

# Courageous Fishing

## 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

The movie, *The Perfect Storm*, well described the dangers of the fishing industry through the eyes of the crew of the fishing boat, the *Andrea Gail*. Out of their need to bring home an excellent catch of fish, the captain and crew decide to risk everything and travel as far as the remote but fertile fishing ground called the Flemish Cap. It is an especially dangerous trek during the unpredictably stormy month of October. On their way back to Gloucester, MA, the *Andrea Gail* encounters the "perfect storm" of 1991 and is never heard from again.

While improvements in shipbuilding, navigational technology, weather-reporting and rescue support have made boating safer, fishing has become, if anything, a more lethal occupation, killing more of its workers per capita than any other job in the United States.

“There are many kinds of work that are dangerous, but one of the interesting things about fishing is that it really hasn’t changed much over time. It’s been mechanized, of course, but the basic reality of going to sea for months at a stretch is the same as it was 100 years ago. You are way beyond help from anyone else; you’re on your own. I think that forms a certain kind of character. Not only does everyone know someone who has died at sea but everyone who works in the fishing industry has almost died. Every single fisherman you talk to has almost gotten nailed at one time or another.” *The Perfect Storm* author Sebastian Junger

It takes courage to be a fisherman whether for fish – or for men!

1 Corinthians 9:19-27 *Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 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. 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.*

*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. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

## **I HAVE BECOME ALL THINGS**

In verse 19, Paul said, “I make myself a slave.” In Paul’s culture there were slaves. Slavery was culturally acceptable. When Paul says, “I make myself a slave,” does he mean that he sells himself into slavery?

- No. Back in 1 Cor. 7:23 Paul said, ***“You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.”***
- Because of the price that was paid on Calvary and the great love that God has for us, we should not allow yourself to become a slave of men.
- So, when Paul says in 9:19, ***“I make myself a slave to everyone,”*** he is not talking about selling himself into slavery.
- Throughout the NT, Paul wrote that becoming a follower of Jesus makes us a slave of Christ.
- And if we are slaves of Christ, we serve those around us.
- Jesus said, ***“even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.”*** (Mark 10:45)
- Christ was a servant, and His followers are servants as well.
- We serve others without selling ourselves into slavery.
- We are voluntarily serving others without having actually sold ourselves into slavery.
- Paul says that he made himself a slave to everyone, and so must we; both individually and as a church.

- Quite frankly, that means no more pew sitting.
- That means no more just showing up for church on Sunday morning and thinking that's all there is to Christianity.
- You cannot be slave to anyone just setting in a pew.
- If West Side is going to thrive in the 21st century, then we have got to have every believer actively involved in serving others.
- West Side will not thrive in the 21st century with people simply coming to church on Sunday mornings and then going home until next week. Every believer must be involved in serving others.
- Every member must follow Christ and Paul's examples by making themselves servants and not just pew sitters!

Then in verse 20, Paul says, ***"I became like a Jew."***

- Now this is a very interesting statement because in the NIV it says, "like a Jew."
- In the KJV it says, "I became as a Jew."
- It does **not** say "I became a Jew." It says "I became as a Jew"
- What is interesting is that Paul was a Jew - a Jew and then became a Christian.
- Now as a Christian Paul says he became "like a Jew."
- He hung around Jews and talked in understandable ways to Jews.
- He told Jews about Christianity in understandable terms.
- Paul did not become a Jew again, he took Christianity to them.
- Paul did not return to Judaism, but he did not abandon the Jews.
- He didn't say God saved me - I need to stay away from the Jews.
- He said God saved me so I need to go back to the Jews so that they can be saved.
- West Side needs people who are willing to go to unbelievers and drug addicts, the adulterers, the sinners, and the unbelievers.
- We can sit in our beautiful building on Sunday mornings and be comfortable, and over time - we will die.
- Or we can be obedient to the Word and become **like** a sinner.
- We don't become a sinner, but we hang out with them and we put the gospel into terms that they can understand.

- West Side needs people who are willing to become a missionary and work across cultural lines with unbelievers!

Verse 20 also says, ***“I became like one under the law.”***

- Paul went to religious people that did not understand the whole truth of the gospel; who needed to have the way of the Lord explained to them more accurately.
- When Paul refers to people under the law, he was referring to people who only knew of the OT.
- They were people who only knew rules and regulations. They believed in God, but they didn't even know about Jesus.
- There are so many people that believe in God, but do not know or understand the truths about Jesus and Calvary and grace!
- West Side needs people who will become like those who do not understand the NT.
- West Side needs people that will go back to those who do not know and understand the Holy Spirit. We need people who will go to people who believe in God, but don't understand Christianity, to go to those people and love them and teach them.
- To become like those who do not understand the Gospel.

In verse 21, ***“I became like one not having the law.”***

- Paul went to those who didn't even understand the OT.
- Paul went to those who didn't even know that there was a God.
- West Side needs people who are willing to go to those who don't even have a surface knowledge of who God is.

In verse 22, ***“I became weak”***

- Back in chapter 8 Paul explained what he means by weak. He means mainly young Christians. Paul is saying that he also went to and taught young Christians. Not young in years, but young in Christianity. To people who hadn't been saved very long.
- This means that we can't just go out to rescue the unsaved, we must also continue to reach out to our own; to believers.

- We must be focused outwardly, but we must also love and nurture each other.
- We must help young believers to mature in Christ.
- People cannot just be brought to Christ and have a Bible stuck in their hands and told “good luck.” We must become weak. West Side must become all things!

## **BY ALL POSSIBLE MEANS**

Look now at verses 24-27.

- Whatever it takes... must use all possible means.
- As long its not immoral or anti-Biblical, we must do everything possible to reach people. It must be an all-out effort.
- Yes, it is going to take money. That is obviously one of the means. I have told you how God is working here at West Side in the way of finances. And that needs to continue!
- There are many possible means that I haven't even thought of. Many other possible means that God will put on your heart.

But I have one tangible way that I would like us to reach out to the lost as a group. I want us to take Paul's teaching about becoming all things to all people so that we might reach the lost. So, I suggest as a practical way for us to become all things to all people that **EVERYONE PRAY** about who God would have us be. Then adapt your life to God's answer to that prayer. May God lay on each heart the burden of lost souls and the willingness to share Jesus with others.