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## PODCAST START:

[intro music]

Brian: Welcome to the Queer Theology podcast!

Fr. Shay: Where each episode, we take a queer look at the week's lectionary readings. We're the cofounders of QueerTheology.com and the hosts for this podcast. I'm Father Shay Kearns —

B: And I'm Brian G. Murphy.

FS: Hello hello! Welcome! This week we are taking a look at the lectionary texts for February 4th. We're going to look at 1 Corinthians 9:16-23. This is from the Common English Bible.

If I preach the gospel, I have no reason to brag, since I'm obligated to do it. I'm in trouble if I don't preach the gospel. If I do this voluntarily, I get rewarded for it. But if I'm forced to do it, then I've been charged with a responsibility. What reward do I get? That when I preach, I offer the good news free of charge. That's why I don't use the rights to which I'm entitled through the gospel.

Although I'm free from all people, I make myself a slave to all people, to recruit more of them. I act like a Jew to the Jews, so I can recruit Jews. I act like I'm under the Law to those under the Law, so I can recruit those who are under the Law (though I myself am not under the Law). I act like I'm outside the Law to those who are outside the Law, so I can recruit those outside the Law (though I'm not outside the law of God but rather under the law of Christ). I act weak to the weak, so I can recruit the weak. I have become all things to all people, so I could save some by all possible means. All the things I do are for the sake of the gospel, so I can be a partner with it. [CEB]

B: Ooh!

FS: [laughs] *Well.*

B: Oh, Paul. Paul says some beautiful things and some shitty things and some ...*huh?* things. What sticks out for me in this passage from 1 Corinthians is that Paul is a man on a mission. He has encountered the Christ and is so moved by it that [laughs] he kind of goes from being an anti-Christian zealot to a Jesus-loving zealot, and is kind of on a tear to spread the good news of Jesus. That feels familiar to me, as someone who grew up in evangelical Christianity. Something that our Sunday School teachers would always say is, "You know, if you had the cure to cancer, you would want to share that with the whole world." And to them the cure to cancer was like, say this prayer and you'll get to go to heaven instead of hell. Which, like, no longer resonates with me. But *now* I feel like my queerness has enriched my understanding of Christianity and my understanding of Christianity has enriched my queerness, and I also sort of feel like, where as once before I was a fundamentalist Christian zealot, now I'm a queer Christian zealot. [both laugh] I'm thinking a lot about our synchroblog queer calling, and what does our queerness call us to do and be in the world? Someone just tweeted at us the other day something that was like, "My queerness is secondary to my identity in Christ. My identity in Christ is my primary identity. And instead I ask what my faith has to say about my sexual orientation." And it's like, well, yeah. That's the starting point. That's the question that everyone's always asking, what does your faith say about your sexuality? But when we say, what does our queerness call us to, or how does our queerness impact our faith, it's not just a sexuality, but like the whole queer experience. I think that when we approach Christianity from a queer perspective, we see something that's always been queer, and we're getting a deeper, more rich understanding that connects us to the divine and others more deeply. I'm really excited about the synchroblog and exploring that, not because my queerness is 'kinking Christianity', but rather that my queerness is unlocking a whole new, profound, prophetic dimension of Christianity that I would otherwise be missing. What about you, Shay?

FS: Yeah, I have such mixed feelings about this passage that didn't really hit me, honestly, until I was reading it out loud. [laughs] Which is kind of funny. Because I feel like I've read this passage about a billion times, and especially as a kid, as an evangelical kid and teenager, I *loved* this passage. It was like, yes! This is what our faith is supposed to be about, this idea that we will become all things to all people, so that by all means possible, we will save some of them. And so there's some things about this passage that make me really uncomfortable now, and especially in this translation, the Common English Bible – this 'recruiting' language is just really uncomfortable and icky. [Brian laughs] But, at the same

time, I think that there's something beautiful in this idea of, when we have something that we are really passionate about, and we want to share, part of what it means to do that *well* is to figure out how to speak it in a language that people can understand. Whether that's figuring out an analogy to use that makes sense to a different group of people, whether that literally means looking at the language that you're using, is it too academic – I think that that's one of the reasons we started Queer Theology, right? We found this beautiful gift in queer Christianity and in queer theologians, but as we looked at the resources that were out there, we realized so many of them weren't accessible simply because of the language that they used, because it was very academic language, and sometimes it felt dry and boring. We wanted to be able to translate this amazing gift into language and into resources that were accessible to people who hadn't gone to seminary or graduate school. So there's something in that for me. And I think that there is this piece too, of Paul start's out with this, like, "I feel obligated to do this work." I think that, when we talk about queer calling, that is something I feel really deeply. I feel *obligated*. And not in a negative way, but I do feel obligated to do this queer theology work, no matter what it costs and no matter what it gives. Because I've been given so much by my own faith and by the way that my queerness and transness has re-enriched my faith, I feel obligated to share that with other people. Because it's meant so much in my life *and* also I know what it was like to not have that, and to feel like my queerness and my transness took away from my faith and was a detriment. And now that it's life-giving and enriching, I want to go back to all of these other people and be like, don't you see what this could be? It's beautiful and it's lifegiving and it's healthy and it's leading me towards wholeness, and I want you to be a part of it too. So I resonate with Paul's by-any-means-necessary, drag people along just because it's so good and I want people to be a part of the goodness.

B: Yeah! When you talked about, in this translation, the use of the word 'recruiting' – it made me think of how Harvey Milk would say, "My name is Harvey Milk and I'm here to recruit you." [both laugh] Just like, really passionate. And I also was thinking about this sense of obligation. Too often, religious obligation can feel like this nagging weight around your neck. I *have* to do it, or if I don't do this I'm a bad person, or I'm not being a good Christian, or I'm being a bad example of a gay Christian. Or maybe it's even more extreme than that – I have to do this to prove that I'm really a Christian so I won't go to hell. You know? So if that's where your obligation is coming from, I think that you can kind of, whatever it is you feel obligated to do, just set it aside. But I similarly to you just feel this sort of sense of obligation and passion and calling that's just like, this thing has so transformed my life that I just want to share it, because it's just fucking awesome. It's been liberating and lifegiving to me and I want to share that good

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**We're here to recruit you**  
**1 Corinthians 9:16-23**

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news with other people. [laughs] And that's why I do this work, even though it takes a lot of time each week, and costs us money as well. But it comes from this burning place of transformation rather than this sense of external obligation. That's one of the things that I feel called to do in the world. I'm really looking forward to hearing folks' experience of the prompt – queer calling, and what does your queerness and transness call you to do and be in the world. You can get all the information about the synchroblog, and as the entries start pouring in, you'll be able to see the entries at [queertheology.com/synchroblog](http://queertheology.com/synchroblog). We'll put a link in the shownotes for how to spell that. That's all for this week!

[outro music]

B: The Queer Theology podcast is just one of many things that we do at [QueerTheology.com](http://QueerTheology.com), which provides resources, community and inspiration for LGBTQ Christians and straight cisgender supporters.

FS: To dive into more of the action, visit us at [QueerTheology.com](http://QueerTheology.com). You can also connect with us online on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Instagram.

B: We'll see you next week.

**PODCAST END**

Transcript by Taylor Walker