

1 Corinthians Series #22
"Rights & Responsibilities" - 1 Cor. 9:1-18

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Examples

1. Two kinds of people; love math / hate math
2. I hate math!
3. In school, axioms, theorems, algebra, trig, calculus
 - a. needed examples
 - b. take abstract and make it visible
4. Car repair
 - a. first time needed to do brakes
 - b. bough manual; read instructions
 - c. still lost
 - d. had an experienced friend who helped
 - e. then, next time, could do by myself
5. We need examples to follow
6. No where more true that Christian life
 - a. take out of abstract and make visible
 - b. Bryan Duncan = "Get You out of my head, and into my heart."
 - c. we can read about the fruit of the Spirit
 - d. but there is nothing like tasting it from the life of another Christian
7. Yes - we need examples!

B. Paul, An Example

1. Last week; balancing liberty and love
2. Dispute over eating meat
 - a. some said OK
 - b. others said no
3. Paul instructed those who were free not to let their liberty be the reason for weaker believer's stumbling and fall
4. Ch. 9 is Paul's example of this truth
5. He uses himself and his calling as a way to demonstrate our need to balance our rights and our responsibilities

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 1-2

**1 Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?
Are you not my work in the Lord?**

2 If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the

seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

1. The problem in Corinth
 - a. group who claimed to be the knowledgeable one
 - b. mature; had arrived!
 - c. realized => free to eat
 - d. defended their practice on the fact that they were the mature and knowing ones
2. Ch. 8, Paul had show - true spiritual maturity and knowledge does not demand it's own rights but rather loves and cares for others
3. This group thought itself superior to others -
4. So Paul shows them that on that line of reasoning, he surpassed them all . . .

Am I not an apostle?

5. He was a leaders of the Church; capital "C"
 - a. not just the pastor of a local fellowship
 - b. the whole Christian movement!

Am I not free?

6. He was the Apostle of Grace, not Law
7. If anyone understood what liberty was about, it was he!
8. Because Paul had not been with the original disciples, some of his critics questioned his apostleship
9. So he answers their criticism . . .

Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

10. 2 tests of an apostle . . .
 - a. 1st - had to have seen the resurrected Christ
- Paul had, on the Road to Damascus
 - b. 2nd - had to have been appointed and sent by Christ to establish the Church
- "apostle" - a commissioned and sent one
- he was; again, on the Road to Dam.
- they were the proof, seal, guarantee of that

B. Vs. 3-6

3 My defense to those who examine me is this:

4 Do we have no right to eat and drink?

5 Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as *do* also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?

6 Or *is it* only Barnabas and I *who* have no right to refrain from working?

1. The defense he is making here is not of his apostleship
2. Rather, it is the defense of his teaching in Ch. 8,
 - a. about balancing liberty and love
 - b. rights & responsibilities
3. Notice, how often he speaks of his rights in these verses . . .

Do we have no right to eat and drink?

Do we have no right to take along a believing wife?

Or *is it* only Barnabas and I *who* have no right to refrain from working?

4. There were many rights and privileges that were afforded the apostles as the leaders of the church.
5. But Paul had not exercised them
6. He had a right to be fed and housed by those he ministered among, but he did not take advantage of that.
7. He had a right to get married and have the ministry support his wife as well as himself as he made his journeys; but again, he did not take advantage of that right
8. He even had a right to quit his regular job of tent making and become "full-time" if he wanted to, but he did not exercise that privilege.
9. The point he makes here is this -
 - a. the other apostles had
 - b. and it was perfectly right for them to do so
 - c. but he had not exercised that right
 - d. we'll see WHY he didn't do these things in just a minute
10. In order to press home the point he is making he uses some examples from everyday life . . .

C. V. 7

7 Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?

1. 3 examples from everyday life give strong proof to Paul's case
2. A soldier doesn't have to provide his own armor or rations; they are given to him from those he is serving
3. A farmer gets to eat of the produce of his own labor
4. A shepherd gets the benefit of his careful oversight of the flock by getting some of the wool and milk.
5. His point is that a laborer gets to partake in the fruit of his labor

6. But Paul is careful to point out that this isn't just common sense - even the word of God reveals this truth . . .

D. Vs. 8-10

8 Do I say these things as a *mere* man? Or does not the law say the same also?

9 For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about?

10 Or does He say *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.

1. In ancient world, they often used heavy cattle and oxen to crush the grains for milling.
2. In Deut 25, God had told the Jews not to put a muzzle on an ox as it stomped on the grain
 - a. this would be cruel
 - b. it was to be able to enjoy the direct fruit of it's work
3. Does God care about oxen?
 - a. of course - so much so, he put this command in His word
 - b. how much more then does God care about his people?
 - c. if it is only right that a dumb ox be allowed to enjoy the fruit of its labor,
 - d. how much more should a minister for Christ be allowed to partake of the fruit of his service of Christ?

E. Vs. 11-12

11 If we have sown spiritual things for you, *is it* a great thing if we reap your material things?

12 If others are partakers of *this* right over you, *are* we not even more?

Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.

1. Now he pulls it together
2. He had been a diligent apostle, pastor, and minister among them
 - a. he had served them in spiritual things
 - b. it was only right that they should take care of his physical needs
3. After all, they had taken care of the other apostles who had been through Corinth
4. They were taking care of the church leaders that were there then.

5. And though Paul had every right to expect this support, he would not ask for it
6. Why? Because he did not want to hinder the going forth of the gospel

7. In that day, as today, there were some people who were bugged by the discussion of money in the church
 - a. they were in bondage to their wallet
 - b. so any talk about supporting the ministry of the local church sent them into a fit of anger
8. Paul knew that objection often raised by critics of the faith -that all the church is interested in is money
9. So he decided to deny them that objection by not exercising the right to support from the church.
10. We know that there were 3 churches that did send him support occasionally
 - a. but it was completely voluntary
 - b. he never asked for it
11. Paul never determined if he would minister or how he would minister based on how much he got paid.
12. Instead, he plied his trade as a tentmaker from place to place and earned enough for his daily needs.
13. Whatever time he wasn't making tents, he was making disciples

F. Vs. 13-14

13 Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat *of the things of the temple*, and those who serve at the altar partake of *the offerings of the altar*?

14 Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

1. Paul uses two more examples from the scriptures to support his argument
2. Under the OT law, the priests were well provided for from the sacrifices and worship of the people
3. When Jesus sent out 70 of his followers for a short-term missions trip, he told them not to take anything along but to depend on the generosity of the people they preached to
(Matthew 10:5-14)
4. Paul clearly identifies the fact that he had a right to expect support from the Corinthians
5. Yet he did not exercise this right
6. Instead, he looked to a higher law than the law of rights

G. Vs. 15-16

15 But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it *would be* better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void.

16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!

1. Paul had never conditioned his ministry on his income
2. He didn't want them to think he was going to start doing that either
3. Sure Paul had a right to support, but he was not claiming or demanding his rights
4. For Paul, he was too mindful of his responsibilities to waste time demanding his rights
5. And as an apostle, his chief responsibility was to preach Christ

H. Vs. 17-18

17 For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.

18 What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.

1. Paul had a job to do; that job had been appointed to Him by God Himself
2. He was responsible to preach Christ
3. He was not responsible to ask for support
4. The support was up to God to provide

5. So Paul refused to let the discussion of money enter the picture and determine his faithfulness to God.
6. He was responsible to preach Christ
 - a. now, he could fulfill that responsibility willingly and with joy
 - b. or with a reluctant and grumbling attitude
 - c. either way, it was a responsibility he had to discharge
 - d. so, since it had to be done, he figured he might as well do it with joy and holy determination
 - e. he would not let his faithfulness be determined by anything other than God

III. CONCLUSION

A. The Reason

1. The whole reason Paul writes these things is to give an example that the Christian life is not about claiming our rights but about being mindful of our responsibilities
2. If anyone knew his rights as a Christian, it was Paul
3. But he was determined to let his reward and rights be left up to God.
4. He knew that God is utterly just
 - a. that ultimately, we are each rewarded for our deeds,
 - b. either in this life or the next
 - c. Paul would rather save up his reward and let God give it to him on that day when he finally stood before him
5. 2 Timothy 1:12 "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that day."

B. Rights vs. Responsibilities

1. Paul was able to live this kind of a life because he kept his eye on eternity
2. We find it easier to concentrate on our rights than our responsibilities because we only see the now
3. Growing in Christ means being weaned from living just for the now, to living for the future.
4. The farmer has as much right to eat the seeds in his hand as he does the responsibility to take them and plant them in the soil
 - a. it is his choice
 - b. if all he can see is the seed, he will eat it
 - c. but if he looks in faith to a harvest, he will plant it

- d. and the reward for planting is much greater than eating
- 5. Are you planting your seeds or eating them?
- 6. Do you make your decisions based on what will bring you the most pleasure now, or what will glorify God eternally
- 7. May God give us the grace to discern the difference between our rights and our responsibilities
- 8. And the courage to let go our rights that we might be faithful to our calling