

1 CORINTHIANS 9 – ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE

9:1-2 – Paul’s Apostolic Authority

- “am I not free?” What does he mean by free? “The idea of freedom was often bound up with authority or rights; Paul, who calls on his readers to circumscribe their freedom, also sacrifices his own rights.”
- V2 – “Paul founded the church community in Corinth (Acts 18:1–11). If the Corinthian believers deny Paul’s apostleship, then they would also have to deny their own legitimacy as a church community. Their response to the gospel message and their maturity in the faith validate Paul’s apostleship”

9:3-6 – Apostolic and personal rights Paul had given up for the sake of the gospel

- V4 – food & drink. Refers to the accepting of meals on behalf of his work for the gospel.
- V5 – marriage (as well as Barnabas) – personal right
- V6 – monetary gifts. Paul worked regularly as a tent maker to supplement his income (Acts 18:3, 28:30) so as not to be a financial burden on the churches he planted and visited during his itinerant ministry and missionary trips.

9:7-14 – A worker is worthy of his wages. Paul does now go into detail about the right ministers of God’s word have to make a living off of serving God and his people. Here, he “supplies four arguments as proof:

- An analogy from everyday occupations (v7)
- An observation on Deuteronomy 25:4 (v8-10)
- An analogy from the temple priesthood (v13)
- A teaching from the Lord Jesus himself [Matt 10:10, Luke 10:7] (v14)
- See also 1 Timothy 3:3, 5:17-18; Phil 4:14-16; Gal 6:6; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 2 Thess. 3:7-10
- V12 – “we have not made use of this right Paul did not want anyone to question his motives for preaching the gospel, so he did not accept financial support. He also did not want to become socially indebted to potential benefactors because of their financial support.”

Five ways to be prepared to make a defense for the gospel with gentleness and respect:

- Understand what you believe and why you believe it. Can you articulate the gospel in 3 minutes or less? Can you give your testimony in five minutes or less?
 - This means reading/listening to your Bible regularly.
- Understand the basics of what they believe and why they believe it. Do your homework. If you don’t know, then ask.
 - This means reading credible books and websites – even ones that go against your worldview to understand the other side more clearly and in their own words.
- Listen. Ask clarifying questions (What I’m hearing you say is...). Their “Questions have context that you need to know.” **Treat them with dignity and respect** (Jesus said something about that once). Remember, there is a wrong way to be right.
 - James 1:19-20, “19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”
 - John 13:34-35, “34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
- Acknowledge common ground when possible. In many ways, you have to earn the right to be heard. You can do this best by listening and understanding where they are coming from. Similarly, people often aren’t ready to hear about how much God loves them if we aren’t willing to love them first.
- Look for natural bridges to the gospel when possible. If none, be ready to articulate what the Bible says about the topic at hand.
- Why go through all this trouble? For the sake of the gospel. Saving people is the most important thing we can do with our time on earth.