

Should I Insist on My Rights?
1 Corinthians 9:1-18
March 7th, 2021

1. Freedom to be _____ in the ministry. (9:1-14)
 - a. It was practiced by the other _____. (9:1-6)
 - b. It is customary to pay other _____. (9:7)
 - c. It was supported by biblical _____. (9:8-12)
 - d. It was the pattern of _____ in Israel. (9:13)
 - e. It was supported by _____. (9:14)
2. Freedom voluntarily _____ for the sake of the gospel. (9:15-18)

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on 1 Corinthians 9:1-18

1. What is the connection between the discussion on meat sacrificed to idols in chapter 8 and Paul's right to be supported financially in chapter 9? What common theme runs between these two chapters as well as into chapter 10? (see 8:9, 13; 9:1; 4; 12; 18; 10:31-33)
2. What stereotypes exist in the world regarding paid religious leaders? Is there any way that a pastor and/or churches can avoid playing into negative stereotypes?
3. What were the qualifications for an apostle in the early church? Does the office or gift of apostle exist today? (see 9:1; 2 Cor. 12:11-12; Eph. 2:20)
4. What practical reasons are there that support a paid pastoral position?
5. What are some situations where it would be wise for a pastor to forgo a salary from the people he is serving and instead provide for himself through a different job or receive outside support?
6. What are some other situations in which Christians might choose to give up a "right" or "freedom" in order not to hinder the gospel? Think about situations at work, in your neighborhood, in the nation.

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Big idea: Those in ministry have a right to be supported financially but may choose to waive that right if it hinders the gospel.

Intro

This morning in Pocatello and Chubbuck roughly two dozen churches are meeting that have paid pastors; pastors that don't have another main outside job but are paid to set aside time to study, meet with people, prepare message, administrate the logistics of church life. But should they be paid? Does that cheapen the ministry and make it a commodity to be bought and sold?

Our passage addresses this question but we need to acknowledge the awkwardness of me teaching on this passage. It feels way more awkward to me than some of the passages on sex and marriage that we have covered in recent weeks.

It feels self-serving.

Like a parent teaching their child that the Bible says children are to obey their parents in the Lord and the child thinks, "well, this is convenient for you."

It confirms some people's suspicions that pastors are only in it for the money.

People are rightly bothered by accounts of the lavish lifestyles of celebrity pastors and tv preachers updating their \$5 million private jet with a \$20 million private jet to shuttle themselves between mansions.

And yet we teach this passage because it's the next passage. We aren't at liberty to skip over awkward parts if we commit to march through a book.

It's a relevant topic – should pastors be paid? At 2 dozen churches around our community this morning, paid pastors are teaching the word. At others in our area, unpaid volunteers are leading; sometimes by conviction other times by necessity.

Are all these churches with paid staff in error?

Are we in error by paying 3 pastoral staff members and a secretary?

Are there times and situations in which a pastor should not be paid for his ministry?

These are relevant questions for church life.

These are relevant questions if you are giving to the Lord through the local church and you want to know if that is an appropriate stewardship of money to pay staff rather than rely on volunteers.

But how does this transition from chapter 8 on eating meat sacrificed to idols? He brings that question up again in ch 10 also. Why wedge what seems to be a disconnected topic right into the middle?

Chapter 8 was about limiting liberty out of love. Yes, you're free to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols because idols aren't real. But there are times to limit that liberty out of love for others that might be tempted into sin by your example.

Chapter 9 gives another illustration of that same point. Paul was free to be supported financially in the ministry, but he has given up that freedom – that right – for the sake of the gospel.

vv. 1-14 support that right

vv. 15-18 explain why he has given up that right

1. Freedom to be supported in the ministry (9:1-14)
 - a. It was practiced by the other apostles (9:1-6)

- i. This first point would not relate to modern day pastors and missionaries because the role of apostle was unique to the early church. It was a foundational office used to establish the church by those who were eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection.
 1. "have I not seen our Lord?"
 - ii. "Am I not free?" ties in with their emphasis on freedom
 1. Also connects with his repeated point in chapter 7 of "remain as you are, but free to change status – free to remain single, free to marry, free to seek freedom from slavery.
 - iii. Even if others downplay his apostleship, surely they wouldn't (v. 1b-2)
 1. Another verification of his apostleship was the Corinthian church itself as evidence of his ministry
 2. They are even described as his "seal" of apostleship
 - a. A seal is something that verifies the authenticity of something – it was used in ancient times to show that a package or letter was official and legitimate.
 3. When he came to Corinth there was no church and there were few, if any, believers. He shared Christ in the synagogue and in homes and people responded and a church was planted. He stayed with them for a year and a half, building up this body before moving on.
 - a. He says, surely you don't doubt my role as an apostle after you yourselves benefited from this work?
 - iv. Receiving financial support as an apostle
 1. Would provide for his basic needs (v. 4) – not talking about getting rich from them.
 - a. While it is appropriate to make a living, it isn't appropriate to generate wealth out of step with the church that is being served.
 2. Would provide for a family (if he had one) (v. 5)
 3. Would allow him to refrain from working another job in order to focus on the ministry (v. 6)
 - a. He then gives three examples of other workers to make this point
- b. It is customary to pay other **workers** (9:7)
- i. A soldier –
 1. a soldier doesn't fight during the day and then have a civilian job at night to provide for their living.
 - ii. A farmer with a vineyard –
 1. Farmers make their living from farming – although "bi-vocational" farming is also common in which someone works another job to support their farming.
 - iii. A shepherd with a flock
 1. A shepherd is provided for through the flock that he cares for
- c. It was supported by biblical **principle** (9:8-12)
- i. He quotes Deut 25:4
 1. **Deuteronomy 25:4** "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.

- a. The ox would pull around a heavy sled across the grain and it would loosen the heads of grain from the stalks of wheat. It was seen as unethical to not allow the ox to eat from the grain while he was laboring in this way.
- ii. God's concern was not just oxen but people.
 1. God cares for and provides for animals. It an argument from lesser to greater. If he cares for animals in this way, wouldn't he also care all the more for people made in his image?
 2. Martin Luther: "This is not written because of the oxen, since they do not know how to read."
- iii. The spiritual labor can be supported with material provision (v. 11)
 1. It simply allows the missionary to focus on his or her missionary work or pastors to focus on the tasks of studying, preparing, teaching, counseling, and administrating in the local church.
 2. **1 Timothy 5:17-18** The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."
- iv. Others were already exercising this right to be supported – perhaps Apollos and Peter since they were mentioned in 1:12 and 3:22.
 1. Starts to turn to what will be the emphasis in vv. 15-18 – he had a right to be supported by voluntarily set aside that right so as not to hinder the gospel.
 2. **Acts 18:1-3** After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. ² And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, ³ and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.
 3. We'll come back to that in v. 15
- d. It was the pattern of **priests** in Israel (9:13)
 - i. The work of a priest in Israel required his fulltime labor. He was provided for through the contributions of the people.
 - ii. When that didn't happen, they had no choice but to work other jobs to provide for their needs and the work in the temple paused.
 1. **Nehemiah 13:10-12** I also discovered that the portions of the Levites had not been given *them*, so that the Levites and the singers who performed the service had gone away, each to his own field. ¹¹ So I reprimanded the officials and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" Then I gathered them together and restored them to their posts. ¹² All Judah then brought the tithe of the grain, wine and oil into the storehouses.
 - iii. The idea was that the support freed up the priests to do the work entrusted to them. That should be the same heart behind supporting pastors and missionaries.
 1. All of our elders share authority, shepherding, and leadership. But it isn't practical for all of our elders to give the same amount of time. Often they have other jobs that occupy their working hours. I'm simply one of the elders, but we often refer to an elder who has been paid to set aside greater time for the work of ministry as a pastor. It would not be wrong to refer to Landon as "Pastor Landon" or Martin as "Pastor Martin." That gets confusing though as people usually associate pastor with a vocation.

2. Is there a danger of laziness? Yes. One of my professors in seminary said that the pastorate is a good place for a lazy man to hide – warning us about this very danger.
3. Paul didn't talk about ministry that way. He used the term "labor" over and over again.
 - a. 1 Tim. 5:17 those who work hard at preaching and teaching.
 - b. 1 Thessalonians 5:12 talks about elders diligently laboring
 - c. In 2 Tim. 2:15 Paul writes to the young pastor, Timothy, about being diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth
 - i. David Mathis comments on what makes this hard work: Part of what makes pastoring hard work is that we teach with a tether. We don't just sit down with a blank piece of paper, or show up to address an attentive church, and speak off the top of our heads. Unashamed workers "rightly handle the word of truth". Week after week, day after day, the words we breathe out to feed the church are not our own thoughts on the matter.
- e. It was supported by Jesus (9:14)
 - i. **Luke 10:7** "Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.
2. Freedom voluntarily limited for the sake of the gospel (9:15-18)
 - a. "But I have used none of these things" – a striking contrast
 - i. After vigorously defending his right to make a living from his ministry to them, he vigorously defends his choice not to make use of that right
 - ii. Ironically, he probably needed to defend this because the Corinthians were looking down on him or were upset at him for this choice.
 - iii. **2 Corinthians 11:7-9** Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge?⁸ I robbed other churches by taking wages *from them* to serve you; ⁹ and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.
 - iv. A teacher, philosopher, professor, or religious teacher in the Roman world made their living in one of four ways: charging fees, staying in the home of a wealthy person (like a patronage), begging, or working in a trade. The last of these was least common but generally acknowledged to give the philosophers the greatest freedom to teach however he liked. Powerful patrons in the Corinthian church doubtless would have preferred to have Paul accept their money but give them deference and political support in return. (Blomberg)
 - b. He makes it clear that he is not teaching this to them so that they would start supporting him financially (v. 15)
 - i. Nor am I preaching this passage because I want a raise!
 - c. Rather, he was compelled – God had given Him a divine assignment to preach the gospel when He commissioned Paul on the road to Damascus. He is simply obeying God, not trying to gather a paycheck – and he doesn't want there to be any confusion on his motives so he refuses a paycheck from them.
 - i. **Acts 9:15-16** But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; ¹⁶ for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

ii. **Acts 13:2** While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

iii. **Galatians 1:10** For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

d. He serves against his will, not that he is unwilling but that he was called and compelled not that he sought out glory and wealth. (v. 17)

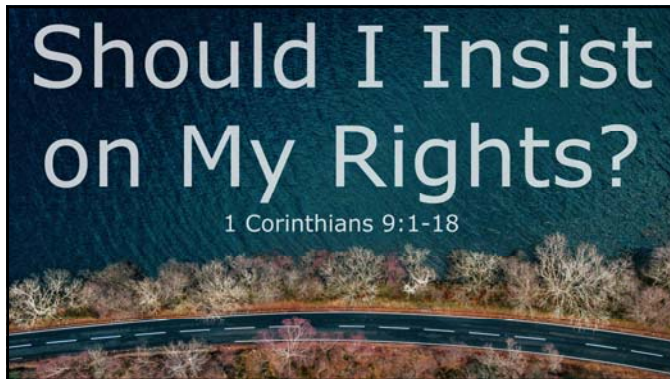
3. Application

a. What rights or freedoms am I willing to give up out of love? What rights or freedoms am I willing to give up for the gospel?

i. **1 Cor. 8:13** Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.

ii. **1 Cor. 9:12** Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

b.



1

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2

a. It was practiced by the other **apostles** (9:1-6)

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b. It is customary to pay other **workers** (9:7)

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c. It was supported
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d. It was the pattern of *priests* in Israel (9:13)

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Nehemiah 13:10 I also discovered that the portions of the Levites had not been given *them*, so that the Levites and the singers who performed the service had gone away, each to his own field.

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e. It was supported by *Jesus* (9:14)

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Luke 10:7 "Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.

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2. Freedom voluntarily **limited** for the sake of the gospel (9:15-18)

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Acts 13:2 While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

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17

1 Corinthians 8:13

Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.

18

1 Corinthians 9:12

Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

19