

1 CORINTHIANS 9:1–18, TO THE CHURCH OF GOD

¹Am 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? ²Even 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.

³This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. ⁴Don't we have the right to food and drink? ⁵Don'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? ⁶Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living?

⁷Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? ⁸Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? ⁹For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain."^[a] Is it about oxen that God is concerned? ¹⁰Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. ¹¹If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? ¹²If 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. ¹³Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? ¹⁴In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

¹⁵But 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. I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of this boast. ¹⁶Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! ¹⁷If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. ¹⁸What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it.

^[a] Deuteronomy 25:4

Discussion Questions (Choose a manageable number to discuss)

1. What is the bottom-line issue in the chapter Pastor Josh Moody is preaching from this Sunday and next? (See verses 1 and 19.)
2. What is the implied answer to the entitlement question Paul raises at the outset of this passage? (See verse 12.)
3. What general principle does Paul's quotation from Deuteronomy (in verse 9) set out?
4. For the Corinthians, do you think the analogy to temple worship (in verse 13) brought to mind pagan or Jewish practice (as in Lev. 7:32, 36 and Num. 18:8–9)?
5. To what command of the Lord (verse 14) did Pastor Josh say Paul was probably referring? (See Luke 9:3–4; 10:7.)
6. Did Paul usually draw on his right (spelled out in verse 14) to be supported? (See Phil. 2:25; 4:14–18.)
7. Paul decided (2 Cor. 11:8–9) against using this right while at Corinth. What (verses 12 and 15–18) were his reasons?
8. For some church has become boring. Pastor Josh conceded this could be so if Christianity is about being a moral people who follow a list of rules. But Paul, he asserted, thought in terms of a total revolution. What was Paul's driving force? (See Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 9:22.)
9. How does illustrating the gospel make articulating it more effective? (See 1 Cor. 11:1.)
10. What rights, if surrendered, could make the gospel irresistible to unbelieving neighbors?