

# ***“It’s Meekness and Not Weakness!”***

## ***1 Corinthians 9:1-14***

**Intro.** – “Power” is the big buzzword in our world today. We hear of “power wardrobes,” “power vocabularies,” “power cars,”... Even read of “power table manners.” Seminar has been developed to help you “eat your way to the top.” The seminar costs \$600, but for “no charge” I’ll give you the highlights:

1. Never tuck your napkin into your collar
2. Never leave a lipstick mark on the rim of a glass
3. Never mash or stir your food
4. Never haggle over the bill
5. Never ever hand your plate to the waitress/waiter
6. Never read the menu like a book, you are there not to eat but to do business
7. Never stoop down to retrieve dropped silverware

The last of these “highlights” (never stoop down...) summarizes the goal of those whose quest is for power. “Never loosen your grip on your rung of the ladder. Never stoop down for anything or to anybody.”

Christians in Corinth were right at home with this “power mentality.” Their idea of an apostle was a man with all authority. Thus, they viewed Christian leadership in terms of being *masters* and not *servants*.

Because of this, Paul was under attack. Several were questioning his apostleship. They were suggesting Paul was too soft, too weak and too willing to deny his freedom in Christ for the good of others. In the minds of those who were questioning it, if Paul were a real apostle, he wouldn’t allow himself to be so restricted/weak.

Paul responds to these accusations by saying, “I practice what I preach.” Paul has been dealing with people asserting their “rights” to the harm/detriment of others. Christ’s principle through this text = Christians have the right to yield and that such is meekness and NOT weakness. Thus, the question is this: when the world questions our authenticity as Christ’s Church, are we practicing what we preach? Are we affirming to this area that Christ is Head of this local church? Is our purpose clear and are we tenaciously remaining true to it?

*Purpose: to better understand that faithfulness is meekness and not weakness*

## **I The Apostle’s POSITION is Stated (vv 1-2)**

- Paul makes his case for being “free” in Christ:

### **A. His Status**

1. Through a rhetorical question, Paul states, “I am an apostle! “
2. Role of an apostle was not just to sit around writing inspired letter and giving out directives...
3. Paul fleshed out Christianity i.e. lived among people with grace, truth, love and flexibility all to the glory and honor of His Lord!

### **B. His Qualifications**

1. Acts 1:21-22 give qualifications being Apostle – one was to have witnessed the risen Lord...
2. When did Paul see the risen Lord? On the road to Damascus... 3 days later became Xtian!
3. Again thru rhetorical question Paul says, “I have seen risen Lord... I am an apostle...”

### **C. His Accomplishments**

1. A seal was used 1<sup>st</sup> Century as an identification mark... Paul saying Xtians there identify his work.
2. Paul appeals to Corinthian Christians to remember what had happened in their lives as proof...
3. Any time a person can be a Jew to Jews and Greek to Greeks to win them to Christ = true freedom! BUT bound by worldly traditions imprison rather than FREE – Paul was FREE in X!

## **II The Apostle’s RIGHTS are Stated (vv 3-6)**

- Paul’s defense is continued = his refusal to demand/exercise certain rights is not a result of his not understanding them:

- A. His Right to Eat and Drink
  - 1. Freedom to eat pork or not ... all written in the context of “at the expense of the church...”
  - 2. I.e. we are free to do as we think best about eating and drinking at the expense of our testimony...
- B. His Right to a Wife
  - 1. It is clear that most of the apostles did their work accompanied by their wives = e.g. Peter was married and the evidence is she traveled with him.
  - 2. Paul is saying he had the same right to be married and to take his wife on mission trips etc.
  - 3. Note: Paul is about to reveal how Christ intended His servants in the church to be supported.
- C. His Right to Support
  - 1. Note: last mention of Barnabas (still loves/respects though they had falling out...)
  - 2. Paul singles out himself along with Barnabas as 2 apostles earned own living while preaching...
  - 3. Sense is: “Are we the only apostles under obligation to work livelihood while preaching?”
  - 4. The rest of chapter goes on to establish preachers are to receive livelihood from faithful preaching and that it’s about time churches understood this as God’s plan not man’s!

### III The Apostle’s POINT is Stated (vv 7-14)

- these vv give five solid reasons for the basis of the “rights” covered by Paul – gives his inspired account as to why preacher/missionaries/staff should be compensated by churches they serve:
- Illus. – today, many think of preachers/ministry workers as parasites and that being “in the ministry” isn’t real work... that such a job is a slothful job... all that is wanted is money...
- one last thing – what I’m about to cover may be construed as a ploy for raise. I assure you it is not!
- A. It’s Human Justice ( v 7)1
  - 1. The three illus. (soldier, farmer, shepherd) commonly used throughout Bible as servants of X...
  - 2. Point: no matter what the perspective, human justice assumes “worker worthy of their wages.”
    - a. what soldier goes to war at own expense? – soldiers in the Lord’s Army no exception
    - b. what farmer plants crops and doesn’t eat? – those tend the Lord’s vineyard no exception
    - c. what shepherd doesn’t eat of the milk of the flock? – support those help, lead/shepherd flock!
- B. It’s a Biblical Precept (vv 8-10)
  - 1. Deuteronomy 25:4 quoted by Paul – plowman/harvester should expect fruit from their labors...
  - 2. Thus, this principle is not just human justice – also method of divine sharing!
- C. It’s a Response of Common Sense (vv 11-12)
  - 1. In short, Paul asking Corinthians (ultimately (ECC) “How much does the Gospel mean to you?”
  - 2. One of the most instinctive responses a Christian should have to grace = GIVE BACK
  - 3. To be on the receiving end of spiritual blessings... common sense says we must demonstrate C
- D. It’s a Jewish Provision (v 13)
  - 1. Corinthians need not look any further than the Jewish synagogue to see this principle in action...
  - 2. OT = sacrifices divided up among Levites in order to care for them...
  - 3. All of which was ordained and ordered by God.
- E. It’s a Command of Christ (v 14)
  - 1. Principle is clear (Matthew 10:10; Luke 10:7) = Christ spoke of and now reiterates in our text!
  - 2. There are those who have and will abuse this principle:
    - a. men who call themselves *ministers* who are lazy, dishonest, self-indulgent and corrupt...
    - b. conversely, there are churches who treat God’s servants as though they were hirelings...
  - 3. Note: it simply says, “*those who proclaim the Gospel, live off of it.*”

**Conclusion:** It’s one thing to have rights and know about them, but it is another thing to insist on exercising these rights regardless of the outcome. This is the whole point of the text. Paul’s refusal of support from the

Christians in Corinth was NOT a mandate nor was it an act of weakness. Next section in chapter 9 tells why Paul at that time did not receive support, but later took support from the Corinthians.

Any church that reads what Paul wrote, under God's inspiration in 1 Corinthians 9 about not receiving pay and using such as an excuse for not taking care of the Lord's servants doesn't understand the vital principle here. They also don't understand that what Paul was doing wasn't an act of weakness; rather, it was a proof of his meekness because of the grace he received through Christ!