

Introduction

In 2002 I was taking some time to pray and fast, and I had this impression of a book about all the stories that I had heard my father teach in his classes. He had a great reputation around the world as being one of the foremost experts in drilling operations, and companies valued his knowledge and the class that he put together to train drilling supervisors. My father taught drilling principles and then illustrated his points with case histories from his own career. These were not just interesting stories; there was an underlying principle in each one. I shared the idea of putting all these case histories in a book with my father, and he liked it. So, I wrote the first edition of what became the Tales of the Oil Patch. My father and I edited and rewrote the book thirteen times before we published it. The Tales of the Oil Patch were not just a collection of stories; they were relevant examples that taught sound principles that drilling personnel needed to know. As my father put it, "They were tales that tell."

The church in Corinth was a gifted church, but it had a lot of problems that needed to be addressed. In the first six chapters, Paul has dealt with the division, strife, and immorality in the church. He had sent them a previous letter, and they had responded to that letter with questions for him. In chapter seven, Paul began answering their questions. He answered questions about marriage, sex, divorce, singleness, and then food sacrificed to idols. In chapter eight, Paul dealt with liberties and how to determine the best course of action to take. Even though the Corinthians were free to eat all foods, eating food that had been sacrificed to idols could possibly offend a weaker brother. Therefore, if they knew the meat was sacrificed to an idol, and a weaker brother was there, they should abstain from eating that meat so that they did not cause the weaker brother to stumble. Paul encouraged them to exercise restraint in certain liberties that they had so that they would not cause others to stumble.

In chapter nine, Paul is continuing that discussion with the Corinthians, and he gives some personal examples to help them see how he had not used some of the liberties he had. Paul speaks of have a right to live a normal life, eating and drinking, and marrying a believing wife, and how he had not used any of these liberties. Next, Paul wrote about his right to receive support for his ministry by those he was ministering to. He then used illustrations of soldiers, farmers, shepherds, and oxen. These illustrations were given to teach about reasons why we might not use our liberties. At surface value, the examples teach about a minister's liberty to live a normal life, and to receive support for his ministry work, and these are important lessons. But, they were given to illustrate Paul's points about giving up some liberties for a greater cause. These are tales that tell.

Paul's Personal Examples of Using Liberties (1 Cor 9:1-23)

1. Paul's Right to Live a Normal Life
 - a. Right to Eat and Drink
 - b. Right to Marry a Believing Wife
2. Right to Receive Pay for His Labor
 - a. Example of a Soldier
 - b. Example of a Farmer
 - c. Example of a Shepherd
 - d. Example of Oxen
 - e. Principle
 - f. Example of Levites and Priests
3. Paul's Reason for Not Using These Liberties

(1 Cor 9:1–23) “Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? {2} 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. {3} My defense to those who examine me is this: {4} Do we not have a right to eat and drink? {5} 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? {6} Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? {7} 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? {8} I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? {9} 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? {10} 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. {11} If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? {12} 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. {13} 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? {14} So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. {15} 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. {16} 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. {17} For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. {18} 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. {19} For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. {20} To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; {21} to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. {22} To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. {23} I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.”

1. Paul's Right to Live a Normal Life (1 Cor 9:1-5)

Paul begins with a question, “Am I not free?” Paul was a free man and could do whatever he wanted to do. He was not a slave; he was a free man, and therefore, he was Christ's slave. As a free man, Paul had lots of liberties. In verse nineteen, Paul said that though he was a free man, he had made himself a slave to all, so that he could win more to Christ. Paul set aside some of the liberties he had in order to win more people to Christ for the kingdom. The Corinthians wanted to make full use of their liberties that they had, and Paul begins by telling them that he was a free man, had lots of liberties, but was not trying to use all of them. There are other considerations about how we use our liberties.

(1 Cor 9:1) “Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?”

(1 Cor 9:19) “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.”

Paul's mention of freedom is a follow-up to the discussion on eating meat sacrificed to idols. Although we have the freedom to eat all meat, if it causes our brother to stumble, we should not use that freedom for the sake of our brother. Paul ended chapter eight by saying, "Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble." We have liberties, but we need to be careful about using our liberties. We cannot be a narcissist, only looking at our own interests, pleasures, and welfare. We should be careful about how we use our freedom. Paul was a free man, but he was very careful about using his liberties.

Paul's next three questions are about being an apostle. "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?" Many people use this text as the qualifications of being an apostle, and since Jesus is not around to see, there are no more apostles. The example Paul uses is not to defend his apostleship; it is about the wise use of his freedom and liberties. As an apostle, Paul would have more knowledge than any of them. He had preached the gospel to them, planted the church, raised up elders, and been a spiritual father to them. Paul did not use his knowledge, authority, and freedom for his own personal gain. The apostle Paul was very careful about the use of his liberties, and he was an example to the Corinthians.

(1 Cor 9:1) "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?"

There are two categories of apostles: apostles of the lamb, and apostles. The qualifications for an apostle of the Lamb are given in Acts 1, when the remaining eleven chose Matthias to take the place of Judas Iscariot. The apostles of the Lamb had to be with the Lord at His baptism, accompany Him, and be a witness of His resurrection. The Apostle Paul was not an apostle of the Lamb; he was of the second group of apostles. Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy and the other apostles mentioned in the New Testament did not have the same requirements. So, this text is not a list of qualifications to be an apostle. I believe that Paul mentions seeing the Lord as a comparison to Peter and the other apostles of the Lamb. He was in no way inferior to these other apostles.

Paul makes one excellent statement about apostles, and that is the proof or seal of their work. Apostles preach the gospel, plant churches, train and release leaders in the church. They lay foundations. There are a number of other things that they do. The Apostle Paul planted the church in Corinth, and they were his work in the Lord. They were the seal or proof of his apostleship.

a. **Right to Eat and Drink** (1 Cor 9:3-4)

Paul has set himself up as a free man, and an apostle. If anyone had some rights and liberties, it was him. Now Paul gets into some of those specific rights. The first right was to eat and drink. He could eat meat sacrificed to idols or anything else. He could drink wine. He was free to do all these things. Yet Paul had already stated that if food would cause his brother to stumble, he would never eat meat again. In Paul's letter to the Romans he said that it is not good to eat meat or drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles. Therefore, Paul did not just teach this; he did not drink wine or eat meat, or use his liberties in this way.

(1 Cor 9:3-4) "My defense to those who examine me is this: {4} Do we not have a right to eat and drink?"

(1 Cor 8:13) "Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble."

(Rom 14:21) "It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles."

b. Right to Marry a Believing Wife (1 Cor 9:5)

The next liberty that Paul addresses is the right to marry a believing wife. Paul was single and free to take along a believing wife. In the Old Testament, the Jews were not to intermarry. The principle carried into the New Testament, where believers were not to marry an unbeliever. The Corinthians understood that believers were not to marry an unbeliever, and Paul had just given some instructions to those that already had unbelieving spouses. We benefit from Paul's directness here that addresses the right of all Christians to marry a believer. Paul was single at this time, although most scholars believe that he had been married earlier in his life, and that his wife probably had died. He was therefore free to marry a believing woman.

(1 Cor 9:5) "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?"

Paul mentions that the rest of the apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Peter, all were married. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we have an account of Jesus coming into Peter's house, and his mother-in-law was sick. Jesus healed her, and she got up and waited on them. Since she was his mother-in-law, he was obviously married. Paul mentions them to say that he had the liberty to take along a believing wife.

(Matt 8:14-15) "When Jesus came into Peter's home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever. {15} He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she got up and waited on Him."

2. Right to Receive Pay for His Labor (1 Cor 9:6-14)

Paul had the same rights as everyone else, to eat, drink, and to get married to a believing woman. Paul's next right that he speaks about is his right to refrain from working. Earlier, when Paul said that he had a right to eat and drink, many scholars tie that into this next section about receiving pay for his ministry work. I have no problem with that principle and application, but because of Paul's answer to their question of eating meat sacrificed to idols, I believe it is referring to that. Paul asked if he and Barnabas were the only ones that did not have a right to refrain from working. Paul worked hard day and night so that he would not be a burden to the people that he was reaching out to. In his second letter to the Thessalonians he said, "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you;" Paul laid aside his right to be compensated for his labor so that he would not be a burden, and to offer himself as an example. There were some in that church that were free-loaders and not working. In both of his letters to them, he exhorted them to work and eat their own bread. He said that if they were unwilling to work, then they should not eat either. Paul had a right to be paid for his ministry, but he gave up that right so that he could be an example to the church.

(1 Cor 9:6) "Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?"

(2 Thess 3:7–12) “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, {8} nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; {9} not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. {10} For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. {11} For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. {12} Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.”

a. **Example of a Soldier** (1 Cor 9:7)

Paul gives several examples to illustrate the right of a minister to be compensated for his work. The first example is of a soldier. He asked, “Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? The obvious answer is, “None.” Soldiers work for on behalf of the country or kingdom, and they are paid by the government for their work.

(1 Cor 9:7) “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?”

b. **Example of a Farmer** (1 Cor 9:7)

The second example is of a farmer. He asked, “Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it?” Again, the answer is, “None.” The vineyard keeper gets to enjoy the fruit of his labor. In fact, he picks it right off the vine and it is always freshest right off the vine. As one who has a small vineyard, I am hoping that next year I will start enjoying some of its fruit. I have some Reliant grapes, which are a red table grape. I also have some Thompson Seedless and Himrod grapes. Both of these are green grapes, and they are not only good to eat, but the majority of raisins come from these two varieties. I also have some Concord grapes, and a lot of the grape juice and grape jelly comes from Concords. This will be the second year for most of my grape vines, and it may be several more years before I get heavy production, but I should start getting some grapes this next year. I planted a vineyard with the expectation of eating the fruit of it.

(1 Cor 9:7) “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?”

c. **Example of a Shepherd** (1 Cor 9:7)

The third illustration that Paul gives is of a shepherd. He asked, “Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?” Again, the answer is, “None.” A shepherd would naturally get some of the goat milk from the flock. Many years ago, we had a small farm in Acworth, and we decided to have milk goats. We bought some Nubian goats, which are some of the best milk goats in the world. After thinking about it for a while, we made a decision to sell the Nubians and buy some Boer goats. Boer goats are meat goats, and they don’t require milking twice a day. While they are still a lot of work, they are not nearly as demanding. Raising cattle or goats for milk is lots of work, and those that do it would certainly use the milk of the flock.

(1 Cor 9:7) “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?”

d. **Example of Oxen** (1 Cor 9:8-10)

Paul's fourth illustration is of an oxen. He quotes Deuteronomy 25:4, where God told Moses that they were not to muzzle the ox while he is threshing. This law was given for more than one reason. It's first application is literal; farmers were to treat their animals well and were not to withhold food from them while they were working.

(1 Cor 9:8–10) “I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? {9} 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? {10} 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.”

(Deut 25:4) “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.”

Paul makes the quote relevant to those in the ministry. He said, “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.” The spiritual principle is that people should be compensated for their labor. Workers need to have a hope of sharing in the fruit of their labor. Pastors should be paid for their work.

There is a new initiative in Saudi Arabia to diversify the economy. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has a national transformation plan. A company named Neom is hiring top executives from Europe and the U.S. to run the company. However, according to the Wall Street Journal, they are struggling to retain employees. The work culture is not great, and this quote from Neom's Chief Executive would explain why. “I drive everybody like a slave. When they drop down dead, I celebrate. That's how I do my projects,”¹ God does not want animals treated that way, and He certainly does not want people treated that way.

I have a friend who pastors a church overseas. He was asked by a local church that was struggling to pastor the church. Since it was struggling, there was very little pay. This pastor worked hard to stabilize the church, and built it up again. He had believed that once the church began to flourish, he would be fairly compensated. However, once the church was on its feet again, the board of the church said they did not need him any longer. This pastor was baffled and disappointed in what happened. He kept his eyes on the Lord and moved on. Pastors, like soldiers, farmers, shepherds, and oxen, should not be muzzled while they are threshing; they should expect to eat from the fruit of their labors.

Many years ago I was part of a pastors' weekly prayer meeting. One of the pastors that attended had a young worship leader, who was outstanding. He had been brought on board to lead worship and to be the youth pastor. His pay was a meagre \$800 a month, which was not enough to rent an apartment at that time. They also offered him left-over food from grocery stores that was collected every week. Many churches have the attitude of trying to pay as little as possible, particularly for youth pastors. Instead of muzzling the ox while threshing, they should try to honor their pastors, and make sure they have enough to live on.

¹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/saudi-arabia-lures-executives-to-neom-with-million-dollar-salaries-zero-taxes-11665475886?siteid=yhoof2>

e. **Principle** (1 Cor 9:11-12)

In verses eleven and twelve, Paul shares the Biblical principle that those who sow spiritual things should reap material things from those that have benefited from the ministry. He said, "If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?" There are many people in the church, including pastors, that do not understand this.

(1 Cor 9:11) "If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?"

A few years ago, I ministered to some pastors for nearly two years. Each week I poured my life into these pastors. I sowed spiritual things in them, but there was no consideration for reaping materially. They felt that I had more money than them, and that I should be supporting them. I have no problem supporting other ministries that are doing kingdom work and need finances. I do have a problem with pastors who violate this spiritual principle.

One week I had a friend of mine minister to the group of pastors. This friend is a prophet to the body of Christ, and he also sowed spiritual things in them. I asked for an offering for the prophet, and not one of the pastors gave an offering. They dishonored the prophet when they violated this spiritual principle.

Many in the church also lack this understanding. I have had people in the churches that I pastored who came and were ministered to every week, but never gave to the church. They spent their money on many other things, but giving material support to those that sow spiritually into them was never even a thought.

Paul is sharing about the support of pastors, and we greatly benefit from the principles that he shares. The reason for sharing this was that he had a right to receive monetary support from the Corinthians, but did not exercise that right. He said, "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." Paul gave up the right to receive monetary support for the sake of the gospel. He did not want his support to hinder the gospel message in any way.

(1 Cor 9:12) "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."

If Paul did not use his right to receive support from the church in Corinth when he was planting it, how did Paul make his living? He earned his keep in two ways. First, Paul worked a secular job. In Acts 18:1-4, Luke describes Paul's arrival to Corinth. When he arrived, he found a Jew named Aquila, and he stayed with them because he was of the same trade, tent-making. So, Paul was making and selling tents during the day, and every Sabbath he was reasoning in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks to believe in Jesus.

(Acts 18:1-4) "After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. {2} And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, {3} and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers. {4} And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks."

The second income that Paul had was from other churches that were supporting him. In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul told the Corinthians that he had been receiving support from the churches in Macedonia, and Philippi was one of those churches. Those churches gave to Paul out of their poverty, and beyond their ability. In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he praised them for their support of his ministry. They had supported his ministry in Corinth, and also in Thessalonica. Even though Paul had a right to receive support from the church he was planting in Corinth, and did not take it, he was still receiving support for his ministry from other churches. Again, the point that Paul was making was that he had a right to receive support, and he had not used that right so that the gospel would not be hindered in Corinth.

(2 Cor 8:1–6) “Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, {2} that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. {3} For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, {4} begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, {5} and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. {6} So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.”

(Phil 4:15–16) “You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; {16} for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.”

f. **Example of Levites and Priests** (1 Cor 9:13-14)

Paul summed up the example of the right of ministers to receive monetary support for sowing spiritually into people with an Old Testament example. He said that those who performed sacred services in the temple ate the food, and those that attended to the altar shared from the altar. The sacred services were done primarily by the Levites, and the offerings at the altar were done by the priests. The priests and Levites received the tithes, and that is how they lived. The tithes of God's people have always been used to support God's servants. That was true in the Old Testament, and that is also true in the New Testament. Paul concluded by saying, “So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.”

(1 Cor 9:13–14) “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? {14} So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.”

3. **Paul's Reason for Not Using These Liberties** (1 Cor 9:15-23)

Paul did not use the liberties he had to eat and drink, take along a believing wife, or to receive monetary support from the Corinthians. He did not write these things to convict them and change this. He said it would be better to die than to have any man make his boast an empty one. Paul was writing to let them know that we don't have to use our liberties. We need to carefully consider the liberties that we have, and think about the needs of others. We should not do anything that will destroy our brothers. We should not do anything that is not profitable. We should not do anything that will destroy our temples. We should not do anything that will hinder the message of the gospel. Even though we have liberties, we need to be careful about the use of our liberties.

(1 Cor 9:15) "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."

Paul said, "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." Paul knew what he was called to do, and he would be full of sorrow and woe if he did not preach the gospel. Paul was compelled to preach the gospel. If he preached voluntarily, he had a reward, but if against his will, he had a stewardship entrusted to him. The word voluntarily (heckon, Strong's G1635) does not mean without pay; it means willfully. Paul preached the gospel willfully; he was not made to do it. Paul was also a steward of the gospel, but he did not preach out of a sense of duty; he preached the gospel because he wanted to preach the gospel. Paul's reward for not making full use of his right in the gospel was that he could offer the gospel without charge and win more people to Christ.

(1 Cor 9:16–19) "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. {17} For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. {18} 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. {19} For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more."

Even though Paul was free from all men, he made himself a slave to all, so that he could win more people to Christ. To the Jews, he became as a Jew, so that he could win Jews to Christ. He lived as if under the Law even though he was not under the Law. To those without the Law, the Gentiles, he lived as without the law. Paul clarified this by saying, "though not being without the Law of God but under the law of Christ." Paul never lived an unlawful or unruly life. To the weak, Paul became weak, so that he could win the weak. The weak would include those that were not mature in Christ, and could get easily offended. Paul would not eat meat or drink wine around those that had a weak conscience. Paul concluded, "I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it."

(1 Cor 9:20-23) "To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; {21} to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. {22} To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. {23} I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it."

Conclusion and Applications

The church in Corinth wanted to know what their rights were, and they wanted to make sure that they made full use of their rights. Many people in the body of Christ today are looking for their rights, and they want the same thing, to make full use of their personal liberties. They want the good life, the easy life, the fun life, and the convenient life. Paul was not concerned about his personal liberties. He gave many examples to the Corinthians of rights that he had, but had chosen not to use them. He had a right to eat and drink, but did not use it so that he would not destroy another brother. He had a right to take along a believing wife, but did not use it, so that he would have undistracted devotion to the Lord and win more people to Christ.

Paul had a right to receive monetary support from the church in Corinth, but he had not used that right, so that the gospel would not be hindered. Paul gave the Old Testament examples of oxen, Levites, and priests to establish the right that he had as a minister to make his living from the gospel. Paul did not use any of the rights so that he could win more people to Christ. Paul lived his life in a way that he could have maximum impact for the gospel message.

Prayer

Father God, help us to carefully consider our liberties. Help us not to think about our own desires and pleasures, but what is profitable for our brothers and sisters in Christ, and for the gospel message. Help us not to do anything that will hinder the gospel message. Instead, help us to live our lives in a way that will maximize our effectiveness as Your servants and representatives. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Introduction (1 Cor 9:1–23)

- 1. Paul's Right to Live a Normal Life** (1 Cor 9:1-5, 9:19)
 - a. Right to Eat and Drink (1 Cor 9:3-4, 1 Cor 8:13, Rom 14:21)

 - b. Right to Marry a Believing Wife (1 Cor 9:5, Matt 8:14–15)

- 2. Right to Receive Pay for His Labor** (1 Cor 9:6-14, 2 Thess 3:7–12)
 - a. Example of a Soldier (1 Cor 9:7)
 - b. Example of a Farmer (1 Cor 9:7)
 - c. Example of a Shepherd (1 Cor 9:7)
 - d. Example of Oxen (1 Cor 9:8-10, Deut 25:4)
 - e. Principle (1 Cor 9:11-12, Acts 18:1–4, 2 Cor 8:1–6, Phil 4:15-16)
 - f. Example of Levites and Priests (1 Cor 9:13-14)

- 3. Paul's Reason for Not Using These Liberties** (1 Cor 9:15-23)

Conclusion and Applications