

# “Paul’s Example of Christian Liberty”

## 1 Corinthians Chapter 9

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 will be dealing with Christian Liberty.

Chapter 8 - Paul introduced the issue of the Mature Eating meat sacrificed to idols. He put the responsibility on the mature (those who maintain they have liberty) to understand that their liberty can cause a weaker brother to be trained to violate their conscience. This would cause the weaker brother to stumble.

Chapter 9 - Paul will use his calling as an apostle to illustrate this principal introduced in chapter 8.

1Cr 9:1

Status

### 1) Paul’s Rights as an Apostle vs 1-14

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

1Cr 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.

- Paul will use his calling as an apostle to illustrate how the mature use their CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.
- He first must first make clear his calling as an Apostle.
  - Paul was Free (not under the direction of men. Under the direction of Jesus only)
  - Am I not an apostle (One sent with a message; In Paul’s case Jesus sent him)
  - Paul has seen Jesus (Not just a vision but seen him in person)
  - The Corinthian Church was the work of the Lord by Paul
  - The Seal / proof is in the people. Not in a council in Jerusalem.
- Are there Apostles Today? (Prophets also)
  - Scriptures teach us that there were 12 Apostles that were foundational in the church. Of these 12 we see a requirement of this position.

Acts 1:21-22 when calling for a replacement for Judas “*Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection*”

1. Called/Chosen by God (Matthew & Luke - Apostles chosen by Jesus)
  2. Seen Jesus’ ministry Personally
  3. Witness of the Resurrection
  4. Been Taught by the Lord Jesus (John 14:26; Gal 1:12; 1 Cor. 15:3)
  5. Signs and Wonders followed their preaching (Mark 16:14-20)
  6. These 12 had the unique calling to write Scripture (Eph 2:20)
- Other Apostles in the Bible
    - Jesus - The Chief Apostle (Heb 3:1)
    - James the Lord’s Brother (Gal 1:9)  
(Original 2 were son of Alphaeus and Son of Zebedee)
    - Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14)
    - Andronicus and Junias (Romans 16:7)
    - Timothy and Silas (implied in 1 Thess. 2:6)
    - And of course Judas Iscariot and his replacement Matthias (Acts 1:16)
    - And lastly Paul.
  - Apostles Today will never be like the 12. Apostles today have a much diminished role. Their roles may be more identified by other names as well
    1. Bishop
    2. Missionary
    3. Church Planter
  - The TWELVE apostles seem to be a fixed number.
    1. When one betrayed the ministry the others felt the need of a replacement.
    2. When others died, there was no re[placement]
    3. Revelation 21:14 “*And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*”

## Rights

4. Church Fathers and Other Great Men throughout history do not consider themselves apostles.

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

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

- **RIGHT #1** - The Right to eat and drink at the expense of the church.

1Cr 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?

- **RIGHT #2** - The Right to bring along a wife and both he and her be supported by the church.
- Just like the other apostles, James and Peter

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

- **RIGHT #3** - The Right to refrain from secular work and receive support from the church.
- It is interesting that Paul would have a greater respect from the church for being bi-vocational (a tent maker) but in reality it caused the church to think less of him. He had to defend his ministry constantly
- Matthew 10:6-10 *"go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 'And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' 'Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. "Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support."*

1Cr 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?

- Paul brings up 3 examples that everyone knows that the worker is supported by the object of his work.

1. The Soldier - He is supported by the country he defends	<u>An Apostle</u> is in warfare
2. The Farmer - He is supported by the field he tends	is sowing seed
3. The Shepherd - He is supported by animals he pens flock	is feeding the

Not only are there examples in life but in the Law also.

1Cr 9:8 I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things?

1Cr 9:9 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?

- Deuteronomy 25:4 In more primitive agricultural cultures, the method for threshing the grain was done by oxen. Tethered oxen would walk in circles over the grain breaking the grain from the husks. It would be cruel to have the oxen work and not be allowed to eat from that very grain it threshed. This is a principal that God is concerned about.
- Paul takes this principal to personal application by knowing the character of God. God is concerned for you and me at the very least the same as an oxen.
- Paul is telling them that those ministering to the church have rights for financial support.
  - 1 Timothy 5:17-18 *"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages.""*

1Cr 9:10 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.

1Cr 9:11 If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

- A plowman and a thresher have a hope as they work for sharing in the crops.
- One who sows spiritual things have a hope as they work for sharing material things.

1Cr 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.

- Paul strongly asserts his right for support.
- But he also, just as strongly asserts his right to refuse if it hinders the gospel.
- Paul's priority is not his salary but the gospel being preached and received.
  
- Remember the context. Paul in chapter 8 is answering the question if it was acceptable to eat meat sacrificed to idols.

1Cr 9:13 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?

1Cr 9:14 So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

- The Lord directed (ordained or commanded) this:  
Matthew 10:10 "the worker is worthy of his support"  
Luke 10:8 "Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you"
- This statement is a clear summation of the right for an apostle or minister to receive support for the work in the ministry.
- But too often there is no attention to the WORK of the soldier, farmer, shepherd, plowman, thresher or the oxen. There is work in the ministry. Someone who receives support from God people should earn those monies by working hard.
- "If a man who does not labour takes his maintenance from the Church of God, it is not only a domestic theft but a sacrilege. He that gives up his time to this labour has a right to the support of himself and his family: he who takes more than is sufficient for this purpose is a covetous hireling. He who does nothing for the cause of God and religion, and yet obliges the Church to support him, and minister to his idleness, irregularities, luxury, avarice, and ambition, is a monster for whom human language has not yet got a name." (Clarke)

## 2) Paul Refuses to Claim His Apostolic Rights vs 15-27

How can Paul refuse a right that seems so necessary?

1. His Reward
2. His FlexABILITY
3. His Discipline

### His Reward

1 Cr 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;

- Verse 1 and verse 19 Paul declares "He is FREE" He is not obligated to any man. There was not to a church board or a denomination that supported him and with that directed him to do things or to limit him from doing things.
- Paul CHOSE to not claim rights due him as an apostle.
- He is making sure the Corinthian understand he is teaching them about CHRISTIAN LIBERTY not trying to drum up money.

for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one.

1Cr 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.

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

1Cr 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.

- Paul makes his boast, "I fulfill my calling (*to preach the gospel*) whether I receive compensation or not"
- Paul says "he would rather die than not be able to make that claim.
- He makes the distinction he fulfills this boast voluntarily, he has a reward.

Jesus said "I have food to eat that you do not know about." John 4:32 Same is true of Paul's reward.

- If he is paid, he has a stewardship entrusted to him. There is nothing wrong with a stewardship but then the preaching can easily become an obligation rather than a calling.
- Paul's reward - He preaches the gospel without charge.
  
- Jesus taught that there will be those that abuse this right of support.
  - Matthew 7:15 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are *ravenous* wolves."
  - The Greek word for "ravenous" is "harpax" which means extortionist / thief

## His FlexABILITY

1Cr 9:19 For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.

- Though he was free, if Paul had the opportunity to win lost slaves -- He would enslave himself.
- The goal wasn't identifying with his target group. The goal was salvation.

1Cr 9:20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law;

- Paul was a Jew. But he had received a fulfillment of the Jewish hope in Christ Jesus. He was a Christian. If Paul had the opportunity to win Jews -- He would clearly be Jewish.
- Paul was not bound by the Law (rules and rituals that governed acceptance by God), if he had the opportunity to win someone who is under the Law -- He would fulfill the Law.
  - Acts 21:23-26 Paul fulfilled a Jewish Purification rite
  - Acts 16:3 Paul had Timothy circumcised.

1Cr 9:21 to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law.

- Paul was a Jew (People of the Law) But if he had the opportunity to win those who were Gentile (without the Law) -- He would be a Roman citizen
- IMPORTANT NOTE: Paul is not saying he was lawless. "though not being without the law"
  - Murder is still murder; Idolatry is still idolatry, Adultery is still adultery; Blasphemy is still blasphemy, Theft is still theft...

Remember the context? CHRISTIAN LIBERTY - the eating of meat and the weak brother (Chapter 8)

1Cr 9:22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.

- Paul was clearly mature in the Lord. Strong in the might of the Lord. But if he had the opportunity to win the weak -- He would humble himself.
- The goal wasn't becoming all things, THE GOAL IS SALVATION!

1Cr 9:23 I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

- The gospel is the reason Paul does anything.
- Paul is not trying to become a Christian with this flexibility. A better understanding of Paul's meaning is found in the KJV where they add the words "with you". Paul wanted the hearers of the gospel to be partakers of salvation with him.

## His Discipline

1Cr 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

1Cr 9:25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

- In Corinth there was the "Isthmian Games" second only to the ancient Olympics. The Corinthians would understand this illustration clearly.
- For a competitor to be eligible to participate, he had to move to Corinth and train for 10 months for the games.
- These who participate live a self-controlled life. Athletes carefully prepare for the moment. How much more should the Christian carefully prepare for the opportunities that come. For the Christian the moment is eternal in weight. Eternal for those that may be saved.
- In the games there is only one prize for the one who comes in first place.
- But for the Christian there are many who receive rewards. And the rewards are not laurels wreaths and trophies,
  - but an imperishable crown of righteousness      2 Timothy 4:8
  - but an imperishable crown of life                      James 1:12
  - but an imperishable crown of glory                      1 Peter 5:4

Revelation 4 we will cast our crowns at His feet when we see Him.

1Cr 9:26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air;

1Cr 9:27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

- The context is CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.
- There needs to be a trained or practiced discipline in a Christian's life. Yes, there are now many things lawful to the Christian. But not all things are beneficial.
- "*Disqualification*" is not loss of salvation but loss of reward (crown)
- The Christian discipline his life so not only he himself can win the crown but that others too may receive the crown.

**"Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible<sup>®</sup>,  
Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973,  
1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation  
Used by permission." (www.Lockman.org)**