

THE BEAUTY OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY
STUDIES IN FIRST AND SECOND CORINTHIANS
1st Corinthians 9:1-27
“WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO GIVE UP OUR RIGHTS”

INTRODUCTION: Paul started introducing a radical idea to the Corinthians in Chapter 6 and then again started in Chapter 8. In Chapter 6 Paul asked the Corinthians why are you taking church business to pagan courts? Can't you resolve it among yourselves or give up your rights to what you should receive so that there may be unity in the church and God glorified? In Chapter 8, Paul started addressing their concerns about eating meat sacrificed to idols. You may know that your Christian liberty may allow you to eat it, but what about your brother or sister who may be weak? Can you give up your rights for the sake of another's spiritual life?

I. WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO GIVE UP OUR RIGHTS FOR THE CHURCH'S SAKE. (1st Corinthians 9:1-14)

A. The word Apostle means one sent. They refer mainly to the 12 Apostles and Paul who were sent by Christ. One of the qualifications for a Biblical Apostle was to have had a face-to-face encounter with Jesus (Acts 1:15-25, Acts 22:4-16, 1 Corinthians 15:1-8) – These were not just people calling themselves Apostles!

1. The Apostles were sent to lay the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:19-20).

2. The Corinthian church was his proof or seal of how the Lord worked through him (vs.

2. (Did you notice how Paul did not take credit for the work that the Lord did through him?)

B. Paul used himself as an example of using his right to give up some of his rights as an Apostle for the Church's sake. Don't get it twisted, just because I do not exercise my right for support does not mean we are not supposed to receive it. (vss.4-6)

1. The other Apostles including Cephas (Peter) and the Lord's brothers (James, Joses, Simon and Judas (Matthew 13:15)) all seem to have the right to take a believing wife with them, to eat and drink and be able to devote full time to the ministry. They all receive support from the church. Paul explains that he has the same power (right), but chooses not to use it for the church's sake.

C. The million-dollar question, should the pastor be paid? Paul gives 4 illustrations of why he and other church leaders should be taken care of by the church! (vss. 7- 14). He gave the human perspective (v. 7), the Law of Moses (vss. 8-12), the priests (v. 13) and the Lord (v. 14).

II. WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO GIVE UP OUR RIGHTS FOR THE GOSPEL'S SAKE. (vss. 15-18)

A. He was not writing asking for support. Paul was not asking for sympathy. He was called to preach, rather in a crowd of one or one thousand. We need to be like Jeremiah where he said in Jeremiah 20:9 when he was so persecuted that he considered not speaking of God

nor His name, But God's Word was in his heart like fire shut up in his bones. He had to speak up!

B. Paul's reward was the privilege of preaching the gospel without getting paid (vss 17-18). He said that he would rather die than give them ammunition to question his motives. We must remember that this was not a commandment, but Paul had to address the church this way due to their immaturity and within its context.

III. WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO GIVE UP OUR RIGHTS IN ORDER TO WIN THE LOST (vss. 19-23)

A. Paul was free. He was not representing a political party or corporation. He did not have to water down his message. But, he became a servant to men that he may present them with the Gospel so that they may be free. For it is written in John 8:36 that if the Son makes you free, you are free indeed.

B. We do not change the message, but adapt it to its context so that we can win the lost. He adapted his message to address the Jews' ethnicity as well as their religion (under the law). "Without law" were the Gentiles. Paul was under the Law of Christ. "The weak" were Non-Christians. He was able to tailor the message to each group.

IV. WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO GIVE UP OUR RIGHTS FOR OUR OWN SAKE (vss. 24-27)

A. Christian must be **determined** (vs.24) - Paul knew that sports were important to the Corinthians and gave them an illustration that they could relate to (being all things to all people vs. 22). We run the race because we are saved, not to get saved. We must be determined to give God 100% because 99 1/2%- just won't do. We run in a way to get the prize. (Philippians 3:14)

B. Christian must be **disciplined** (vs. 25) – We must be willing to give up something so that we gain more.

C. Christian must be **decisive** (vs. 26) – We must be certain of our goal. We cannot beat at the air!

D. We do not want to be **disqualified** (vs. 27) – That does not mean that we lose our salvation, but if we are not disciplined in our life we can lose out testimony for the church and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We must discipline ourselves so that we do not exhibit extremes. We do not want to be so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly good.

We want to hear the Lord say "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matthew 25:21 KJV) Therefore there may be times when we have to use our right to give up our rights!

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