

Church Gone Wild: Week 9
Rights & Rewards

1 Corinthians 9
Pastor Derek Vreeland

Who do you think you are?

1 Corinthians 9:1-3

The church in Corinth had gone wild. Paul who founded the church was trying to correct them. Some in the church were asking, "Who gives you the right to say anything to us?"

Every Christian has the right to respectfully question any Christian leader.

Every Christian leader has the right to respectfully defend their leadership.

Paul gives a defense using sixteen rhetorical questions.

1 Corinthians 9:4

This refers to the issue of eating meat sacrificed to idol.

1 Corinthians 9:5

Apostles had the right to marry, although Paul did not get married. (See Chapter 7)

1 Corinthians 9:6

Barnabas was another apostle, another early church leader. Apostles drew financial support from the churches they founded. Some in the church questioned whether or not church leaders like Paul had the right to "the church's money."

Paul now turns his rhetorical questions to deal with the issue of Church leaders and money.

Church Leaders and Money

1 Corinthians 9:7

Soldiers get paid by the government they serve. Farmers live on the crops or animals that they raise.

1 Corinthians 9:8-10

Jewish Law is clear that those who work should receive payment.

1 Corinthians 9:11-12

Some people questioned whether or not Paul had the right to receive financial compensation from the church he started. Paul states that while he does indeed have the right, he has not chosen to use it.

He was not giving his life for a paycheck, but for the promotion of the gospel, the central message of the Christian faith – the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 9:13

Both pagan and Jewish temples had provision for priests to share in food that was given to the god.

1 Corinthians 9:14

Every Christian is called to tell the Jesus story, the gospel. Nevertheless, it is right to pay those church leaders who proclaim the gospel on a full-time basis.

1 Corinthians 9:15-17

Paul says that he has a right to receive payment, but he also has the right to give it all up. He preaches not because he is paid for it.

Preaching and teaching, telling other people about Jesus, is his singular passion.

The Christian's reward

1 Corinthians 9:18

Paul's reward is in preaching the gospel free of charge.

Preachers can get funny with money.

In November 2006, Patrick Shelter was convicted of embezzling more than \$60,000 of church funds between 2004 and 2005. He was the pastor of a Community Church in Phoenix for six years.

For two years:

- He wrote checks to himself (\$25,000)
- He used an ATM card to withdraw (\$27,000)
- Forged his secretary's name
- Opened up personal credit cards in the church's name

The “freeness” of Paul’s ministry demonstrated the “freeness” of the message. The gospel is this – *You have sinned and your sin has separated you from God. Jesus came, suffered, died and rose from the dead as your substitute. If you turn to God and put your faith in Christ you can receive God’s free gift of forgiveness.*

1 Corinthians 9:19

Paul answers his own question from verse 1, “I am free.” Paul followed the example of Jesus, who said he did not come to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45).

Paul uses the language of competition, when he says that he relinquishes his freedom in order to “win more.”

The single desire of Paul’s life is to win non-Christian people to Christ

1 Corinthians 9:20

“The law” refers to the Jewish law. He is saying that if he has to take on Jewish culture in order to win Jews to Christ, then he will do it.

1 Corinthians 9:21

The law of Christ is living by the law empowered by the Holy Spirit, a new law written on your heart.

If he needs to take on the culture of those who are not under the Jewish law, then he will do it.

1 Corinthians 9:22-23

We become like them by speaking like them, but not thinking like them. We need to be good missionaries by clearly communicating the gospel – the life, death and resurrection of Jesus—but we need to avoid the sin of synchronization.

The sin of synchronization is when we take on the unbiblical values of a culture and change the message of the gospel. Extreme forms of the prosperity message are an example of this sin.

We avoid synchronization by:

- ...allowing our thinking to be guided by the Scripture & tradition.
- ...allowing our conduct to be guided by Scripture & conscience.

If we remain cloistered in our little holy club and only listen to Christian music and only watch Christian television and only watch Christian movies and only talk to Christian people, we will become marginalized and ignored by a world that is in need of Jesus.

Furthermore, we will displease the very Christ that we are trying to honor. Jesus said himself, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:31-32).

1 Corinthians 9:24

Runners run for one reason. They run to win!

1 Corinthians 9:25

Success in athletics requires self discipline.

1 Corinthians 9:26-27

Not only is Paul a legitimate church leader, he disciplines himself so that nothing will disqualify him from preaching the gospel.

The Jimmie Bratcher Concert on Wednesday, October 24, 2007 is an opportunity for us to win people to Christ.



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