

Giving up our rights for the sake of the Gospel

Many ministers of the Gospel have their authority questioned. The apostle, Paul was no exception. The same types of questioning came out then as comes out today.

- Who is he?
- What authority does he have?
- What right does he have to take anything from us?
- How do we know that he is called of God and not just building his own kingdom?

Paul faced such questioning even amongst the churches that he planted.

1 Corinthians chapter 9 is Paul's response to this type of attack on his ministry.

1 Corinthians 9: 1 – 27

1) Ministry credentials (9: 1 – 2)

- A minister of the Gospel must be free in Christ – from sin, anger, bitterness, resentment, unforgiveness, worldliness and self-centredness
- A calling to do what God has called him/her to do.
 - Paul was called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God (1 Corinthians 1: 1)
 - We don't serve God because someone else wants us to or because it is a good idea or we can't find another job.
- A real person encounter with Jesus
- Touches peoples lives in way that they will be able to testify of their ministry.

2) Our rights (9: 3 – 12a)

- A right to our needs – food and drink (v.4)
- A right to marriage (v.5)
- A right to material support from those into who spiritual seed has been sown (vs.11 & 12)
 - Who serves as a soldier at his own expense (v.7)
 - Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? (v. 7)
 - Who tends a flock and does not drink of its milk (v.7)
- Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out its grain – don't hinder a minister of the Gospel from carrying out his/her God given calling.
- The Lord commanded that those who preach the Gospel should receive their living from the Gospel. (v.14) c. Matthew 10: 10

3) Giving up our rights for the sake of the Gospel (9: 12b – 18)

- We give up our rights if holding to them will hinder the Gospel of Christ.
- Many ministers are accused of serving God for personal gain and using religion to extort money out of people. Unfortunately much of this is happening in many parts of the body of Christ and so the accusations have valid foundations.
- In order for Paul not to let anyone have any ground to accuse him of serving God for person gain he rather gives up his rights to receive material gifts from the Corinthian church so as not to hinder the preaching of the Gospel.
 - I preached the Gospel with a group. The man wouldn't come out of his room as he said that we all drive nice cars when they have to walk. He came out after I told him that I didn't have a car. We could share the Gospel with them. He had no more ground for accusation.
- A minister's motivation for preaching the Gospel is internal – a fruit of grace – not for what we can get out of it.
 - I am compelled to preach. Woe to to me if I do not preach the gospel. (v16)
 - The Message “If I proclaim the Message, it's not to get something out of it for myself. I'm compelled to do it, and doomed if I don't! If this was my own idea of just another way to make a living, I'd expect some pay. But since it's not my idea but something solemnly entrusted to me, why would I expect to get paid? So am I getting anything out of it? Yes, as a matter of fact: the pleasure of proclaiming the Message at no cost to you.”

4) Becoming all things to all men to save some (9: 19 – 23)

- We give up our freedom if that's what it would take to see others saved.
- “I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible” (v. 19)
- “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (v.22)
- Paul gave up his personal, social, cultural and religious rights for the sake of others
- When he was with Jews he acted like a Jew, when with Gentiles he acted like a Gentile, when he was with the weak he refrained from what would make them stumble and acted like them but without compromising the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Sadhu Sundar Singh: “We need to give the same water of life in an Indian cup.”
- Indian Theologian: “Western missionaries answered questions that Indians weren't asking.
- The minister of the Gospel is always relevant to his/her society.

5) Watching our own lives (9: 24 – 27)

- The minister of the Gospel needs to watch his own life carefully
- It is easy to preach to others. But if we are so intent in preaching to others that we don't see the dangers for ourselves we will fall.
- The message is always as much for ourselves as for others.
- So let us run the race with discipline in order to win the prize that is set before us.