

Message #32

I Corinthians 9:1-14

As unthinkable as it may seem, the great Apostle Paul went through some very difficult experiences with churches concerning the subject of money.

The word “examine” (9:3) means that Paul was being questioned and investigated concerning his philosophy of money. The word implies that this examination was very painful to Paul and was, in some way, legally being conducted by certain people in the church (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 31).

THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CALLED BY GOD INTO MINISTRY AND HAVE BEEN GIFTED BY GOD FOR MINISTRY AND HAVE PROVEN THEMSELVES FAITHFUL IN MINISTRY ARE TO BE FULLY AND COMPLETELY FINANCIALLY SUPPORTED.

Not everyone who claims they have been called by God into ministry really has been called by God into ministry. Not every ministry who claims to have been gifted by God is truly gifted by God. Not everyone who requests financial support should receive financial support. But when it has been clearly established that one is truly a called and gifted servant of God, the church has a responsibility to fully and abundantly support the minister.

QUESTION #1 – Who is a minister that should be supported? 9:1-3

Evidence #1 - As a minister, he must have freedom from God. 9:1a

The word “free” implies that some in the church were trying to restrain Paul’s ministry by making him something like a hired servant or slave. A church does not own a minister; God does. The church that is wise will recognize this and give him the freedom he needs to minister. A minister is not a slave to the church; he is a servant of God. Freedom to minister is a wonderful thing if a man is disciplined enough to use the freedom. If he is not disciplined, he should not be in ministry.

Evidence #2 - As a minister, he must have a gift from God. 9:1b

According to God’s ranking of N.T. gifts, the gift of apostle was the highest gift that any man could be given by God (I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). It seems to me that contextually Paul is saying that one of the main factors in determining whether or not a minister should be fully supported is the factor of having a spiritual gift that the people of God can recognize.

Evidence #3 - As a minister, he must have proof of his gift. 9:1c-2

(Proof #1) - He met the specific prerequisites of an apostle. 9:1c

One of the specific prerequisites of being an apostle was that one had to have been an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:21-22; I Cor. 9:1c). If a man does not or cannot demonstrate he has a gift of God by meeting God’s prerequisites, he is not worthy of support.

(Proof #2) - He met the specific impact of an apostle. **9:1d-2**

A man who has truly been called and gifted by God will make a dynamic difference in the lives of others. A man worthy of support will influence the lives of others for the glory of God. People's lives will change. Some will get saved; some will get more serious in their walk with God. People will fall deeply in love with God and His Word.

QUESTION #2 – How should a minister be supported? **9:4-12**

Guideline #1 - The gifted man of God should be supported to meet his needs financially. **9:4**

A man who has been identified as a called and gifted man of God does have a right to eat and drink. He has a right to expect that when his bills are paid he will have enough for groceries.

Guideline #2 - A gifted man of God should be supported to meet the needs of his family and fellow workers. **9:5-6**

A man has a Biblical mandate to provide for the needs of his family (I Tim. 5:8).

Guideline #3 - A gifted man of God should be supported to meet his needs fully. **9:7a-10**

There are three illustrations that Paul uses to make this point:

1) A soldier; 2) A farmer; 3) A shepherd. No soldier goes to war at his own expense. The government picks up the whole tab. Churches ought to be asking a gifted man of God what do you need to fight and win this war, not how little can you get by on.

Guideline #4 - A gifted man of God should be supported to meet his needs firstly. **9:7b-10**

A farmer determines first of all what he will keep for himself. The shepherd determines first how much he needs, how much he will sell and how much he will give.

There is a remarkable illustration of this principle in the O.T. in the case of Elijah and the widow woman of Zarephath (I Kings 17:8-24). The widow and her son were literally about to eat their last food and drink their last water and die (I Kings 17:12). Elijah said serve me first and watch what God will do in blessing you (I Kings 17:13-14). She did and she was blessed in many ways. The minister is like a soldier in that he is in a spiritual war; he is like a farmer in that he is responsible to cultivate God's people; and he is like a shepherd that must tend God's sheep.

Guideline #5 - A gifted man of God should be supported to meet his needs fairly. **9:11-12**

(Line of Reasoning #1) - A gifted minister has impacted our spiritual lives. **9:11**
The minister who is influencing the spiritual should be reaping the material.

(Line of Reasoning #2) - Other ministers have not impacted our spiritual lives. **9:12**
Paul is basically saying we have more right to be supported than any other minister, but notice the end of **verse 12**; Paul never demanded anything.

QUESTION #3 – Why should a minister be supported? **9:13-14**

Reason #1 - Because of God's law. **9:8-10**

The O.T. Law taught that the ox was not to be muzzled (Deut. 25:4). An unmuzzled ox could eat whatever he wanted whenever he wanted. This kept him strong so he could continue to go on. If you don't give the ox enough to eat, pretty soon he is run down and tired. The work IS NOT done properly.

Reason #2 - Because of sacred service. **9:13**

Under the O.T. Law, the temple priests were to be fully and abundantly supported (Lev. 7:8-10; Num. 18:8-20). In Corinth, the heathen temple false priests were well-cared for and honored, but in the church a true sacred priest like Paul wasn't.

Reason #3 - Because of the Lord's command. **9:14**

The word "directed" is a word that means a command or direct order. God's own Son, the Lord, has given a direct order that those who proclaim the Gospel should make their living from the Gospel. Some religions and churches boast that they do not have paid ministers; they are boasting that they do not obey the commands of God.

Of course the willingness to obey God financially comes from hearts that are right with God spiritually. That was the real problem in Corinth; they were carnal. Are you?