

1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE
Part XXI: Restricting The Use Of Our Rights To Enhance Our Ministry Effectiveness
(1 Corinthians 9:15-26)

I. Introduction

- A. We learned in our last lesson that those who minister for the Lord have specific spiritual rights, including freedom from ceremonial restrictions under the Law, freedom to be married while ministering for the Lord and the right to receive financial remuneration from those to whom they minister.
- B. Yet, there is a higher calling than exercising such rights, that of restricting the use of one's rights to enhance his effectiveness through exposing his integrity to others, what Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 9:15-26:

II. Restriction The Use Of Our Rights To Enhance Our Ministry Effectiveness, 1 Corinthians 9:15-26.

- A. Having taught in 1 Corinthians 9:6-14 that he along with all of God's messengers had the right to receive financial remuneration for his service of ministering the Gospel, Paul asserted in 1 Corinthians 9:15a that he had not exercised that right, nor was he writing in order to motivate people to donate money to him.
- B. Indeed, Paul added that he would rather die than have anyone deprive him of his reason for glorying in the reason for why he was not receiving financial remuneration for his ministry, 1 Corinthians 9:15b.
- C. To clarify that reason, Paul established that he had no special reward for actually preaching the Gospel itself: if he did not preach it, he was in disciplinary trouble with the Lord, 1 Corinthians 9:16. If he willingly obeyed the Lord to preach the Gospel, he had a reward for that willing attitude, but even if he did not preach willingly, he had a stewardship before the Lord and was accountable to Him to fulfill his mission, 1 Corinthians 9:17.
- D. Thus, what Paul gloried in relative to his ministry of the Gospel was that when he preached it, he did so without financial charge to his hearers, demonstrating thereby that he was a messenger of **integrity** before the Lord, that he was not in the ministry with the false motive of the love of money, 1 Corinthians 9:18.
- E. Paul thus had laid aside his right to be free of all men to enslave himself to all men through earning his own livelihood that he might gain more converts because of the testimony of his **financial integrity**, 1 Cor. 9:19.
- F. The Apostle Paul then applied this principle to the various groups he was trying to evangelize, 1 Cor. 9:20-23:
 - 1. In refusing to exercise his rights when it was applicable to them, Paul was becoming a Jew to the Jews under the Law that he might gain more of them because of his testimony of financial integrity, 1 Cor. 9:20.
 - 2. In refusing to exercise his rights when it was applicable to them, Paul was becoming to those without the Law as one without law (not being lawless before God, but subject to the spiritual law of Christ), that he might gain more of those who were outside the Law through his testimony of financial integrity, v. 21.
 - 3. In refusing to exercise his rights when it was applicable to them, Paul was becoming to the weak as a weak man that he might gain more of the weak through his testimony of financial integrity, 1 Cor. 9:22a.
 - 4. Thus, Paul was made all things to all men that he might by all means save some, including his testimony of financial integrity by not making his preaching of the Gospel a financial charge to anyone, 1 Cor. 9:22b.
 - 5. Paul added that he did all this for the sake of the Gospel he preached that he might share in its blessings of winning many more to Christ through his self-imposed restrictions on his rights, 1 Corinthians 9:23.
- G. This effort to restrict his use of his rights required self-discipline, 1 Cor. 9:24-27 (**B. K. C., N. T.**, p. 525):
 - 1. Like an athlete in training to win a prize, Paul disciplined himself to restrict using his personal rights like receiving financial remuneration for his ministry, and he urged others to follow his lead, 1 Cor. 9:24-25a.
 - 2. Paul noted that athletes worked hard in self-discipline to get into shape for their athletic competitions just to gain a corruptible crown though we believers do so for an incorruptible crown, 1 Cor. 9:25b. With this realization, Paul explained that he did not figuratively as an athlete run aimlessly or box as one who beats the air, but he disciplined his body, keeping it under control lest after preaching to others he himself should be disqualified, and miss the prize of the incorruptible crown from the Lord, 1 Corinthians 9:26-27 ESV.

Lesson: *To enhance his effectiveness in the Gospel ministry that he had received of the Lord, Paul laid aside the exercise of a number of his rights, especially that of receiving financial remuneration from his hearers, that he might demonstrate real integrity in preaching with real concern for the souls of his hearers, not for financial gain, thus leading to more people trusting in the Lord to the added eternal reward of the Lord. Paul strove hard in this effort, involving self-discipline, that he might not have his ministry cut short in divine discipline for moral laxity.*

Application: *May we strive before God to use or to refuse to use the rights we have that we leave the best possible testimony we can before others to enhance our effectiveness in view of our future great accountability to God.*