

CHAPTER NINE

Analysis

- A. Paul presents his own rights as an apostle in relation to the principle of Christian liberty (1-12a).
1. In a series of questions which require affirmative answers, he presents his rights as a Christian and as an apostle (1-3).
 - a) He asks the question about his rights as a Christian: I am free, am I not? That is, free to abstain from food that might cause a brother to stumble.
 - b) He asks questions that show his right as an apostle:
 - (1) I am an apostle, am I not? The questions that follow prove that he was.
 - (2) I have seen our Lord Jesus, have I not?
 - (3) You are my work in the Lord, are you not?
 - c) He shows why the Corinthians cannot deny that he is an apostle.
 - (1) Others might deny it.
 - (2) The Corinthians cannot for they are his converts and the seal of his apostleship in the Lord.
 - (3) This is his defense to those who question his apostleship.
 2. In another series of questions he proves his right to support while preaching the gospel (2-12a).
 - a) He asks questions that indicate some of his rights.
 - (1) It isn't that we do not have a right to food and drink, is it? Negative answer is implied.
 - (2) It isn't that we do not have a right to be accompanied by a wife—a sister in Christ, that is, a Christian wife—is it? Negative answer implied.
 - (3) He has this right even as the other apostles and the brethren of the Lord and Cephas, has he not?
 - (4) Or is it only Paul and Barnabas who do not have the right to be supported by their work.
 - b) He raises questions that show that workers do receive support from their tasks.
 - (1) The questions on the human level.
 - (a) What soldier serves at his own charges?
 - (b) Who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof?

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- (c) Or who feedeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock?
 - (2) The Scriptures say the same thing.
 - (a) He indicates this by a question.
 - (b) He quotes from the Law of Moses, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn." See also Deut. 25:4.
 - c) He asks questions that show how this Scripture applies to him.
 - (1) Is it for the oxen that God careth, or does He say it for our sake?
 - (2) He shows why it applies to him as a gospel preacher.
 - (a) He that ploweth ought to plow in hope.
 - (b) He that thresheth ought to thresh in hope of partaking of the harvest.
 - d) He raises questions about sharing of spiritual and carnal things.
 - (1) If we sowed unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter that we reap your carnal (material) things?
 - (2) If others have this right over you, do not we yet more?
- B. Paul shows why he did not make use of his right to receive support from preaching the gospel (12b-18).
- 1. He did not use this right, but endured all things (12b-14).
 - a) The reason he didn't was that he might cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.
 - b) He adds additional proof, however, that he did have the right to support.
 - (1) Know ye not that they that minister about sacred things eat of the temple?
 - (2) And they that wait upon the altar have their portion with the altar?
 - (3) In the same manner, the Lord ordained that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel.
 - 2. He did not use his right, neither was he writing that it might be done in his case (15-18).
 - a) He declares that he would rather die than let any man make his glorying void.
 - (b) He explains his glorying in relation to the gospel.

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- (1) He did not glory over the fact of his preaching the gospel, for it was necessary for him to do so and, he adds, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel."
 - (2) He could look at his preaching in two ways:
 - (a) If he preached the gospel of his own will he had a reward.
 - (b) If he did not do so of his own will, he had a stewardship entrusted to him.
 - (3) His reward, then, was preaching the gospel without charge. In so doing, however, he was not using his right in the gospel to the full.
- C. Paul explains that his purpose in preaching the gospel is not to receive support, but to win some (19-27).
1. Although he is free from all men, he made himself a slave to all that he might gain more converts to Christ (19-22).
 - a) To the Jews, he became as a Jew to gain Jews.
 - b) To them under the law, as under the law, although he was not himself under the law, that he might gain them that are under the law.
 - c) To them that are without law, he was as without law; but this does not mean that he was without law to God, for he was under law to Christ. This was for the purpose of winning them that were without law.
 - d) To the weak, he became weak that he might win the weak.
 - e) He became all things to all men that by all means he might win some.
 2. He explains that he was doing all things for the gospel's sake (23-27).
 - a) His purpose was that he might share in the blessings promised in the gospel (23).
 - b) He illustrates his purpose by reference to the athletic games (24-27).
 - (1) He reminds them that those who strive in the games exercise self control in all things.
 - (2) Their goal was to receive a corruptible crown.
 - (3) In contrast, the Christian's goal was an incorruptible crown.
 - (4) Consequently, he was not running uncertainly (without a goal) or boxing as one who beats the air.
 - (5) His aim was to conquer the body, lest after having preached to others he should be rejected.

Text

9:1-12a. Am I not free? am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? 2 If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. 3 My defence to them that examine me is this. 4 Have we no right to eat and to drink? 5 Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? 6 Or I only and Barnabas, have we not a right to forbear working? 7 What soldier ever serveth at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? 8 Do I speak these things after the manner of men? or saith not the law also the same? 9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. Is it for the oxen that God careth, 10 or saith he it assuredly for our sake? Yea, for our sake it was written: because he that ploweth ought to plow in hope, and he that thresheth, to thresh in hope of partaking. 11 If we sowed unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things? 12 If others partake of this right over you, do not we yet more?

*Paul's Rights as an Apostle (1-12a)**Commentary*

Am I not free?—This chapter must be read in the light of what the apostle had just written in chapter eight. A Christian had a right to eat the meats that had been sacrificed to idols because he knew the truth about idols. This right—translated “liberty” in the American Standard Version—was not to be used in such a manner as to cause the weak brother to stumble.

Paul was just as free as any other Christian to exercise his judgment about eating this kind of food, for the truth of Christ had set him free from all rules and regulations and superstitions of men. It had, indeed, set him free from the bondage of the Jewish law. It had set him free from the bondage of sin. See John 8:32 and Rom. 6:22. It was for freedom that Christ had set him free, and he was not becoming entangled again in any yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1). But what he had recommended to others about the limitation of Christian liberty, he was free to observe for himself (8:13).

am I not an apostle?—All this group of questions are so framed as to suggest affirmative answers. “I am an apostle, am I not?” The question of his freedom and of his apostleship could only be answered by “yes.” The question as to his apostleship lays the ground for his argument that he has the right to expect material support from

those to whom he preached the gospel—a right which he was to forgo.

have I not seen Jesus Our Lord?—Again, the affirmative answer is suggested. "I have seen Jesus Our Lord, have I not?" This was an essential qualification of an apostle. Their task was to be witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 1:22). It is true that others of the apostles had been eyewitnesses of the things that occurred during the ministry of the Lord (Lk 1:2; II Pet. 1:16; Heb. 2:3-4), but the essential thing was that they should be witnesses of the resurrection (Acts 2:32).

This was so important in the life and ministry of Paul that Luke who records the story of his conversion mentions it three times, twice in Paul's own words (Acts 9:3-6; 22:5-11; 26:12-20). In the list of appearances of Our Lord, Paul gives this humble but significant testimony: "and last of all, as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also (I Cor. 15:8).

are not ye my work in the Lord?—We can show that an affirmative answer is implied by stating in this way: "You are my work in the Lord, are you not?" No one of them could deny it. They had heard the gospel from the lips of the apostle. Their faith in Christ depended upon it. Their very hope of eternal life in Him was based on the gospel Paul preached. When they admitted this, they also had to admit that he was an apostle and that he was free in the Lord.

If to others I am not an apostle.—Paul had his critics at Corinth, but it is doubtful if the members of the church were in the group that denied his apostleship. Some were for Cephas, some for Apollos, and some for Paul. But this seems to be a matter of leaders and not a question as to Paul's apostleship. Then who were they who were denying that he was an apostle? In all probability, the Judaizers. These, whom he calls false brethren, had disrupted the liberty of the churches of Galatia and had attempted to do so in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:4-5). Paul mentions these critics in II Cor 10:7-11. "If any man trusteth in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again with himself, that, even as he is Christ's, so also are we. For though I should glory somewhat abundantly concerning the authority (which the Lord gave for building you up, and not casting you down), I shall not be put to shame: that I may not seem as if I would terrify you by my letters. For his letters, they say, are weighty and strong; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account. Let such a one reckon this, that, what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such are we also in deed when we are present." He speaks of

them ironically as "the very chiefest apostles" (II Cor 11:15). He says that "such are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ" (II Cor 11:13).

yet at least I am with you.—The Corinthians of all people could scarcely afford to deny his apostleship for they had become Christians through his preaching. This reminder also lays the ground for his claim to the right to support from them which he develops later in the chapter. "He could not prove to any one that he had seen the Lord; but the Corinthians at any rate had no need of such evidence to convince them that he was an Apostle. He seems to be glancing at the rival teachers who questioned his claim to the title (Plummer, I C C, *First Corinthians*, p. 178)

for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.—A seal stamped on a document certified that it was genuine and that it was trustworthy. The Christian life of the Corinthians was the seal that certified that Paul was a genuine apostle of Christ and that he was to be trusted. He adds, "My defense to them that examine me is this." Some commentators take this statement to refer to what follows, but it makes good sense to take it with what goes before, for it really completes his statement about the defense he had made for his apostleship. *Have we no right to eat and drink?*—This question containing a double negative is so framed as to imply a negative answer: "It isn't that we do not have a right to eat and drink, is it?" Who could deny him the right to food and drink as a result of his work? Having established, at least to the Corinthians, that he was an apostle, he began a series of arguments to establish his right to support.

right to lead about a wife that is a believer.—His question is about his right to be accompanied on his missionary journeys by a wife who is a Christian. This had nothing to do with whether or not he was married. See chapter seven for the discussion of this point. He is merely arguing his right to do so, not stating as a fact that he is being accompanied by a wife. This, it seems, is another of his rights which he had given up for the sake of his work in the gospel.

The word translated "believer" is actually "sister." The misunderstanding of this text that was used by some at a later time to support the practice of entering into some kind of "spiritual" marriage has no support in the correct interpretation of the passage. "Sister" must mean that the wife was to be a Christian. His question was: "It isn't that we do not have a right to be accompanied on our journeys by a Christian wife, is it?" Who could deny him the right?

the rest of the apostles.—Paul had the same right as the rest of the apostles to claim support for himself and a family. We have nothing in Scripture to show that any of them were married except Cephas. One of the outstanding miracles of Jesus' ministry was the healing of Peter's wife's mother (Lk 4:38). But the absence of evidence does not prove that the others were not married, and Paul seems to imply that they were.

and the brethren of the Lord.—When Jesus came into His own country and entered the synagogue and taught the people, they were astonished at His wisdom and said, "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James and Joseph, and Simon? And his sisters, are they not all with us (Matt. 13:55-56)? It would seem that those who knew the family of Jesus understood that His brethren were the children of Joseph and Mary. This is the natural thing to suppose, although some have suggested that these whom Matthew calls brothers were cousins or the children of Joseph by some former marriage. Such inventions of the imagination are not necessary in the light of the plain statement of Matthew (Mat. 1:25). After the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary reared a family who are known as "the brethren of the Lord."

John records that "even his brethren did not believe on him" during His ministry (John 7:5). But this does not indicate that they joined with the Jews who hated Him and sought to kill Him (John 7:1). Some of His friends at one time thought that "he was beside himself" (Mark 3:21), and came to rescue Him from the crowds that gathered about Him to the extent that "they could not so much as eat bread" (Mark 3:20). It was at this time that His mother and His brethren came and standing outside the circle of the crowd sent unto Him asking Him to go home with them (Mark 3:31). This certainly indicates that His family held Him in high esteem even though they did not at the time recognize Him as Messiah. It was not until they were compelled to do so by the force of the evidence of His resurrection that they were found in the company of believers (Acts 1:14). It is interesting to note that James, the author of the epistle that bears his name and (we suppose) the brother of Jesus, calls himself "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1). This is one of the strongest statements of the deity of Jesus that we have. His brother had known Him as the oldest one of the family and surely as a wonderful brother, and, when all the evidence was in, they too accepted Him as their Lord. Paul mentions "James the Lord's brother" as one of those whom he saw when he went to Jerusalem to visit Cephas (Gal. 1:19).

We have no record in Scripture as to the marital status of these brethren of Our Lord, but we can safely assume that Paul did know about them and that this information was generally known. His point in mentioning them in exactly the same as in mentioning the right of the apostles to receive support for their families.

and Cephas?—The prominence of Cephas (Peter) justified Paul in mentioning him, although everyone knew that he was one of the apostles. His prominence led some to ascribe preeminence to Peter, something that is in no way supported in Scriptures. Paul mentions him because he must have been well known to the Corinthians (1:12; 3:22). His point is that he had just as much right as Cephas to receive his support from those to whom he preached the gospel.

Or I only and Barnabas.—It is interesting that Paul should mention Barnabas, his associate at Antioch and companion on the first missionary journey (Acts 11:22-26; 13:1-3). They had parted company over John Mark just before starting the second journey that finally led Paul to Corinth (Acts 15:2, 25-26, 31-41). The reference to Mark in Col. 4:10 and II Tim. 4:11 and this one to Barnabas suggest that the "sharp contention" between them was a matter of policy and not a personal quarrel unbecoming to Christian brethren.

Were Paul and Barnabas, for some strange reason, to be excluded from this right to refrain from working for their living in order that their whole time might be given to the preaching of the gospel? Paul is only arguing for the right. The Corinthians were well aware of the fact that when he came to Corinth he made his own living, at least in part, by tentmaking (Acts 18:1-3). But tentmaking, it seems, was only temporary, for other churches sent support to him from time to time. "Ye yourselves also know, ye Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving but ye only; for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need" (Phil. 4:15-16). Paul called the attention of the Corinthians to this later. He asked, "Did I commit a sin a abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I preached to you the gospel of God for naught? I robbed other churches, taking wages of them that I might minister unto you; and when I was present with you and was in want, I was not a burden on any man; for the brethren, when they came from Macedonia, supplied the measure of my want; and in everything I kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself" (II Cor. 11:7-9).

Do I speak these things after the manner of men?—In arguing his right to receive support, Paul turns to some everyday examples to prove his point. The soldier doesn't provide his own rations; the one who plants a vineyard expects to eat the fruit it produces; the one who feeds a flock expects to use the milk of the flock for food. All of these are supported by the work they do.

or saith not the law the same thing?—He appealed to the higher authority of the law of Moses to further emphasize his right. The law said, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn" (Deut. 25:4). It was necessary, of course, for Paul to show how this rule applied to him. He asks, "is it for the oxen that God careth?" While it is true that the original provision was for the protection of the oxen, Paul is suggesting that it was not only for them that God cares. Certainly God who provided that the ox should be fed from the work he was doing would have even more concern that His apostles receive support from their work of preaching His gospel. He adds, "For our sakes it was written." Two more examples are used to enforce this application: The man who plows the field ought to plow in hope of having a share in the crop he is going to raise. The man who threshes ought to do so with the hope of partaking of the harvest.

If we sowed unto you spiritual things.—This is the real issue: He had shared the gospel message with them; they believed the word of the cross which he preached; they believed it and got themselves baptized, and thus they were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our Lord (1 Cor. 6:11). These were the spiritual things they received as a result of his labors among them.

is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things?—The argument is clear enough. He did have an indisputable right to receive support from them. In reality, this was a small matter in comparison to the blessing they had received through his efforts in their behalf.

By "carnal things" he refers to material things such as food and drink. He had used the word "carnal" in a different sense in 3:1-3. See notes on these verses.

Robertson, in *Word Pictures*, Vol. IV, page 145, assumes that Paul teaches the same lesson in Gal. 6:6. It is highly probable, however, that that passage suggests the mutual obligation of teacher and those who are taught to actually share in the good things of the gospel message.

If others partake of this right over you.—This is apparently a reference to those same men who were questioning Paul's apostleship. They, in all probability, had been taking support from the Corinthians. Paul refused to do so that he might show what sort they were (II Cor 11:12).

But for the sake of argument, he contends that if others had this right the apostles were more entitled to it than they.

Text

9:12b-18. Nevertheless we did not use this right; but we bear all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. 13 Know ye not that they that minister about sacred things eat of the things of the temple, and they that wait upon the altar have their portion with the altar? 14 Even so did the Lord ordain that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel. 15 But I have used none of these things: and I write not these things that it may be so done in my case; for it were good for me rather to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. 16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel. 17 For if I do this of mine own will, I have a reward: but if not of mine own will, I have a stewardship intrusted to me. 18 What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel without charge, so as not to use to the full my right in the gospel.

Why He Did Not Make Use of His Right (12b-18)

Commentary

Nevertheless we did not use this right.—At this point, as we read the letter, we might expect him to say that he now expects them to make this support available to him also. The Corinthians, of course, knew that he had not taken support from them. They may have been unprepared for the turn of thought, but it was clear to them that although he had proved his right he was not taking advantage of it. He endured all the hardships that had come to him at Corinth; he worked with his own hands at one time to support himself; he had waited until the brethren from Macedonia arrived with support. Surely he knew "how to be abased, and how also to abound: in everything and in all things he had learned the secret both to be filled and to be in want" (Phil. 4:12).

that we cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.—Under no circumstances was Paul going to let personal needs hinder his dedication to Christ and his determination to preach the word of the cross.

Lack of adequate support for the ministry has often hindered the progress of the gospel of Christ. Those who argue that Paul recommended "tentmaking" as a proper way to support the ministry fail to see the underlying reason for his attitude toward receiving support from the Corinthians. No minister, Paul is particular, can do his best in presenting the gospel if he has to give too much time to the task of making a living, or, as it often happens, to living on what he makes. On the other hand, no man should enter the ministry as a means of gaining a livelihood. When churches awake to their opportunities and privileges, the minister and the missionary will be more adequately supported.

they that minister about sacred things.—Lest anyone should misunderstand what Paul had just said, he adds two more arguments to support his position that the gospel minister has a right to be supported by his work. First, those who ministered about sacred things and those who waited upon the altar ate of the things of the temple and had their portion with the altar. He had pointed out that the principle of support from work was well known in ordinary human experience and that it was also supported by Scripture. Now he turns to sacred things to indicate that the same thing is true in that area also. Second, he calls attention to the fact that the Lord had ordained that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel.

The law on this point, so far as the Jewish temple is concerned, is found in a number of places (Lev. 6:16, 26; 7:31-38; Num. 18:8). It was sadly abused by some as in the case of the sons of Eli (I Sam. 2:12-17, 27-36). The priests were accustomed to share in the meats that the people offered as sacrifices. While the meat was boiling, they would take a three-pronged fork and thrust it into the meat, taking for their portion all that clung to the fork. But these young men, Hophni and Phinehas, treated the offering of the Lord with contempt and demanded that they be given raw meat to roast before any of it was offered to the Lord. They greedily looked upon the sacrifices of the people and demanded the choicest parts for themselves. It is barely possible that some ministers and missionaries today with extravagant tastes have hindered the cause of the gospel by demanding more for themselves than they have any right to receive or than people are able to supply. But this was the exception in Old Testament times and today also if it does exist.

Even so did the Lord ordain.—God gave orders that the priests of the temple should be supported; so also did Jesus ordain that the gospel minister should be supported. These are the words of the Lord as reported by Matthew and Luke: "The laborer is worthy of his food" (Matt. 10:10); "And in that same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7). Paul has an additional word to say on the subject: "Let elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching. For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his hire" (I Tim. 5:17-18).

There is no reference to the tithe in this passage unless it be assumed that the offerings were a part of the tithe. Even if such were the case, it cannot be used as a valid argument for or against tithing today.

Some argue from the fact that Abraham gave a tenth of the chief spoils to Melchizedek—and through him even Levi paid tithes—that the Christian is under obligation by the law of the tithe to give a tenth of his income to the church. The only valid conclusion that can be drawn from this incident is that Christ, the high priest after the order of Melchizedek, is superior to the Levitical priests.

It is a well known fact that the Jews did greatly abuse the matter of tithing. Malachi said, "And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar. And ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of Jehovah is contemptible. And when ye offer the blind for sacrifice, it is no evil! Present it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased" (Mal. 1:6-8)? The prophet's challenge is: Try to pay your taxes with the things you bring to the Lord and see if your government will accept them.

But the fact that some abused their privilege in making an offering to the Lord does not prove that the Christian is by law obligated to pay a tithe to the church. What then is the basis of giving for the support of the gospel? (1) Proportionate giving, "as he may prosper" (I Cor 16:2); (2) Not commandment but love (II Cor 8:8); (3) Readiness, for "if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according as a man hath and not according as he hath not" (II Cor. 8:12); (4) equality (II Cor 8:14); (5) Willing gift, not of necessity (II Cor 9:5, 7); (6) "As each hath purposed in his heart" (II Cor. 9:7); (7) A cheerful gift, for God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Cor 9:7).

Tithing is a good basis for a Christian to adopt as a beginning point, but it cannot be argued from Scripture that it is "an eternal principle of giving." The only point being made here is that tithing is not a requirement of the New Testament, but this should not be used as an excuse for not giving. There is certainly nothing against adopting the principle of the tithe if one should care to do so, but love for Christ should lead one to do far more than he would as a matter of law. It is my conviction that love for the Lord and the privilege of participating in the spread of the gospel will bring more money into the church than all the arguments for tithing as a law of giving.

And I write not.—So strong had been the argument for the support of the gospel minister that the apostle felt the need to state again that he did not use this right and that he was not writing to give the impression that he wanted to use it now. Far from it!

good for me rather to die.—The apostle's deep feeling on this issue is seen in the structure of the sentence. He says, "I would rather die than—," but the alternative is not stated even though it is clearly implied—"than have such a thing happen in my case and destroy my boasting in preaching the gospel without charge." He seemed to be in a hurry to add, "No one shall make my boasting void." This boasting was his reward, that is, boasting in the fact that he could preach the gospel without charge.

necessity is laid upon me.—He could not boast that he was preaching the gospel. Unseemly vanity is sometimes seen in preachers and missionaries who boast of their sacrifice in preaching the gospel. But Paul considered that he was under obligation to "Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish" to share the gospel with them. The very possession of the gospel makes us debtors to those who do not know of the redeeming love of Christ.

Paul was compelled to preach the gospel of Christ. He said, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." Christ had commissioned him (Acts 26:16-18); the Holy Spirit had given orders for the church at Antioch to set him aside for the task (Acts 13:1-3). Therefore, he was under obligation to preach the word of the cross, for he was like the household slave who was under obligation to care for his master's affairs (Lk 17:10; I Cor 4:1-2).

But there was a place for him to exercise his freedom in the matter: he could preach the gospel without charge. This was his reward, and he would not allow anyone to take it from him.

Text

9:19-27. For though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more. 20 And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 21 to them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. 23 And I do all things for the gospel's sake, that I may be a joint partaker thereof. 24 Know ye not that they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so run; that ye may attain. 25 And every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 26 I therefore so run, as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not beating the air: 27 but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected.

*Paul Preached to Win (19-27)**Commentary*

For though I was free.—He had laid this principle down in the beginning of the discussion of his right to receive support. He was not bound by the customs, regulations, and practices of others. He was free to forgo accepting support that the gospel of Christ be not hindered.

under bondage to all.—He was a slave to all in that he had a service to perform in their behalf. By preaching without charge he was able to win more than he would have done if he had accepted support. Why? Evidently there were some at Corinth who were constantly looking for opportunities to discredit him by saying that he was working for money. He removed the possibility completely, and in so doing was able to win more for Christ. Moreover, he was also able to gain much more satisfaction from his work in this way (this is not stated in the text).

to the Jews I became as a Jew.—Paul used his right as a Jew to go into the synagogues on the sabbath day and, when called upon, go speak to them. God providentially provided for the propagation of the gospel through the scattering of the Jews over the known world before the Day of Pentecost. "For Moses from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath" (Acts 15:21). When Paul came to Antioch of Pisidia,

he entered the synagogue on the sabbath and sat down. After the reading of the law, he was invited to speak. He stood up and with characteristic gesture urged those present to hear his message. Carefully and skillfully, he led the audience through the familiar but ever interesting story of God's dealings with the Jews. Then he declared that God had fulfilled His promise given through the prophets in the resurrection of Jesus through whom he proclaimed the remission of sins. When the meeting was over, many of those present urged Paul to speak to them again the next Sabbath. See Acts 13:13-52.

When Paul selected Timothy to travel with him, he had him circumcised because of the Jews that were in that part of the country. Timothy's mother was a Jewess, but His father was a Greek. See Acts 16:1-2. In the case of Titus, however, on whom some tried to force the law of circumcision, Paul refused to be bound by the opinions of men, since Titus was a Greek. See Gal. 2:1-3.

not being myself under the law.—Paul did not carry this matter of conformity to the point of keeping the law in every instance. Indeed, he had been freed from the power of the law by becoming a Christian (Gal. 2:19-22). As a Jew, however, he could approve of circumcision, keep the vows of his Jewish background (Acts 18:18), and even go into the temple with offerings along with other Jewish brethren (Acts 21:17-26).

to them that are without law.—Paul associated with Gentiles as if he were one of them. He defended his right publically when Peter refused any longer to eat with the Gentiles because of his fear of the Jews (Gal. 2:11-21). This whole course of action reminds us of Jesus who associated with publicans and sinners, not as one of them, but as the Good Physician who came to minister to the sick and the lost. Paul was always careful to conform to God's law, for he was under the law of Christ, just as he said to the Galatians, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

To the Weak I became weak.—This is what he wrote about it in the second letter to the Corinthians: "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is caused to stumble, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things that concern my weakness" (II Cor. 11:29-30). He fully understood and appreciated the problem of the man who was weak—that is, who did not have the information he should have had about idols and who, by the wrong example, might have been led to violate his conscience and so perish. An excellent example of the meaning of "empathy."

that I may by all means save some.—He was concerned about the salvation of all men—the Jew and the Gentile, the weak and the strong. He used every possible means to win them to Christ. At that, only some responded to the gospel invitation.

that I may be a joint partaker.—When Jesus was on the cross there were some who taunted Him saying, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." How true! But how many Christians have caught the point of Paul's remark? He did all things for the gospel's sake in order that he might become a partaker also in its blessings. Does he not suggest that there is some real doubt about participating in the joy of heaven if we fail to participate in the spreading of the gospel?

they that run a race.—Two illustrations taken from the athletic games illustrate what he has just said about the necessity of doing all things for the sake of the gospel that he might become a partaker of its blessings. They also illustrate the great principle which he had been discussing: the limitation of Christian liberty. In the tenth chapter, he adds another illustration to show what happens in the case of the one who fails to observe this principle.

In the race, there were many runners, but the prize was for one. Paul says, "Even so, run that ye may attain." All of you are to run so that you may receive the prize of eternal life.

exercise self-control in all things.—Here is the principle of limitation of liberty. The athlete had to observe the rules of training if he expected to win the prize. There were some things that he had to give up. Just so, there were some things that the Christian had to give up, such as liberty to eat food used in idolatrous worship—if he was to win the weak brother. This is, of course, just one of the many applications of the principle of limiting liberty for the sake of others. The rules of the game are given in the Bible. For a summary of them see II Pet. 1:5-11 and Gal. 5:22-24.

Crown.—This is the wreath that symbolized victory, not the diadem of kingly authority. But for the Christian, it was a thing that did not perish. It is the inheritance "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away" (I Pet. 1:3-5). It is the crown of righteousness which the Lord will give to those who have loved His appearing (II Tim. 4:8). It is the crown of life for the victor over temptation and sin which the Lord promised to those who are faithful to the end (James 1:8; Rev. 2:10). It is the crown of glory that fades not away which the chief Shepherd will give to those who have cared for the flock when He comes (I Pet. 5:4).

I therefore run, as not uncertainly.—Paul's purpose in preaching was to win some to Christ; his goal was life eternal. Too many are like the Israelites who lost sight of their goal—the promised land. Perhaps there is too much pointless preaching, too much aimless holding of services, too much organization for the sake of organization. The aim of church activity should be to evangelize and to educate. "Make disciples, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," and of equal importance, "teaching them to observe all thing whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:18-20). And we must organize to evangelize as well as to educate. There is just as much need for a permanent director of evangelism in every congregation as there is for a director of education. Both are necessary! Without them, we are likely to be found running without a goal.

The writer of *Hebrews* sounds a timely warning to all on this issue: "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God" (Heb. 3:12). And again, "Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience" (Heb. 4:11).

I buffet my body.—Literally, strike under the eye. Paul takes this figure from the boxing match. He was in the fight to win. He landed blows where they counted. He gave his opponent—his body—a black eye, the knockout blow. Those who interpret Romans 7:14-27 to mean that Paul constantly fought a losing battle with sin need to consider his remarks in this verse. He did face constant opposition from Satan, but he was equipped to conquer and that he did (Eph. 6:12-18). In this life, we too have a struggle with Satan, but there is no need to let him win; there is no need for us to fight as one beating the air; there is every reason why we must overcome.

I myself be rejected.—No man can safely say until the good fight is finished that he has gained the victor's crown. See I Cor. 10:12. The word translated "rejected" means rejected after a test has been made. It is the assayer's term for that which did not stand the test or meet with approval. It is used in Romans 1:28 where it is translated "reprobate." Those who rejected God were given up to a "reprobate mind"—that is, considered to be utterly worthless. It describes the one who may be disqualified in a race. This was Paul's great problem. He proclaimed the message of Christ in such a manner that he would not be disqualified, that is, be lost. He was careful to observe the rules of the game and to keep the goal in mind so as not to become disqualified after preaching to save others.

CHAPTER NINE

Summary

The principle of the limitation of Christian liberty which was introduced in chapter eight is applied to Paul's rights as a Christian and an apostle in this chapter. He begins with a series of questions that called for affirmative answers. As one who is free and who qualifies as an apostle of Christ, he has certain rights. He cites as proof of his apostleship the fact that he had seen the Lord. Others might deny that he was an apostle, but the Corinthians could not for their position in Christ depended on their belief of the word of the cross which they had heard from Paul. Since he is an apostle, he has a right to be supported by the preaching of the gospel. Other rights are mentioned which the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas enjoyed, but the main issue in the discussion is the right to support. The reason for it is seen in the possibility that others were exercising this right over the Corinthians, a thing that Paul was determined to forgo in order not to hinder the gospel, that is, to prevent some from saying that he was preaching just for the sake of making a living.

He proves his right to support by reference to the soldier, the keeper of the vineyard, the shepherd, and all who worked with the hope of partaking of the results of their labors. These examples are not limited to human experience, for the law said, "You shall not muzzle the ox while it is treading the grain on the threshing floor." This principle is seen in the work of the farmer who plows the field in hope of enjoying the fruit of his labor and threshes the grain in hope of eating the bread that is made from it.

But Paul refused to use his right for the sake of the gospel of Christ. He insisted, however, that he had a right to be supported, for he called attention to those who served in the temple and waited upon the altar. They were supported by the work they did. Then he added, "Just so, the Lord ordained that they that preach the gospel should get their living from their work."

Nevertheless, he was not writing in order to receive support at that time or at any future time, for he declared that he would rather die than have anyone make void his glorying in the fact that he was free to preach the gospel without charge. Preaching the gospel was a necessity. He was a servant of the Lord and was bound to be faithful in the task assigned to him. But he was free to preach it without receiving support for so doing. His purpose was to avoid doing anything or letting others do anything to discredit the gospel. He endeavored by becoming all things to all men to win some to Christ and be-

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come a fellow-partaker in the blessing of the gospel, that is, be saved himself. Just as the athlete must exercise self-control in all things, so Paul was willing to renounce some of his rights as an apostle to make sure of winning the race and conquering his body so that he would not be rejected after he had preached to save others.

Questions

1. What is the relation between the subject matter of this chapter and chapter eight?
2. What freedom was Paul claiming by his question, "Am I not free"?
3. What other aspects of Christian freedom are explained in the New Testament?
4. Why did Paul frame some of his questions in this chapter so as to suggest an affirmative answer?
5. Why did he ask, "am I not an apostle"?
6. Why did he ask, "Have I not seen Jesus our Lord"?
7. What place in the preaching of the apostles did the resurrection of Jesus have?
8. What distinction is there between the witness of Paul and the other apostles?
9. How is the importance of the appearance of Jesus to Paul shown by Luke?
10. How did Paul describe the appearance of Jesus to him in this letter to the Corinthians?
11. Our text frames the questions this way: "are not ye my work in the Lord?" How can it be framed so as to show that an affirmative answer was suggested by Paul?
12. Why did he ask the question?
13. Did the Corinthians deny his apostleship?
14. Who, in all probability, did deny it?
15. What is the connection between the fact of Paul's apostleship and his freedom?
16. What defense did Paul make of his apostleship in II Corinthians?
17. Who were those whom Paul called "the very chiefest apostles"?
18. Why does Paul suggest that the Corinthians couldn't afford to deny that he was an apostle?
19. What did he mean when he said, "You are the seal of my apostleship"?
20. To what does the expression, "My defense is this" refer?
21. Why did Paul ask this question which implied a negative answer: "Have we no right to eat and drink"?

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22. Why did he mention his right to be accompanied on his missionary journeys by a Christian wife?
23. How are we to understand that the words of the text mean "a Christian wife"?
24. Why did he mention the rights of the rest of the apostles?
25. What of their marital status?
26. Why were the names of the brothers of Jesus?
27. What suggestion does Scripture give to show that they were the children of Joseph and Mary?
28. What was the attitude of Jesus' brothers toward Him during His ministry?
29. What finally convinced them that He was the Lord?
30. Why did Paul mention Cephas in addition to the apostles?
31. What is the history of the relation of the work of Barnabas to Paul's?
32. What did his question suggest as to the limitation of their rights?
33. What examples from everyday life did Paul present to support his view that he had a right to receive support from his preaching the gospel?
34. What evidence did he present from Scripture to prove the same thing?
35. What did he mean by sowing spiritual things and reaping carnal things?
36. In what sense did he use "carnal things" in 3:1-3?
37. To whom did he refer by the statement "If others partake of this right over you"?
38. Why did he mention them?
39. How was Paul supported at Corinth?
40. Is "tentmaking" to be desired as a means of supporting the minister?
41. Why, then, did Paul resort to it?
42. What are the two additional arguments which Paul presented to prove his right to receive support?
43. Why was it necessary to mention them?
44. How did the sons of Eli abuse the law regarding the priest's portion of the sacrifice?
45. Where is the order of the Lord concerning support of the gospel worker found?
46. What else did Paul say about it?
47. What is the history of the teaching of the Bible on the matter of tithing?

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48. What are some of the principles regulating Christian giving?
49. If we assume that tithing is not presented as a command in the New Testament, can we safely use this as an excuse for giving less to the support of the Lord's work?
50. Why was it necessary for Paul to say that he was not writing that he might receive support?
51. How deeply did Paul feel on the matter of preaching the gospel without charge?
52. Why was he determined to do it this way?
53. What did he mean by saying, "necessity is laid upon me"?
54. Why did he say, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel"?
55. What was his reward in preaching as he did?
56. In what sense was he under bondage to all?
57. How did he use his Jewish background to gain Jews?
58. What limit did he place on the matter of compliance with Jewish customs?
59. How is this illustrated by the cases of Timothy and Titus?
60. As a Christian, what law was Paul under?
61. Since he was a Jew, how did he approach Gentiles?
62. How did he approach those who were weak?
63. What was his two-fold concern in preaching the gospel?
64. What lesson did he teach from the figure of the race?
65. Where are the rules of the race of life found?
66. What kind of crown is the Christian to strive for?
67. How is it described?
68. What was Paul's attitude toward running the race of life?
69. What is the goal of church activity?
70. How did Paul show that he had assumed the role of victor in this life's struggle against sin?
71. Why did he say, "lest I myself be rejected"?

For Discussion

1. Methods of Evangelism to make the church effective today.
2. How can the educational program in your church be improved to make it effective in producing strong Christians.
3. What can you do to make sure that you are living a victorious life for Christ?