



***I Have My Rights!***  
**1 Cor. 9:1-14**

NKJ 1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

2 If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless 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 have no right to eat and drink?

5 Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?

6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?

7 Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?

8 Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also?

9 For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about?

10 Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.

11 If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?

12 If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.

13 Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?

14 Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

15 But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void.

16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!

17 For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.

18 What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.

We live in a country and an age that is awash in “rights” we are literally drowning in them. Hardly a day passes when new “rights” are not discovered and vigorously promoted in the courts. Now I am not saying that rights do not exist, or that they are not important. For instance, I am very zealous to maintain certain essential rights such as the right to the free exercise of religion.

However, we have gone from being a nation that once rationally asserted that people had been granted certain inalienable rights by their creator, as in the Declaration’s classic statement: “***We hold these***

*truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. --That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed*" to a position where we are generating new rights derived from nothing but our own desires, and which were certainly never granted to anyone by God. We hear for instance of gay rights, the right to die, the right to abortion, and now we seem poised on the brink of granting and defending utterly nonsensical rights, for instance Animal Rights and now even Terrorist Rights.

This is just a personal opinion admittedly, but I tend to believe that a society loses *the right* to be taken seriously, it is when it grants special legal rights to pork chops and people whose main aim in life is to die in the process of flying airliners into buildings.

Everybody it would seem, wants their rights, I WILL HAVE MY RIGHTS! Or I will create new ones, but very few, it would seem, want their responsibilities. What this hyper-concern over "rights" reveals, is a selfish society. Rather than a spirit of self-denial and service, we have become a people who to quote the title of an Ayn Rand novel have made a "Virtue of Selfishness."

This is not something new however, that particular spirit goes all the way back to the Fall when the Devil managed to persuade Adam and Eve to exercise a supposed right to eat from the only tree in the garden that had been denied to them.

Certainly the spirit of selfishly maintaining ones rights prevailed in the congregations in Corinthian where we learned from the last chapter that members of the congregations in Corinth were exercising the right to eat meat sacrificed to idols and attend pagan feasts no matter what the results of the exercise of those rights might be, such as the wounding of the weak conscience of a brother or even causing them to stumble and fall back into pagan practices.

Paul had agreed that yes, idols were nothing and that it was lawful to eat meat sacrificed to them, but that sometimes exercising ones ability to do so was not the right decision, but was rather a sin against Christ. Paul had even gone so far as to assert that rather than causing another Christian to stumble he would rather forego his own "right" to eat meat forever saying in 1 Cor. 8:13 ***"Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble."***

Now some people would say, well Pastor that's easy to say. But are you the one living in Corinth who is going to have to practice what you are preaching? Paul answers their objections immediately by showing beyond any shadow of a doubt that he was in fact exercising the principle of self-denial that he was teaching. He does this using a series of rhetorical questions that establish his status:

First that he was an Apostle, a person called by the Lord Jesus Christ and endowed with unique authority in the church

Second that he had both Freedom in Christ and that he not a slave to any man, he was not bound by any outside constraints, he had the right to go where he wanted and do as he wished.

Third that as proof of his Apostleship, unlike the Corinthians he had literally seen Jesus Christ in his encounter with the Savior on the Damascus Road, and then as further proof of his apostleship that his ministry in Christ's service had been blessed and had borne much fruit, they themselves were evidence that as God's farmer, Paul had planted and God had given the increase. Even if some had denied his

full Apostleship as not being on par with say Peter who had long walked with Jesus, he could say look you yourselves are the evidence that I have been called of the Lord.

To those who were still might have doubted his authority to proclaim this, he goes on to point out that despite his position he had given up many things. He had a right as a gospel minister to be supported by the church. That is why for instance he starts in verse 4 by saying *do we have no right to eat and drink?*

Jesus himself had established that the answer to this question was undeniably yes he had the right –

**“Luke 10:5 *But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.'***

**6 *And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you.***

**7 *And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house.***”

Paul then pointed out that he had a right to take along a believing wife, now there he is not establishing a right for Gospel ministers and Apostles to be married, mercifully the problems of the Apostolic church were not the problems of the modern Roman Catholic church, at this point in time *no one* would have disputed the right of an Apostle or Gospel minister to marry, what he is speaking of is the right to also have his family and in particular his wife supported by the church and he points out that the wives of the other apostles are supported by the church, including the half-brothers of the Lord, Jesus Christ such as James and Judas, and even Peter.

He then points out in verse 6 that only he and Barnabas were actually working other jobs in order to support their ministry to the gentiles

We are told in Acts 18:3 “So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.”

But that was not the case with the other Apostles, Peter did not fish on the side. He was supported by the church as was his right.

Paul then established that it wasn't just ministers who had this right to profit from their labors.

Soldiers – Can you imagine if you had to raise funds to be able to go deploy overseas? Holding a bake sale to go to Afghanistan? Of course not – your wages are needed and earned.

Farmers - as well expect to reap a reward from their toil at harvest time.

Or the shepherd, what shepherd tends sheep free of charge or without support? Who would do these things?

He then goes on to point out in verse 8, these aren't merely pragmatic arguments, even the word of God established the principle that laborers deserved to take a share of their labors and if this was true even of dumb animals – see you could say Andy, even oxen have *some rights*. But the point is, this verse wasn't written to establish oxen rights, God didn't write it for the benefit of the oxen it shows that if even an oxen should have a share certainly people should. And therefore a minister should be supported by his people.

The Corinthians owed their spiritual lives to Paul as God's instrument in bringing the gospel, was it too much then to ask that he receive some small material benefits? What was more important after all? He even points out that if the elders and deacons of the church had the right to these things, doesn't the Apostle who established the church have even more right?

Answer to all these questions was undoubtedly yes! At this point Paul might have demanded a huge sum in back wages.

Yet he at this point says ***I have these rights but I don't use them!***

Because I have not wanted to hinder the gospel of Christ, to all others to suggest that my aim is profit and thus detract from the gospel.

He goes on to establish that although he had a right – showing how those who ministered in the temple at Jerusalem took their fair share and that Minister SHOULD live from the gospel – HE HAD DENIED HIMSELF THAT RIGHT!

What then is the big deal about denying yourself a little meat? Why should you, why should Paul?

Because the passion of the Christian shouldn't be for *rights*, it shouldn't turn inward selfishly, it should turn outward towards Christ and his people.

***Luke 9:23 Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.***

Paul himself is so zealous for the gospel and for Christ, that he would rather die than have his own practices get in the way of it.

Paul did not have a secret agenda, he had an overt agenda

Very few men Gospel ministers like this

***I expected the comfort of a letter to a prisoner from you, see now. I am here, Sir, putting off a part of my inch of time; and when I awake first in the morning (which is always with great heaviness and sadness), this question is brought to my mind, "Am I serving God or not?" Not that I doubt of the truth of this honorable cause wherein I am engaged; I dare venture into eternity, and before my Judge, that I now suffer for the truth, because that I cannot endure that my Master, who is a freeborn King, should pay tribute to any of the shields or potsherd of the earth. Oh that I could hold the crown upon my princely King's head with my sinful arm, nevertheless it should be struck from me in that service, from the shoulder-blade. But my closed mouth, my dumb Sabbaths, the memory of my communion with Christ, in many fair, fair days in Anwoth, whereas now my Master getteth no service of my tongue as then, has almost broken my faith in two halves. Yet in my deepest apprehensions of His anger, I see through a cloud that I am wrong. And beside, He has visited my soul and watered it with His comforts. – SAMUEL RUTHERFORD***

**Obvious Applications – Not about us, and our rights, but about Christ and turning others to him**

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Why should we do this? Because the Gospel alone is the power of God to salvation! Keep the Gospel of Salvation through faith in Christ first like Paul - Don't get caught up and distracted by the things of this world:

***Luke 21:33 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.***

***34 " But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.***

Be willing to sacrifice anything including your life if need be for HIS sake -

*Luke 9:24 "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.*

*25 "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?*