

The Distracted Christian

1 Corinthians 9:16-27

The Corinthian church in Paul's day was a mess. 1 Cor. 9:16-27 addresses the heart of their problem: getting distracted from our Christ-given purpose and mission.

Paul's first concern is the potential distraction of personal financial and material gain. He talks about preaching voluntarily. Paul normally taught that ministers of the gospel should receive their support from the gospel, but in Corinth, he knew that accepting their support would create expectations that he served them instead of Jesus. Material gain wasn't going to distract him from his main purpose, effectively selling his independence for it. Paul sets an example for us and challenges us to realize what Jesus famously taught: "You cannot serve both God and money." (Matt. 6:24)

The Bible also warns that we can be easily distracted by personal preferences and privilege. "To become all things to all people" means that he sacrificed his own preferences and privileges that he might see people saved. Spreading the gospel requires us to set aside personal preferences. But why do we follow Christ...to get our itches scratched? Or is it to spread the gospel?

Finally, Paul speaks about athletic achievements because athletes exemplified how personal comfort and ease can be a distraction for the follower of Christ. Like a determined athlete, true followers of Christ must bring their desire for physical comfort into submission to win the most valued prize in heaven, described in **1 Thes. 2:19**: The crown of winning others to Christ.

What is common to all these distractions? The word, "personal"; making it about my life, about my will and my way. **2 Cor. 9** reminds me of what Jesus warned about: *that whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.*