

## 1 Corinthians 9

### Verses 1-2:

--Paul had just encouraged the so-called knowledgeable or mature believers to surrender their liberties to care for their weaker brothers and sisters. He had warned them that the refusal to do so would in fact show they were not walking in love but pride and be a sin against the brethren and against Christ.

--Now, it is one thing to say something like that but another thing to do it. That is what we are going to see from Paul in this chapter. He is going to show that he had—and was—doing this for them.

--Paul is not giving a strict defense of his apostleship in these verses but a statement of it—so that he could more clearly prove what he had done with his own “rights”.

--As an apostle, and one free, he was a picture of knowledge and maturity but what had he showed as an example with his rights?

--The Corinthians very existence in Christ was part of ***the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.***

--Paul knew conversion was always a divine work—***I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.*** Paul wasn't out on the street stealing sheep from other folds like the heretics that followed him around—or like those today that try to convert Christians into something else.

--Outward “success” isn't always an easy measuring stick to decipher. That said, it is a decent measurement when it comes to conversion through truth preached Vs. other means.

***\*Galatians 2:8-9: (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.\****

### Verses 3-5

--(3) Paul uses legal terms in ***defense*** and ***examine***. Apparently his actions in this matter of the surrender of “rights” was being used against him. He was charged with some form of hypocrisy. And if we follow his example, so will we all! \*On various levels even such as: Personal, Ministry, entire Church bodies, Movements, etc. . .\*

--(4) Paul moved freely between kosher and nonkosher before the Lord.

--(5) Paul also makes it clear that he has a right to be married and to labor and travel with his wife as many of the other apostles did (Also while being supported).

--Paul says ***believing wife*** or the word could be *sister* because that is the idea. A wife that is also a sister in Christ. Not as the Catholics say: A sister in Christ who is rich and supportive like those that traveled with Christ to help Him.

--Peter was clearly married (**Mat. 8:14; Mk. 1:30**).

--We all know the sad history of abuse in the Catholic church because of the rejection of this clear doctrine in Scripture (of boys and Nuns)! I say this not to slam Catholics but to make it clear to those that may have been taught otherwise that this outcome does not come from God but untaught and sinful men.

#### **Verses 6-7:**

--Here Paul brings up another issue—which he is going to elaborate on as it may have been one of the main accusations of hypocrisy that he wasn't accepting money from the church as others were—which is their right to material support.

--Let me say right off the bat, he is not trying to drum up support. He is showing that he surrendered that right—and still was—for a purpose.

--Paul is now going to prove his right to material support on a number of different levels. I believe he chose this particular topic because of how clearly he could prove that being supported was a right they could not deny.

--**(7)** He begins with three normal life illustrations.

-First, the government pays for soldiers.

-Second, the farmer eats of his own fruit.

-Third, the shepherd drinks the milk of the flock he tends.

#### **Verses 8-12:**

--**(8)** Was what Paul was saying only natural wisdom? No! He proves that it is also found in the Word of God through the law of Moses.

--**(9-10)** He then quotes from **Deuteronomy 25:4** and asks if this was only for oxen to read to know their "rights" or did God have something more to say to us? Certainly, there was a lesson that we see in the character of God in relation to animal provision that can be raised to a higher level in the character of God in relation to human provision.

--If God cares enough to defend the right of an oxen that is plowing the field can take a couple of bites as it works then God also cares enough to defend the right of humans working for Him to have their own provision.

--Each should work with a **hope** of being provided for.

--**(11)** Not only that, but Paul shows that what he brought to them was of much greater value than material things. The gospel and the Word of God had eternal value!

--**(12)** Here Paul begins the turn in his argument. Two things are clear: Paul's right to support from the Corinthians church and the fact that he didn't use that right!

--**Endure** is an interesting Greek word used only a few times in Scripture. It has the idea of suffering in silence. Paul didn't make a stink about what he went through to help establish churches without receiving material support.

--Why did he not use that right? Because he didn't want to hinder the gospel he was bringing to them. Because of love not hypocrisy! **\*2 Cor. 11:7-12\***

### Verses 13-14:

--(13) Paul puts the finishing touches on his proof of rights here. Now to the natural illustrations and the Word of God in the law he adds the structure of God's own house. God ordered that His OT priests who served in spiritual things would be supported with material things.

--(14) Finally, Paul's ends with what he could have just started and finished with: Jesus said so.

**\*Matthew 10:9-10: Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, no staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food.\***

**\*Luke 10:7: And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house.\***

### Verse 15:

--At this point, Paul has firmly established his right to be supported by the Corinthians. Even so, **But** tells us that the argument is changing.

--Paul makes it clear that he is not saying all of this in manipulation or to make them feel ashamed or to give him money (I have to say isn't it interesting that the guy who makes the strongest case in the Bible for ministerial support isn't asking for or accepting any!?). \*Be careful of those working you for money!\*

--Paul makes it clear he will not accept money from them and would rather die than do so! By saying these things Paul is moving the right of support—like the issue marriage he discussed before—as something that must be decided on a personal level. \*He did accept from Philippi\*

--What are the greater issues? Love. The Gospel. The Kingdom of God. Personal call. \*Think of Paul Vs. Peter; George Mueller Vs. John Paton; etc.\*

--What "rights" have we surrendered for the love of God, for the love of others less mature in Christ, or for the service of God in the gospel? \*Not just for missionaries!\*

### Verses 16-18:

--Paul makes it clear he is not boasting in this surrender as something that makes him super spiritual. He says he cannot boast because his preaching of the gospel wasn't just free service to God but a literal and personal commission from God.

--Paul was not free to decide not to preach the gospel!

--(18) Paul's great reward was to come somewhere totally free of all financial ties and preach the gospel **without charge!** He was sharing with no ulterior motives.

--Unfortunately, just as it was then so it is now. There is a lot of money in the god-racket and there are a lot of unsaved folks and worldly saved folks trying to net their share.

**\*2 Corinthians 2:17: For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.\***

--Can I say two things here:

1) This is why we don't push for money at our fellowship. We don't want to be peddlers either—nor do we want to shade the preaching of the gospel of the Word of God.

2) You guys have faithfully given in so many remarkable ways for this church to operate for over 41 years (also have given to support other fellowships around the world!). Thank you!

--Paul makes it clear that he never wanted to **abuse my authority in the gospel**. Instead, by surrendering his rights for love, his personal call, and the sake of the gospel; he made himself an example for them to follow as he said earlier and as he will finish:

**\*4:15-16: For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me.\***

**\*11:1: Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.\***

### **Verses 19-23:**

--(19) Here Paul makes it clear that this principle went beyond receiving support from the church but touched his whole ministry. "Freedom" was not his end goal. The salvation of the lost was! **That I might win the more!**

--Again, this whole discussion is in the context of "liberties" in Christ. What Paul surrendered were things that didn't matter in and of themselves before God. This is personal surrender and not compromise.

--Paul would act like a Jew or Gentile, eat kosher or nonkosher, enter into the conscience of the weak or strong, because he knew none of it mattered to God! \*Remember it was often his practice to go to the synagogues first in a town and then to the Gentiles so this was experience day by day and many probably thought him a hypocrite!\*

--(21) Paul wants to make it clear that he wasn't operating this principle of being **a servant to all** on a lawless level. Instead, in an overlooked and powerful statement, Paul links God's law and Christ's law!

--We are not under the OT law but we are also not lawless. We now follow Christ's law which is found in His clear commands and His life in us through the Holy Spirit.

--(There is no middle ground between these two. We are either fully out from under the OT law of Moses or fully under it. This tends to confuse people still. Christ's law is a totally different entity—though it may have overlap. See: **Galatians 5:3-4**)

--(22) Paul's whole end goal of being **a servant to all** was to **save some!** That word **some** is both encouraging and tragic! Jesus, who surrendered all, only saved some.

--So this becomes a challenge to our interest in the edification of others and our participation in the cause of Christ. Are we only concerned with our own material and spiritual welfare? Are we concerned at all with the spiritual welfare of those around us?

--This is a large dividing factor in spiritual maturity and immaturity. Immaturity only thinks about itself (Think of how we related to parents and others as babies or children Vs. As your kids get older and you expect a certain amount of recognition).

--To be a servant means to be present *to serve* and not only present *to be served*. Jesus taught us that very clearly. Paul also lived it out.

--(23) Paul soldiered, sowed, and shepherded for the gospel and he personally expected a proper return from God. That was his hope and ours.

### **Verses 24-27:**

--(24-25) Paul now takes his example and focuses it into an illustrated exhortation. They would have been very familiar with the athletic games he mentions here.

--First, his encouragement is not to beat everyone else you run with, but to run like the guy who won the race!

--Then he adds that the guy who ran the race and won had to be **temperate** or *self-controlled* in all things. His victory was not happenstance. It was cultivated as a goal.

--We must realize that we are competing or contending with the world, the flesh, and the devil (not our fellow believers). You have an adversary out there! When he finds you on the day of contending will he find you weak and indulgent or strong and focused?

--And on top of that, the guy who ran the race and won with self-denial did it for a corruptible crown. How much more should we also be self-controlled in all things if we are competing for an incorruptible crown?! \*A prize worthy of all the cost it took to obtain it!\*

--(26-27) Here Paul takes the exhortation to himself and adds in another image of a boxer.

--Paul says that his aim is not to run like an *uncertain* or *aimless* runner. Like a runner who has lost sight of the finish line. \*Is our Christian life aimless? If not, *what* are you aiming at? More importantly, *how* are you aiming at it?\*

--Paul also says he does not want to fight like a person who never lands any blows. This is the description of the most futile effort.

--Instead, Paul brings his body (the source of his issues) into subjection. Why? Because he fears ***I myself should become disqualified!***

--Now, some here fear the loss of salvation. Paul has not been talking about salvation this entire passage. He is speaking to the Corinthian believers about their lack of love in the expression of the liberties and then showing them what love would look like (and had looked like to them personally through Paul's own life).

--Paul the apostle is not afraid of losing his salvation. What he fears is missing out on the eternal realities he has been pushing the Corinthians toward.

\*C.H.M. (Short Papers): "The body is a good servant, but a bad master. If not kept down, it will altogether disqualify the servant of Christ for the discharge of his high and holy responsibilities. A person may be a child of God and yet be 'disapproved' as a servant of Christ. To be an efficient servant of Christ involves self-denial, self-judgment, self-emptiness, self-control. *I do not become a child of God by these exercises, but most assuredly, I shall never become a successful servant of Christ without them.*"\*

--The whole point is this: We do not run or fight or work for eternal life. We receive eternal life as a gift. Eternal life must come *before* pleasing service. We cannot be castaway as a son or daughter of God, but we can be disapproved as a servant of Christ or a vessel fit for the Master's use.