

## **Sermon 43: Limiting Rights to Avoid Ministry Entanglement: 1 Corinthians 9:1-14**

**Text: 1 Corinthians 9:1-14** "Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel..."

**Summary:** Ministers should faithfully demonstrate the truths they proclaim.

**Part 1: Paul's basic teaching on conscience: 8:13** "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend..."

- We should be well informed Christian.
- We should be principled in our decision making.
- We should be balanced in our approach to difficult matters.
- We should love others more than we love ourselves.

**Part 2: The connection between his teaching and his example: 9:3-6**

"Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?"

- **He addressed several specific areas that directly impacted the Corinthian church:**
  - Do not associate with idolatry by going up to the pagan temple.

- Do not ask people at a meal if the meat has been associated with idolatry.
- Do not ask people in the marketplace if meat has been associated with idolatry.
- If you are told that meat has been associated with idolatry, refrain from eating it for the sake of those around you.
- **He addressed several ways in which he had limited himself for the sake of ministry.**
- **He then highlighted those examples for them to consider.**

**Part 3: Specific ways Paul had limited his personal rights for the sake of ministry:**

- **Respect in his ministry role: 9:1** "Am I not an apostle? am I not free?"
  - Paul was an apostle and had personally labored in the church's formation.
  - They did not treat him with the level of respect and gratitude that would have been appropriate for him to receive.
  - Though they did not treat him with appropriate respect, he loved them and ministered to them.
- **Dietary decisions: 9:4** "Have we not power to eat and to drink?"
  - Paul had the freedom to live outside the Jewish dietary restrictions, eat meat rather than vegetables, and eat meats that had been in some way associated with idolatry.
  - For the sake of ministry, he limited those freedoms and made personal adjustments.
- **Choosing to marry and travel with your wife: 9:5** "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?"
  - Paul had the right to marry a believing woman and travel with her like other prominent apostles who were married.
  - For the sake of ministry, he chose to remain single and live a life entirely devoted to the work of ministry.
- **Receiving financial support: 9:6** "Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?"
  - Paul had the right to be fully supported by the love gifts of the Corinthian church.
  - He chose not to receive financial compensation for his labor.

**Part 4: Paul's decision to work and refuse financial support from the church: 9:7-13** "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou

shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel..."

- **Those who minister the word should be supported by those they serve:**

- **Common sense establishes this principle:**

- **Military protection: 9:7** "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?"
- **Cultivating crops: 9:7** "Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof?"
- **Raising animals: 9:7** "Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?"

- **God's word establishes this principle: 9:8-10** "Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope..."

- **The Old Testament example:** Providing food for animals that benefit you.
- **The Old Testament principle:**
  - You should allow your animals to benefit from their labor.
  - God takes care of them through your responsible care.
  - The animal will be motivated in its work by the way you care for it.
- **The weight of Paul's example:** If you understand that an animal should not starve while it works, how much more should you value the image bearer who feeds your soul.
- **The consistent teaching of scripture on this principle: 9:13-14** "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the

altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel..."

- The reason we should support the Lord's work is not to give ministers free time.
- It is not to give them more time to build the church.
- We should give, because it is unjust to receive a benefit on the most sacred level and refuse to financially support those who labor in the word and in doctrine.
- **1 Timothy 5:17-18** "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward..."
- **Our lives demonstrate this principle in other areas:**
  - We pay taxes.
  - We pay for food in the market.
  - We take care of your animals.
  - Why would we neglect to support those who minister to us.
- **Paul's right: 9:12** "If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather?"
- **Paul's refusal to demand that right: 9:12** "Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things..."
- **Paul's motivation: 9:12** "Lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ..."
- **Paul's application:**
  - It is wrong for us to refuse to support those who minister to us.
  - It is also wrong for us to hold that support as leverage over them.
  - Since they viewed support the wrong way, for the sake of ministry, Paul refused it and met his own needs with his own hands.
  - He believed it was better to sacrifice to minister freely, than to minister with strings attached.
  - He made this sacrifice for the sake of the gospel as he ministered to immature Christians.

## **Part 5: Applying Paul's teaching:**

- **Big Picture:**

- Ministry demands self-restraint.
- Failing to consider the full context will lead to unnecessary barriers to the gospel.

- Ministers must live out what they proclaim:
  - Inconsistency between teaching and living will undermine the message being preached.
  - Consistency provides a visible model that can encourage those who want to apply what they have heard.
- **Secondary Issues:**
  - Christians should be generous and grateful for what they have received from those who minister in the word.
  - Those who minister the word should deeply feel the weight of that duty.
  - Christians should never view giving as a tool to leverage influence.
  - Those who minister should never view the gifts of God's people as something they should demand.