

"Do We Not Have a Right?"

1 Cor. 9:1-14

Celebrating the Centrality of Christ in the Local Assembly

Chapter nine is a part of the larger section that runs from chapter eight through chapter ten. The entire passage is dealing with issues of liberty. Remember the context: Paul is speaking to them about their "rights" based on their "knowledge" of eating meat sacrificed to idols in a temple restaurant. Paul will ask them to forego that "right", even as he foregoes his own rights as an apostle; but Paul will also use the occasion to defend his apostolic position before the doubting Corinthians.

Here the issue is whether Paul has the liberty to be paid for his services to the church. The verbal barrage is relentless. What Paul will show us is that he was willing to give up his personal rights in order that the gospel might go forth among those who have yet to believe.

Paul gives six reasons why he had the right to be supported by the churches to whom he ministered.

I. Paul was an apostle (vv. 1-6).

"Verse one is composed of four questions. All of them are rhetorical, the answer to each being assumed (vv. 1, 2)." There are seventeen questions in all. Their intent is to show Paul as a worthy and qualified apostle.

In verse three Paul uses the language of the court. The word **defense (apologia)** and **examine (anakrino)** are both legal words, taken from the Roman law court; Paul feels like he's on trial. Paul addresses three "rights" that he has as an apostle.

- A. As an apostle he had the right to eat and to drink (v. 4).
- B. As an apostle he had the right to take a wife along during ministry travel (v. 5).
- C. As an apostle he had the right to be supported for his ministry involvement (v. 6).

II. It is customary (v. 7).

Paul pictures the church as an army, as a vineyard, and as a flock □ all of whose workers have a right to be supported.

III. It is God's Law (vv. 8-10).

The principle of workers being paid for their work is not merely according to human

Continued on the other side...

judgment, as in the previous illustrations. God's Law teaches the same thing (cf. Deut. 25:4).

The point is not the ox, but the fair and honest treatment of people. This same principle is brought out and used in 1 Timothy 5 when speaking of Elders.

1 Timothy 5:17-18

The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

Paul uses similar language in 2 Timothy 2:1-7. Scriptural precept dictates providing for those who work.

IV. It is done for others (vv. 11, 12).

The church was already supporting their pastors. Since this was true, their support of Paul was not out of place or unusual.

Paul notes this same principle in Romans 15:27.

Romans 15:26-27

For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. **For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.**

This same point is brought out in Galatians 6:6-10. The principle is somewhat elastic, but its direct meaning is in the area of supporting financially or materially those who have invested themselves completely to the communication of God's Word.

V. It is the Jewish custom (v. 13).

Since the founding of the priesthood in Israel those who served were supported by the tithes of crops and animals as well as sacrifices from the people to whom they ministered in the temple, and before that in the tabernacle. (Num. 18:8-24). (MacArthur, 1 Corinthians, 205).

VI. Jesus ordained it (v. 14).

The summary in verse 14 is conclusive; the paid ministry is a legitimate principle today, because Paul's arguments apply to more than just apostles.