

# WHEN RIGHTS BECOME WRONG

## 1 CORINTHIANS 9:1-23

Look on a map, east of Clayton, GA - and you'll see a slender, innocent-looking line separating the two great states of Georgia and South Carolina. *Yet don't be deceived...* If you went in person to the location on the map, to see that line, you'd find a roaring, raging river!

**The Chattooga River** has some of the wildest white water in the United States. The names given to some of the river's Class V rapids speak for themselves; [Sock'em Dog](#), [Seven Foot Falls](#), [Corkscrew](#), [Bull Sluice](#).

But not so with one particular spot... The most dangerous rapid on the river, a Class VI hydraulic, has the most innocent-sounding name, "[Woodall Shoals](#)."

From the shore, it doesn't look like much, but under the surface there's a smooth steep slide, that creates a near perfect, inescapable whirlpool. It's called "*a keeper-hydraulic*." Folks have fallen into the rapid and never surfaced. In the past, locals have thrown dynamite into the water there in hopes of dislodging a trapped body.

Today, for a \$150 you can hire a professional river rat to escort you down the Chattooga River, and help you navigate all the rapids, *except Woodall Shoals*.

Guides are expert rafters, and they know the river. On their own they'd have no problem navigating Woodall Shoals, but no one takes a raft down this rapid - *no one*.

A conscientious guide would never float Woodall Shoals *on his own* - let alone with a raft full of thrill-seekers. *And certainly, not in the presence of spectators.*

Here's the fear... If a novice sees a raft or kayak sail through Woodall Shoals they might think there's nothing to it - "*hey, if he can do it, so can I!*" - and he might try it.

That's a risk no one with any experience and knowledge of the river wants to take. There's an unwritten rule - *nobody takes on Woodall Shoals, just in case somebody sees them and thinks anybody can do it.*

For their own sake, the rafting companies and responsible river guides have agreed to make Woodall Shoals off-limits. If someone did die in the hydraulic, it would be bad for business. The industry would suffer.

Rafting professionals see the bigger picture than just their own egotistical adventures and afternoon fun.

It's not a question of whether the guides "*can*" raft Woodall Shoals. Of course they *can*. There's no law against it, and they have the ability. But is it worth the risk, given the danger it poses to present and future clientele, and ultimately the business they hope to grow?

For a similar reason Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 9.

We learned in Chapter 8 that Paul was free to eat meat sacrificed to idols - *the idol is nothing and meat is just meat* - yet many of the Corinthians associated the city's meat-eating with idolatry, and they viewed Paul's freedom to eat as a concession to their former lifestyle...

Like an experienced river guide Paul had the skill to navigate the turbulence of the pagan culture around him without getting sucked in and drowning in their idolatry.

But if a new Christian saw Paul eating pagan pulled-pork, or a Temple tenderloin, they might be tempted to slide their raft into the Temple culture, and suddenly find themselves in a keeper hydraulic that had them trapped.

Why run the risk at a time when Christianity was trying to attract new clientele? As far as Paul was concerned nothing was worth misleading a spectator, or damaging a brother, and bringing distain on the cause of Christ.

As an apostle - as a Christian guide - Paul had a higher calling on his life. He saw the bigger picture...

*So what if an activity was legal? So what if he was free to indulge? So what if he happened to enjoy it?*

Were his liberties, and his own personal pleasures worth the risk of harming the growth of the new Church? In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul's answer is an emphatic "no."

In Chapter 9 Paul runs through a list of the rights and liberties he possessed as an apostle and church leader.

Then he gets to the much more important point of why those rights and liberties were secondary and superficial compared to the integrity of the Gospel preacher, and the health of the Church, and the salvation of souls...

He begins in verse 1, "Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"

Paul was not only a follower of Jesus, and a pastor of His Church - he was an *“apostle”* - a *pastor of pastors*. He’d been sent out by Jesus Himself to cross cultures and to bring the Gospel to new people groups.

Yet Paul’s humility - *his own acknowledgment of his weaknesses and dependence on Jesus* - often caused folks to question his apostleship. He didn’t sashay into a room and act like an alpha dog. He was unassuming.

This is why Paul often had to remind the churches of his authority and qualifications. Here he does so, *“Am I not an apostle?”* Then he lists two apostolic markers...

First, he was *“free”* from the Law. Paul was *“apostle to the Gentiles”* - an ambassador of God’s grace.

And second, he’d seen the risen Christ with his own eyes. On the Road to Damascus Jesus appeared to Paul. Literally, knocked him off his high horse... The first apostles were distinguished by the fact that they were eye-witnesses of the resurrected Lord Jesus!

And of all people the Corinthians should’ve been confident of Paul’s apostleship... He continues in verse 1, *“Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.”* Paul points to the church in Corinth as evidence of his leadership.

*A thriving church had been born in a wicked city.*

It was obvious God had blessed Paul’s efforts in Corinth. The new and growing believers in this church were a testimony to the legitimacy of his ministry.

Yes, Paul was without a doubt an apostle in the early church - *which put him in the same circle as the other apostles, and entitled him to the same privileges...*

He says in verse 3, “My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we have no right to eat and drink?” In the ancient world, travelers had a tough time finding food and lodging. It was understood among the churches that every effort should be made to show hospitality to a true apostle - *provide him eat and drink.*

The Didache, a manual of church practices that circulated in the early church, devotes a whole section to identifying true apostles for this very purpose.

In fact, even today, churches practice this hospitality.

Whenever we invite a guest speaker to share with our church, or at a conference, we provide for his needs while he's with us. It'd be to our shame if a person came to minister at CC, and we made him or her finance their own meals, or hotel, or transportation.

Paul's point here is that as an apostle in the church ample food and lodging was his right and privilege... *As was the prerogative of traveling with a wife...*

He writes in verse 5, “Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas (which was a name for Peter - the word “Cephas” means “rock ”)?”

An apostle traveled extensively. He logged a lot of miles. And he was blessed with frequent flyer benefits.

His medallion status afforded him food and lodging, *and the right to take along his wife*. He got a buddy pass!... Apparently, Peter would take along the Mrs...

Which obviously, creates a big problem for Roman Catholics. The Roman church claims Peter as their first pope. If so, that means you've got *a married pope!*

Which reminds me of the newspaper tycoon who had three sons. He wanted to select a successor, but wasn't sure which son would make the best newspaper man. He proposed a test of their potential...

He asked each boy to compose the most shocking, sensational three word headline he could imagine...

The first son submitted the lead-in, "**Obama turns Republican.**" That was sensational for sure!... But the second son bested him, "**Palestinians become Jewish.**" Wow, what a headline!... But it was the third son who won the prize. His headline had just two words, "**Pope Elopes.**" Well, that's as over the top as you can get!

Here, Paul's point is that as an apostle he had rights that he had willingly forfeited. He didn't come into the city asking to be taken to dinner, and put up in a hotel.

Nor did he traveled with his wife. Paul had no wife.

As we read earlier in Chapter 7, Paul had chosen to stay *single* so he could be *singly devoted* to the Lord.

He continues in verse 6, "**Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?**"

From its earliest days the Church supported its leaders financially. Thus, they could devote themselves to the full-time study of God's Word and guidance of God's flock. Paul too, was entitled to such support, but during his time in Corinth he waived the privilege.

Acts 18:3 tells us that in Corinth, Paul lodged with a married couple named, *Aquila and Priscilla*. They were tent-makers. Paul also knew the trade, and helped them sew tents and sails. By doing so he was able to make ends meet, and keep from burdening the church.

But again this was out of the ordinary. This was not standard apostolic protocol. And Paul explains why. He writes, **“Who ever goes to war at his own expense?”**

A soldier doesn't pay the bill for his own gun and ammo. He doesn't purchase his provisions out of his own pocket. He's supported by the people he defends.

How can a soldier focus on the fight *at hand*, if he's worried about his family back *at home* - *whether they're starving or getting evicted*. **Distracted troops become defeated troops**. A soldier will be better on *the battlefield*, if he isn't so worried about *the home front*.

And quite frankly, the same is true for a pastor.

How can a pastor give himself fully to ministry and to the spiritual needs of God's people, if he's concerned about how he's going to pay the bills for his own family? Even in the spiritual battle - even within God's army - **“who ever goes to war at his own expense?”**

And “Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?” Again, this is the same principle...

You’ll never find a thirsty vinedresser, or a dairy farmer with brittle bones - because they drink the wine and milk. They’re supported from what they harvest.

And the same should be true of a pastor. He should receive a salary from the offerings of the people.

I’m not saying *an exorbitant salary*, but I am saying *an ample salary*. The idea is to keep him from worrying about his family’s needs, and focused on God’s work.

Sadly, some churches that pay the minimum.

They pray, “Lord, you keep him humble, and we’ll keep him poor.” *A church with that attitude may get what they pay for - a poor pastor!...* Paul is teaching us that a church needs to pony up and pay its pastor.

He hammers home this point in verse 8, “Do I say these things as a *mere man*? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses...”

And here Paul quotes Deuteronomy 25:4 - a verse you wouldn’t at first glance associate with paying the pastor. In verse 9 he quotes Deuteronomy (25:4), “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.”

In other words, any good farmer allows his ox to munch as he works. An ox would walk across the threshing floor crushing the grain under his hoofs. As he worked the farmer let him bend down and eat a mouthful. Only a cruel farmer would muzzle the ox.



Besides, a weak ox is worthless!... Paul is saying, just as feeding the ox is an expense of the harvest, supporting the pastor is a cost of the spiritual harvest.

Paul finishes his reflections on Deuteronomy 25, “Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.” In other words, a *fair day’s wage* for a *good day’s work* isn’t a carnal motivation - it’s a good and godly incentive. There’s a hope behind hard work.

Who among us doesn’t want to be compensated for their employment? And the same is true of a pastor.

Years ago we had a church member suggest that my salary should be capped. That I should be able to make “X” amount, and that’s it... I resisted the notion.

Not because I wanted *a lot of money*, but I knew I needed *a lot of hope*. “*He who plows should plow in hope...*” Even for a pastor at times work feels like work. *Why kill a man’s financial incentive to do a good job?*

I told the elders, “You can raise my salary, or you can lower my salary, but don’t ever put me in a situation where there’s nothing I can do about my salary.”

That produces a hopeless pastor. Paul understood the nature of pastors who are men, and what motivates them... He says, “*he who plows should plow in hope.*”

And then he says in verse 11, “If we have sown spiritual things for you, *is it* a great thing if we reap your material

things?” Paul capsulizes the important spiritual principle he’s been teaching in the last few verses...

If a pastor, and the church he serves, helps you spiritually; then you ought to support them materially.

If a church adds to your life *spiritually*, builds you up *biblically*, helps you focus *eternally* - then its a minor trade-off for you to help that church pay a few bills.

And if this principle applies to all pastors, it certainly applied to Paul in his dealings with the Corinthians.

He tells them in verse 12, “If others are partakers of *this right over you, are we not even more?*” Like some believers today, the Corinthians were quick to support the preachers on TV who begged for their money - and they would opened up their wallet for everybody with a slick appeal and a sad sob story...

*But how about the local guy they knew and trusted?*

Here, Paul says if they gave to virtual strangers, how much more should they give to him - who’d planted the church, and who’d been with them on site, working alongside them for 18 months, and was even then helping them sort out and work through their problems!

Paul deserved their support more than anyone!

Yet he writes, “*Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.*” Here’s his main point, it wasn’t that he wanted to get paid, he was willing to forfeit his right to get paid for the Gospel’s sake...

Even though Paul had rights and privileges of an apostle, he didn't use them...

Yes, he founded the church. Yes, he labored in this church. He was due a salary - probably even vacation and a 401K - but Paul laid aside what he was entitled to, so no one would accuse him of selfish motives.

More important to Paul than adequate compensation was the reputation of Christianity and the furtherance of the Gospel. Paul didn't want to give anyone any reason to question his love for Jesus and the Church.

Paul didn't want anyone to say, "Ah, that Paul he's only in it for the money..." Or "Hey, don't go to the Church in Corinth all they care about is your money."

Again, Paul was not opposed to taking a paycheck for his work in the ministry. As he's explained, it was his right. And he accepted financial support from other churches... *Just not while he was in Corinth...*

Perhaps some crooked clergy had previously worked the city - bilked the saints. Many of the Corinthians had been burned financially, and were now suspicious.

So Paul adapted his approach to the needs of the people he wanted to reach. In Corinth he needed to prove to folks he cared for *their soul*, not *their money*. And if that took Paul making tents for a time, *so be it!*

I want you to know a similar concern guides our church in our approach to money. Understand, your church has financial needs. *Don't think Walton EMC donates the electricity, or Pastor Matt plays for free...*

Of course, knowing Matt, he'd probably play for free if we told him it was for *the Gospel sake!* But *we need* to pay him. And Jenny appreciates it when we do.

But here's the decision we've made as a church. We've deliberately chosen to low-key our appeals for funds, and trust the Lord to provide us what we need.

Are there are times when I'm tempted to be more bold toward giving? Yes! And I think we would be well within *our right* to stress the biblical emphasis to give.

Yet for 35 years we've waived that right, because we realize how often the subject of money gets abused in churches. *Who hasn't been to a church at some point and felt manipulated?* That's why for the sake of the Gospel, at CC we temper our appeals. Some Sundays we don't even mention the offering box. We prefer it, when people come up and ask us how they can give.

We just want to prove to people that this church and its leaders exist for them - not the other way around.

And we believe if we're faithful to the ministry God gives us; then God will take care of our financial needs. *We might even be able to pay Matt next Monday...*

Again, verse 13 makes clear that a pastor is justified in drawing a salary, **“Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?”** Paul is referring to the Temple...

When the OT worshipper brought his animal to the Temple, the priest who administered the sacrifice got a choice cut of the meat. The priests were paid in beef.

The OT priest was supported by the worshippers...

“Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.” And what was true of the OT priests should be true of NT pastors. Pay them out of the offerings given to God.

“But (Paul writes in verse 15) I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it *would be* better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void.” Paul shudders at the thought of anyone labeling him a money-hungry preacher! Notice his intensity, he would rather *die* than bring shame on the ministry, or give someone a reason to question his motive.

It reminds me of Billy Graham. Early in his ministry, after a Crusade in Atlanta, the newspaper ran a photo of Graham leaving the stadium with bags of money in his hands. Billy was innocent of any wrong-doing. He just got stuck making the deposit, *but it looked bad*.

And from that day forward Billy Graham separated himself from the money. He put himself on a modest salary, and set up strict guidelines for how others would handle the ministry's finances. He wanted everything to be above board. He eliminated any appearance of impropriety. *This was Paul's attitude!*

And this is the attitude I seek to maintain... *In the lifestyle I live - in the type of clothes I wear - in the car I drive - in the*

*movies I watch...* there are activities and privileges that I could justify as my right and liberty to engage in, but I don't - *I refrain for the Gospel's sake...*

There was a time when one of my responsibilities was to mow the church lawn. I'd be pushing the mower around on a blistering hot July afternoon - the temperature hovering in the high 90s, sweat pouring off my body. And my temptation was to pull off my shirt.

I was free in Christ to peel off my shirt, but I didn't...

It hit me, "*what if a sister in Christ drives by, she sees my bulging muscles, and starts thinking the wrong thoughts...*" For the sake of the Church I curtailed my liberty to keep the ladies from stumbling.

I mentioned it last week, as a Christian I have the freedom to drink a glass of wine with my meal - *but as a leader in the Church why would I? Why go there?*

*"Yea, but European Christians drink wine!"*

Well, I don't live in Europe. I live in America, and it's estimated that 16% of our population has a chemical propensity toward alcoholism. That's 1 in 6 people! Every sixth person I meet has a problem with alcohol.

*How could a pastor drinking NOT be a stumbling block to someone?* And I'm sure 99% of the population has a friend, or family member who's been harmed by alcohol. Why would a pastor take what is a *liability* too so many, and insist on it as a *liberty* for himself?

Again Paul tells us, *“it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void.”* And Paul’s boast was his sincerity toward the Gospel.

The apostle wasn’t out to serve himself. His ministry had no ulterior motives. His sole ambition was for God to be glorified, and for lost people to be saved.

Paul’s goal was to avoid anything that could hinder someone from hearing and receiving the Good News!

He writes in verse 16, *“For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!”*

Being a pastor and preaching the Gospel, wasn’t just a career move for Paul. He didn’t get the idea of being an apostle by talking to a career counselor, or by browsing a brochure on apostleship. *God called him.*

God put a burden on Paul’s heart he couldn’t shake. He writes, *“woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!”*

It wasn’t *Paul’s choice*, it was *God’s calling*.

When a young man approaches me about becoming a pastor, I always tell him, *“If you can do anything else other than pastor - and be happy doing it - then don't pastor.”* Being a pastor, and preaching the Gospel, isn’t just a job. Paul said it was laid on him of necessity.

It was a passion - a calling - a mission from God.

Paul was a talented man, and I’m sure he would’ve been successful at whatever he did in life - *but satisfied?* I doubt it! God called him to preach the Gospel, and he’d be happy doing nothing less.

Paul says in verse 17, “For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.” If Paul’s ministry had been job he would’ve received wages - a reward. But it wasn’t a job. It was a “*stewardship*” - a God-given responsibility.

He says, “What is my reward then?” What did Paul expect from the ministry? What was *his* take away?

He answers, “That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.” Paul’s reward was the opportunity to conduct his ministry with charity and purity and integrity toward Christ and the Gospel.

In short, the ministry wasn’t a paycheck to Paul. His goal was an eternal reward - the glory of God and the souls of men. God put it in his heart to be a minister.

Once, I watched a television special on professional basketball, entitled, “*The first fifty years of the NBA.*”

One of the old-time players commented, “The team owners were the dumbest people on earth. They paid us a salary, but they didn't have to - we would've played for free.” They played for the love of the game.

And this was Paul. He preached for the love of the Gospel... “*woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!*”

And this is why I teach God’s Word...

Don’t misunderstand, I appreciate my salary. Kathy does too. *And rather than dumb, you're biblical and prudent for*



*paying your pastor* - but I've said it before, "If you didn't pay me to pastor, I'd pay you to let me."

"*Pastor*" is the most demanding, taxing, challenging, intense job I know. But I wouldn't trade it for any other job in the world. I thank God daily for the opportunity to communicate His Word and to pastor His people.

Paul could've lived a care-free life. He could've fabricated tents full-time - owned a wealthy business. Instead, he signed-on for the toughest job on earth.

He says in verse 19, "For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more..." Paul's freedom in Christ was far-reaching - he was *free from the Law, free to eat meat, free from the desire for special treatment, free from money. And he was also free from the opinions of men.*

In a sense, Paul didn't care one iota what people thought of him. The newspapers and bloggers could write what they wanted - *it didn't bother Paul.* He didn't live for man's approval! He was "free from all men..."

But he did care deeply what people thought of Jesus, and the Gospel. So much so, that Paul made himself a servant to all lost men to share with them the Gospel.

Thus, he was always building bridges - earning the right to preach - building platforms for the Gospel.

It bothers me when I run into Christians with the cavalier attitude. "*Who cares what people think - what they say about me - I'll just do what I want - I'm free!*"

Paul too was “*free from all men...*” but he tells us, “*I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more...*” He realized that for the Gospel’s sake his reputation was important. How people saw him would determine if they were willing to look into the Gospel.

If they respected Paul, they’d want to know what made him tick. And that opened doors for a witness.

Paul could’ve bulldozed through life with his head down, unconcerned about public opinion - but Paul realized spreading the Gospel is a people business, and it matters what people think about the preacher.

Disrespect the messenger and it’s easier to reject the message. Only a foolish pastor is oblivious to what people think about him. He desires a good reputation.

Paul elaborates on what it means to be a servant to people in verse 20, “*and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews...*” When Paul preached the Gospel he understood how his audience thought. He never tinkered with the message, but he tailored his methods to the culture of the people to who he spoke.

When his audience was Jewish he wore a yarmulke, and he ate kosher, and he didn’t work on the Sabbath.

When your goal is delivering the Gospel, it’s not the time to flaunt your freedom, or prove a point. A lost soul needs Jesus. *The goal is to find common ground?*

“*To those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who*

*are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law...*” When Paul preached to the Gentiles he ate barbecue pork.

Rather than a yarmulke, he wore a Roman toga.

He *fit in* so he could *speak out*. He used his freedom, not for his selfish enjoyment, but to be a more effective witness for Jesus, and a messenger of the Gospel.

Paul was always *faithful*, but he was also *flexible*.

And he says, *“to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak.”* If it took becoming poor to win the poor to Jesus, Paul would sell all his belongings...

If it took being weak to win the weak, he’d fast for three weeks, and put himself in a diminished state.

Culturally speaking - *not morally or spiritually, but culturally* - there was nothing Paul wouldn’t do to reach folks with the Gospel. There wasn’t a single liberty he wouldn’t forfeit if it meant reaching someone for Christ.

Imagine, if Paul knew donning a gold and navy sweatshirt, and cheering for the Rambling Wreck, would win someone to Christ, he’d do it! *Amazing!*

Paul would give up anything for the Gospel!

He says, *“I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”* God can always surprise us, but it’s most likely that the biker will win the biker to Jesus - the housewife will win the housewife - the golfer the golfer - the salesman the salesman...

Paul never compromised *morally*, or *spiritually*, or *biblically* - but he did adapt *culturally* to folks he wanted to reach. He found common ground and built a bridge.

Traditionally, the Church approaches the surrounding culture in one of two ways - either **isolation** or **imitation**.

Either we **isolate** from society, and hide - or we **imitate** the society and lose our distinctiveness.

God doesn't want us to do either.

There's a third option - **infiltrate**! This is what Paul did. He became all things to all men. He related culturally to where people *were at*, so that he could bring them to where they *needed to be* - to Jesus.

Over the years, we've had some church-folk complain about CC's music, "*I can't stand rock-and-roll! We need to sing hymns.*" But then the same people grumble because of a lack of young people in our church! *Hey, you can't have it both ways...*

What do you want?... A cozy atmosphere for the *dignified* and *sanctified* - or a place that's inviting and relatable to the modern environment in which we live?

An expert on evangelism, Donald McGraven, once said, "**The world has more winnable people than ever before... but it's possible to come out of a ripe field empty-handed.**" And that's what's happening today!

Our world is hungry for the Good News, but the Church doesn't always present it in a compelling way.

When Hudson Taylor landed in mainland China he struggled in his efforts to spread the Gospel. One day the Lord told him to give up his Western clothes and customs - dress like the Chinese. He even cut his hair.

Sadly, this offended his fellow missionaries, and it drew their sharp criticism. But it built a bridge to the locals that yielded a great spiritual harvest. *Hudson Taylor didn't go to China to reach other missionaries...*

I love what the founder of the Salvation Army, William Booth, once said, "I would stand on my head, and play a tambourine with my feet if I thought it would help me win one lost soul to Jesus." *That's how I feel.*

I'd try anything - *other than sin* - if it helped me reach a person for Jesus. *I'd even cheer for GT... maybe...*

Paul closes this section, "Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you."

Paul had even become *like a Corinthian* to win *the Corinthians*. Corinth was home to the Isthmian Games, a sporting contest second only to the ancient Olympics.

The Corinthians were sports enthusiasts. And it's the fan that reaches the fan. That's why he finishes up Chapter 9 by using a sports analogy. He compares the Christian life to an athlete's training and mentality.

That's what we'll look at next week.