

Studies in 1 Corinthians

Lesson XXIV: *Motive of a Godly Leader*

TEXT: 1 COR. 9:1-18

1 Am I not as free as anyone else? Am I not an apostle? Haven't I seen Jesus our Lord with my own eyes? Isn't it because of my work that you belong to the Lord? 2 Even if others think I am not an apostle, I certainly am to you. You yourselves are proof that I am the Lord's apostle. 3 This is my answer to those who question my authority.^[a] 4 Don't we have the right to live in your homes and share your meals? 5 Don't we have the right to bring a Christian wife with us as the other apostles and the Lord's brothers do, and as Peter^[b] does? 6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who have to work to support ourselves?

7 What soldier has to pay his own expenses? What farmer plants a vineyard and doesn't have the right to eat some of its fruit? What shepherd cares for a flock of sheep and isn't allowed to drink some of the milk? 8 Am I expressing merely a human opinion, or does the law say the same thing? 9 For the law of Moses says, "You must not muzzle an ox to keep it from eating as it treads out the grain."^[c] Was God thinking only about oxen when he said this? 10 Wasn't he actually speaking to us? Yes, it was written for us, so that the one who plows and the one who threshes the grain might both expect a share of the harvest.

11 Since we have planted spiritual seed among you, aren't we entitled to a harvest of physical food and drink? 12 If you support others who preach to you, shouldn't we have an even greater right to be supported? But we have never used this right. We would rather put up with anything than be an obstacle to the Good News about Christ.

13 Don't you realize that those who work in the temple get their meals from the offerings brought to the temple? And those who serve at the altar get a share of the sacrificial offerings. 14 In the same way, the Lord ordered that those who preach the Good News should be supported by those who benefit from it. 15 Yet I have never used any of these rights. And I am not writing this to suggest that I want to start now. In fact, I would rather die than lose my right to boast about preaching without charge. 16 Yet preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about. I am compelled by God to do it. How terrible for me if I didn't preach the Good News! 17 If I were doing this on my own initiative, I would deserve payment. But I have no choice, for God has given me this sacred trust. 18 What then is my pay? It is the opportunity to preach the Good News without charging anyone. That's why I never demand my rights when I preach the Good News.

Footnotes:

a. Greek: *those who examine me*. b. Greek: *Cephas* c. see Deuteronomy 25:4

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. What is Paul's purpose in writing chapter 9? (see vs. 2-3)
2. Often in studies of this text, the importance of paying preachers, missionaries, evangelists, etc. is emphasized. However, Paul may have deeper message in mind—one with especially powerful implications to modern times. What is it?
3. Why doesn't Paul take full advantage of all his rights as an apostle? (vv 4-5, 12, and 15).
4. Paul uses two illustrations from the Old Testament (the ox, the temple worker) to back his argument for compensating certain church workers (vv 9-10,13-14)—even going so far as to say that an Old Testament passage “was written for us” (vs. 10). To what extent can the New Testament believer derive spiritual benefit from the Old Testament Scriptures? (cf. vs. 10; Romans 15:4).
5. Unfortunately, greed has invaded the Christian movement, causing considerable scandal and leaving terrible tragedy in its wake. What could the money-hungry and power-loving take away from Paul's example and from chapter 9? (vs. 15-18)