

2009-2010 WORLD MISSIONS SERMON OUTLINE

NOT AFRAID TO CHANGE

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Text: To the weak I became weak to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some (1 Corinthians 9:22).

INTRODUCTION

The buzzword today is “change.” Society seems to yearn for change that will somehow impact their lives as individuals. Sadly, many cry out for change without realizing that any and all change must begin on a personal level.

In the context of this letter to the Corinthian church, Paul expressed an openness to change in order to effect eternal change upon the lives of those with whom he came into contact. This attitude governed Paul’s life and was characterized by ...

- I. A willingness to give up his rights
 - A. Paul’s rights were those of an apostle. He “deserved” to be treated in a particular way, but was willing to sacrifice what was rightfully his rather than hinder the gospel.
 - B. Paul was willing to sacrifice personally to bless the community. This is in contrast to a society that places priority on individual rights and self-gratification. Paul was not engaging in self-martyrdom; however, he recognized the interdependent aspect of the Kingdom and his responsibility to live in a way that would encourage the community.
 - C. Paul’s willingness was characterized by humility. He was ready to “put up with anything” (verse 12). He didn’t “draw a line in the sand” to let his antagonists know his limitations.
 - D. Application: Rather than be governed by our “rights,” we can be encouraged to adopt Paul’s attitude of living above his rights.
- II. A readiness to adapt to the context of others
 - A. The apostle was more interested in the comfort zone of others than his own. His was not an attitude of meeting others halfway. He was willing to enter their world fully to know them and move them toward Christ.
 - B. Illustration: One of the greatest examples of this readiness is the story of Philip and the Ethiopian official (Acts 8:26-40). Philip was aware of the cultural backdrop when he approached the one who, perhaps, became the first African convert to the gospel. Not only does it appear that he was not

intimidated by the cultural divide between them, but that his witness was so powerful that it caused the official to ask to be baptized.

- C. Application: Rather than be limited by our context, we can be open to the work of the Holy Spirit who will commission us, just as He did Philip, to build bridges to others' contexts.

III. A recognition that his life was not his own (verse 19)

- A. Paul's acknowledgement that his was a life of service to others was informed by a desire to reach people of diverse backgrounds. Although he was known as the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul continued with a desire to reach the Jews. It was this sense of the universality of the gospel that caused him to place his freedom at the feet of Christ to serve others.

- B. Illustration: During the Cuban revolution, Assemblies of God missionary Floyd Woodworth stayed in Cuba at the request of the national church. His decision to stay resulted in his being imprisoned for a period of time. The history of missions is characterized by decisions such as these that have been fueled by a conscience that one's life is not his own.

- C. Application: Lasting change takes place when people of God realize that their lives have been "bought with a price" and are not their own. The intent of the Holy Spirit is to use us to the fullest. That happens when we are willing to serve, regardless of the cost.

CONCLUSION

Paul's words have a simplifying effect. They are clear that we are to incorporate all possible means to reach the unbeliever for Christ. This inevitably calls for change in the heart of every believer as we wrestle with the individualistic human nature that is ours. May the liberating Holy Spirit enable us to empty ourselves, much like Paul, and allow Him to use us in every way possible.

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