

# I CORINTHIANS 9:1-18

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? 2 If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

3 This is my defense to those who would examine me. 4 Do we not have the right to eat and drink? 5 Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? 6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? 7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

8 Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? 10 Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. 11 If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? 12 If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more?

Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. 13 Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? 14 In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

15 But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting. 16 For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! 17 For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. 18 What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

## Overview

Paul continues his letter addressing individual rights and freedoms. Paul knows that in Christ we have many rights; including the right to earn a living through spiritual work. To form that idea, Paul uses the common illustrations of a soldier, farmer and shepherd; along with scriptural references (*Deuteronomy 25:4 & Matthew 10:8-10*). Paul knows he is entitled to be paid for his pastoral work, but his life is compelled by something greater than his everyday right to compensation.

The Corinthian church held a high value of their rights, and were on the difficult journey we also may be familiar with: Yielding our lives — with all its rights and freedoms — to the Lordship of Jesus and the mission of His Kingdom.

Paul urges his spiritual children to join him in seeing the ultimate purpose of our lives: to be a faithful steward of the gospel.

## Questions to Contemplate

**Consider the life of Jesus. How is He a better example of living out what Paul is commending to us?**

**What are the rights and entitlements you have that you don't think you should or could give up if God called you to do so? Why?**

**Who do you know that has disadvantaged themselves for the advantage of people they are serving? How has this been effective for the sharing of the gospel? What can you learn from their story?**

## Table Talk with Children

Talk about one time you served God by serving someone else and didn't receive anything in return. How did that feel? How do you think God feels about that?

# Song for Worship

## I Surrender All by Citizens

### Prayer

Lord,

There is one thing that deserves my greatest care,  
that should call for my most rapt attention,  
and that is,  
that I may know the great end for which I am made  
which is to glorify You, who has given me life,  
and to do all the good I can for those around me.

Truly, help me see that I exist for this noble purpose.  
And, Lord please forgive me,  
because of how little this purpose  
is the thought of my everyday life.

Most days I live for myself,  
without much, or any regard, for Your glory,  
or the good of others.

I desire & pursue more readily:  
riches, honors, pleasures of this life,  
as if wealth, greatness and merriment  
could make my mortal soul eternally content.

Help me see what a false & delusive dream this is.  
Help me trust that my happiness consists in loving You,  
and being holy as You are holy.  
I believe that God... but help my unbelief.

Lord, can You give me more grace to remain in step with You?  
Please help me to know each moment that  
there can be no true happiness,  
no fulfilling of Your purpose for me  
apart from a life lived in and for Jesus.

Amen.