

## **The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians**

### **The Case for Supporting God's Servant**

1 Corinthians 9:1-14

1. Rights and Freedoms: An Important Thread in His Argument (vs.1, 4-6, 12)  
Paul's primary focus in the larger context of this section (1 Cor. 8-11:1) is on the Christian's proper self-restraint of freedom because of love for the Lord and for one another (1 Cor. 8:9; 9:12, 19; 10:31-33). Paul makes a compelling case for the goodness of taking care of ministers of the gospel in order to highlight his freedom to not take advantage of that right.
2. The Anticipated Affirmation of Paul's Questions and Examples (vs.1-13)  
In his next letter to the Corinthian church, Paul's vigorous defense of his apostleship indicates that it was actually under attack (2 Cor. 10-11). Those objections have likely not yet surfaced, and so Paul's questions related to his apostleship (vs.1-2) are structured anticipating a response of "yes". Similarly, the anticipated response to every example that he uses would affirm the principle that it is right for a person, regardless of vocation, to expect compensation derived from his or her work.
3. Illustrations of Being Supported by the Work One Does
  - A. Examples of Apostles Being Supported (vs.3-6)  
The term apostle is primarily used to refer to the Twelve (Matt 10:2), and later also to Matthias and to Paul (Acts 1:26; 1 Cor. 15:8-9). However, this term is also more loosely used in application to other ministers of the gospel and colleagues of Paul or the Twelve (Acts 15:4; 1 Cor. 9:5; Gal. 1:19). The right to eat and drink referred to the requirement for others to provide for these basic needs for these men.
  - B. An Emphasis on Supporting Their Wives (v.5)  
It is important to note that the requirement for provision was not limited only to the minister himself, but also to his wife if she were to accompany him. It would have been unthinkable for a church to provide for the needs of Peter but not for his wife.
  - C. Several Common Social Examples (v.7)  
Pay for the soldier, grapes for the vineyard planter, and milk for the shepherd were clear secular examples of having the needs of the worker met by virtue of his occupation. God had declared it to be sinful and wicked to withhold wages from a worker (Lev. 19:13; Deut 24:15; cf. Matt 20:1ff; 2 Tim 2:4, 6; James 5:4).

#### **D. An Illustration from the Law (vs.8-10)**

The way in which this command is positioned in the Law may have made people misunderstand its meaning (Deut. 25:4). Proper care for working animals was both wise and good stewardship (Prov. 12:10). Paul apparently appealed to this passage from the Law regularly when the issue of caring for a minister was in view (1 Tim. 5:18).

#### **4. The Principle of Supporting God's Servant (vs. 11, 13-14)**

By virtue of the way that Paul organized his argument, the issue of whether or not to take care of a traveling apostle or Christian minister was never in question. However, if it were, his argument is both thorough and compelling. It is consistent with the axiom of sowing and reaping (v.11) and it was the manner that God had ordained for the care of the Aaronic priesthood and the Levites (v.13). A church that takes care of the physical needs of the minister of the gospel does so in obedience to God (v.14).