesus, I confess that I am a sinner..... I believe You died for me and rose again..... I surrender my life to You..... Forgive me..... Save me..... Help me run this race for You..... Amen!**

**Romans 10:9(NIV)<sup>9</sup> If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**

“**If**” you meant that, you are saved....  
He has given you new life.  
And He will empower you to run with purpose!!!

Welcome to the family of God!!!!

Let us Pray....

**Closing Prayer:**

**Father God, thank You for calling us into this race. Forgive us for complacency. Forgive us for clinging to rights instead of surrendering them. Ignite passion in our hearts for the gospel.**

**Help us run with discipline.  
Help us run with endurance.  
Help us run for eternal reward.**

**For those who have surrendered to You today, fill them with Your Spirit. Strengthen them. Establish them. Give them courage to live boldly for YOU.**

**May we run in such a way as to win the prize. Eternal prize....**

**We love You. We praise You.  
In Jesus' mighty name, Amen.**



Matthew 28:19-20