

The Wisdom of a Master Soul-Winner

by David Legge

David Legge's sermon emphasizes the wisdom and motivation required for effective soul winning, drawing from the example of the Apostle Paul.

Duration: 49:33

Scripture: Acts 20:33, Acts 20:35, 1 Corinthians 9:15, 1 Thessalonians 2:9, 2 Thessalonians 3:8

Topics: "Evangelism", "Soul Winning"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of passionate preaching and evangelism. He uses the analogy of a watchman sounding the trumpet to warn the city, stating that if the watchman fails to do so, the blood is on his hands. The preacher also discusses the motive behind serving in ministry, emphasizing that the focus should be on saving souls rather than seeking personal gain or money. He highlights the example of the apostle Paul, who was driven by a desire to preach the gospel and was willing to endure suffering and hardship for the sake of spreading the message. The preacher concludes by emphasizing the significance of the gospel above all else, even one's own comfort and livelihood.

Transcript

1 Corinthians chapter 9, 1 Corinthians chapter 9, I'm beginning to read at verse 15, and we're looking at these verses under the title tonight, The Wisdom of a Master Soul Winner. Verse 15, trying to remember at least if you were with us the last couple of weeks what we have studied hitherto. But I have used none of these things, neither have I written these things, that it should be done so unto me, for it were better for me to die than that any man should make my glorying void.

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of, for necessity is laid upon me. Yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel. For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward.

But if against my will, a dispensation or a stewardship of the gospel is committed unto me, what is my reward then? Verily, that when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain them over. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews.

To them that are under the law is under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without law has without law, being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak.

I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. This I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Let me finish everything at verse 23.

If we have anything in these verses that we've read together this evening, one thing we do receive is a picture, a portrait, even a self-portrait of the Apostle Paul as a soul winner, and I would go as far to say as a master soul winner. We're going to see this evening as we go down these verses that Paul knew what Solomon said in Proverbs 11 and verse 30, that he that winneth souls is wise. And that doesn't just mean that it's a wise thing to go after souls who are lost and seek to win them, but I think the inference is in that verse also that you need wisdom, a certain amount of wisdom, in order to win the lost for the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's not just all about the sovereignty of God. We need to be very careful that we don't make this mistake, and although we stand very firm and square on the sovereignty of God, in all things we must remember that God has left with his church and with his disciples the responsibility to go and win the lost, and it is significant that Paul himself said that he longed to save some. Of course we know that salvation is of the Lord and the Lord alone can save men and women, but yet Paul uses this phrase because there is a human responsibility on all of us as believers to go after our kith and kin, our brethren in humanity, and seek and save the lost.

We will see tonight the wisdom that Paul had in this regard, but what we also need to see that this wisdom of soul winning is found in the context of the weaker brother and forgoing what is your right and liberty in Christ for the weaker brother who may stumble seeing your liberty. We are going to see this evening as we did last week that Paul forfeited the right to be paid for his gospel ministry in order that that gospel that he was preaching might have greater success. You remember that? He had foregone any wage, even a meal on the table of Corinthian homes in order that no one could point the finger and say Paul's in it for the money, and so he had foregone these things in order that the gospel might be spread without any hindrance whatsoever.

But the point that Paul was making as he made these Corinthians aware of his own sacrifice was that they too ought to forfeit their right to eat this meat sacrifice to idol that they talked about in the first few verses of the chapter. They should avoid it in case they injure the weaker brother, in case they offend a brother for whom Christ has died. And what he's really getting at is this, the testimony of the believer, the testimony of the church, and the testimony of the witness of the gospel is much more important than the liberty that we have in Christ.

And although the Corinthians theological viewpoints were A1, they were absolutely correct. Paul had to point out to them that love was to regulate their liberty, even when their liberty was theologically accurate. Now we're going to see tonight that Paul cites two reasons why it is important to forego your right, and in his case personally, to forego his right of payment for his ministry.

The two reasons really, if we were to summarize it, can be given like this. One, you're to forego your right in the gospel, for the gospel's sake, because of the reward that you will have one day in eternity. The second thing is this, if you are to win souls, it will be called upon you at times to forego your rights and your liberty for the gospel's sake, in the very medium of winning the loss for the Lord Jesus.

So one, because of your reward, and two, because of the necessity of soul winning, and soul winning with wisdom. Let's look at this tonight, because it's particularly informative to all of us who are believers. Those involved in so-called, I don't like this phrase, but at times it's hard to get around it, full-time service.

And those who are involved in all sorts of service, every individual Christian will get some kind of an application from this study tonight. The first thing that Paul talks about is the soul winner's motivation. The soul winner's motivation, verse 15 to 18, and really the summary of what he is saying in this is, your serving is not all that matters.

Now if I could get everybody in the iron hall to serve the Lord, I would be really chuffed. But once you get to that point of doing something for the Lord, Paul is saying that's not the be-all and end-all of everything, but what really matters is how you serve the Lord, specifically the motivation with which you serve him. There are three things I've outlined for you in your notes, with regards to the soul winner's motivation that Paul teaches us from his own personal example.

One, there is a high motive, verse 15. Two, a passionate motive, verse 16. And three, a rewarded motive, verse 17 and 18.

Let's look at verse 15 first of all. But I have used none of those things, neither have I written these things, that it should be done unto me, for it were better for me to die than that any man should make my glory void. And of course he's talking about what has already come.

He was talking about how he had a right to be paid for his gospel ministry, and we looked at the various evidences, and he made a watertight legal case on this regard, appealing to the law, appealing to custom, appealing even to our Lord Jesus Christ to show that he was worthy, the labourer of his heart. You're not to muzzle the ox as it trades out the corn. But Paul's pointing out to them again that he waived that right of wages and reward financially for his labour.

And the reason being, and let us not miss this, that he didn't want to give any of his enemies or the enemies of the gospel an occasion to charge him with using the gospel in a mercenary way for their own personal gain. Now we hadn't time to do this last week, but we want to take the time just to show you that this is right, this is a consistent pattern in the life of the Apostle throughout the epistles. Look at 1 Thessalonians for a moment.

1 chapter 2 verse 9, Paul says, for you remember brethren, our labour and travail for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. In order to be answerable only to God, he didn't want the people of God in Thessalonica to have any ties financially upon him. Turn to 2 Thessalonians 3 verse 8, you see the similar sentiment.

Neither did we eat any man's bread for naught, but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you. Do you see this? Paul would even go to the extent of refusing a meal in order that none could point the finger at him and say, look, he's only here in Thessalonica to be fed, to be watered at our expense, to be looked after by the Church of God. He's a sponger.

But because Paul wanted the gospel to stand out above everything else in his life, he made sure that there was never once an occasion of finger-pointing of blame toward him, that he was in it for the money. Now the interesting thing is that Paul received support from the Church of Thessalonica after he left them, but he never received any support when he was labouring among them. And I think without doubt that the Church of Thessalonica was among those Macedonian churches that helped support the Apostle, ironically, when he was in Corinth, labouring among the Corinthians.

Let me show you this, 2nd Corinthians chapter 11. It's narrowing it down to see that it was when he was among the people ministering in the gospel that he didn't take this money. But when he was in Corinth, the Thessalonians, being of Macedonia, helped him, chapter 11 verse 8 and 9, I robbed other churches, taking wages of them to do you service.

And when I was present with you and wanted, I was chargeable to no man, no man among you that is, for that which was lacking to me, the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied. And in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. Why? Why was he so particular and I imagine that some of the brethren in the churches today would have sat down with Paul and said, now Paul, you're going against your own teaching.

The labourer is worthy of his hire. Paul would say, no, you're missing my point. That is my right.

And if I wanted, I could have it. But what's more important for me is the gospel. I want only the gospel to be seen.

And that's why he says in verse 15, for it were better for me to die than that any man should make my glory void. I would rather die. I'm led to believe that this is not a single sentence as it appears to us in the English verse here in our authorized version.

And in the original, the phrase could be read like this, I would rather die than, and then it stops. I would rather die than, it's an incomplete exclamation. I would rather die than, and then it's interrupted by this statement.

No one will deprive me of this boast. Do you see it? I would rather die than, and then he pauses. No one will deprive me of this boast.

Now, we haven't got time to look at this, but you can go through the great New Testament and you can find it on occasions. Paul didn't complete his sentences here. It's a bit like me at times.

He didn't complete them. He got so worked up in an exclamation of emotions that he was overcome and he stopped dead in the middle of sentences. He couldn't finish this particular sentence because he was overwhelmed by how important the preaching of the gospel was above everything else, even above the very bread that he was eating and the water that he was drinking.

And it didn't matter that he suffered and had to work in the back streets of Corinth with his hands making tents. It didn't matter as long as the gospel was not hindered. This is tremendous stuff and we need to really note this.

He never, I will never let anyone deprive me of the boast that I preached the gospel voluntarily, not for what I could get out of it. Now, friends, this evening, Paul, when he's boasting, isn't sinning because we see later that his call to preach the gospel was nothing to do with him in one sense. It was of God entirely.

But what he's trying to point out to them is I'm not a prophet for hire like the prophet Balaam in the Old Testament that was in it for the money. I am in it for the gospel and the glory of the gospel. And this is what we need in our hearts today.

Although if a church like this church is able to keep a man like me, that's tremendous and commendable and I'm very thankful for it. But if there ever came a day when you couldn't support me or when I wasn't

here for whatever reason, I would have to preach the gospel no matter what was on the table or no matter what I could drink or where I could live. We'll see this because Paul says it's a necessity.

But let's look at one more passage to show you how this was ingrained within Paul. Acts 18, when he's talking to the Ephesian elders, this was the commitment that he declared to these Ephesian men of God. Verse 33, Acts 20, I've written down the wrong text.

I have showed you all things, verse 35, that so leeringly ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus how he said it is more blessed to give than to receive. It's more blessed. Verse 33, I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel.

Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me. Do you see it? It is more blessed. This is his thesis of ministry, if you like, his motto.

It's more blessed to give than to receive and if I'm called upon to give the gospel and get nothing back in return but suffering and grief from the people of God and the enemies of Christ, so be it. I'll tell you this is what we need today. And if we could sum it up, we could sum it up in this statement.

Paul's purpose and motive in ministry was men, not money. And what a refreshing statement that is in the light of all the television evangelism that goes on and goes over the satellite. Isn't it amazing? It's remarkable that the elect of God are deceived, sure the world can't even see through it all.

My friends, as one man said, if Paul was more concerned about money than he was, his stature would have shriveled and we would not have heard of him except for a passing mention. And I believe he's right. Paul stands out because he was different in this regard.

He had a high motive, not for money, not for his welfare, but for the gospel. Secondly, he had a passionate motive, which was a soul winning motivation. Verse 16, for though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of.

For of necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel. Now that seems quite complicated, but what he's really saying is the driving force of my ministry is a compelling conviction. In other words, I have been sent of God.

Now we know that he was an apostle and we looked at this last week, that there was a uniqueness in how an apostle was sent of God. But in one sense we can understand this generally, that all of us who go to preach the gospel are sent to preach the gospel on the great commission of the Lord Jesus in Matthew chapter 28. So we are all sent and it's not as if I'm just going of my own free will, Paul's saying, but there's a compelling conviction in me.

He actually uses this statement, for me it is a necessity. And it's not a necessity that's my doing, look at the wording, for necessity is laid upon me. I didn't ask for this.

He's not complaining, but what he's doing is retorting back to his Damascus Road experience, when the Lord laid his hand upon him, when he saved him, and Paul said, what wouldst thou have me to do? There the Lord Jesus ordained him. He was ordained in his mother's womb, but there the Lord put his hand upon him and called him to be an apostle to the Gentiles and do the work he's actually doing here. And for him it is a necessity to do this.

It's a necessity to go, and then we read on, but woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel. So it's a necessity to go and it's a woe if he didn't. That's why Paul says, though I preach the gospel I have nothing to glory on.

I'm running all around the Mediterranean world, but you know what he's saying, colloquial terms, I have no choice. I have no choice. This wasn't something that I sat down by the fire one day and thought, well I better make a new religion, or I better go around and preach this gospel of Jesus because I think it's right.

Necessity was laid upon him. He had a compelling conviction, a compulsion on him, so much so that he was cursing himself if he didn't fulfill it. Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.

Now don't misunderstand me. We know that he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision and there was a choice that he had to make. I'm not saying that he could have refused to obey God, but what Paul wants you to see is he was compelled and if he had not fulfilled his ministry that God was calling him to, there would be the woe of chastisement.

I believe that word woe means the severest of judgments promised on unfaithful ministers. James 3 verse 1, James says, seek not to be many masters for you bring yourself under greater condemnation. That really means teachers.

Don't seek to be a teacher unless you're prepared to go and preach the gospel, unless you're prepared for necessity to be laid upon you, unless you're prepared to be judged if you do not do it. For Paul preaching was not a profession. There is no such a thing as the preaching profession.

For Paul preaching was not a pastime that he did at nights and got a brown envelope for it. But preaching was a passion. It drove his whole being and existence.

He's saying you can't just choose to be a preacher the way people choose an everyday profession. For it's not really a matter of your choosing, it's a matter of God's choosing. I think we would do well perhaps if there were fewer men in pulpits who were not called of God.

Men trying to fill the place and I do not stand on a high horse when I say this and I have a lot to learn and a lot of ground to cover in my life yet. But surely we have to acknowledge in this day of apostasy that men ought to stand up and open their mouths when they're called of God and when they've got a message from God. The old preacher said to a young man contemplating service, don't enter the ministry if you can help it some.

That's what it's like. Don't enter the ministry if you can help it. And I can testify in my own life that I was compelled, there was nothing else open for me.

Men told me why not do a degree in teaching. If you excuse the personal illustration for one moment but I know that this is true. Do a degree in teaching and if it doesn't work out you can fall back upon it.

That's not a call from God. Paul had this compelling issue of necessity upon him. One writer put it, if the modern ministry is to be adequate to the tremendous days ahead it needs to be the ministry of a master passion.

You know what's wrong a lot of the time? There's too little passion in our pulpits and you know that communicates. That man doesn't believe what he's saying. I hope I can remember this illustration right but

it was a very famous actor who was asked the question, what is the difference between you and a preacher? And he answered something like this, a preacher is a man who preaches truth as if it was fiction.

I am a man who acts fiction as if it was true. God forgive us as if this is the case with us. Sometimes when you get, and I know I get excited and I know I go overboard at times but I can't help it because necessity is led upon me woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.

I can't talk about the blood of Christ and the cross of Christ and the nails of Golgotha like an icicle. And this is what Paul was saying, the great preacher said Spurgeon said the man who says God has chosen me can afford to let others think and speak after their own nature. It is in his business to take his stand separately and deliberately and distinctly to do what he believes to be right and let the many or the few do as they will.

But he's to preach the gospel even if he doesn't get fed for it. It's a passionate motive. Speaking about modern ministers, a Christian editor said a man who is forced to preach in order to save himself always makes a fervent preacher.

To save yourself from judgment, woe is unto me. The philosophy of the watchman that when he cries and when he puts the trumpet to his mouth and blows the warning in the city and the people don't heed it the blood's off his hands but if he falls asleep and doesn't put the trumpet to his mouth the blood's on his hands and Paul could say and act I am not guilty of the blood of any of you because he preached unto them the gospel. He was driven to preach and he preached with passion.

God give us more passionate preachers and passionate evangelists and passionate Christians as they seek to win the lost. Thirdly a rewarded motive verse 17 and 18 for if I do this thing willingly I have a reward. This is remarkable.

If I do this willingly I have a reward but if against my will a dispensation or a stewardship of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then verily that when I preach the gospel I may make the gospel of Christ without charge that I abuse not my power in the gospel. Paul is saying I can't get reward for something I'm compelled to do.

See what he's saying here. Necessity is laid upon me. I've been called to be a preacher of the gospel and I can't get rewarded for something that I have to do.

I don't think Paul's saying he'll not be rewarded in any way for his preaching of the gospel but the main point that he's making here is it's not the actual preaching of the gospel that I will be rewarded for. That's a dispensation it's a stewardship and if I don't do it I'll not be rewarded I'll be punished. Not in a sense of wrath or hell or judgment but in less reward when I get to the judgment seat.

So I'm not being rewarded for doing something. This is my responsibility but what I will be rewarded for is preaching the gospel without charge. Preaching it when there was nothing in it for me but suffering and hell and anguish and torment and tears and fastings day after day.

There's a night in the deep when you're getting nothing out of it only glorifying Christ. Paul says when it's not motivation you'll be rewarded. It will be a rewarded motive to do it not for your own gain but for the gain of the glory of Christ.

Paul's reward was not just preaching the message but for taking no payment and continuing to preach it anyway. Oh we can learn so many lessons from the soul winners motivation a high motive a passionate motive a rewarded motive but let's move on because we need to get to this. The soul winners adaptation not just as motivation but as adaptation verse 19 to 23 and really this is Paul is saying the primary reason for not taking money.

What is it? To win the more. I love that. To win the more.

Sometimes people take pity on me because we see so many people getting saved in these days and it's a real burden upon my heart and I hope it's on yours too and some people mean well and I know where they're coming from because I have to remind myself of this too that you have to be faithful. We learned this in this book. You have to be faithful and you have to sow the seed and you to a certain extent have to leave the results with God but please do not miss the point that it wasn't just this issue with Paul you just preach and leave the rest with God.

No. He had a greater hand on it than that. He desired that he might win more.

Win the more. I don't think it's wrong to want many people saved. Do you? We're not in the numbers games.

Bums on pews if you excuse the expression. That's not what we're into or how many's on their own but I tell you this I would rather go to the judgment seat with more souls under my preaching saved than less. Would you not rather lead more than less to the Lord Jesus Christ? And Paul this was his desire.

This was the reason why he adapted his whole lifestyle to see more won for him. So he speaks of the need for this worker's willingness to adapt himself. Adapt himself to what? Adapt himself to the conditions of the men.

The needs of the men and the women who need the gospel in order to come into this flexibility towards them that he might save some. This isn't universalism now. All are not going to be saved and there's people preach this because Jesus died and shed his blood that the world will be saved.

That's not what that means the world will be saved. And although he's the savior of the world that is not talking about the whole world every single sinner that's in it is saved without repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It can be seen clearly here because Paul wanted to save some because only some would be saved.

How did he do it? Well he definitely believed that he that wins souls is wise and he shows this. He illustrates it in three types of people who he witnessed to and worked among and there's two of them. The first is the Jew and the second is the Gentile.

Look at this verse. Verse 20. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew.

Now then in verse 21 to them that were without the law that's a Gentile as without the law. Now you I would say couldn't get two more diverse groups of people in the ancient world than these two groups Jews and Gentiles. They detested one another.

Yet Paul was able as a soul winner to adapt himself to both of them and defend neither of them but reach and win and save them. Both of them. They're different in all sorts of ways.

In clothing, in their holy days, holidays, in their eating habits, in their family practices, in their religious rites and ceremonies and all the rest and sacrifices and it required it must have required tremendous flexibility but Paul was able to drive himself to it. And incidentally remember how we applied the area of eating meat that's sacrificed to idols a couple of weeks ago and we applied it to gray areas that are in believers lives even today. Things that the bible doesn't speak about.

There's no revelation on whether we don't know whether to do them or not to do them. Whether it's sinful or not sinful. Well we can apply this here that if there's anything that is doubtful as someone said to me after that evening if in doubt cast it out but certainly in this regard if in doubt that it will affect the gospel in detrimental ways cast it out.

It's Paul's point. Paul even when he had a right to be practicing as a Jew for when that in order that he might witness to the Gentiles when he had a right to be let go of all the ritualistic ceremony of Judaism he had forgone that right in order to win those among the Jews. Isn't it tremendous to see this? He didn't want to offend the one who he was witnessing to and the reason why was that his love for the lost regulated his liberty in Christ.

Do you see that? I have made myself a slave. That's what verse 19 really means. For though I be free from all men I'm liberated like the rest of you.

Yet I have made myself a servant. The word is slave unto all that I might gain the more. Now there's only two words in the Greek use for that statement.

I have made myself a slave and it's the Greek word *agelosa*. I enslave and emoton myself. I enslave myself and the word enslavement is an extremely strong Greek word.

It's actually used to describe in act 7 the 400 years of enslavement of the children of Israel in Egypt. See that? And Paul says in that way I enslave myself. Chapter 7 and verse 15 of this book he talks about the bond of marriage but if the unbelieving depart let him depart.

A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases. It's talking about they're not required in such cases to try and keep a marriage relationship not a marriage but a marriage relationship going in such circumstances that to let them go they're not bound. It's the same word used but I do bind myself to these lost people to the way they are.

It's used in Titus 2 3 of addiction to wine. A binding like that an addiction to wine to be enslaved and it's also used in Romans 6 18 of the relationship that Christians have now through Christ of righteousness of righteousness to God and it's so binding that we'll never be lost once we're saved we're always saved and it's the same word to be enslaved to that relationship where he talks I have made myself a slave that I might win some. It's not remarkable.

You can talk all you like about just sow the seed and let God do the rest but that's not what Paul did. Paul did more than sow the seed. In Mark 10 verse 44 we find the reason from the Savior's lips whosoever wishes to be first shall be the slave of all.

You might want to call it in the modern term pre-evangelism in other words things that we can do that are apart nothing to do with the gospel but help unbelievers to listen to the gospel a sort of methodology in how we present it that we adapt ourselves to their needs and even their way of life up to a point of sinning. Let's show you how this bears out in the moments that remain. Let's look at the first example he makes.

Verse 19 and 20 the Jew for though I be free from all men I make myself a slave unto them unto all that I might gain the more and unto the Jews I became as a Jew that I might gain the Jews to them that are under the law as under the law that I might gain them which are under the law. Now this is real adaptability. He's flexible to the Jewish conscience within and this is important to know within scriptural limits Paul would be as Jewish as was necessary to win the Jew.

Did you see that? Was he not a Jew? Of course he was a Jew but when he got saved he did he let go of all the ritualistic ceremonial rites and so on and all the rest of it and as far as is scripturally possible in the gospel within the limits of the bible he worked as a Jew among the Jews and if they had a feast day a fast day if they had a religious ceremony or a rite if they insisted on him being cleansed whatever it was even to the extent of traditions of Judaism he followed them in order that it would create an open door for the gospel witnessing Jews. He gladly accommodated these things and was flexible to them to win them. What had once been this is the point I want you to see legal restraints in his life when he was a Jew now had become love restraints.

See the difference? He didn't have to do it he would have been right not doing it but because he loved them so much and there was nothing wrong in doing it in fact it opened the gospel to them and gave an opportunity to win them he did it he did it because if he had brazenly blasted the Jews in the way of the Jews both their custom and conscience he would lose all hope of winning them wouldn't he? Some wisdom here about soul winning soul winning you're trying to win people win people you see it in the gentiles to the gentile outside the law he did the same to them verse 21 that are without law as without law being not without law to God he doesn't want you to make a mistake of thinking that he's talking about sinning here he's not talking about sin he's under the law to Christ incidentally that means the moral law he's under the law to Christ he has to obey the Decalogue and so on apart from the Sabbath which isn't reciprocated in the New Testament that I might gain them that are without law what does that mean?

But he doesn't want to be misunderstood saying that you go and you sin with the sinners to get them saved he's not violating God's law but he becomes conventionally correct to those around him in their ways and in their ideas perhaps even in their practices that are neutral and he did not expect these gentiles to be regulated by Jewish customs and ceremonies and rules he sought to understand their background where they were coming from even respect their opinions to an extent and be sympathetic with their convictions and as Warren Weirby put it well it took tact to have come tact that's his point to the Jew he became a Jew to the gentile he became a gentile because these things aren't important anymore to the weak he says verse 22 23 he became weak to those who are weak without

understanding and I think he's talking about those within the church verse 22 to the weak became I as weak that I might gain the weak I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some it doesn't mean when in Rome do as the Romans and so many people even Christians today have taken this verse and made it so flexible that believers are actually sinning trying to win those that are lost which is absolutely ridiculous but what he's saying is Paul where things were without moral significance was flexible he was rigid when there was a moral conscience about a thing when it would have violated Christian morality and truth but when a thing was cultural Paul was flexible he let his love overrule his liberty in order that he might win some as one scholar put it it was not

looseness of life that Paul advocates it was rather liberty of action with a lofty object the object was that he would by all means save some now don't misunderstand me please because there's a lot of dilution of the gospel going on today and what we need if anything as we've said woe is unto me if I preach not the

gospel we're not talking about making the gospel acceptable to those around us or changing it or diluting it to satisfy them because Paul said already that he was an ambassador not a politician you had to give what God to give to him but what he's talking about here is not the message but the method and in his method he was able to come to send in any way it took to see people brought to Jesus Christ he never set the truth of the gospel aside but he was willing to set aside his

own personal liberty in the gospel that he would win so I think John MacArthur puts it very well and he says this if a person is offended by God's Word that is his problem if he is offended by biblical doctrine biblical standards or church discipline that is his problem that person is offended by God but if he is offended by our unnecessary behavior or practices no matter how good and acceptable those may be in themselves his problem becomes our problem and it is not a problem of law but a problem of love that's it in a nutshell because for Paul nothing meant anything apart from the gospel what a statement I do all things verse 23 for the gospel sake I am willing to set aside everything but the gospel for the gospel in order that the Gospels influence cannot be hindered in my life how

refreshing this is how challenging it is I've been referring lately in my preaching to Hudson Taylor because I've been reading on and off his biography you may not know this but Hudson Taylor went to China at the same time when Britain had declared war upon China it was like going to the enemy and if that wasn't stigma enough Taylor also decided when he was out in China for a while that he would take upon himself the dress and the look of the Chinese and this was something unique and monumental it had only been done a few times before by gospel missionaries but he he did it if you like he became a China man to China man that he may win China man what did he do remember now this is the 1800s he shaved off all his hair now some of you don't need to do it but he shaved off all his hair apart

from one ponytail that went down his back he grew it because that was Chinese custom to have this ponytail from your head I can't remember the technical name for it but he did this and then he dyed that ponytail black because the Chinese all have as far as I know black hair he nearly blinded himself with ammonia and he was a doctor as he tried to dye his hair he scars over his face trying to do it then he took upon himself Chinese traditional dress the long silk gown and robe and he bound himself he loosed himself of the liberty to dress whatever way he liked and coming from the West to dress in a three-piece suit or whatever it was he for he had foregone this why because in the Chinese mind they believed that a white man's dignity rested in strict adherence to British dress and British

Western habits and when Taylor decided to dawn this Chinese look and look no intents and purposes just like a Chinese man it was deeply shocking first of all to the Chinese and then to the British some of the missionaries we're not in the 1800s but what would you do if on our missionary Sunday we had a missionary from China and he got up into the pulpit in the dress with a long ponytail down his back come on now what would you do hundreds of years ago this man of God and hope you would agree with me that he was a man of God he had gone native and as far as the British were concerned it's in record that he had lost his credibility as a missionary for doing it he even lost support and they even labeled him a traitor because he was going to those whom they were at war with and he was denying

his Britishness in order to win the lost but he set aside his liberty and he became a slave to these Chinese customs why to win them because his love for them was greater than his desire for liberty in Christ why was that because he had a passion for the lost come on friends what are we doing that we by all means not sinful means now you don't misunderstand but by all means save some do you know we need to do you even know that we need to what are we doing can we even bring somebody to the gospel meeting it

seems not Hudson Taylor was preaching on one occasion and a man called knee young ha he was a Ningbo cotton dealer was converted he had also been a leader in a reformed Buddhist sect and this Buddhist sect believed that you shouldn't worship idols they were reformed in that sense they

opposed ideology and they were really trying to search for the truth and at the end of Hudson Taylor's sermon knee stood up honey he addressed the audience and he said this I have long searched for the truth as my father did before me and I have traveled far but I haven't find it I find no rest in Confucianism Buddhism Taoism but I do find rest in what I heard tonight from now on I believe in Jesus knee took Hudson Taylor to a meeting of the sect he had formerly led and was allowed for a moment to explain the reason for his change of faith and Taylor was so impressed with the clarity and power with which he spoke that he addressed him afterwards and spoke to him personally another member of the group was converted that same evening and both knee and the new convert were baptized that

moment then knee asked Hudson Taylor how long has the gospel been known in England embarrassed he said for several hundred years what exclaimed knee and you have only now come to preach it to us my father sought after the truth for more than 20 years and died without finding it why didn't you come sooner the author says for Hudson Taylor it was a difficult question to answer may we be as Paul says in verse 23 partakers together and winning the lost by all means and saving some friends in the assembly the elders deacons members is there not more we can be doing to win the lost and I'm not talking about dressing up like a clown and swallowing a goldfish I'm talking about in the realms of liberty that we have in Christ can we not be doing more may we do more may the Lord give us a passion

after the lost father help us to save with fear to have compassion making a difference pulling them out of the fire hitting even the garment spotted by the flesh give us a heart that the Savior had as he stood over Jerusalem and wept for their souls give us the compulsion that he had to set his face as a flint to go to Jerusalem to say I have a baptism to be baptized with and how I'm straightened until it be accomplished let us be like Paul who said oh that I would be accursed from my breath for my brethren accursed from Christ that I might win them my heart's desire he said and prayer for Israel is that they might be saved oh Lord would you save our friends our loved ones this neighborhood those around that have no hope and Lord let us by all means biblical and necessary seek to win them

for the time of short and there's no time to be playing around with the eternal souls of men and women so hear us Lord Amen.

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