

A Right Heart Concerning Ministry 1 Corinthians 9:1-18

Introduction:

1. In chapter 8 Paul dealt with matters pertaining to our Christian liberty that we have in Christ. **Galatians 5:1**
2. But how do we use our liberty wisely? Paul taught that we aren't to flaunt our liberty and use it in a way that will hurt fellow believers. **Galatians 5:13**
3. I may have a legitimate right to do something, but I also have a responsibility to forego my rights for my brother's benefit. If my liberty is going to harm or hinder him in any way, I should be willing to lay down my rights for his good.
4. What was Paul's conclusion about how he would live his life in light of other members of the Body of Christ? 8:13
5. As we move to chapter 9, Paul is going to use some very personal examples that demonstrate this principle in his own life. Paul was willing to not only forego his rights for another brother, but also for the sake of the gospel ministry. That is what this passage is all about.
6. In this passage, God reveals to us what the hearts of God's people and God's leaders **should be** concerning the work of the ministry. **Ephesians 4:11-12**

What should be the heart of God's people?

First, there should be a respect for the position of our leaders.

1. In the first five verses Paul basically has to defend his position as an apostle of Christ and assert his God-given rights. He is doing this to show them how he had laid down those rights for them.
2. Paul's apostleship was constantly under scrutiny and question (verse 3). Paul was not one of the twelve, nor did he receive his ministry and message from the twelve. **Galatians 1:11-12**
3. Because of this, many people did not like Paul and constantly sought to turn the churches away from Paul and undermine his apostleship.
 - The fickle Corinthians had bought into a lot of this verbal garbage. **2 Corinthians 10:10, 11:5-6**
4. In verses 1 and 2 Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions in order to remind the Corinthians that it was **Paul's** gospel message that had saved them and transformed their lives from paganism to a sanctified position in Christ. 1:2
 - Paul says, "You want to know what the seal or proof of my ministry is? Look around at your next church meeting." Paul's gospel message was evidenced in their own lives. They were his letters of commendation. **2 Corinthians 3:2-3**
5. Paul then asserts that he had the same rights as any of the other apostles. vs. 3-6
 - The twelve apostles did not work secular jobs, but they and their families were supported by the church at Jerusalem. **Acts 6:1-5**
6. What a shame that Paul had to deal with this issue. The Corinthians knew that Paul was a God-called apostle. Instead of respecting Paul's office, they treated him in a demeaning way. God's people should respect their God-given leaders. **1 Thessalonians 5:12-13**

Second, there should be a recognition of our responsibility to our leaders.

1. Paul had labored intensely, teaching and preaching the Word among the Corinthians, yet they had taken no responsibility whatsoever to care for Paul's physical needs.
2. Paul's needs were completely neglected, but other religious charlatans had come in and were getting money out of the Corinthians. vs. 12a
3. Paul will demonstrate that he had every legitimate right to demand compensation for his spiritual labors. He begins with three illustrations. vs. 7
 - You don't require a soldier to pay for his own guns and bullets when he goes off to war for you. You take care of his physical needs.
 - You don't tell a guy working in a vineyard that he can't have a grape when he's hungry.
 - You don't tell a farmhand who is toiling among those stinky animals that he can't have any milk when he gets thirsty.
4. Paul then uses the Law of Moses as another illustration. vs. 8-9
 - If an ox is threshing corn for you and he gets hungry, you don't starve him. You let him eat all he wants. You don't muzzle him. Why? Because he's working for you!
5. In verses 10-11 Paul applies this principle to today. If a man is plowing and planting the seed of God's Word in your life and teaching you the spiritual things of God Almighty, you have a responsibility to meet his physical needs.
 - If a man or ministry is feeding you spiritual food, then that is where you have an obligation to meet the carnal, physical needs so he can continue to minister.
 - What a shame that many Bible-teaching ministries are hamstrung for a lack of funds while the members of that local congregation send money to religious organizations that aren't even proclaiming God's Word rightly divided. This was happening at Corinth.
6. Old Testament, Levitical priests were to be supported through a system of tithes and offerings that God's people gave regularly (vs. 13). This is how the priests lived, ate, and got their provisions.
 - Paul says that gospel preachers today should likewise live of the gospel. vs. 14
 - If men give of their time, energy, efforts, and lives to serve the church and teach the Word, their necessities should be met by the church and they should live of the gospel ministry. This is where their living should come from, if at all possible.
 - This is the way God set it up and the way it is supposed to function.

1 Timothy 5:17-18

 - The Corinthians had been woefully lacking in their responsibility to take care of Paul. **2 Corinthians 11:7-9**

What should be the heart of God's leaders?

- This is a wonderful passage as we see the heart of a true man of God that burns with passion to teach and preach God's Word. The Corinthians had treated Paul so unfairly and so poorly, yet how did Paul respond? We see the heart of a leader.

A leader is willing to sacrifice. vs. 12b

- Paul had the power to demand his rights that the Corinthians take care of him. Paul said we used not this power, but suffer all things. Why? For the sake of the gospel.

A leader refuses to abuse his power. vs. 18

- Paul had every right to expect financial support (just like the other apostles), yet Paul refused to demand it or force the issue. Paul made the gospel without charge. If people chose to help meet his necessities, that was great. If not, Paul would make tents to support himself. **Acts 18:3**

A leader must preach the gospel no matter what others do. vs. 16-17

1. I love what Paul says, "*Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.*"
2. A dispensation (a dispensing) of the gospel of grace had been committed to Paul by Jesus Christ for the Gentiles. Paul couldn't do anything but preach!
3. This is the heart of a true man of God. He can't do anything else. You can't stop him. He has to do it. He can't quit. He can't do anything else and have peace.
 - His attitude is, "If I can derive enough income to meet my needs, that's great, but if not, I'm still preaching. I'm still giving my life to proclaim the Word of God."
 - A guy who is in it for the money, when the money runs out and the going gets tough, he's gone.
4. Paul's reward was to be able to willingly and freely preach the gospel to everybody without any strings attached.

In Conclusion:

1. Remember the point of all this. Paul makes it clear that it wasn't to get money out of the Corinthians. vs. 15
 - It was to illustrate what he taught in chapter 8 about being willing to lay down your rights for a weaker brother.
2. Paul is basically saying, "I've got a right to have things work the way God ordained it, but if you aren't ready for that, that's okay. I'm going to preach anyway. If you're so immature as to act that way, then let's just take that issue off of the table and talk about Christ."
3. Paul's attitude was, "Let's just make Christ the issue." How refreshing to see this kind of heart. May God give us the same heart!