

1 Corinthians When Faith & Life Collide

Study 11

The Gospel and Our Rights

1 Corinthians 9:1-27

Paul's Rights as an Apostle

1 Corinthians 9: 1-12 (NIV)

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. Don't we have the right to food and drink? Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?

Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more?

1. a) Objective question. Select all that apply. Which of the following is true?

- A. Paul has the right to act freely (food, drinks, taking a wife in ministry, etc)
- B. Paul has not seen Jesus in person
- C. Paul established the Corinthian church
- D. Paul is posing rhetorical questions to the Corinthian church about the rights that he has
- E. The Old Testament has laws that indicate that everyone who contributes has a legitimate right to a share (ox gets to eat grains while working, and ministry workers get paid for their ministry work)

b) Discussion question. What were two things that apostles had the right to do? (vv 5-6)

Paul's Forgo His Rights

1 Corinthians 9:13-18 (NIV)

But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.

Don't you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me, for I would rather die than allow anyone to deprive me of this boast. For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.

2. a) Discussion question. Based on 1 Corinthians 9:13-18, why did Paul not use his rights to get financial support from the Corinthian church?

b) Fill in the blanks. Refer to the slide and fill in the blanks on how Paul counters the layer of expectations put upon him by those around him.

Layers of Expectations	How Paul counters these expectations
Obligations to men from accepting financial support for his ministry	
Cultural and Religious Expectations of Jews	
Opinions and expectations of men and society	

c) Discussion question. Is it proper for a preacher to receive support from the church?

Paul's Use of His Freedom

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (NIV)

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

- 3. Discussion question. How can Paul act differently toward different groups and not be considered a hypocrite?**

The Need for Self-Discipline and Intentional Training

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NIV)

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

- 4. a) Reflection question. In verses 24-27, the athletic metaphor is emphasised. How does this metaphor apply to your Christian life?**

- b) Reflection question. Do you want to ask the Holy Spirit to make us willing to get trained in love for the sake of the gospel?**

Takeaway

- A. Christians have rights to many freedoms but we are to relinquish those freedoms if it means some might be saved through the gospel.**
- B. Apostle Paul led by example by giving up his freedom to eat and drink, the right to take a believing wife with him in his ministry, and his right of full ministry wages (instead he worked on the side to get his own income)**
- C. As Christians, we are not to let our bodies and desires dictate our lives and behaviour, but we are to intentionally train them for the sake of the gospel.**

Case Study

Case 1 – Food at Work

Mah Khan owns a medium-sized company in Klang. He goes to Klang West Baptist Church and has been a believer for 7 years.

Then he hired a few new employees, two of the new employees who don't eat pork, one due to religious reasons, one due to preference. They requested separate utensils, plates, fridge, microwave, and eating area so that they have a pork-free version of each to store, heat up, and eat their lunch. Mah Khan calculated and it would cost a lot of money for these requests for the 2 new employees.

1. a) Objective Discussion question. Which of the following should Mah Khan do?

- A. Refuse the new employees' request and ask them to have lunch outside
- B. Follow their request and make all the changes as requested (even though they are new and still under probation and may even change jobs after a while), but this will split into two eating groups.
- C. Replace all with utensils, plates, fridge, and microwave but make all the other employees stop eating pork in the office pantry, so they can eat together.
- D. Remove the pantry for food. Ask everyone to eat outside the office.
- E. (please suggest).

b) Reflection question. Have you gotten upset before when you cannot order certain foods because someone else on the table cannot eat them? Is there a better way to think about the situation so that it is less upsetting?

c) Discussion question. Mah Khan decided to make the office pantry a pork-free area. The colleagues then start to go out and eat when they feel like eating pork. They would make secret lunch plans and exclude the two colleagues because the two can't eat pork anyway. They started a new Whatsapp group chat to discuss lunch and excluded the two. What do you think of this?

d) Reflection question. If you were one of the colleagues, would you have done the same or would you give up on your rights to eat pork?

e) Discussion question. As a Christian, what is the correct way to think about this situation and what are the ways we can win some to the gospel?

Case 2 – Wages for Full-time Ministry Workers

Poh See Tar grew up as a Christian and decided when he was 25 years old to enter full-time ministry as a pastor at Hundreth Baptist Church. The lay elders in his church told him that their policy is that all the full-time ministry workers should look for their own funds just like Apostle Paul did.

See Tar started having second thoughts because he has a young family consisting of his wife who is pregnant and a young two-year-old toddler to take care of. Yet, he feels strongly called to pastor people and many in his church have affirmed his giftings.

2. a) Discussion question. Are elders in Hundreth Baptist Church allowed to make such a ruling?

b) Discussion question. See Tar decided to go to a different church that gives a wage to their pastors as this provides financial stability for his family. Is See Tar less holy for doing so?

c) Discussion question. Are paid ministry workers and unpaid ministry workers different in terms of one being holier than the other? Are there any differences?

d) Discussion question. Are full-time ministry positions popular? Why or why not?