

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 27TH, 2022 // BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

MY DEFENSE (1 CORINTHIANS 9:1-7) PAUL IS AN EXAMPLE OF SACRIFICE

Paul taught that the Corinthian Christians should be willing to let go of their "rights" to eat meat sacrificed to idols.

- In order to use himself as an example, Paul would first defend his position as an Apostle, and **show how he had given up "rights" afforded to him for the sake of the gospel.**

"THE SEAL OF MY APOSTLESHIP"

Paul asks four rhetorical questions that should remove any doubt that he is an Apostle. The fourth question was directed at the Corinthian Christians, showing that they were brought to Christ through Paul's "work in the Lord."

- **The Corinthian Christians were proof of Paul's apostleship.**

A TOUCH OF SARCASM

Paul offered a defense through questions with obvious answers. First, he asked, "do we not have the right to food and drink as they ministered?" Second, he asked, do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife like other apostles and Cephas (Peter)? His final question was about Barnabas and himself being the only ones required to work for support.

THEY MISUNDERSTOOD HIS SACRIFICE

Those who doubted Paul's apostleship and judged his teaching on refraining from eating meat sacrificed to idols thought that his refusal to take advantage of his rights proved that he lacked those rights.

- Paul countered this thought by affirming those rights and explaining why he was willing to give them up.

COMMON DAILY LIFE EXAMPLES

Paul, to build his case even further, spoke to some real-life scenarios that offered further evidence in which he was afforded certain rights and he willingly chose to lay down.

- He showed that a soldier does not serve at his own expense, a farmer eats from what they produce, and shepherds drink milk from their flock.

WE ENDURE (1 CORINTHIANS 9:8-12) MILLION-DOLLAR QUESTION

When it came to Paul having rights as an apostle, he wisely addressed the question, "are these expectations merely from the perspective of men or does God confirm them as well?"

- To show that God agreed with these rights, Paul quotes Deut. 25:4 that says, "**Do not muzzle an ox while it treads grain.**"

TREADING GRAIN

Two practices were used for treading grain in biblical times. In the first, stalks of grain would be laid out on a flat hard surface, called the threshing floor, and the ox would pull a weighted board across the grain. In the second, the ox would simply walk across it with their hooves treading it under the weight of their own body.

"GOD SAID IT FOR OUR SAKE"

Similarly, if it is considered cruel to muzzle an ox and keep it from eating the product of its work, the Apostles should be allowed to receive support from those they minister to.

- The worker should not feel abused or used. Instead, they should be able to operate in the hopes that they are going to be taken care of.

ENDURE HARDSHIPS FOR THE GOSPEL

Just as Paul affirms his right to receive support from those he ministered to, he quickly affirms his right to not use it.

- Paul is not condoning ministers getting paid to the detriment of the church. Instead, he said, "**we endure everything so that we will not hinder the gospel of Christ.**"

I AM COMPELLED (1 CORINTHIANS 9:13-18) EXEMPLIFIED AND COMMANDED

In one final attempt to show that he had a right to receive pay, Paul shows that the OT priest and Levites got their food from the temple and shared in what was offered on the altar.

- Paul goes beyond the OT examples and points out that Jesus commanded that those who preach the gospel should earn their living by the gospel.

"DEPRIVE ME OF MY BOAST"

Paul did not write this section of his letter so that he could receive financial support from the Corinthians.

- He passionately claimed that he would rather die than for someone to get the impression that he preached for the money. **To pervert his reason for preaching would have robbed him of his joy.**

"IF I PREACH, I HAVE NOTHING TO BOAST OF"

Paul started his letter by encouraging the Corinthian Christians to boast only in the Lord.

- Paul essentially is saying that there are no prideful achievements to be had in preaching the gospel. **He did not create the narrative he teaches, Jesus did. Paul simply had a calling to teach what Jesus has done.**

"I AM ENTRUSTED WITH A COMMISSION"

Paul taught out of necessity and did not rely on an earthly reward for preaching the gospel.

He knew God was faithful and in honoring Him, Paul would receive his reward from the Father.

- Whether preaching was Paul's will or not was of little consequence to him. **He had been commissioned by God to preach.**

WIN THE PRIZE (1 CORINTHIANS 9:19-27) "FREE FROM ALL"

Paul says, "I am free from all and not anyone's servant, but I have made myself a servant to everyone."

- Paul willingly gave up his rights and preferences so that he could better serve those around him. He, "**in humility, considered others as more important than himself**" (Philippians 2:3-4).

"BECOME ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE"

Paul continued observing Jewish traditions and ceremonies so that he might reach more Jews, yet to the Gentiles he set aside Levitical law to reach more non-Jews.

- Paul won people to Jesus by being aware of their needs and finding commonality with everyone. **We must reach people where they are and expect change later.**
- When Paul said he "became all thing to all people," **this does not mean that he changed the gospel message depending on who he was talking to.**
- **The message was consistent, and only his behavior and approach would change based on who he was trying to reach.**
- In a perfect display of what it means to become "all things to all people," Paul uses examples of athletes that his audience would have been familiar with.
- The Corinthians would have been familiar with the analogies used by Paul because of the Isthmian Games held there, which were second to only the ancient Olympics.

RUNNERS IN A RACE

The first point Paul makes in his analogy is that in a race **not everyone wins.**

- Not everyone who starts in a life of being a Christ-follower will endure and see it through to the end. Just like a runner in a race, **we must run in a way as to get the prize.**
- Then Paul points out that **every athlete must train, deny self, and sacrifice in order to win.**
- **As Christ-followers we train in the Word and prayer, we deny ourselves for the sake of the gospel, and sacrifice for eternal glory. We do not seek to win "crowns that will not last."**

WARNING TO THOSE WHO ARE RUNNING

We do not run aimlessly. We have a finish line that we are running towards and have a target we are trying to hit, so do not fight like a man boxing the air.

- Instead, Paul says we are to "**beat our bodies" into submission so that we are not "disqualified" by those we are preaching to.**

TREADING GRAIN

- This principle is about more than just the physical and financial rights that are to be extended to those called to work for the Lord. **Those who are called must "eat of their work" first.**
- **We must always apply what we see in the Word to our own lives so that we are better equipped to see it work in the lives of others.**

WHAT ARE OUR PRIORITIES?

- Paul said the mature believers in Corinth should be willing to set aside their rights for the new believer. **We should not place a higher priority on our rights than on edifying the church.**
- **Do we hinder the gospel with misplaced priorities?**
- **Our priority should be to follow Matthew 6:33!**

I AM COMPELLED TO PREACH

- Paul felt he had no choice but to share his faith. He was compelled by the grace of God through Jesus Christ to tell everyone the gospel.
- **The blessing of the gospel message is too great a message to keep to ourselves.**
- **May we find the same sense of compulsion inside of us!**