

September 23

Scriptures: Read 1 Corinthians 8 & 9

Key Verse: "... I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."
(1 Corinthians 9:22)

Overview

In so many ways the apostle Paul was way ahead of his time. You might even call him a "renaissance man". He was remarkably free, and admirably mature. And he had absolutely no trace of superstition in his makeup.

For instance, he had no problem eating food that had been offered to idols. Food was food and had no intrinsic moral value (8:8). But, if he was at table with former idolaters to whom meat offered to idols brought memories of pagan ritual, he was careful not to touch it. Not for the sake of his conscience, but for theirs (8:10, 11).

Then there was his view of apostle's rights. As he saw it, an apostle had a right to have a wife (and take her with him on his travels—9:5), to have food and drink, and to be supported financially by those to whom he ministered (9:11). "But I have not used any of these rights," Paul says. Why? So that "in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it" (9:18). Paul preaches a free gospel; free of charge and free of financial obligation. That sounds definitely "renaissance"!

Essentially, Paul was committed to what we today call "cross-cultural ministry". He recognized that there was cultural baggage in every sub-cultural group to whom he ministered. Ex-idolaters had it. Ex-emperor-worshippers had it. Gentiles, Jews, and heathens all had it. Fighting it or disdaining it would be counter-productive. So instead he was sensitive to it, and even adopted some of it from time to time if it was "helpful" (6:12).

He had one goal—to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ as free from hindrance as possible. To do this he was prepared to be a Gentile to Gentiles and a Jew to Jews. He was free to be—and free to preach a free Gospel.

Prayer

Lord, we commit our lives to You afresh today, to run the race that we may obtain the prize. Help us to be temperate in all things. Help us not to be uncertain in our goal. Help us to discipline our bodies and bring them under subjection. Lord, we determine to do these things, lest having preached to others, we ourselves should become disqualified.