

1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE

Part XX: Understanding The Rights Of God's Messengers

(1 Corinthians 9:1-14)

I. Introduction

- A. When God establishes messengers to the Church, these men of God are given a lot of spiritual responsibility in their accountability to the Lord to obey the Lord's assignments for them.
- B. However, God has ordained that they also have personal rights that on occasion have been denied them by ecclesiastical hierarchies or even by laymen, and Paul clarifies these for us in 1 Corinthians 9:1-14 as follows:

II. Understanding The Rights Of God's Messengers, 1 Corinthians 9:1-14.

- A. The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:1-14 clarified what his rights before God were as an apostle by office, and two of those rights apply only to the original apostles -- (1) one's having seen the Lord (v. 1b) and (2) his having had converts led to Christ in his apostolic ministry that was assigned to him by the Lord (v. 1c-2).
- B. However, the **other** rights named in this passage apply to all of God's messengers to the Church as follows:
 1. God's messengers have the right to be free from ceremonial restrictions of men like other believers, 1 Cor. 9:1; Col. 2:16, 20-23. (F. W. Grosheide, The First Epist. to the Cor. (NICNT), 1980, p. 201.
 2. God's messengers have the right to eat and to drink spiritually free from ceremonial restrictions of men like other believers, 1 Corinthians 9:4; Colossians 2:16, 20-23; *Ibid.*, p. 202.
 3. God's messengers have the right to be married to a believing spouse while they minister, 1 Corinthians 9:5:
 - a. Celibacy for ministers has been promoted in some realms of Christendom, but even "Cephas," the Aramaic surname of Simon, the Greek form of that surname being Peter (Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 432) the alleged first Roman Catholic "pope," was married, 1 Corinthians 9:5 with Matthew 8:14; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to 1 Corinthians 9:5!
 - b. Indeed, Paul noted that the earthly brothers of Jesus, the expression "the brethren of the Lord" in 1 Cor. 9:5b being the same expression used of Jesus' earthly brothers in Acts 1:13-14 (*Ibid.*, Grosheide, p. 204), we also married, indicating that marriage was not forbidden to Church leaders in the Early Church!
 - c. The expression "to **lead about** a sister, a wife" refers to being "married **while doing the work of** an apostle," so a messenger of God has the right to be married while serving in his ministry, *Ibid.*; 1 Cor. 9:5.
 4. God's messengers have the right to be financially supported by believers to whom they minister so that they can minister without having to work at a secular job for their livelihood, 1 Corinthians 9:6-14:
 - a. Paul supported this claim with three illustrations from the world, 1 Cor. 9:6-7: he noted that (1) a soldier who goes to war is given livelihood support by others since he is preoccupied with war and not making a livelihood (v. 7a), that (2) one who plants a vineyard gains a livelihood from its produce (v. 7b) and that (3) one who tends a flock gains a livelihood from its milk production (v. 7c ESV; *Ibid.*, p. 204-205).
 - b. Paul then supported this claim with the precedent in the Law regarding threshing oxen, 1 Cor. 9:8-11: Paul alluded to Deuteronomy 25:4 where Moses commanded Israel's people not to muzzle the ox that threshed out the grain on a threshing floor so it could freely eat of what it threshed as the precedent for letting those who expound God's Word of its spiritual truths to God's people to have liberty to partake of the material donations of their hearers! (*Ibid.*, Ryrie, cross-reference to 1 Corinthians 9:9)
 - c. Paul supported this claim with the precedent in the Law of those who minister at the altar, 1 Cor. 9:13: the Mosaic Law repeatedly noted in the various offerings given that the priests who ministered with the sacrifices and offerings had the right to partake of a select portion of the offerings for their services.
 - d. Applying these precedents, Paul claimed God has ordained that they who preach the Gospel have the right to live materially off of the donations of those who hear them, 1 Corinthians 9:14.
 5. [In this argument, what he will later develop, Paul clarified that though he and Barnabas (see v. 6) had the right to live materially off of the financial support of their hearers, they had chosen not to do so lest they should hinder the Gospel by being viewed as lovers of money by a watching world, 1 Corinthians 9:12.]

Lesson: *God's messengers to the Church have the rights to be free from man's ceremonial restrictions, free from such ceremonial restrictions regarding food and drink, free to be married to a sister in Christ while ministering and free to receive financial support from their hearers so that they can minister without need of a secular job.*

Application: *(1) May we acknowledge the rights of God's messengers to the Church. (2) May we who minister as God's messengers acknowledge our rights, but be prepared to restrict using them for the sake of our testimony!*