

Solitary Refinement

1 Corinthians 9:19-25

Week 5: Paul on being Free

Opening Question: What is your favorite freedom?

Ask them: When most Americans talk about freedom, what do you think they are referring to?

Tell them: Let's see what freedom Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians 9:19-25:

*"For since I am **free from all** I can make myself **a slave to all**, in order to gain even more people. To the Jews I became like a Jew to gain the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) to gain those under the law. To those free from the law I became like one free from the law (though I am not free from God's law but under the law of Christ) to gain those free from the law. To the weak I became weak in order to gain the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that by all means I may save some. I do all these things because of the gospel, so that I can be a participant in it. Do you not know that all the runners in a stadium compete, but only one receives the prize? So run to win. Each competitor must exercise self-control in everything. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one." (1 Corinthians 9:19-25, NET)*

Ask them: In verse 19, what is the apostle saying he is free from? Why does he go from that freedom to being "a slave to all?"

In verses 20-21, what do you think he means when he says for the Jews, he became like one under the law and for the Gentiles he became like one free from the law? Looking at verse 22, how do you think the gospel benefits from a follower of Christ becoming all things to all people?

Tell them: Pastor Michael said, "The modern church is an immature body of believers." In what way would you say that is true, especially with regard to our use of our freedoms?

Tell them: We've all heard the expression, "Freedom isn't free." What was the cost of your freedom as a disciple of Christ?

Pastor Michael said: "In order to win people to faith, Paul gave up his freedoms." What freedom do you think a believer might have that would hinder another believer or non-believer in the cause of the gospel?

Read aloud Galatians 5:13-16 - *"For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity to indulge your flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law can be summed up in a single commandment, namely, "You must love your neighbor as yourself." However, if you continually bite and devour one another,*

beware that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, live by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:13–16, NET)

Ask them: *In verse 13, what are we not to use our freedom for? Can you think of some examples of believers using their freedom in Christ to indulge their flesh?*

Tell them: Pastor Michael said, “Indifference is the opposite of love. When we are indifferent to the sacrifice of those who gave all, we are not only dishonoring them but undervaluing our freedom.” *In what way do you think this is true?*

Pastor Michael said that, “Following Christ is freedom.” *Do you remember what it is freedom from? (serving the flesh)*

Pastor Michael said: “Jesus gave up his freedom to buy our freedom.” *What is the purpose of our freedom?* **Tell them:** It is summed up in the most important commandment, Love.

Let’s Read John 15:12-17: *“My commandment is this—to love one another just as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this—that one lays down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because the slave does not understand what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because I have revealed to you everything I heard from my Father. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that remains, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you. This I command you—to love one another.” (John 15:12–17, NET)*

Ask them: *What does Jesus say makes us His friends? (v 14) What did Jesus choose and appoint us as believers to do? (v16)*

Tell them: By way of application, Pastor Michael gave us 5 things we can learn from Jesus on love and freedom. They are:

1. **Love like Jesus.** We could talk about this for years, but I encourage you to do a personal study on the biblical concept of love in your devotional time.
2. **Sacrificial love for a friend is the greatest kind of love.** *What is sacrificial love? Can we love sacrificially without literally dying?*
3. **We are his friends when we obey,** and He will lay down his life for those who obey. (v 13-14)
4. **We are not slaves to sin,** for He frees our minds. We are not slaves to darkness; we are walking in the light. *What have we been set free from?*
5. **He chooses us to go and bear fruit.** *How is bearing fruit loving?*

Tell them: Pastor Michael taught us that, “In order to win the race, Paul gave up his freedom. Following Christ is freedom from the flesh to serve others in love.” Just think for a minute now about how sacrificial your love for your neighbor, your family, and your friends is or could be. Make this your topic of prayer this week. “Help me to be more sacrificial in love.”

Tweetable Quotes and things to ponder as we go:

1. “When we embrace our freedom for ourselves, we are going to do selfish things.”
2. “The greater the level of sacrifice, the greater the level of love.”
3. “The statement, “Last time I checked this was a free country,” is not becoming ‘all things to all people.’”
4. “To be saved and then use your freedom for yourself is unbiblical.”
5. “Freedom, when it’s for our flesh, turns sour and dark and becomes a prison of our own selfishness. The freedom of Christ allows us to surrender our freedom for the sake of the gospel.”