

1 Corinthians 9:16-23^{iv}

Brothers and sisters, if I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel! For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel. For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

^{iv} About the Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23

In chapter 9, Paul defends his status as an apostle. His authority had apparently been questioned because he had waived two apostolic rights: being married and receiving support for preaching.

Opponents may have used Paul's restraint as evidence of his unworthiness. Paul retorts that he did not choose preaching as a career for the purpose of earning a living. Instead, like the prophets, he received a commission from God and so has no choice but to preach.

The absolute claim of the gospel makes relative all cultural, ethnic, national or legal values. The freedom that his decision gives him puts him in a position of servitude under "Christ's law"—the obligation of love. Paul's flexibility is neither cowardice nor compromise; rather, his freedom allows him to speak to and from the experience of others. Paul's freedom is for service, and his ministry is its own reward.