

The Blessed Mess: Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

Sermon Notes

The Heart of a Missionary

(1 Corinthians 9:1-18)

Paul's Rights

"Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? 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.

My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we not have a right to eat and drink? Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?

I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel." – 1 Corinthians 9:1-14

Paul's Use of His Rights

"But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one. For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel." 1 Corinthians 9:15-18

How Can We Apply Paul's Heart?

For Further Thought and Discussion

Getting Started

1. What was helpful to you in this week's sermon? What didn't you understand?
2. What keeps you from sharing your faith with those who don't yet know Christ?

Going Deeper

3. Please read 1 Cor. 9:1-14. What reasons does Paul give for his right to be paid for his ministry?
4. Please read 1 Cor. 9:15-18. So, why doesn't Paul use this right?
5. Paul was willing to give up any right he had to reach more people with the gospel. What rights do you have, which if you chose not to exercise them, would make you more effective in reaching others? (for example, my right to my time, comfort, reputation, happiness, etc.)
6. How is Jesus an example of giving up His rights to save us?

Application

What is one thing you will apply from this discussion?