

I Corinthians 9:1-14

Paul's passions are showing and so are ours.

- The movie "The Passion of the Christ" was, in the words of its producer, a love story. This left many viewers confused as it depicted the horrendous self-sacrifice and suffering of Jesus. But this was the point. Love and self-sacrificial suffering are related.
- **John 15:13** "Greater love has no one than that one lay down his life for his friends."
- **John 10:11,17-18** "11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." "17 For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. 18 No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."
- **I John 3:16** "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."
- How is Christian faith best defined? The Missional Church "movement" tends to define faith in terms of conduct more than confession. Following Jesus' words in Matthew's gospel "you will know them by their works" not their words. There is a tension within Christian tradition between "Faith as confession" and "Faith as conduct."
- This tension is experienced in a number of core Christian teachings.
 1. **Holiness** - can be a description of moral conduct or ceremonial purpose. For example, the temple is holy (set apart for sacred use), and the disciple of Christ is called to be holy in being morally upright and separated from the world.
 2. These two aspects of holiness are applicable to the Christian who is: a) **Positionally** perfect in Christ, and b) **Experientially** progressing in Godly behavior.
 3. Paul's letters typically start with an affirmation of the believer's position as a "saint" (holy) and then move to exhortation to walk in a Godly way. He always starts with the affirmation before moving to the exhortation.
 4. As "**children of God**" in Christ we have an unchanging legal status (reconciliation) before God based on God's gift and our faith. As "**disciples of Christ**" we have a dynamic relationship based on our faithfulness.
 5. The first commandment (to love God) has to do with our coming **TO** Christ. The second commandment (to love our neighbor) has to do with following **AFTER** Christ.
 6. Our spiritual identity and position (what Christ has won **FOR** us) is about **SELF** (personal reconciliation, redemption, justification). Our spiritual calling and mission (what Christ can do **THROUGH** us) is about **SACRIFICE** in serving others.
 7. As believers we have personal identity rights. We are forgiven, loved, gifted, and declared worthy before God. We also have social involvement opportunities. We are to forgive, love, respect, and support others.

- In this section of Chapter 9 Paul outlines personal rights that he (later in the chapter) will voluntarily lay aside so as not to hinder the Gospel ministry.
- In this chapter Paul gives us an insight into the passions that motivate his behavior. I suspect that the way we live our lives will reveal our passions as well.

A. "I am a true Apostle"

"¹ Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? ² If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord."

B. "I have rights as an Apostle"

"³ My defense to those who examine me is this: ⁴ Do we not have a right to eat and drink? ⁵ Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? ⁶ Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? ⁷ Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard, and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?"

C. "I have rights according to the Law"

"⁸ I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? ⁹ For it is written in the Law of Moses, "*You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.*" God is not concerned about oxen, is He? ¹⁰ Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher {to thresh} in hope of sharing {the crops.}"

D. "I have rights according to common sense and custom"

"¹¹ If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you? ¹² If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ."

E. "I have rights according to the direction of Jesus"

"¹³ Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the {food} of the temple, {and} those who attend regularly to the altar have their share with the altar? ¹⁴ So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel."

The point of this text -

Paul, following Christ's example, reveals his passions and priorities in what and for what he is willing to sacrifice.

Lessons from this text

1. Our confession may reveal our identity but our self-sacrifice will reveal our passions and priorities.
2. Love is a passion punctuated with self-sacrifice in the service of the one loved.

3. Christian consumer, spectators are challenged to conduct an audit of their true passions and priorities by looking at their sacrifices.

Two models of the nature and purpose of the church.

