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1 Corinthians 9
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By Dan Maines

1 Corinthians 9

1 Corinthians 9:1-2

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

† Paul defends his apostleship, reminding them he has seen the risen Christ.

† The Corinthians themselves are proof of his calling, being the

fruit of his labor.

† Ignatius (Letter to the Romans 4) emphasized apostles as eyewitnesses of Christ, aligning with Paul's defense.

1 Corinthians 9:3-6

My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we not have a right to eat and drink? Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or do only Barnabas and I have no right to refrain from working?

† Paul appeals to the natural rights of apostles, including support and family.

† Yet he and Barnabas labored without demanding these rights.

1 Corinthians 9:7-10

Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not consume some of the milk of the flock? I am not just asserting these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does the Law not say these things as well? For it is written in the Law of Moses: "You shall not muzzle the ox while it is threshing." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking entirely for our sake? Yes, it was written for our sake, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops.

† Paul uses examples from daily life and the Law to show ministers deserve support.

† Deuteronomy 25:4 provided a principle for fairness, applied to gospel work.

1 Corinthians 9:11-12

If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the

gospel of Christ.

† Paul and his coworkers chose self-denial for the sake of the gospel's advance.

† The gospel's progress outweighed their personal rights.

1 Corinthians 9:13-14

Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

† As priests in the Old Covenant lived from the altar, so ministers of Christ may live from the gospel.

† Jesus affirmed this principle in Luke 10:7.

1 Corinthians 9:15-18

But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case, for it would be better for me to die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting. For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion, for woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward, but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a commission regardless. What, then, is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

† Paul glories in preaching freely, motivated by divine compulsion.

† His reward is the joy of offering the gospel without charge.

† Chrysostom (Homilies on 1 Corinthians 22) praised Paul's zeal and refusal to burden others.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

For though I am free from all people, I have made myself a

slave to all, so that I may gain more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might gain Jews. To those who are under the Law, I became as one under the Law, though not being under the Law myself, so that I might gain those who are under the Law. To those who are without the Law, I became as one without the Law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might gain those who are without the Law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might gain the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow participant in it.

- † Paul adapts to every audience without compromising truth.
- † His flexibility shows love and mission focus, never self-interest.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. So they do it to obtain a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way as not to run aimlessly, I box in such a way as to avoid hitting air, but I strictly discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

- † Paul compares Christian discipline to athletic contests.
- † Self-control and endurance are vital to finish the race.
- † The prize is eternal, unlike the fading crowns of the games.
- † Epictetus, a Stoic philosopher, also emphasized discipline in life, but Paul points to Christ as the goal, not human virtue.

How it applies to us today

- † 1 Corinthians 9 calls believers to lay down rights for the sake of the gospel.
- † Ministry is about service, sacrifice, and endurance, not privilege.

† The call is to discipline ourselves, live missionally, and endure for the eternal reward.

† The gospel must be advanced without hindrance, in love and humility.

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

Source Index

† Ignatius, Letter to the Romans 4 - apostles as eyewitnesses

† Deuteronomy 25:4 - do not muzzle the ox

† Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians 22 - Paul's zeal in preaching freely

† Epictetus, Discourses 3.12 - discipline in life

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