

Verses 1-18: Paul defense and being paid for service of the Gospel

Verses 1-2: Paul an apostle to them

Verses 3-7: begin the idea of the right to reap from the Gospel with examples of other apostles and Peter

Verses 8-12: appeal to the law

Verses 13-14: those who worked in the Temple

Verses 15-18: Paul wants to preach the Gospel free of charge

Verses 19-23: Paul wants to be all things to all people: reference to the food laws

Verses 24-27: Run to win! Maybe the reference to sacrificing in order not to cause one to stumble

This chapter seems somewhat of an interlude between chapters 8 and 10. However, there are still things mixed in that relate.

### **Verses 1-18: Paul's defense and being paid for service of the Gospel**

#### **Verses 1-2: Paul an apostle to them**

- Paul starts with a repetition of rhetorical questions
- The questions have positive answers
  - Yes you are free
  - Yes you are an apostle
- We have to wonder what prompted this. Probably from a previous letter
- Paul states that He has seen the Risen Lord and that is something that makes him an Apostle
- Paul calls the Corinthians the Seal of His Apostleship. I think this is because of his work there.
- In 2 Corinthians 12:12 he talks about the signs of a true Apostle being down for them

#### **The IVP:**

**9:1–2.** By “free,” philosophers normally meant free from false values or free from property concerns and thus self-sufficient. The idea of freedom was often bound up with “authority” or “rights”; Paul, who calls on his readers to circumscribe their “freedom” (8:9), also sacrifices his own rights (9:4–5).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (1 Co 9:1). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

**Verses 3-7: begin the idea of the right to reap from the Gospel with examples of other apostles and Peter**

- Paul introduces what he is saying that this “is my defense”
- Verse 4: I think what Paul is talking about is determined by context. The context shows that they do have a right to get paid for their work. They have a right to get food and drink
- Paul gives examples that they would understand. Apparently Paul and Barnabas were the only ones that still had other jobs. Apparently the others were professional Apostles
- In 2Thess 3:8 Paul talks about working for what they have
- These farm and soldier illustrations are common. (2Tim 2:4)

**The IVP:**

**9:3.** Paul’s primary purpose here is to provide an example that will support his exhortations in chapter 8; but for this purpose he adapts the form of an “apologetic [defense] letter.” Some well-to-do members of the congregation have been complaining about Paul’s simple artisan lifestyle, which distinguished him from most traveling teachers (see comment on 9:6). What is a peripheral issue here later becomes central when this group’s dissatisfaction is exploited by other traveling teachers (see comment on 2 Cor 12:13–18).<sup>2</sup>

**9:5.** Jewish disciples who went away to study under a distant teacher would not bring their wives along; this was also true of the disciples in the Gospels. But just as the rare Cynic who found a wife willing to share his lifestyle would take her with him (see comment on 7:32–35), so the apostles took their wives as collaborators. Paul presents himself and Barnabas as exceptions to the general rule that apostles were married.

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<sup>2</sup>Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (1 Co 9:3). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

disciples **\*Disciples.** Students of rabbis or philosophers, normally committed to memorizing and living according to their master’s teachings.

Cynic **Cynic.** One type of antiworldly philosopher who expressed independence from social needs by begging. Cynics owned only the barest necessities (e.g., cloak, staff, begging purse) and often greeted passersby with harsh, antisocial words.

apostles **\*Apostle.** The term applies literally to a sent or commissioned messenger; in Judaism such messengers acted on the full authority of their sender, to the extent that they accurately represented the sender’s message. The closest Old Testament equivalent to God’s “apostles” in this sense was the prophets, although the apostles seem to have added an overseeing and evangelistic function that prophets (both Old Testament and New Testament) did not always incorporate. Those prophets commissioned with special authority to oversee prophetic awakening (e.g., perhaps Elijah,

Although ancient Egyptian and Hebrew (Song 4:9–12; 5:1) love songs called wives “sisters” as a term of endearment (also Tobit 8:4, 7), the term here simply means a sister in Christ (i.e., a fellow Christian; thus some translations have “a believing wife”; KJV has “a sister, a wife”).

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**9:6.** Philosophers supported themselves in one of several ways: by attaching themselves to a wealthy patron, who used them for ostentatious dinner lectures; by charging fees for instruction; by begging (generally despised, but practiced by the Cynics); or, least desirable of all, by working as manual laborers. Although artisans normally prided themselves on their own work, aristocrats and those who shared their values despised manual labor. The socially “strong” faction in the church undoubtedly wish that their founder-teacher did not work.

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Elisha, Jeremiah) or to judge Israel (e.g., Deborah, Samuel) may provide the best Old Testament models.

KJV King James Version

<sup>3</sup>Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (1 Co 9:5). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

patron **\*Patron.** The social superior in the Roman patron-client relationship, who granted favors to and acted as political sponsor for his clients, or social dependents. The obligations in the relationship were viewed as reciprocal; clients were to grant the patrons honor as their benefactors.

Cynics **Cynic.** One type of antiworldly philosopher who expressed independence from social needs by begging. Cynics owned only the barest necessities (e.g., cloak, staff, begging purse) and often greeted passersby with harsh, antisocial words.

church **\*Church.** The Greek term used in the New Testament reflects the terms often used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word for the “congregation” (*qahal*) of Israel: “church” (assembly) and “synagogue” (gathering). Although some scholars have suggested that Jesus could not have spoken about the church during his earthly ministry, the Dead Sea Scrolls used the Hebrew term for God’s community; hence Jesus could use this word in talking about his future community (Mt 16:18; 18:17). The term was in common use in Greek culture for “assemblies,” especially citizen assemblies in cities. (The popular modern surmise that the Greek word for “church,” *ekklēsia*, means “called-out ones” is thus mistaken; that sense is actually more appropriate for “saints,” i.e., “those separated [for God].”)

**9:7.** If laborers in secular occupations are paid, why not apostles?<sup>4</sup>

**Verses 8-12: appeal to the law**

- DT 25:4
- Notice the parallel of verse 12 and verse 2
- But also notice that Paul says that they have not made use of the right to “physical things.” This could be because they are afraid that if he gets paid for it the people may not take him as serious. People may think that he is not as genuine.
- In Acts 20:33 Paul says that he has not coveted anyone’s silver or gold
- Notice verses 15 and 18

**Verses 13-14: those who worked in the Temple**

- All the following deal with the O.T. priest getting food for their work. Lev. 6:16, 26; 7:6; Num. 5:9, 10; 18:8-20; Deut. 18:1<sup>5</sup>
- See also Matt 10:10 about the Lord providing the needs of the Apostles.
- So Paul is still giving illustrations to back up this idea

**Verses 15-18: Paul wants to preach the Gospel free of charge**

- In Acts 18:3 the text talks about Paul working
- See my note on verse 12: I see Paul working because he thinks if he doesn’t people may question his motives. Nor to own him by money.

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apostles \***Apostle**. The term applies literally to a sent or commissioned messenger; in Judaism such messengers acted on the full authority of their sender, to the extent that they accurately represented the sender’s message. The closest Old Testament equivalent to God’s “apostles” in this sense was the prophets, although the apostles seem to have added an overseeing and evangelistic function that prophets (both Old Testament and New Testament) did not always incorporate. Those prophets commissioned with special authority to oversee prophetic awakening (e.g., perhaps Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah) or to judge Israel (e.g., Deborah, Samuel) may provide the best Old Testament models.

<sup>4</sup>Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (1 Co 9:6-7). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

<sup>5</sup>*The Holy Bible : English standard version*. 2001. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

- What is his ground for boasting?
  - I think it may have to do with his being a bivocational apostle
  - Also he could boast of what the Lord has done. He can't boast about his Gospel preaching. See the next verse. If someone questions his motives he may not be able to boast of the Lord's work.
  - But then look at verse 16
- In verse 16 Paul makes it clear that he is compelled to preach the Gospel.
- In verses 17-18 Paul talks about reward versus stewardship. If he preaches by his own will he has a reward. But if it is not his own will he has a stewardship
- In verse 18 he explains his reward
- These verses seem very self explanatory. Paul explains things.
  - Paul was not controlled by anyone because of money they paid him.
  - **Could this have to do with chapter 8?** I wonder if the Corinthians might have questioned Paul by thinking he got paid to say certain things about food sacrificed to idols or anything else???
- 2 Cor. 11:7; 12:13

**Verses 19-23: Paul wants to be all things to all people: reference to the food laws**

- This is a common passage for evangelicals today
- Very self explanatory passage
- I don't think that Paul was being a fake. Paul was simply keeping people from stumbling

**Fee: the New International Commentary on the New Testament:**

- Paul confirms that he is not writing this defense so that they will do for him what they had been doing in the case of others
- Paul's sentence breaks off "it would be good for me rather to die...." We don't know how this would end. This shows Paul's strong stance to exercise restraint.
- Paul is boasting in an indirect way of the Gospel itself. Not in what he does or doesn't do.
- Preaching the Gospel without pay is both a calculated decision as well as an expression of his apostolic weakness.
- In verse 16: the word compulsion must have to do with his divine destiny.

- Gal 1:15-17 leads us to believe that God had ordained his destiny on the Damascus road
- In verse 17 the “reward” should be understood metaphorically as pay
  - Paul meant, if his labor is not voluntarily than he is not entitled to pay
  - His apostleship is comparable to a steward or household slave who has been entrusted with a management.
- In verse 18: Fee says in one sense his pay is “no pay”
- But this non-payment gives him” payment” gives him apostolic freedom so that he might freely make himself a slave to everyone. So his pay turns out to be total freedom from all merely human impositions of ministry.
- There is no hindrance before the Gospel
- Better worded: “he offers the Gospel free of charge so that he will not misuse his authority (*exousia*) in the Gospel” by making use of his “right” (*exousia*) to live by the Gospel”
- Fee thinks we could examine this for our lives today and for those of us who see our calling as laid upon us should be glad to readjust our lives for the sake of the Gospel.
- Verse 19 Paul is free from all people since he doesn’t accept pay
- Paul now explains his conduct which rests solely on evangelism
  - The conduct in verses 19-23 is probably marketplace food
- When Paul talks about freedom it is not inner freedom or legal freedom but financial freedom
- Freedom is not his goal but evangelism and so he makes himself a slave which is characteristic of Jesus.
- Language of “win” and “slave” refers to evangelism
- In verse 20 Paul starts to give past example of him using his freedom. In modern terms it would be Kosher with the Jews and non kosher with the Gentiles.
- Paul had no problem with Jews continuing their Jewish practices as long as they knew it didn’t give them right standing with God.
- 10:23-20 shows that Paul felt free to eat marketplace food and we can be sure that is the issue here.
  - The context suggests that he willingly refrained when he was in such settings
- Paul didn’t say that he changed the Gospel but he changed himself

**Witherington’s commentary:**

- To have a right doesn't mean that one has an obligation
- In 15b Paul makes it clear that he is not writing these things in order to receive help
- In footnote number 25 Witherington says that "It appears that by the time 2 Corinthians was written some of the Corinthians Christians were upset at Paul for not accepting support while he was in Corinth, as did some itinerant teachers and especially other Christian *apostolos*. They question whether this was not a tell tale sign that Paul was no true *apostolos* or true teacher." Page 25
- Verse 15c in an incomplete sentence. Paul seems to be saying that he wants to go "above and beyond the call of duty" and not to make an empty boast for preaching the Gospel free of charge. Witherington says that it may be that he sees this as the way to operate since he is preaching free grace in Christ.
- In verses 16 and following Paul's point is that he is under a calling and he is an apostle. Therefore, it is necessary for him to preach the Gospel. This is an obligation as an apostle. He has a commission. As a soldier, Paul doesn't do it voluntarily. Witherington says, "as a result, there can be no eschatological reward for this work." (page 210)
  - Witherington also points out parallels with 9:16-18 and 4:1-2, where Paul refers to himself as a sort of slave or household steward who has been found faithful. Here Paul refers to himself as a slave entrusted with the stewardship of the Gospel. In both cases Paul is disavowing the idea of the minister as a patriarchal overlord or master. Paul believes there is only one Lord over the church.
- In verses 19-23 Witherington says that Paul accommodates his lifestyle—food, clothing, and the like for the people he is with.
  - Witherington references an important study by D. B. Martin, "Martin points out, taking a lower station or place in society was not seen as virtue. It was seen as slavish and servile behavior, not the sort of thing to which the upper crust would ever aspire. Paul is saying that he deliberately moved from high status to low status, not least because he wants to produce an attitude adjustment among some of his converts, who have an all too worldly vision of Christian leadership." (page 211)
    - "In 1 Cor. 9:16-18, by depicting his leadership as slavery to Christ, Paul takes one step away from their position. They think of Christian leadership as modeled on the benevolent, free, high status *sophos*. Paul, however, depicts his leadership as the derived authority by association with his master Christ. This does constitute a claim to authority but one different than that of the strong. Then in verses 19-23, Paul takes a further, more radical step away from the position of the strong. By using the demagogic model of the leader as slave of all, Paul more specifically rejects the status-maintaining leadership of benevolent patriarchalism. Again, he still claims leadership, but it is a leadership from below. It is an exercise of authority, but a more subtle ambiguous authority that is not based on normal social position and normal status hierarchy....." (pages 211-212)
- This goes along with the Christ hymn in Phil 2

- That Paul says that he becomes a Jew to the Jew may seem odd when we recall that Paul was Jewish but this probably imply means that he resumed freely his Jewish heritage.
- Here “those under the law” may refer to Jews by heritage, or proselytes.
- This passage is the clearest evidence that Paul feels no compulsion to maintain the Jewish law.
- Verse 21 could refer to lawless people but more likely refers to those not under the scope of the law which would be gentiles
- Paul could be making a play off of the two meanings of the word *anomos*, without law or lawless, Paul is saying to those without the law, “I acted as without law, even though I am not lawless under God but in the law (*ennomos*) of Christ,” which means subject to the law of Christ. (page 213)
- Witherington believes the law of Christ is those ethical imperatives imposed on Christians by Christ or by His example. (page 213) it is not optional an in 6:9f Paul makes it clear that those who don’t follow will not inherit eternal life. It is not a way of gaining eternal life but no less important.
- The weak here probably doesn’t refer to weak Christians but people who are non Christians.

**The IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary:**

- Verse 15: self reliance was a virtue highly extolled among philosophers
- Verse 16: “woe is me” was a common OT and GK phrase uttered by one confronted with terrible news
- Stoic philosophers said that Fate imposed its will whether one accepted it or not; hence one might as well accept it. The Old Testament taught that one must submit to God’s call, even if (as in the case of Moses, Gideon, Isaiah and Jeremiah) one felt unprepared or inadequate for it.<sup>6</sup>
- **9:19–23.** Aristocratic thinkers despised demagogues who tried to please the masses; they considered such demagogues “slaves.” Paul borrows the language of populist politics, undoubtedly offending defenders of the aristocratic element in Corinth. Some Jewish

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Stoic **Stoicism.** The most popular form of Greek philosophy in Paul’s day. Although most people were not Stoics, many Stoic ideas were widely disseminated. For more detail, see comment on Acts 17:18.

<sup>6</sup>Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (1 Co 9:17). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

teachers, like Hillel, were similarly accommodationists, to win as many as possible to the truth.<sup>7</sup>

**Verses 24-27: Run to win! Maybe the reference to sacrificing in order not to cause one to stumble**

- Common image for Paul: Phil. 3:14; Col. 2:18
- What does disqualified mean?

**The IVP:**

**9:19–23.** Aristocratic thinkers despised demagogues who tried to please the masses; they considered such demagogues “slaves.” Paul borrows the language of populist politics, undoubtedly offending defenders of the aristocratic element in Corinth. Some Jewish teachers, like Hillel, were similarly accommodationists, to win as many as possible to the truth.

**9:24–25.** Philosophers (followed by Diaspora Jewish sources like Philo and 4 Maccabees) commonly used athletic illustrations to describe their striving for truth and wise living. Paul portrays the discipline and self-sacrifice necessary to live the Christian life through the analogy of races (9:24–26a) and boxing (9:26b–27). (The footrace preceded the other four athletic contests of the pentathlon in the Panhellenic Games.) The clause “but only one receives the prize” (a wreath for the head, which would eventually rot) emphasizes how hard one had to work to win the race. (A long period of intense discipline was mandatory for any who planned to participate in the events. For instance, participants for the Olympic games had to swear by Zeus to follow ten months of strict training beforehand.)

Corinth itself hosted major games for all Greece every two years on the isthmus; these were the best-attended Greek festivals next to the Olympic games, which were held every four years. The pine garland was awarded at these Isthmian games (wild olive at the Olympic, parsley at the Nemean, etc.).

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Hillel **Hillel**. A famous Jewish teacher contemporary with Shammai and with Jesus’ early childhood; usually more lenient than Shammai, his school’s opinions generally prevailed after A.D. 70.

<sup>7</sup>Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (1 Co 9:19). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

Hillel **Hillel**. A famous Jewish teacher contemporary with Shammai and with Jesus’ early childhood; usually more lenient than Shammai, his school’s opinions generally prevailed after A.D. 70.

Diaspora **\*Diaspora**. The Jewish dispersion outside Palestine. The technical term “Diaspora Judaism” is thus used interchangeably with “non-Palestinian Judaism” in this commentary.

Philo **\*Philo**. A first-century Jewish philosopher committed to both Judaism and Greek thought; he lived in Alexandria, Egypt, and held a position of great influence and prestige in the Jewish community there.

4 Maccabees **4 Maccabees**. A Jewish treatise full of Greek (especially Stoic) philosophy; probably written by an Alexandrian Jew in the early first century A.D.

**9:26–27.** Boxing was one of the major competitions at Greek games; boxers wore leather gloves covering most of the forearm except the fingers, and boxing was a violent sport. Shadowboxing or “beating the air” was insufficient preparation for a boxing competition; a boxer had to discipline his body better than that to win. In the same way, Paul had to discipline his life to sacrifice what he needed to sacrifice for the sake of the gospel, lest he himself be disqualified from the race and fall short of the wreath of eternal life (9:25).<sup>8</sup>

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gospel **Gospel.** The term so translated means literally “good news”; it was the sort of good news heralds would bring, and in Isaiah it refers to the specific message of God’s restoration and salvation for his people. (“Gospel” as a literary genre, a type of book in the New Testament, is different; on this sense of the term see the introduction to the Gospels.)

eternal life **\*Eternal life.** In Jewish texts, the term literally means “the life of the world to come,” bestowed after the resurrection from the dead; taken from Daniel 12:2, it became a standard concept in most of early Judaism and was sometimes abbreviated “life.” Some New Testament passages speak of it as a present as well as future gift, because Jesus’ resurrection has inaugurated salvation for the present.

<sup>8</sup>Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (1 Co 9:19-26). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.