

I Corinthians Lesson # 20
Paul's Apostleship
Pentwater Bible Church
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It is apparent that some were questioning Paul's apostleship as he has engaged in some serious defense in many of his books. In II Corinthians Chapters 10-13 he has given a very comprehensive defense and exposition of his apostleship. Here too in the ninth chapter of I Corinthians he addresses this subject too. Paul steadfastly refused to derive any material support for his work. He did this so no one could say that he was motivated by money in his efforts to bring the gospel to the Gentiles.

II Corinthians 2: 17 For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

I Corinthians 9: 1-2 Am I am not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

Paul begins this section of Scripture presenting his credentials for apostleship. It is helpful for us to firmly realize Paul's place in the Lord's grand plan for His work on this earth. Some denominations teach that Paul is not ordained to write biblical books that have any authority. Paul here disputes this strongly. Obviously some Corinthians thought the same thing. Only a small group of believers were apostles. In order to show that one was an apostle he had to verify the following:

1. A commission directly from Jesus in the sight of witnesses, or confirmed by others. One other sub qualification was the individual must have seen the Lord after His resurrection. For Paul this account was recorded in Acts 9:3-18.
2. The true apostle must have the ability to perform signs and wonders and mighty acts to confirm their message (Acts 13: 9-12; II Corinthians 12:12).
3. Finally, the true apostle must have evidence of a successful ministry (Acts 18:1-17). With the proper credentials Paul's message is all the more persuasive.

Paul returned repeatedly to the theme of this verse (1 Cor. 9:2) that the Corinthians themselves were his vindication (2 Cor. 3:1-3; 5:12; 7:14-16; 8:24).

I Corinthians 9:3 Mine answer to them that do examine me is this,

Paul's defense begins here which discusses the rights he had willingly forfeited. Paul's defense, then, was an explanation of why he refused to be maintained at the church's expense even though he had a right to such support.

I Corinthians 9:4 -6 Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?

The word power (right) in these verses is the same word (*exousia*) translated "freedom" in 8:9. It links the chapters, though Paul's subject here was not sacrificial meat but *ordinary* food. To bring out the meaning of these rhetorical questions the phrase "at the expense of the church" could be added to verses 4-5 (cf. Matt. 10:10-11). He was simply saying it was his right to get paid for what he was doing but was not going to take advantage of that right. Paul was not alone in refusing this right but had an ally in Barnabas. Many other traveling preachers of that day lived by the donations they received. Some even doubted his apostleship because he did not exercise his right to support.

I Corinthians 9: 7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

Paul saw the right of support as a principle, which extended beyond the apostles to others in the church; he illustrated the point along six different lines. The first was custom. The soldier, farmer, and shepherd are all supported by their work.

I Corinthians 9:8-10 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

Old Testament itself affirmed the principle of proper remuneration. It is found in the context of Deuteronomy 25:4 which Paul quoted. That chapter contains instructions not about animal husbandry but human relationships. Not muzzling an ox, therefore, was a proverbial expression concerning just remuneration, properly understood and interpreted as such by Paul. Animals were used to break down grain by moving in a circle with the grain under their hooves. They were allowed to eat some of what they were working on. The illustration says that Christian workers should get paid from the donations the Church receives for their work.

I Corinthians 9: 11-12 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power

over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

Paul's third illustration concerned a basic principle of community reciprocity: beneficial service should be rewarded. If Paul had been used to bring spiritual riches to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:5), material recompense was surely appropriate. A fourth line of appeal was made to the precedent of other Christian leaders. Paul had earlier alluded to the ministry of Peter (Cephas) (v. 5) who was also supported by the church. The same was probably also true of Apollos (1:12; 3:4-6, 22; 4:6; 16:12). If the church supported them, Paul had a right to support.

Yet Paul did not exercise this right (cf. 8:9) because he did not want to hinder the response of anyone to the gospel. Had he been materially recompensed for his ministry, some might have presumed he was simply another itinerant educator motivated by profits (cf. 2 Cor. 2:17) and would have refused him a hearing. To avoid being a "stumbling block" (1 Cor. 8:9) to any, Paul relinquished his right to receive support from those to whom he ministered.

1 Corinthians 9:13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?

Paul then offered a fifth example in support of the right of remuneration by citing the practice of the priesthood. Old Testament priests were remunerated for their service (Num. 18:8-32), and so were the pagan priests with whom the Corinthians were probably more familiar (cf. 1 Cor. 8:10).

1 Corinthians 9: 14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

In the sixth place Paul appealed to the strongest support of all, the instruction of Jesus that those who give out the gospel should derive support from it.

Luke 10: 1-12 After these things the LORD appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again. And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into

the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.

I Corinthians 9: 15 But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

With his arguments completed Paul had established his rights in relation to the Corinthian church. However, he affirmed once again (cf. v. 12) his refusal to exercise those rights. He expressed *one* reason in verse 12, a desire to avoid any hint of profit motivation in his ministry. A second and related reason was now stated: the opportunity to affirm the integrity of his commitment to the ministry (cf. 2 Cor. 11:9-12). This was Paul's boast: he ministered *willingly and freely* from his heart (cf. 2 Cor. 2:17).

I Corinthians 9: 16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

Paul is simply saying that the Lord has compelled him to do this. It was not of his own accord. Like Jonah, Paul was compelled to preach (cf. 1 Cor. 1:17), and like that prophet, woe to him if he shirked his task.

I Corinthians 9: 17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

The condition, if I preach out of his own will, was not true of Paul as he had just said, so he had no claim to any special recompense since he was simply discharging the trust committed to him just like the Lord did with the seventy He sent out.

I Corinthians 9: 18 What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

Did he then not have any reward? Yes; First, he had his boast that he offered the gospel free of charge, and no one could deny that Second, he had the opportunity to see the gospel at work among those to whom he preached and these results, the believers themselves, were his reward. Paul had shunned material recompense, but he was not without a reward or return for his labor. He had the joy of reaping. To enhance the harvest he would gladly give up certain rights, among them the right to material support, in order to enjoy both the integrity of his boast about his ministry and the results of his ministry

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