

1 Corinthians

The Rights of an Apostle—1 Corinthians 9:1–27

Topics: Believers, Discipline, Example, Judgment, Law, Perseverance, Rewards, Right, Sacrifice, Salvation, Serving

Open It

1. What emotions do athletes usually feel on the day of a big event?

1 Corinthians 9:1–27 (ESV)

¹Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord?

²If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

³This is my defense to those who would examine me.

⁴Do we not have the right to eat and drink?

⁵Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?

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

⁷Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

⁸Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same?

⁹For it is written in the Law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned?

¹⁰Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.

¹¹If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

¹²If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

¹³Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?

¹⁴In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

¹⁵But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting.

¹⁶For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

¹⁷For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship.

¹⁸What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

¹⁹For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.

²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.

²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.

²²To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

²⁴Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.

²⁵Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

²⁶So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air.

²⁷But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

Explore It

2. What proofs did Paul use to show that he was a genuine apostle? (9:1–2)
3. What rights did Paul waive to be an apostle? (9:3–6, 12)
4. What case could Paul make for asserting his rights as an apostle? (9:7–11, 13–14)
5. Why didn't Paul take full advantage of his rights? (9:12–18)
6. What motivated Paul to preach as he did? (9:16–17)
7. What reward is there in preaching the gospel? (9:18)
8. To what extent did Paul go to save people? (9:20–23)
9. Why is it necessary to live with purpose and discipline? (9:25–27)

Get It

10. What are some of your rights and freedoms as a Christian?
11. Why is it helpful to adjust our actions for the people around us?
12. How can neglecting spiritual disciplines (such as prayer, Bible study, and worship) disqualify a Christian from having an influence on unbelievers?

Apply It

13. What specific rights could you waive for Christ's sake? How?