

c. Intrinsic value. v. 11. The thought here is that in the very nature of the case an apostle should receive for what he has given! In this case, however, he gets what is inferior in value to what he has given. The soldier, vinedresser, shepherd, and ox receive that which is of the same nature of their labour. Not so with the apostle or Christian worker. He gives that which is of the Spirit of God, but he receives that which is of material composition ("carnal" is not used of a moral issue here).

d. Comparative issue. v. 13. Although Paul may have in mind both Jewish and heathen sacred ceremonies, it is more likely that the OT sacramental system is the Greek root "work." The reference is probably to those in general who are at the temple. The verb "wait" means to "sit beside" and hence given constant attendance. Linked with the word "partakers with the altar" the idea is a reference to the Levitical priests who consumed a portion of the sacrifice. Surely, if those who were set aside in the OT gained this advantage, the NT servant of God is of no meaner proportion!

e. Heavenly command. v. 14. Paul now reaches for his unanswerable argument: the positive order of the Lord Himself (cf. Matt. 10:10; Luke 10:7). There is no clearer statement than this: those who are for the Gospel in work must live of the Gospel in finances. Woe betide the man who claims the latter without living the former!

Conclusion As an apostle Paul has "rights." The term is used four times (vv. 4-6; 12). But he disposes of these rights. He bears all things (verb in Greek means to receive blows intended for another) in order that the Gospel of Christ be not hindered (Greek: cut into or broken up so as to hinder a march of advance by an army). The Gospel must reach its intended goal! What ever right you may claim, make certain it is sacrificed for the sake of the Gospel! Amen.

THE BOOK OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

"Spiritual Rights"

I Cor. 9:1-14

Introduction

1. The hue and cry of many today is "rights." In some sense, this spirit has invaded Christian circles--lamentably!

2. Paul has argued with vehemence against libertinism in relation to the ungodly society (8:1-13). He avers that it is better to forgo one's freedom than to bear a poor witness (8:13). In order to enforce this contention, the apostle gives a concrete personal example.

3. The details of this example are given in forceful words. From what are his rights, Paul has made a clear decision to desist from exercising them so that the Gospel will not be hindered. Since he has moved in this orbit, the Corinthians can do no less! Study Paul's actions:-

1. Paul's POSITION vv. 1-3.

Four questions are raised and all expect an affirmative reply (v. 1). Paul is established as an apostle. He gives three points:-

a. A vision received. v. 1. The verb "seen" is in the perfect tense and speaks of an abiding vision. He actually beheld the glorified Redeemer on his way to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6; 22:6-10; 26:12-18). There Paul was saved and his apostleship began. The better MSS (manuscripts) omit the name "Christ" There is no question, however, that the apostle identifies Whom he saw-"Jesus, our Lord!"

b. A mission confirmed. vv. 1, 2. Some might deny Paul's apostleship, but not the Corinthians. They were his fruit and proof. Indeed, he calls them a "seal" which testifies to the truth of a deed. His work among them was all "in the Lord" (cf. 1 Cor. 2:1-5).

c. An action proved. v. 3. Some were actually "examining" Paul in an investigative sense to discover whether he actually was an apostle. He offers the evidence (vv. 1, 2) and claims this

is his "defence" (better word than "answer"). He has no doubt that his claim to the apostleship is valid (cf. Acts 22:16).

2. PAUL'S OPTION vv. 4-6

Having confirmed his position as an apostle, Paul finds no difficulty in raising issues which apostles rightfully may exercise. He gives three of them:-

a. Meat. v. 4. Here is the matter of Christian hospitality. The phrase "eat and drink" receive from the context the special meaning of eating and drinking as guests of the church and at church expense. The matter of sacrificial meats is no longer in question. An early Christian writing stated: "Every true prophet is worthy of his food." This was also a "right" which Paul owned.

b. Marriage. v. 5. The original text reads "a sister, a wife." The reference is to a Christian wife. The Vulgate (Roman Catholic Bible of Jerome) translates it: "a wife as sister" and this for obvious reasons. The Nicene Council, however, condemned the practice of priest and monks who scandalously kept "sisters." They based their contention on this verse. It is to be noted that the "other apostles" were married, although tradition does indicate that John was a celibate. The "brethren of the Lord" were four: James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude (Matt. 13:55). They were not apostles, but are mentioned here because of their eminence. "Cephas" or Peter is singled out because he was venerated by some at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:12). The Bible positively informs us that he was married (Matt. 8:14). His was an example par excellence. The verb "lead about" applies to the habitual missionary journeys of the apostles. If anyone sought support for the idea of maintaining a pastor, his wife, and family, this would be an ideal verse.

c. Money. v. 6. Paul brings Barnabas into the picture here as the one who first laboured with him in the Gospel at his own expense (cf. Acts 11 and 13). The verb "working" gains a determinate

sense from the context: gaining one's livelihood by working. Here it is negated and argues for release from manual labour. The allusion to Barnabas implies his wide-spread influence altho his recorded career ends early in Acts (15:39). Not until Philippi helped did Paul receive financial aid from any church (cf. Phil. 4:15).

NOTE: Paul had every right to what moderns would call: a cost of living allowance, a family arrangement with a wife and children, and abstinence from general secular employment. These were his rights in view of his commitment to the Gospel.

3. Paul's PROPOSITIONS vv. 7-14.

These verses form an extrapolation of the truth that apostles merit financial support from the churches. Five major proofs are advanced to indicate this right. Here they are:-

a. Human practice. v. 7. Three examples are drawn from nature to prove that a man who separates his labour to a work ought to be able to live by that work. The soldier, vinedresser, and shepherd are called up. Everyone listed here lives off the proceeds of his business. The word "charges" is interesting. It denotes rations served out in lieu of pay.

b. Scripture counsel. vv. 8-10. The Bible also contends for the principle advanced. The quote is from the Pentateuch (Deut. 25:4). The ox who was used in treading out the corn was not to be prohibited from eating some of the grain in the process. He was to get provender out of the corn he tread. The ox who had done the ploughing was, in equity, to have the same right as the ox who tread the corn! All contributors to the harvest, whether at an early or later stage, were to share in the gain. Indeed, this is viewed as a "debt" (Greek for "should"). What is written about oxen is incidental. The real issue is that all of this pertains for "our sakes." That is, apostles or full time workers in the Gospel are in view! God has people in mind, altho He speaks about beasts!