

1 Corinthians 9:1-18 — Limiting My Liberty

February 22, 2026

I have a surprise for you this morning. We are taking a break from our studies in the Book of Acts. As many of you know, Pastor Jordan is working on his doctorate. As part of that, he took a course on 1 Corinthians. This winter, he is required to preach two sermons from that book. As we talked about it, rather than him taking a two-week break for those sermons and having me march further ahead in the Book of Acts, I offered to take a break from Acts with him and preach on the same passages he was assigned to preach. That is the reason for this two-week break.

The first passage Pastor Jordan was assigned to teach is 1 Corinthians 9. It is a chapter on limiting our liberty. As Christians, we have great freedom. We don't have Old Testament laws to follow. We don't have rituals, ceremonies, offerings, or a special diet we have to follow. All of that is gone. All we need is Jesus. But because we can do almost anything doesn't mean we should do everything. At times, out of love for other people, we should limit our liberties.

In this chapter, Paul explains how he chose to limit a liberty granted to him to more effectively share the good news of Jesus with people. He will give us an example of a right he chose not to exercise for the sake of the gospel. It is the right to be paid for his pastoral work. The first part of this chapter is why pastors should be paid for their work.

As I was in my office, I thought, this is going to be an interesting Sunday, especially if you are new to CrossWinds. The first week you show up in church, the pastor is talking about his salary and how he should be paid. That will go over

like a lead balloon. This is why I want you to know why we took a break from Acts. This is why I told you this passage was assigned as part of Jordan's doctoral work. I didn't go out of my way to choose it.

I also want to be clear that while the first part of this chapter is about why a pastor should be paid, and how a pastor should be paid, this is not some kind of veiled request for a raise. CrossWinds has been extremely gracious to Cindy and me. You have provided for us very well. CrossWinds takes good financial care of its pastors, and I am proud of our elders for how they handle this area. Nevertheless, whenever we look at the Bible, there is still plenty to learn. This chapter offers great principles for how pastors should be paid.

Background

In 1 Corinthians, Paul is answering questions that the Corinthians asked him. One of those questions was about eating meat sacrificed to idols. In the pagan temples, the meat that wasn't burned up on an altar would make its way to the market. It was sold for a lower price. Christians could purchase this meat. It was no big deal. Idols weren't anything. If you can reduce the price of a pound of hamburger when feeding your family, you should do it.

But for baby Christians, it was a different story. They just came out of idol worship. That meat had a bad association with their past life in their mind. Eating that meat wasn't technically wrong, but for them, it felt wrong. They were emotionally injured seeing other Christians eat that meat.

Paul says to them, you have the freedom to do something, you can buy that cheap meat and serve it to your guests, but if serving that meat causes your guests, who are baby Christians, emotional distress or trauma because they

associate it with idol worship, then out of love for other people, don't exercise your freedom. Loving other people is more important than exercising your freedom in Jesus.

Paul talks about the same type of thing in Romans 14 regarding alcohol. It is not wrong to drink wine. We are not allowed to get drunk, but we can drink wine. But, if you have people over, and they are former alcoholics, or they are young and impressionable, or your drinking of wine might contribute to someone thinking less of you or stumbling into sin, then while you have the freedom to drink, your love for other people is more important than exercising your liberty.

Having stated the principle that loving people is more important than exercising our liberties, he proceeds to illustrate this in 1 Corinthians 9 and 10. Paul will tell us a right, yet out of love for other people, he was not exercising that right.

What is that right he had to that he was not exercising? It is the right to be financially supported by the church he planted. He had a right to expect financial support from the church in Corinth. They should pay him money for his ministry. They should provide for his needs. But he chose not to use that right. Instead, he chose to work two jobs. He pastored the church and taught people about Jesus by day, and at night, he made tents to earn his own living. Why did he do this?

He realized that, in the early stages of establishing a church in that culture, demanding payment from the new Christians would be offensive. It would look like he was planting a church just to get money. He would look like a scam artist. It would give Jesus a bad rap, which would keep people from hearing the

good news of Jesus. Rather than exercise his right to be paid for his services as a pastor, he chose to be bi-vocational, working a second job to pay his way, so people wouldn't think he was telling them about Jesus and starting churches as a scheme to get money from them.

Why did he feel that people would mistake him for a scammer? Several years ago, while researching Roman culture, I learned that many public speakers had a reputation as scam artists. They would enter a town, gather a crowd, use their speaking skills to sway people, and then get them to give money. Eventually, they left town with a bag full of money and abandoned their audience. They went to the next town and started the whole thing again in another city.

Paul says, I do not want people to think I am one of those guys. I do a lot of public speaking. I draw big crowds. I start churches, then I leave town. So people know I am not that kind of guy, I don't want people to give me money.

To make this argument, he does two things we will look at this morning. First, in verses 1 to 14, he explains why pastors should be paid. Second, in verses 15 to 18, he explains why he limited his liberty and did not use his right to be paid, why we, out of love for other people and the progress of the gospel, should be willing to limit our liberties as well.

Why should a pastor be paid?

As an apostle, Paul had the right to be paid for his work.

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 9:1–2 (ESV)

He begins with two rhetorical questions. Am I not free? Remember what the Corinthians were saying. In Jesus, we are free! We can do anything we want.

We can live any way we want. We can eat meat offered to idols. It doesn't matter; we are a liberated people. Paul says, "You think you are free? Am I not free?" I can do whatever I want. I am not an ordinary Christian. Am I not an apostle? If you have the freedom to do what you want, I have even more freedom to do what I want. I am an apostle. That is freedom plus some.

He knew some would say, "Paul, are you really an apostle?" Paul anticipates and answers that question when he says, "Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" The apostles were those chosen by Jesus. They met the resurrected Jesus. They were specially commissioned by Jesus to take the gospel to the world. Did Paul have those experiences? Yes, he did, three times. The first one that comes to mind is in Acts 9, when the risen Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus and told him he was a chosen instrument to take the gospel to the world. The resurrected Jesus specially visited him and commissioned him. In addition to that, we see the resurrected Jesus also spoke to Paul in a vision in Acts 18:9 and 22:17. The first thing he says is that he is an apostle who has seen the resurrected Jesus and been specially commissioned by Jesus to take the gospel to the world, just like the other apostles.

The second proof of his apostleship, that he is taking the gospel to the world, is the Corinthian church.

...Are not you my workmanship in the Lord?...1 Corinthians 9:1-2 (ESV)

If you have doubts about me being an apostle sent to the world to plant churches, look in the mirror. Where do you think your church came from? I planted the church. I began the church.

...If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 9:1–2 (ESV)

If to other churches, I would not be considered an apostle because I didn't plant them or begin them, I certainly am to you because I started the church in Corinth. I started from scratch. You are the seal of my apostleship. A seal is what verifies something as genuine.

In those days, if you were selling a sack of wheat, you always put a wax seal on it so people knew it hadn't been tampered with from the time you packed it until they opened it. It is similar to the seals we have on bottles today, so we know what is inside is genuine. Paul says the Corinthian church is his seal, his proof that he is a genuine apostle. He planted it. He began it.

This is my defense to those who would examine me. 1 Corinthians 9:3 (ESV)

When people ask Paul, "Are you a genuine apostle?" this is the answer he gives. First, I have seen the resurrected Jesus. I was commissioned by the resurrected Jesus to plant churches. Two, an example of my church-planting efforts is the church in Corinth.

He says, since I am a genuine apostle, don't I have great freedom to do whatever I want? One of the freedoms I have is I have the right to ask you for money. I have the right for the church that I began, the church where I pastor, to financially support me.

Do we not have the right to eat and drink? 1 Corinthians 9:4 (ESV)

He is being a bit sarcastic. Since I am an apostle, since I did all the work of planting this church, of preaching, of teaching, all the countless hours; after I am done preaching on Sunday, don't I have the right for the church to buy me a

sandwich and Pepsi after service for all the work? As a church, shouldn't you be willing to provide me with the bare necessities of life?

Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? 1 Corinthians 9:5 (ESV)

Don't I also have the right to be married and to take my wife with me on my missionary journeys to plant churches? The other apostles do it. The half-brothers of the Lord, who are James and Jude, do it. Peter did that. Did you know the apostle Peter was married? When he traveled around, he took his wife with him. You want proof that he was married? In Mark 1:30, we read that Peter's mother-in-law was sick. Jesus came to the house and healed her. If you have a mother-in-law, that means you have a wife.

Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? 1 Corinthians 9:6 (ESV)

Are Barnabas and Paul the only ones who have no right to stop outside work and to be paid by the church? Everybody else was doing that. All the other apostles were married and had wives who joined them on their missionary journeys, plus the churches paid for their wives to join them in their work.

At this time, Paul wasn't married. It seems he might have been at one time, but his wife presumably passed away or left him. We don't know that for sure. But if he wanted to, wasn't he free to remarry and take that wife with him on his missionary journeys?

Get this: not only to have the churches pay for his missionary journeys, but also to pay for his wife to travel with him. This is what the other apostles, as well as James and Jude, the half-brothers of Jesus, were doing.

As a church, it is our privilege to give each Sunday. Your financial support pays the pastors. It fuels the mission of reaching people with Jesus. If you are a guest at CrossWinds, we don't expect you to give. You are a guest. If CrossWinds is your church home and you benefit from the church, it's a different story. In that case, it is your privilege to give to pay for the pastors, to keep the heat on, and fund the mission. As Paul says, churches have a responsibility to pay their pastors.

The principle is that the pastor has a right to be supported by the church where he ministers. Of course, some pastors abuse this. Those are the televangelists with their prayer towers and private jets, the Kenneth Copelands of the world. They make me as sick as they make you. But we don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. While there are religious con artists out there fleecing money out of them, that doesn't change the fact that the people of the church should financially support the pastors of the church.

Of course, sometimes in the church we have freeloaders. They gain spiritual benefit from the church. They come on Wednesday nights to educate their children and on Sunday mornings to join us in study. They pay the YMCA for facilities they never use, but they pay nothing to support the church's mission, which they regularly use.

If we should give to the church, how should we give? Paul says, when we give, we should only give what we can give joyfully, willingly, and proportionately. God doesn't want a reluctant giver. Nevertheless, pastors have a right to be paid by the church.

Let me spend a moment on something else Paul said. He said, “Don’t I have a right to take along a believing wife?” In the early church, when you married someone, the idea of a Christian marrying an unbeliever was unheard of. The idea of even dating someone who was not a fellow believer was unheard of. Look what Paul says.

...if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 7:39 (ESV)

You are free to marry anyone, but they must be a Christian. Too many people have a low bar for a spouse. They are looking for a body, not a believer. Dating and marrying someone who doesn’t love Jesus leads to all kinds of frustration. At first, it may look like it works, but as life goes on, it gets worse because you are building with two different sets of blueprints. If you don’t date and marry a believer, how can you pray together, walk through challenges together, care for one another in sickness and in health, for better or for worse? You need a spouse who loves Jesus more than he or she loves you.

I should also throw this in. Do not live together before marriage. That is a recipe for difficulty. I did not say, “Don’t get to know someone well before marriage. You need to know someone well. I said save yourself for marriage. God doesn’t want us to take our hormones for a test drive before the wedding. Look what Paul said to young Timothy.

...older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. 1 Timothy 5:2 (ESV)

Paul says to young Timothy, if you wouldn’t do it with your sister, don’t do it with your girlfriend. If you want to treat her like a wife, marry her and treat her like

a wife. Until you are married, God's will is for you to do nothing with her that you wouldn't do with your sister.

Back to Paul and 1 Corinthians 9. Paul said that if he had a wife, she should also be supported by the church so she could join him on his missionary journeys. This means the church should pay pastors enough that his wife doesn't need to work outside the home to make ends meet for the family. Pay the preacher enough that his wife doesn't have to work. Sometimes churches are so stingy with the pastor's pay that they expect the pastor's wife to work to cover the rest of the family's needs, instead of allowing her to be a mother and care for her children, her husband, and her home.

Before we came to CrossWinds, I flew to two churches in California to be considered as a candidate there. One of the churches was very clear; they expected my wife to work so we would have enough money. It was a big enough church, but they didn't want to pay their pastor that much. The problem was, who would raise our three children if Cindy had to work? In addition, Cindy has an autoimmune disease and, at the time, had almost had her fingers amputated. She was tired and weak. How was that going to work with a sick wife who was coming out of a serious autoimmune disease? The cheap church would have jeopardized our marriage and children, all to save a few bucks.

Notice what Paul said about the church. Doesn't he have a right to be financially supported enough to not just pay for his expenses and what would be his wife's expenses, but he also has a right to be supported enough for a wife to go with him on his trips. When pastors travel, the church should not just pay for

them to go on a mission trip or conference, but also for their wives to join them. Isn't that what Paul just said he has a right to?

I don't like traveling. It is not the travel that is hard; it is being away from the wife and family I love. I don't like being alone night after night in a hotel for a week. The pastor is much happier, can concentrate better, and has a much stronger marriage when they are paid enough to have their spouse travel with them instead of having to take every trip alone or apart from their spouse.

When I did my doctoral work, 20 years ago, classes were all-day-long for 2 weeks straight. It was a drag being away from Cindy for that long. One year, Cindy asked me what I wanted for Christmas. I told her I'd buy an airline ticket so she could fly to Massachusetts and we could spend the weekend together instead of sitting alone in a hotel room. I had a lot of jealous guys in my class, but I told them, this is biblical, do we not have the right to take along a believing wife on our journeys.

I know some of you think that is too costly. I am just opening the Bible and explaining the text! Really, it is a matter of generosity. It is a matter of loving people. You never regret going out of your way to love people. You only regret not going out of your way to love people. One of the best things you can do is invest in your pastors' marriage, enabling a husband and wife to make memories together and minister together. Pastors are better with their spouse than apart from them.

For years, I attended a two-day gathering of pastors to talk about ministry. They would close it by putting an empty chair in the center of the room and

asking, "Will your chair be empty next year?" Will your chair be empty because you are out of ministry because you had an affair, or you went through a divorce, or some other kind of breakdown disqualified you for ministry? They said, statistically, given the size of the room, at least one person will have some kind of marital trainwreck that will disqualify them before next year. The following year, when we got together, one guy was out of the ministry because of an affair. The next year, another pastor had the same thing happen to him.

One way to help protect the church is instead of having pastors run around all over the place doing everything without their wives; instead, spend a few extra dollars to let them take their wives. That way, ministry duties can make some deposits in the marital bank account instead of always making withdrawals.

It is common sense that people should be paid for their work.

Who 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? 1 Corinthians 9:7 (ESV)

Paul says another reason he had a right to be paid by the churches he planted and pastored is that it was simply a matter of common sense. Who goes to war at his own expense? Do you know any soldiers who pay for their uniforms, pay for their food, and buy the weapons they use to fight? Absolutely not. The army sustains them and pays them for their work.

Nobody plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit. I mean, if you have a garden that you plant, that you weed and water, don't you get to eat the tomatoes, the cucumbers, the beans, and the cantaloupes? It would make no sense for you to do all the work of a garden, then everybody else eats the

vegetables, and you have to pay for a burger at McDonald's. It just makes no sense.

How about someone with a flock of sheep or goats? In Iowa, it would be a herd of cows. You don't have dairy farmers who milk the cows that are not allowed to drink the milk.

He uses three occupations: a soldier, a farmer, and a shepherd. It is just common sense that they get to enjoy the fruit of their labor, the benefits of their labor. Paul says, "Isn't it also common sense that a pastor who works hard teaching, caring, and maturing the church should enjoy some of the fruits of his labor? He should have his sustenance come from the church. It is just common sense.

The law says people should be rewarded for their work.

Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? 1 Corinthians 9:8 (ESV)

He says, I know I just gave you an argument for why pastors should be paid, from just common sense, but this is also what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches some common sense stuff.

For 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? 1 Corinthians 9:9 (ESV)

He starts talking about not muzzling an ox, when it is grinding out the grain. This comes from Deuteronomy 25:4. What is it talking about? The way the Israelites removed the husk from their grain was by placing the grain on a flat surface, like a rock. Then they took oxen and put behind them a large stone cut into the form of a rolling wheel. They chained the ox to a central post, then the ox dragged the heavy stone in a circle, crushing the grain husk.

If you want to have a frustrated ox. Put a muzzle on the ox while it is grinding the grain. It sees the food right in front of its mouth, food that it made, but it is not allowed to have any of it. That is animal cruelty. The principle is that when people work, they should be supported by their work. They should derive some benefit from their work. When oxen work, they should enjoy some of the fruits of their work. You shouldn't work all day and then go home with nothing to put on the table.

Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake,... 1 Corinthians 9:10 (ESV)

Paul says the reason God put this in the Old Testament was not just for the sake of oxen, even though God cares about animals. He put it in the Bible as a principle for us. When people work, they should be rewarded for their labor. People shouldn't be expected to do everything for free. If an ox is not expected to work for free, a man shouldn't be expected to work for free. A pastor shouldn't be expected to work for free. If you don't muzzle an ox in his work, you don't muzzle a pastor in his work.

...because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. 1 Corinthians 9:10 (ESV)

The guy who is plowing the field should be able to plow in the hope of getting a reward for his work. He should work, realizing he will get something out of his labor. Farmers don't work for nothing. A farmer should make money from their work. It is cruel to work for nothing or to get almost nothing for all their labor.

Every pastor should be able to work the field of his local church and expect a harvest; he should expect to reap a benefit for his work in the future. Out of his labor should come his provision.

There is also an incentive here. If the plowman plows really hard in planting season and plants more crops, he should expect to receive a greater harvest in the future. If a pastor works really hard, it is right to pay them for their hard work.

[If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? 1 Corinthians 9:11 \(ESV\)](#)

Paul says, Corinthians, think about this. What crop were we planting? It is spiritual things. It is eternal things, not physical things like widgets you purchase on Amazon. What we sowed among you were things that transform your life. We told you the good news of Jesus. That message has supernatural power to forgive your sin eternally, to move you from heaven to hell, to transform your heart, and your life. The message of the gospel changes lives, it changes cultures, it changes everything. It takes us from being prideful people and makes us humble people. It transforms us from angry to kind. It is not just words; it is invaluable. If people can make a fortune selling you worthless stuff from China on Amazon, isn't it right that a pastor should be paid for his work of sharing the gospel, which has eternal value?

Many times, the mentality of churches has been, keep the pastor poor. Don't give them too much. They are serving the Lord. If they wanted a decent living, they should have gone into business. That is wrong. In one sense, the pastor is a business; it is the most important business.

Earlier, I mentioned a church I visited before we moved to CrossWinds. Another church we visited in California was the community for the alternate launch site for the Space Shuttle program. At one point in the interview process,

the discussion turned to salary. They asked me how much I would like to be paid. I didn't know what to say so I said something like this. I would like the average salary of a professional in the church who was my age, who held a similar leadership position, and who had a similar education. That ended the conversation in a hurry. They said that was more than they were thinking.

Other pastors are paid for their work.

If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more?... 1 Corinthians 9:12 (ESV)

Paul says, by the way, as a church, you are already financially supporting other people. Don't I have an even greater claim to financial support from you since I planted your church and was in the city for 18 months getting the church off the ground, much longer than he stayed in other cities?

The priests in the temple were paid for their work.

Do 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? 1 Corinthians 9:13 (ESV)

He says, go back to the Old Testament and look at the priesthood. The priest in the temple was supported by his work of offering sacrifices. If you were here several years ago, you will remember I taught a series for Christmas called "Christmas from Leviticus." Before Christmas, we went through the five different sacrifices in Leviticus and how they pointed to Jesus. Christmas from the Book of Leviticus was a hard series to preach, but we learned a lot from it. In the Old Testament, the priest made his livelihood from those sacrifices. The whole burnt offering was a sacrifice completely burned up, except for the animal hide, which the priest kept and sold for his livelihood. In the sin offering, only the fat was

burned up. The priest kept the rest. In the grain offerings, a small part was offered in the fire, and the priest kept the rest of the grain for food. When the people offered the first-fruits, some were consumed, but the priest could eat the rest. In each offering, the priest was given a portion of the offering as a benefit for their work on the altar.

The priests were supported by their work. If the priests in the Old Testament didn't work for free, doesn't it also make sense that pastors should be paid for their work?

Jesus said those who preach the gospel should earn their living from the gospel.

In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. 1 Corinthians 9:14 (ESV)

This is not just common sense. It is not just Old Testament law. It is not just the way the priesthood worked. It is what Jesus said. If you give your life to proclaiming the gospel, you should be able to earn your living from the gospel. You shouldn't always have to preach the Bible for free.

When did Jesus say that? We don't have Jesus using those exact words in the Bible, but we do have him saying something very close when he sent out his disciples.

...no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. Matthew 10:10 (ESV)

I am sending you out to share the gospel. When you share about Jesus, people who believe in Jesus should support that work.

Paul says it is very clear that he has the right to be paid for his work by the Corinthian Church. He should be paid well. He should be paid well enough that his wife can travel with him without needing a second job. BUT...

Out of love for people, we should limit our liberty.

...Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right,... 1 Corinthians 9:12 (ESV)

Paul says, I have a very strong right to be paid for my services to you. There is a truckload of evidence for this. Paul just gave us the logic for this, but Paul did not ask them for money.

But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision.... 1 Corinthians 9:15 (ESV)

Just so you know it, even though I probably made a bunch of you feel really bad because you are not financially supporting me, and now you realize what a big obligation you have to support me, please understand, I didn't write this to guilt you into supporting me.

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. 1 Corinthians 9:12 (ESV)

Why did he not want to be paid for his work? He would do anything not to put an obstacle in the way of sharing Jesus. That means I don't want to do anything that would put up a barrier against Jesus in people's minds.

In Greek, the term "to put an obstacle in the way" originally referred to a city under attack. Before the attacking army arrived, the people of the city would go to the roads and tear them up. Just rip them up, looking like a farmer's plow went through them. This made it very difficult for the army, their carts, and their wheeled catapults to advance toward the city. Paul says, I don't want to do anything that would slow down the progress of the gospel.

Remember, in that day, there were plenty of charlatans. Charlatan speakers, who gathered a crowd, talked all kinds of persuasive things, got them to give money, then left town with their cash. Paul knew that in virgin territory like Corinth, where there were new churches and lots of con artists trying to scam people, if he asked for money and then left town to plant another church, people would think he was one of them.

Is it right for Christians to support their church and their pastors? Yes, of course! Every spiritually mature Christian will support their church and their pastors. Those who benefit from the church but don't support the church are spiritually immature. But to tell new Christians to give money on day one sends the wrong message. We support the pastors and the church because we are mature Christians behind the mission. We don't expect baby Christians to do that.

Later on, when churches matured, tent-making, self-supporting Paul did accept money from mature churches when they gave it. The Philippians gave him financial support. The Macedonians gave him financial support. When a church matures, it doesn't just grow in understanding God's grace; they also grows in the grace of giving.

For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 1 Thessalonians 2:9 (ESV)

And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. 2 Corinthians 11:9 (ESV)

Paul didn't want to be a burden to anyone and be thought of as in the ministry for money because he knew that would hinder the progress of the gospel, so he chose to limit the exercise of this liberty in Jesus.

...For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting. 1 Corinthians 9:15 (ESV)

What was he talking about? There is something he is doing that he boasts about. There is something he is proud to be able to do.

For 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! 1 Corinthians 9:16 (ESV)

He was not proud that he preached the gospel. He didn't have a choice in that matter. Jesus showed up on the road to Damascus in blinding light and gave me a new job description. Guys, I didn't have a choice in that one. If I don't preach the gospel, I am in trouble.

For 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. 1 Corinthians 9:17 (ESV)

God is not going to reward me for preaching the gospel. It was given to me as a stewardship. I was told to do this job. Telling people about Jesus, planting churches, suffering, Jesus told me this was my job. I didn't choose it.

What 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. 1 Corinthians 9:18 (ESV)

I will tell you what God will reward me for. It is something Jesus did not command me to do. I chose to do it so more people would know about Jesus. Instead of taking money for my ministry, I work a second job and pay my own way. I have a right to be paid for my work. The other apostles and the brothers of the Lord are paid for their work. That is the way it should be. But I limited my

liberty out of love for people, so nobody would be turned away from Jesus. I preach the gospel free of charge to everyone.

Conclusion

My friends, this is the attitude we need. We are free in Jesus to do almost anything. But out of love for people, we restrict our freedoms in order not to do anything that would cause people to think less of Jesus or God's message.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, and time with his family. Feel free to contact him at www.Christ2RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)

© You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided (1) you credit the author, (2) modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include the web address (www.Christ2RCulture.com) on the copied resource.

