

Just Because You Can, Doesn't Mean You Should...

Long Beach Alliance Church • July 26th, 2009 • Pastor Chris Lankford

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.

~1st Corinthians 9:16-17 (NASB)

1) The Rights Of An Apostle (One Who Is Sent By Jesus)

- A) After appealing to the followers of Christ in Corinth to show “loving restraint” in their use of their “rights” (1st Corinthians 8:1-13) in order to preserve the message of Jesus Christ, Paul switches gears with a personal example.

- B) Paul illustrates the principle of “loving restraint” with a personal illustration about the rights of the apostles, eyewitnesses of Jesus who were sent to proclaim the gospel (good news about Jesus) to the world (9:1-6).

- C) Note that Paul's apostleship was sometimes challenged (9:2). Note also that "Cephas" (Apostle Peter) had a wife (9:5). Note that Barnabas functioned in ministry in a fashion identical to Paul (9:6). Note that Paul uses nicknames for Cephas/Peter (John 1:42) & Barnabas/Joseph (Acts 4:36), indicating a familiarity in the church.

2) Old Testament Examples Of A Christian Worker's Rights

- A) Further illustrating his point that one who is called by God has the right to be supported by those for whom he is working, Paul uses two OT references as support (9:8ff).
- B) First, Paul illustrates his point with "you shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing" (Deuteronomy 25:4). Paul's rhetorical question (9:9-10) is instructive, God gave the Law to illustrate principles (not simply for rules).
- C) Secondly, Paul illustrates the "right of support" from the examples of the OT priesthood (cf. Leviticus 6:16-17). The priests ate the "left-overs" from the people as part of their provision as God's chosen workers (9:13).
- D) All of these things illustrate the God-given "right" of an apostle to "reap from what is sown" (9:11-12), and derive a living wage from "gospel preaching" (9:14).

3) Just Because You Have The Right, Doesn't Mean You Use It...

- A) Paul notes that he uses none of these "rights" (nor does he want them, 9:15), and does so both freely and as one "under compulsion" (slave) to Christ (9:16-17).
- B) Paul gives us his example of sacrificing his rights so the gospel message is not obscured (9:18). We also are to make personal sacrifices in "loving restraint" for the gospel.