(With a warm, passionate tone) Oh, dear friends, I am so excited to dive into this incredible passage with you today. 1 Corinthians 9:1-19 is a powerful reminder of the freedom and responsibility that comes with following Jesus. As we explore these verses, I pray that the Holy Spirit would stir our hearts, ignite our passion, and empower us to live a life that reflects the radical love of Christ.

As we delve into this passage, I want to highlight three distinct points that I believe are crucial for us to understand. These points are not just theoretical concepts, but practical applications that can transform our lives and our ministry.

**Point 1: The Freedom of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:1-14)**

* **The apostle’s credentials**: Paul begins by establishing his credentials as an apostle, saying, “Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” (1 Corinthians 9:1). He’s reminding the Corinthian church that he has a direct commission from Jesus to preach the Gospel.
* **The right to support**: Paul then talks about his right to be supported by the church, saying, “Is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living?” (1 Corinthians 9:6). He’s pointing out that it’s reasonable for those who preach the Gospel to be supported by those who benefit from it.
* **The voluntary surrender of rights**: However, Paul then says, “But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ” (1 Corinthians 9:12). He’s showing us that even though he had the right to be supported, he chose to surrender that right for the sake of the Gospel.

**Point 2: The Motivation of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:15-18)**

* **The joy of preaching**: Paul says, “For if I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; but if not voluntarily, I am still entrusted with a stewardship” (1 Corinthians 9:17). He’s telling us that his motivation for preaching is not just a sense of duty, but a deep joy and passion for the Gospel.
* **The necessity of preaching**: Paul then says, “For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16). He’s emphasizing that preaching the Gospel is not just something he wants to do, but something he must do.
* **The reward of preaching**: Finally, Paul says, “For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship” (1 Corinthians 9:17). He’s showing us that his reward is not just something he’ll receive in the future, but something he experiences in the present, as he sees people come to know Jesus.

**Point 3: The Method of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)**

* **Becoming all things to all people**: Paul says, “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more” (1 Corinthians 9:19). He’s telling us that he’s willing to adapt and become all things to all people, in order to reach them with the Gospel.
* **Becoming like those we’re trying to reach**: Paul then says, “And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law” (1 Corinthians 9:20). He’s showing us that he’s willing to identify with the people he’s trying to reach, in order to build bridges and establish relationships.
* **Becoming a slave to the Gospel**: Finally, Paul says, “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22). He’s emphasizing that his goal is not just to win arguments or prove a point, but to see people come to know Jesus, and to be saved.

As we conclude, I want to leave you with a challenge. What is God calling you to surrender to? What is God calling you to lay down, so that you can take up the cross of Christ? Is it a particular sin or habit that’s holding you back? Is it a fear or a doubt that’s keeping you from stepping out in faith? Whatever it is, I want to encourage you to surrender it to God today, and to ask Him to give you the courage, the strength, and the passion to live a life that is fully surrendered to the Gospel.