

Proper Care And Feeding of Spiritual Leaders

1 Corinthians, Vol. 15

HBC 2/12/20

1 Corinthians 9:1-18

We saw back in chapter 6 that Paul used rhetorical and sarcastic questions to show the emotional fervor with which he approached the matter of Christians going to court. There are **17 rhetorical questions** in 9:1-14. Paul came on very strongly about this!

You're going to see Paul's **inconsistency**. He wisely knew when to use his liberty to do things to advance the gospel, and he wisely knew when to limit his liberty by love. He zealously defends the rights of servants of God to be supported, and he explains why he limited his liberty by choosing not to be supported most of the time.

I. **My Defense Is This** (1-7)

1 Corinthians 9:1: *Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?*

1 Corinthians 9:2: *If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.*

A **seal** is a mark of _____ and a means of _____.

1 Corinthians 9:3: *My defense to those who examine me is this:*

1 Corinthians 9:4: *Do we not have a right to eat and drink?*

The word **right** here is the same word translated _____ in 8:9.

1 Corinthians 9:5: *Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?*

The phrase **believing wife** is literally **a sister, a wife**. The sense is "a sister in the Lord who is a wife," so **believing wife** is the right way to say it for our world.

1 Corinthians 9:6: *Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?*

1 Corinthians 9:7: *Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?*

The reasoning is that the natural order of things in the world is that people are supported by their occupation.

II. **The General Principle** (8-14)

1 Corinthians 9:8-9: *I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING." God is not concerned about oxen, is He?*

See Deuteronomy 25:4. The logic is that if God cares for oxen, there is also an application to those who tend the spiritual field of souls.

1 Corinthians 9:10-11: *Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?*

1 Corinthians 9:12: *If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.*

1 Corinthians 9:13-14: *Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.*

III. **How I Apply The Principle (15-18)**

1 Corinthians 9:15: *But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one.*

These things = ___ - ___.

Used none: Paul never exercised his right by _____.

1 Corinthians 9:16: *For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.*

Preaching the gospel is no one's "job." It's everyone's duty.

1 Corinthians 9:17: *For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me.*

At the time of Paul's conversion, God told a man named Ananias to overcome his fear of him, receive him, and lay hands on him to restore his sight. The explanation was:

Acts 9:15–16: *But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."*

Stewardship means _____. In the case of Paul, it was well defined and it was a crucial role in the development of the Church and this era of the Kingdom of God:

- Bear My name before the Gentiles
- Bear My name before kings
- Bear My name before the sons of Israel
- Suffer for My name's sake

1 Corinthians 9:18: *What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.*

Lesson From Paul's Example: Unless a specific activity is required by God or prohibited by God, we should weigh its use according to whether it helps us to be spiritually effective.

The principle is clear in Scripture. The **same Paul** who gave up being supported for ministry **also wrote**:

1 Timothy 5:17-18: *The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."*

The more generously the people of God give, the more of God's servants we can have the joy of being His instruments to support, and the greater our sense of teamwork grows. And it's not a one-way street! God promises to bless those who give.

Luke 6:38: *"Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."*