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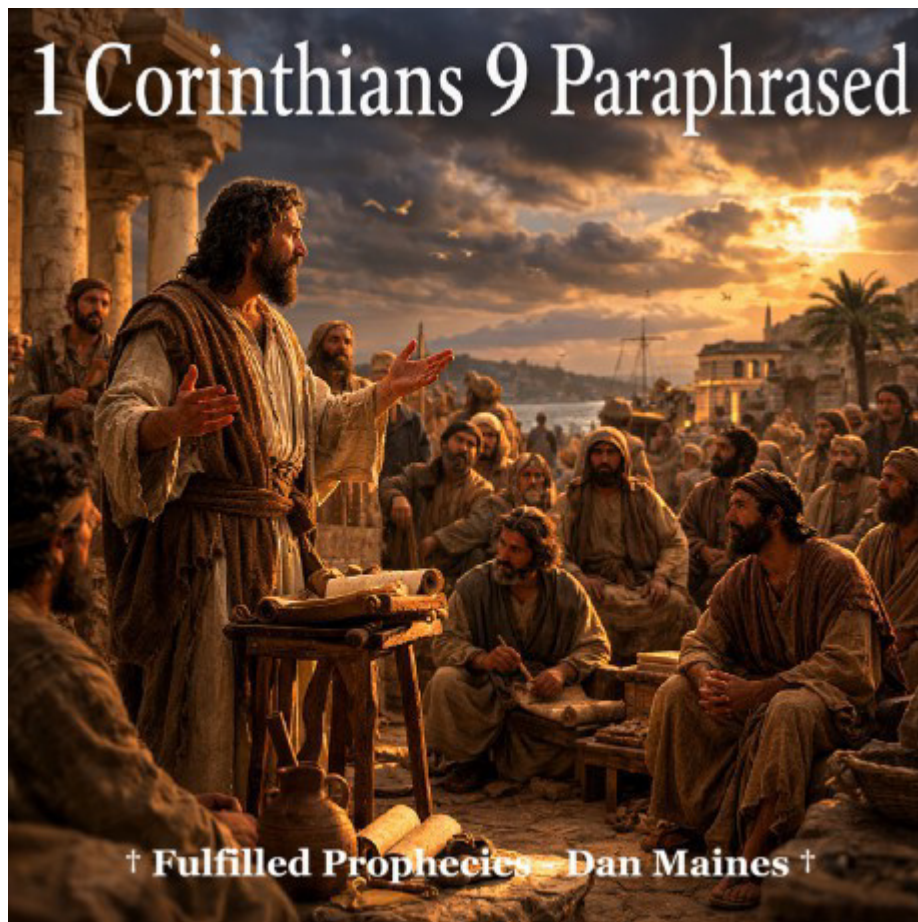
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1 Corinthians 9 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

1 Corinthians 9 Paraphrased

Introduction

† In this chapter Paul explains his authority as an apostle and why he willingly gives up certain rights for the sake of the gospel.

† His argument shows the balance between freedom and responsibility in ministry.

† The message also reminds believers that serving Christ often means laying aside personal advantage so the truth can reach more people.

1 Corinthians 9:1

Am I not free, am I not an apostle, haven't I seen Jesus our Lord, and aren't you the result of my work in the Lord

† Paul reminds them that he personally saw the risen Christ and was commissioned as an apostle (Acts 9:3-6).

† The Corinthian church itself proved his apostleship because they came to faith through his ministry (1 Corinthians 4:15).

† Irenaeus explained that the apostles were eyewitnesses of Christ and founders of the churches.

1 Corinthians 9:2

Even if others don't recognize me as an apostle, surely you do, because you are the seal that proves my apostleship in the Lord

† Their very existence as a church was the evidence of Paul's authority.

† Their faith confirmed the success of his mission among the Gentiles (2 Corinthians 3:2-3).

† Clement of Alexandria wrote that the apostles left behind established churches as proof of their calling.

1 Corinthians 9:3

This is my defense to those who examine and question my authority

† Paul is answering critics who doubted his apostleship.

† Challenges to Paul's authority appear throughout his letters (2 Corinthians 10:10).

† Tertullian noted that apostolic authority was often questioned by false teachers.

1 Corinthians 9:4

Don't we have the right to receive food and drink from those we serve

† Ministers of the gospel have the right to be supported by those they serve (Luke 10:7).

† Paul is establishing a biblical principle before explaining why he personally refused it.

† Early church communities commonly supported traveling teachers and apostles.

1 Corinthians 9:5

Don't we have the right to take along a believing wife just like the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas

† This verse shows that several apostles were married.

† Christian ministry in the first century included married leaders traveling with their wives.

† Clement of Alexandria wrote that Peter and other apostles had believing wives who shared in their ministry.

1 Corinthians 9:6

Or is it only Barnabas and I who must work with our own hands to support ourselves

† Paul often supported himself through tentmaking (Acts 18:3).

† This allowed him to preach without being accused of greed.

† Early Christian writers praised Paul's willingness to endure hardship for the gospel.

1 Corinthians 9:7

Who serves as a soldier at his own expense, who plants a vineyard and doesn't eat its fruit, or who tends a flock and doesn't drink the milk

† Paul uses examples from everyday life to show that workers normally receive benefit from their labor.

† Soldiers, farmers, and shepherds all receive provision through their work.

† The same principle applies to spiritual labor.

1 Corinthians 9:8

I'm not saying these things from human reasoning alone, the Law also says the same thing

- † Paul now appeals to Scripture to support his argument.
- † Biblical law confirms the fairness of supporting workers.
- † This shows continuity between God's law and gospel ministry.

1 Corinthians 9:9

Because it is written in the Law of Moses, you shall not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain, God isn't concerned only about oxen, is He

- † Paul quotes Deuteronomy 25:4.
- † The principle shows that laborers deserve to share in their work.
- † Early Christian interpreters understood this as a moral principle about fairness.

1 Corinthians 9:10

He said this for our sake, because the one who plows should plow in hope and the one who threshes should do so expecting to share in the harvest

- † The instruction ultimately points to human laborers.
- † Those who work should expect reward for their effort.
- † Spiritual workers fall under the same principle.

1 Corinthians 9:11

If we've planted spiritual things among you, is it too much if we harvest material things from you

- † Paul argues that spiritual labor is even more valuable than physical labor.
- † Therefore material support would be reasonable.
- † Early churches often supported evangelists and teachers.

1 Corinthians 9:12

If others share this right over you, don't we even more, yet we didn't use this right, instead we endured everything so nothing would hinder the gospel of Christ

- † Paul refused financial support in Corinth to avoid accusations

of greed.

† His sacrifice protected the credibility of the gospel.

† Eusebius wrote about apostles who endured hardship so their message would not be questioned.

1 Corinthians 9:13

Don't you know that those who serve in the temple eat from the temple offerings and those who attend the altar share in what is offered there

† Paul refers to the Old Testament priesthood (Numbers 18:8-12).

† Priests were supported through the offerings brought by the people.

† This reinforces the biblical precedent for supporting spiritual workers.

1 Corinthians 9:14

In the same way the Lord commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel

† Jesus taught this when sending out His disciples (Luke 10:7).

† Gospel workers had the right to receive support.

† The early church followed this instruction in many communities.

1 Corinthians 9:15

But I haven't used any of these rights, and I'm not writing this so it will happen for me, because I'd rather die than have anyone take away my reason for boasting

† Paul's joy was preaching freely without financial obligation.

† His boasting referred to the privilege of giving the gospel freely.

† This demonstrated sincerity and devotion.

1 Corinthians 9:16

If I preach the gospel I have nothing to boast about, because

I'm under obligation, and woe to me if I do not preach the gospel

† Paul viewed preaching as a divine commission.

† The responsibility was placed on him by Christ.

† Apostolic ministry carried a sense of urgency and duty.

1 Corinthians 9:17

If I do this willingly I have a reward, but even if unwilling I'm still entrusted with a stewardship

† Paul's mission was a sacred responsibility entrusted to him.

† The gospel message had to be faithfully delivered.

† Early Christian leaders often described ministry as stewardship.

1 Corinthians 9:18

What then is my reward, that when I preach the gospel I may offer it free of charge and not use my full rights in the gospel

† Paul's reward was the privilege of giving the message freely.

† This removed any suspicion of personal gain.

† His approach strengthened trust in his preaching.

1 Corinthians 9:19

Though I'm free from everyone, I've made myself a servant to all so I may win more people

† Paul willingly humbled himself for the sake of others.

† His focus was reaching as many people as possible.

† Missionary work in the early church followed this same mindset.

1 Corinthians 9:20

To the Jews I became like a Jew so I could win Jews, to those under the Law I became like one under the Law though I'm not under it myself so I could win those under the Law

† Paul adapted culturally to connect with Jewish audiences.

† This did not mean compromising the gospel message.

† It meant removing unnecessary barriers to hearing the truth.

1 Corinthians 9:21

To those without the Law I became like one without the Law though I'm not without God's law but under Christ's law so I could win those without the Law

† Paul remained obedient to Christ even while adapting to Gentile culture.

† Flexibility never meant abandoning righteousness.

† The mission was always reaching people with the gospel.

1 Corinthians 9:22

To the weak I became weak so I could win the weak, I've become all things to all people so that by every possible means I might save some

† Paul showed compassion toward those with fragile faith.

† His goal was helping people grow rather than condemning them.

† This reflects the heart of pastoral care.

1 Corinthians 9:23

I do all things for the sake of the gospel so that I may share in its blessings

† Paul's life revolved around the mission of the gospel.

† Every sacrifice served that purpose.

† Participation in God's work was his greatest reward.

1 Corinthians 9:24

Don't you know that in a race all runners run but only one receives the prize, run in such a way that you may win

† Paul uses athletic imagery familiar in Corinth.

† The Christian life requires discipline and determination.

† Early Christian teachers frequently used athletic metaphors for spiritual endurance.

1 Corinthians 9:25

Everyone who competes exercises self control in all things, they do it to receive a temporary crown but we pursue an eternal one

† Athletes trained intensely for a fading reward.

† Believers strive for something far greater.

† The eternal reward surpasses any earthly prize.

1 Corinthians 9:26

Therefore I don't run without direction and I don't fight like someone striking the air

† Paul's ministry had purpose and focus.

† His life was not wasted on meaningless effort.

† Every action aimed at advancing the gospel.

1 Corinthians 9:27

Instead I discipline my body and bring it under control so after preaching to others I myself will not be disqualified

† Paul practiced personal discipline to remain faithful.

† Spiritual leadership requires integrity and perseverance.

† Early church writers often pointed to Paul's self control as a model for believers.

Historical References

† Irenaeus taught that the apostles established churches as witnesses of the gospel message.

† Clement of Alexandria wrote about married apostles and their shared ministry with their wives.

† Eusebius documented the hardships and sacrifices endured by the apostles.

† Tertullian defended apostolic authority against critics and false teachers.

How It Applies To Us Today

† Believers should be willing to sacrifice personal rights for the sake of the gospel.

† Christian freedom should be used to serve others and help

them grow.

† Discipline and perseverance remain essential in faithful living.

† Like Paul, we should remove obstacles that might prevent others from hearing the truth.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Why did Paul refuse financial support from the Corinthians?

A: He wanted to remove suspicion that he preached for money and to protect the credibility of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:12, 15).

Q: Did Paul believe ministers could receive support?

A: Yes, he clearly taught that those who preach the gospel have the right to live from the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14).

Q: What does it mean that Paul became all things to all people?

A: He adapted culturally to reach different groups without compromising the truth of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:20-22).

Q: Why did Paul compare the Christian life to athletic competition?

A: The comparison shows the need for discipline, focus, and perseverance in faith (1 Corinthians 9:24-25).

Q: What warning does Paul give in the final verse?

A: Even those who preach must remain disciplined and faithful so they themselves are not disqualified (1 Corinthians 9:27).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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† 1 Corinthians 9

† Irenaeus, Against Heresies

† Clement of Alexandria, Stromata

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

† Tertullian, Apology

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