

## 1 Corinthians 9

*“9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? 2 Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.”*

Just like in the U.S., freedom in Corinth at the time Paul wrote this letter is highly valued. We celebrate Memorial Day, Veterans Day and the Fourth of July to honor those that have given us these freedoms. Many Americans and Corinthians believe that they can do whatever they want as long as no one gets hurt.

Paul is continuing his discussion from Chapter 8, regarding eating food sacrificed to idols and doing things that are ok but these things may cause a weaker believer to stumble or draw an improper conclusion. He is starting out his argument by saying that as an apostle he too has certain rights even if some people do not accept him as a true apostle of Jesus. We saw in his letter to the Galatians (1:11-13) that he had to continuously defend his apostleship.

Paul says that in Corinth there are those that doubt that he is a true apostle of Jesus. Paul received his commission from Jesus on the road to Damascus. In his letter to the Galatians he explains this but here in verse 2, he says that he shouldn't have to explain it because they, the Corinthians are his “*seal of apostleship*”. Seals were used to prove that a letter had truly come from that person.

*“3 This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. 4 Don't we have the right to food and drink? 5 Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? 6 Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?”*

In these verses, Paul is beginning to defend his apostleship just like a lawyer argues at a trial. He points out that as an apostle he has certain rights. As an apostle he has the right to get paid for his preaching. He says he has the right to eat and drink but he is implying that he is to do so at the church's expense. Doesn't he have the right to bring his wife along like Peter and the other apostles did.

“Those judging Paul knew that he understood the practice was theologically justifiable—it was a freedom that every knowledgeable, mature Christian had. To them it must have seemed that Paul contradicted the straightforward truth when he insisted that stronger Christians should not eat for the sake of weaker Christians. To defend his actions, Paul drew upon the larger practices of his life. His position on eating meat sacrificed to idols was not a sign of weakness or inconsistency. Rather, it accorded with the basic Christian principles that guided his life. For this reason, the

Corinthians who opposed him on the matter of meat sacrificed to idols actually opposed the fabric of Christian ethics.” Holman New Testament Commentary

*7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? 8 Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned 10 Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. 11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? 12 If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.*

Paul goes even further back in his argument regarding getting the spoils of your labors. He gives several examples of this fact.

Verse 7 – The service of a soldier  
A vineyard worker eats the grapes.  
A shepherd drinks the milk from his flock.

The Law of Moses says:

Do not muzzle an ox while the ox is grinding the wheat so that it can eat.

Whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest.

In verse 12, Paul ties the physical to the spiritual. If we share in the harvest in the world then we should also share in the harvest in the spiritual domain. Paul was saying that the spiritual work of one who shares the good news of Jesus should benefit him in the material world. He had a right to get paid for saving their souls. He also says that even though they had the right to be supported by the church, he is willing to forego this right in order to save more people. He was willing to support himself if it became a stumbling block. How did Paul support himself?

Tentmaker

*13 Don't you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? 14 In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.*

Just like most pastors and priests today, as one called to preach the gospel, Paul asked isn't he entitled to focus on serving the Lord and not have to worry about earning an income. This goes

back to Joshua 13:14 and 33, “14 But to the tribe of Levi he gave no inheritance, since the food offerings presented to the Lord, the God of Israel, are their inheritance, as he promised them.”

There is no record of Jesus saying those specific words, but He states something similar.

Matthew 10:10 says “for a worker is worthy of his support (or food (NKJB) or keep (NIV).

Luke 10:8 says “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you.”(NIV)

Luke 8:3 helped Jesus ministry financially.

*“15 But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me, for I would rather die than allow anyone to deprive me of this boast. 16 For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! 17 If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. 18 What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.”*

Remember why Paul has headed down this road. He is giving up his rights as an apostle so that he does not become a stumbling block to current or future believers. In verse 16, he is not asking to be paid or supported for preaching the Gospel. He preaches to reach as many people as possible with the Good News of Jesus.

Paul doesn't want the Corinthians to think that he is boasting to build himself up. He is again trying to reach people for Jesus and if by supporting himself allows him to reach more, then all the better. Paul says this more clearly in 2 Corinthians 11:30. If he is going to boast then he will boast in Jesus. In verse 17, Paul says “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” Preaching is Paul's calling from God. He is compelled to do nothing else. Pastor Larry said that his grandfather told him, “You should never become a pastor without a calling from God but if you are called to preach then you should do nothing else.” In verse 18, he gives his reason for supporting himself. It is so he can preach the Gospel message free of charge.

*“19 Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made 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 people 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.”*

Paul says that he is free and is not responsible to any man. He is responsible to God and he takes it very seriously. Paul takes the following verses very seriously.

Matthew 22:36-40. Paul devoted his life to loving and serving God. After seeing Jesus on the road to Damascus, he then understood loving people.

Matthew 28:19-20. This is the Great Commission. If you love God and people then this is what God wants us to do.

As a church, what are some of the things that we do as the two commands of the Great Commission.

Go – mission trips, tell those around you about Jesus, VBS

Teach – Teach Sunday School, VBS, Bible Studies, Preach

Paul is continuing to teach us how not to be a stumbling block to fellow believers. He was willing to become “*all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.*” He was willing to give up his rights in order to save as many people as he could. Paul was willing to do whatever it took to save people. Today people get caught up on MY rights. They make everything about themselves, not Paul.

Paul says that he does everything for the “*sake of the gospel*”. What is the gospel that Paul preached? (See 1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

- The gospel brings salvation (v. 2).
- Jesus died to take away our sins (v. 3)
- He died, was buried and was raised again. (v. 4)
- Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us that it is by grace that we have been saved.
- John 3:16 ties it all together. The whole purpose is “*whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life*” with God.

*“24 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. 25 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. 26 Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. 27 No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”*

In these verses, Paul uses the example of running a race. The Greeks were the creators of the Olympics. The goal of running a race is to win the crown (or olive wreath). He points out that proper training is required to do your best to win. The same thing applies to living your

Christian life. If you don't read God's Word, go to Church, serve God in everything, then you will not grow as a Christian and you will not win the crown from Jesus.

In case you don't remember from our study of Heaven (Week 5) the Bible tells us about 5 Crown Rewards in Heaven:

The Victor's Crown (1 Corinthians 9:25-27)

The Crown of Rejoicing (1 Thessalonians 2:19)

The Crown of Righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8)

The Crown of Life (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10)

<https://davidjeremiah.blog/what-kind-of-rewards-will-believers-receive-in-heaven/>

These crowns are from God so they are eternal.

Paul finishes this chapter with another analogy. He uses boxing. His goal is not to just shadow box but it is to lead others to Christ. The NASB says that he disciplines his body in order to get control of it, so that it does what his mind and heart want. If it does what the world wants then he would not be living as God wants. If he preaches one way and lives another, then what kind of witness would he be. No good to God. This is similar to his discourse in Romans 7:15-20. Controlling the body is critical to living a Christian life and being a good example for others.