

TEXT: **1 Corinthians 9:19-23** Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. **20** To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. **21** To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. **22** 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. **23** I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

TITLE: **Every Way**

INTRO:

1. Several weeks ago, I was downstairs in this building doing something and I came across some of the promotional materials from our past missions' emphasis.
2. We missed our emphasis last year because of Covid, but I am looking forward to this year's time of focusing on what God wants to do all over the world.
3. I came across the banners from three different years.
4. The first year the theme was **Everywhere**. The idea is we've got to get the message of Jesus out to every location and place and area of the globe.
5. Now most people understand and accept and readily embrace the idea of everywhere. After all, is there some geographical place that just doesn't deserve the chance to hear about Jesus? Everywhere.
6. Then the next year the theme was **Everyone**. Again, that is an easy theme to accept and understand. Everyone needs to hear about Jesus. No person on this planet can survive and make it to heaven without Jesus and because that is the truth we need to get the message of Jesus out to everyone.
7. But then the last theme of that series came along. **Every way**. While it may seem easy in a mission's setting to say oh we want everyone, everywhere, to be reached in every way possible, it is a much different story when you actually consider what this idea of every way actually means.
8. Because **this idea of reaching people in every possible way is not just a theme, it is a principle in the word of God.**

9. This idea is more than just a slogan on a poster or banner, it was the driving force behind why Paul lived and ministered like he did. It was also the main reason why God used Paul to spread the good news of Jesus in a more prolific, abundant, productive, and fruitful way than almost any other person in the bible.
10. What Paul does in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 is state unequivocally his commitment to reach out to people in every way possible so as to be effective at reaching people for Jesus.
11. I don't know where you came from or what your religious background, but I must tell you for me, my background and religious upbringing makes that idea absolutely foreign to me.
12. I grew up in a time and place where we didn't believe in reaching people in every way possible.
13. My experience wasn't as bad as the way I heard a gentleman in our area describe his church this week. He said at my church you better know somebody or be related to somebody because if you don't you will be considered an outsider.
14. He said as a matter of fact I married into the church 14 years ago and I still feel like an outsider.
15. The two churches we attended during my formative years weren't quite that bad but looking back I remember a mindset that drove everything we did. That mindset was, we're going to do what the church has always done, we're going to have church the way we think church ought to be done and if anybody wants to come here they are going to have to conform to the way we do things and if they won't conform to us then we don't need them.
16. About every other week we would hear a sermon about not becoming worldly. It would be preached that we should avoid the world like the plague because if we got too close to the world we would become like them and that would send us to hell.
17. I remember as a boy, it probably was partly my fault, but I remember growing up thinking that sinners were the enemy. That if I got too close to sinners that it would lead me down to a path of destruction.
18. Even though God for sure doesn't want us to be worldly and involved in sin, there's only one problem with the way I processed and thought about my relationship and the churches relationship with lost people.

19. The problem is it wasn't biblical. I grew up hearing messages about staying away from the world and worldliness and then I began to read in the bible how Jesus spent most of his time, not with church people but with publicans and sinners and prostitutes and tax collectors.
20. Then I read the writings of Paul and I hear him say **1 Corinthians 9:22 I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.**
21. How many understand that if the people Paul had become all things to needed to be saved then that means they were sinners? They were lost. They were worldly?
22. If Jesus and the greatest missionary in the bible weren't afraid of getting close to lost people and they weren't afraid of using "all possible means" Paul says, which in effect means "every way", then why was I afraid?
23. And more importantly, if Paul says use every means possible to save some then why were we acting as the church like it was our job to just do what we do, and what we've always done as the church, and if those sinners want to accept that's fine and if they don't well it's just because their sinners.
24. I must tell you I went through a time of great confusion. And it wasn't until I began to let the Holy Spirit conform me to the truth of the word that the confusion began to subside some.
25. There was still a struggle at times. There still is a struggle at times, but I'm getting better.
26. What has helped me more than anything is coming to a place of understanding the difference between the destination and the vehicle to reaching that destination.
27. As the church we have a destination. Another word for destination is goal, target, purpose, an objective, an aim, an end.
28. **Our goal** and target and purpose and objective and our aim **according to** the command that Jesus gave his disciples in **Matthew 28:19** just before he left them to return to heaven **is to make disciples.**
29. That command is called the great commission. What does it mean to make disciples? It means to win the lost to Jesus, train them and disciple them to a place of maturity, and then include them in ministry to other lost people.
30. That's the destination. The church will not arrive at that destination until everyone; everywhere have been made disciples, or Jesus returns.

31. What's interesting is that Jesus made the destination extremely clear. But what is also interesting is that he left the journey to that destination extremely vague, and he left the vehicle for arriving at that destination extremely vague.
32. And as we as individual believers and we as the church work to sort through and figure out and define the journey and the vehicle, we have to be careful to keep our beliefs and our actions in line with the word of God.
33. I'm going to give you a hint. The enemy doesn't want our beliefs and our actions about the journey to be in line with the word of God and so because of that we have to be clear about what God's word actually says.
34. Let's begin by looking at the difference between...

The vehicle and the destination.

1. Let's begin by separating and understanding what Paul was saying concerning the destination verses the vehicle.
2. Paul here in verses 19-23 clearly states **the destination** (aim, goal, purpose, end) no less than six times. Let's look at them quickly.
 - a. Vs. 19 to win as many as possible.
 - b. Vs. 20 to win the Jews.
 - c. Vs. 20 so as to win those under the law.
 - d. Vs. 21 so as to win those not having the law.
 - e. Vs. 22 to win the weak.
 - f. Vs. 22 so that by all possible means I might save some.
3. How many understand that Paul's destination, his aim, his goal, his purpose was to win the lost? That was his destination.
4. That same destination and goal and aim and purpose has been given to the church. We have already established that.
5. We have also already established the fact that Satan doesn't want the church meeting or completing its God given goal.
6. So, what option does the enemy have to keep the church from meeting its goal?
7. Does Satan have the ability to change the goal? Of course not. Jesus spoke the goal. It came straight from the throne of God, through his lips into the ears of his disciples, onto the pages of history and carried down to all of us who will forever live.

8. The goal cannot be changed or altered. Then how will Satan attempt to keep us his church from carrying out the goal? Because how many know if we carry out God's goal there will be worldwide revival and Satan will be defeated?
9. He does it by getting the church to disagree about which vehicle they will use to arrive at the destination.
10. In other words, the enemy tries to de-rail the church from carrying out its mission by getting the church to disagree about how it should go about making disciples.
11. He gets our eyes off the goal and the purpose and the aim onto something that is not the goal or the aim or the purpose. The vehicle and the Journey.
12. I learned very early in our marriage that different people travel differently. I go about the journey of getting to the destination very differently than my wife does.
13. We first got married and we would be going on a trip of more than a couple hours and I would get up that morning and be in a race to get the car packed, then when we got on the road I was a man on a mission.
14. Let's get there on the shortest route in the least possible time with the fewest number of stops.
15. My lovely bride is different. She wants to take her time getting ready and packing the car. She doesn't want to set a time to leave we'll just leave when we get ready.
16. She isn't interested in driving like Mark Martin she wants to enjoy the ride, stop several times, look at the scenery.
17. We would plan a trip, with a noble destination, with the good intention of spending time with family that we rarely got to see and even though the destination was a good destination we would arrive at the destination having argued all the way.
18. There were several times we would have been better to just stay home because not only did we ruin the journey, but we ruined the time while we were at the destination.
19. Why does Paul state the destination 6 times in four verses? Because he's trying to send the message that it's the destination that counts not how you got there.
20. The Corinthian church had become distracted because they had begun to focus more on the journey and the vehicle they traveled in, than on the destination. Winning the lost.

21. I'm here to tell you that temptation still exists today in 2021 and as mature believers we must be unwilling to give into that temptation.
22. **The destination is what counts not the vehicle** that takes us to the destination.
23. Several years ago, Patti's parents came for the weekend. They drive a little Mazda Miata. It's about as big as a hot wheel's car.
24. I had to come to church early that Sunday morning and they were coming later with the kids, so we needed to work out transportation.
25. I said let me drive your car and you drive my wife's truck.
26. I felt like a clown in a circus climbing in and out of that thing. I didn't like it.
27. But they love it.
28. They didn't like her truck. It was too big. But she loves it.
29. At the end of the day did it matter what vehicle we used to arrive at church?
Of course not. The only thing that mattered was I needed to be at church that morning to preach the word of God, because people got saved that day.
30. What if when I got to church I had called them and started complaining about their vehicle and how small it was and how they needed to sell that thing and drive a vehicle like I like?
31. What if they had arrived at church and my father-in-law lit into me before the service and insisted that was the worst vehicle he had ever ridden in and we had gotten into an argument or had hurt feelings all over the vehicle?
32. Guess what, we could have made arriving to the destination useless.
33. **I'm sorry but some folks and some churches are so focused on the vehicle that they never arrive at the destination of making disciples.**
34. They are so focused on how they do church that it doesn't matter if anybody ever gets saved or disciplined just as long as the vehicle still looks the same.
35. I've seen people, and pastors for that matter, leave churches that were reaching and discipling the lost all because they didn't like the way that church did church (the vehicle) and go to a church where almost no one ever got saved and disciplined all because they liked the vehicle better (they way the other church did church.)
36. It's not about the vehicle it's about the destination. Making it about the vehicle plays right into the enemy's hands.
37. So how do we confuse the enemy's trap? Make it about the destination. What is the destination of the church? Making disciples.
38. What happens when we make it about the destination? We find that...

Destination determines the vehicle.

1. What do we mean by that? It means that we decide what kind of vehicle we are going to travel in based on where we are going.
2. If you get the idea that you would like to go and visit London England you need to be aware that there are only two vehicle options for you to choose.
3. Either you are going to fly on a plane to London England or you are going to sail by boat to London England.
4. Someone may say well I want to drive to London England. Guess what? You can't. You can throw a fit if you want to, but you aren't driving to London England. You can't drive to London because there's no road to London. The destination determines the vehicle you will use.
5. Guess what? It works the same way in reaching our destination of making disciples. The destination has to determine the vehicle we will use.
6. Let's break this down again verse by verse and see this principle in action.
7. **1 Corinthians 9:19-23** Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. **20** To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. **21** To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. **22** 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. **23** I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.
 - a. Paul says in verse 19 that he wants to win as many people as possible. That's the destination. What is the vehicle? Verse 19 I make myself a slave to everyone.
 - b. Paul says in verse 20 that he wants to win the Jews. That's the destination. What is the vehicle? Verse 20 I became like a Jew.
 - c. End of verse 20 Paul states he wants to win those under the law. That's the destination. The vehicle? Verse 20 I became like one under the law.
 - d. Verse 21 he wants to win those not having the law. That's the destination. What is the vehicle? Verse 21 I became like one having the law.
 - e. Verse 22 he makes it his goal or destination to win the weak. What is the vehicle he uses to get there? Verse 22 to the weak I became weak.
 - f. Finally, verse 22 he lets us know it is his desire to save some. Destination. What is the vehicle in verse 22 I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means.
8. How many are seeing that? The destination determined the vehicle that would be used.

9. Let me state that a different way. The need of the lost person determined how Paul would go about trying to reach them.
10. I'm going to warn you right now. I'm getting ready to make a statement that is going to stretch some folks. It won't rip you apart but it's going to stretch you.
11. What is the destination and the goal and the purpose and the aim of the church? To make disciples. To win the lost, bring new believers to a place of maturity and release them to win others.
12. What should determine how we go about doing what we do to reach our destination and our aim and our goal and our purpose?
13. According to Paul the need of the person we are trying to reach should determine how we do church.
14. What does that mean? Does that mean we compromise our standards and lower our standards? Not at all. I don't believe for a moment that Paul lowered his standards.
15. Paul wasn't compromising for anybody. What does it mean then when it says that Paul became all things to all men so that by all possible means he might win some?
16. What does it mean when Paul said he made himself a slave so as to win as many as possible? Does that mean he sold himself and was abused? No, it means he humbled himself and became like a servant.
17. Did he reject Christ in order to win the Jews? No, he simply built relationships with Jews who didn't understand Christ until they had a chance to see Christ in him.
18. Did Paul go backwards and start living again completely by the binding law that he had been delivered from? No, but in order to win those under the law if he knew something offended them he wouldn't do it so he could influence them to trust in Christ.
19. Did he become a lawless sinner and start carousing and drinking and sinning just to fit in with those who weren't under the law? No, he just didn't condemn them when they did those things. He showed them love and humble compassion and let them see the light of Jesus in his life first.
20. Did he run a marathon and wear himself out and hurt himself and mutilate his body just so he could relate to weak people? No, he just recognized when they were weak, and he didn't come in loud and proud, he responded to their weakness on their level with empathy and understanding.

21. Letting the destination determine the vehicle has nothing to do with compromise it has to do with caring about people more than caring about methods.
22. Remember our destination is to win the lost and make disciples. What is one of the key ingredients or vehicles in being successful? The preaching of the word. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.
23. The preaching of the word is an unchangeable necessity to carrying out our mission and purpose, but how the word gets to the hearer can change a thousand times.
24. For years those who wanted to get an audio copy of the message to someone would order a cassette tape. Run on duplicator.
25. Now days most cars don't even come with cassette players. So, several years ago the church decided to purchase a CD duplicator and record the messages digitally. That CD is simply a different vehicle.
26. In the last several years we have changed the vehicle again. We now put the messages online. (video not audio) Same purpose, different vehicle.
27. Truth be told we need to change the vehicle again. We are currently in the process of trying to make massive improvements to our weekly livestream.
28. Cameras. Audio equipment. Software. All of these tools are different than we have used them in the past.
29. Well pastor I don't understand all that and it doesn't make any sense to me. I'm sorry for being blunt but who cares if you understand all that or not, as long as the word is getting to those who need to hear it who cares how we do it?
30. How we do it becomes an issue when we confuse who we are.

We are not the destination; we are the vehicle.

1. What in the world would possess Paul to say I become like a slave and I become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might win some?
2. What would possess him to become weak and with the law and without the law and all the things he became? Why was he willing to be fluid like water and just flow into whatever situation he was in?
3. Why did he refuse to be rigid and say well this is how I do things and if you want to be a Christian and a follower of Christ then you are going to have to come to me and do what I do and be what I am?
4. What made him live and act and minister in a way that is completely opposite of the way I remember as a boy?

5. Because Paul knew who he was. Paul knew he wasn't the destination. He was already saved. And because he was already saved and because he wasn't the destination and because he knew that what he needed to be wasn't determined by what he wanted then that freed him up to become the vehicle.
6. Remember the vehicle is determined by the destination. The destination is reaching and discipling the lost.
7. What is the vehicle? Whatever method necessary to reach the destination.
8. Who's driving the vehicle? Does the vehicle drive itself? No. The driver of the vehicle drives the vehicle.
9. Who is the driver? It's Jesus. The vehicle just carries Jesus where he tells it to go.
10. How many in this room are saved and you know Jesus as your Lord and savior? Guess what? We are not the destination. At one time we were the destination. We were lost and undone with Jesus but now that we know him we are no longer the destination.
11. Because we are not the destination we don't determine how we carry out the church's purposes, according to Paul those who need to hear determine how we carry out the church's purposes.
12. I know it's a stupid question but is anyone in here Jesus? That means what the world needs is not us it's him.
13. We are just the vehicle that carries Jesus. As the vehicle we don't have a choice. **The vehicle simply goes where the driver tells it to go.**

Every Way

Conclusion:

1. If you feel confused and stretched and all bent out of shape don't feel bad. So do I.
2. One of the things that has been so challenging for me over the past year. And one of the things that challenges me as I look toward the future is what ministry will look like going forward.
3. Because, over the past year how we do ministry has changed quite a lot.
4. The ability or willingness of people to visit a physical location has shifted.
5. The ability or willingness of people to serve has shifted.
6. The numbers of people who are engaging the church through some sort of digital media has shifted.

7. I don't know much. But there is one message I have heard over and over again from church leaders is that if we try and do ministry the same way we have always done it, the church will die.
8. Because the church isn't the same as it always has been.
9. What staff members we hire may have to change.
10. How we hold small groups, or feed people, or minister to people is probably going to change.
11. And just to be transparent, that scares me. But here is the reality.
12. This, is not about me, it's about them.
13. If we really believe that Jesus wants to reach everyone, everywhere, then we will let him do it through us and through his church in every way he wants to. Even if we don't like it.
14. At the end of every message, I ask the Lord to give me direction concerning what he wants to do.
15. As I prayed for that direction this morning I was hesitant to follow the Lord's leading.
16. Mainly because what I believe he wants to do in us is something that we already have been doing, but that we don't like very much.
17. And because we don't like it we can become resistant to it.
18. But what he really wants us to do is surrender to the changes he wants to make in our lives.
19. The destination is still the same. Heaven. But what life looks like along the journey is probably going to be very different going forward.
20. Prayer.
21. Lord you do what you want to do in my life.
22. Do it how you want to do it.
23. And help me get out of the way.
24. Lord, do what you want to in and through your church.
25. Do it how you want to.
26. And help us get out of the way.
27. Salvation call.