



# A Study of Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians

## Lesson 14: I Have the Right to, but Don't.... 1 Corinthians 9:1-23

Now, right before we broke for our summer vacation we began the third section of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. It's the third section because First Corinthians contains both an introduction and a conclusion and because there are two sections sandwiched in between. The second section concerned a number of reports that Paul had to respond to and this third section, the one we started looking at before we quit for the summer concerns a number of questions the Corinthians wanted answered. So you can see, it really is the third section in terms of structure but if you look at Paul's letter in terms of its overall size and subject matter, you can see that what we really have come to is the second half of the book.

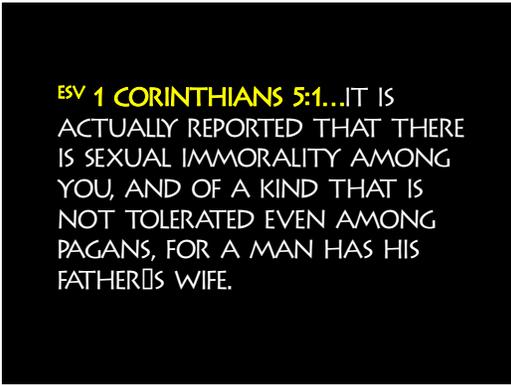
### FIRST CORINTHIANS

- AN INTRODUCTION (1:1-9)
- TWO REPORTS
  - ABOUT DIVISIONS (1:10-4:21)
  - ABOUT IMMORALITY (5:1-6:20)
- ANSWERS TO 8 QUESTIONS (7:1-16:12)
- CONCLUSION (16:13-24)

Now the first half, the smaller half, only covers four or five chapters. It concerned a number of reports that Paul had received concerning the Corinthian church.

You will remember, I hope, that those reports concerned the divisions at Corinth...we saw that in chapters one through four.

After that, Paul mentioned a second report, contained in chapters five and six, which concerned a notorious case of immorality in which one of the men in the church was living in an incestuous relationship with his step-mother. It is hard to forget Paul's disappointment and frustration with the Corinthians at the beginning of chapter five.

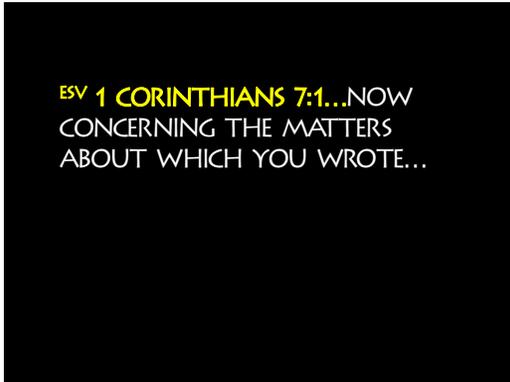


**ESV 1 CORINTHIANS 5:1...**IT IS ACTUALLY REPORTED THAT THERE IS SEXUAL IMMORALITY AMONG YOU, AND OF A KIND THAT IS NOT TOLERATED EVEN AMONG PAGANS, FOR A MAN HAS HIS FATHER'S WIFE.

**ESV 1 Corinthians 5:1...**It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.

And then, starting in chapter seven, Paul began the third section of his letter in which he turned from the reports he had received about the Corinthians to a letter that the Corinthians had written to him asking him a number of questions.

Listen to the opening line of chapter seven.



**ESV 1 Corinthians 7:1...**Now concerning the matters about which you wrote...

You see the Corinthians had written Paul to ask him about several things. How I would love to have that letter. I would love to know whether the letter was simply comprised of a number of theological questions regarding their faith and practice or whether it was something a little more sinister. When I say sinister, I mean I would like to know whether the letter was ironical and bitter and whether it contained hints that they were rejecting his ministry out and out. I make that point because whatever their letter contained beside the questions they asked caused Paul to spend a good bit of his time defending his ministry and apostleship.

Now the first question that Paul addresses starting in chapter seven concerned the nature of Christian marriage. Specifically, it addressed the issue of sex in Christian marriage. If you missed that section you may very well want to go back and read the two lessons we went through together. They are contained in lessons 11 and 12 and are posted on the web.

After that, Paul answered their question regarding the propriety of eating meat sacrificed to idols. Now at first glance, it might seem like that question has absolutely no relevance for anybody living in a world as post-modern and post-Christian as ours. But it really does have a great deal of relevance because the question it really addresses is whether there is anything or anytime that a Christian ought to say, **“You know even though that particular behavior or that particular action is permissible I am not going to exercise my right to do something I really want to do because of how it might impact others.”**

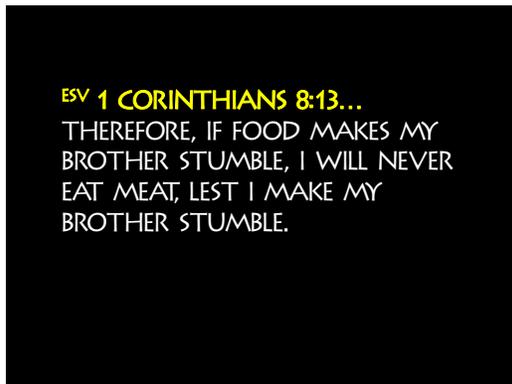
Or you could say that the question it really addresses is whether there is ever a time a Christian ought to say, **“You know even though I can, I’m not going to for the spiritual well-being of my weaker brother.”**

Or you could even put it more simply and say, **“For their sake I am not going to do what I really want to do.”**

And you know I think that does have a measure of relevance for us today. I think it has a measure of relevance because our culture today is just about as egocentric and narcissistic as any body of people ever could be and when I say that I am not think so much of the unbelieving culture in which we live as I am of the church in our time. You see, there is a tendency today for believers to think of their experience with church involvement in terms of the many choices they have as consumers. That is, they tend to approach their involvement with a church more or less as consumers picking and choosing from a wide range of available buffet options available rather than in terms of any need they might meet in others if they were to commit themselves to a local congregation.

That is why I think Paul's conclusion at the end of chapter eight is so important. You see what he says is this, **"We ought always to weigh our decision about what to do or not to do not in terms of whether it will benefit us or please us but really in terms what it will do to those around us."**

The way he actually puts that is like this.



**ESV 1 Corinthians 8:13...**Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

You see what Paul says in chapter eight is this, **"I don't make decisions about what I am going to do simply based on filing this desire or that desire. Rather I make my decisions about what I am going to do based upon the impact it will have on others."**

Now what we are going to see this morning is that Paul is going to continue that idea. And he is going to continue that idea looking at his his own personal experience and relationship with the Corinthians. Now I have to add that not only is Paul making himself the point of a wonderful crystal clear illustration

about giving up personal rights for the benefit of others but I think he is, at the same time, defending his ministry and apostleship to the Corinthians.

I think, perhaps, they had questioned whether Paul was really in a position of authority to tell them what to do or even to make suggestions.

Now with that in mind I would ask you to turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 9:1.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 9:1**...Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? <sup>2</sup> 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.

Now the first thing you ought to notice is that there are three quick questions in a row. In Greek, a writer could ask a question in such a way that the reader knew they were expected to give a “yes” answer. That is what Paul does with these three questions. Now the way you emphasize that in English is by adding a little phrase at the end. For example, if you really wanted to make Paul’s point clear you would write his three questions in English like this:

I am free, aren’t I?

I am an apostle aren’t I?

I have seen the Lord, haven’t I?

And here’s what Paul meant. He meant, **“I am free to make my own decisions about what I do or say or think, aren’t I?”** Of course Paul was free. He was free in that he was a Roman citizen and could come and go as he pleased in the ancient Roman world. He was free in that he was an educated man and was

privity to the world of letters and books. He was free in that he was unmarried and not bound in any sort of way to meet family obligations to a wife or children. He was free in that he was a recognized leader in the church and was in a position of authority which, of course, led to his second question.

I am an apostle aren't I?

The fact that this question is brought up at all is very important. It is important because it tells you what some critics of Paul were saying. You see, I think it is almost certain that there were a number of men out there who were saying something like this, **"You know he claims to be an apostle but look at the way he acts. If he were an apostle his behavior would be more like this....or like that...he would act more like...well, like me. Therefore, you ought to stop following Paul and follow a real leader...a leader like, well...like me."**

So Paul frames the question so the Corinthians had to answer it a certain way...that is, so they had to answer it, **"Yes, you are an apostle."**

He then goes on to the next question...a question that speaks directly to the previous question, **"I have seen the Lord, haven't I?"** I love the fact that Paul brings that question right here and it causes me to want ask the question of you, **"When do you think Paul saw the Lord?"**

I think the answer is almost certainly that Paul saw the glorified Lord Jesus on the Road to Damascus.<sup>1</sup> I think he is hinting at that here and that he says it quite explicitly later in 1 Corinthians 15.<sup>2</sup> I think that the passage in Acts implies that he was blinded by the glory of the Lord Jesus on the Road to Damascus and, of

course, if that is true it was more than simply a vision like so many movies portray it today.

Anyway, he concludes these three opening passages by saying even if he is not a recognized apostle by others he certainly ought to be to the Corinthians because he was the instrument God used to bring them out of darkness into light.<sup>3</sup> Look at how he says just that in verse 2.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 9:2**...If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal<sup>4</sup> of my apostleship in the Lord.

Now that ought to convince you that he is defending his apostleship in how he is structuring his argument. But just in case the Corinthians weren't able to pick that up, Paul makes his case even more explicit in verse 3. Look at what he says there.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 9:3**...This is my defense to those who would examine me.

I like what one writer write when he says that, "Paul put himself in the dock to make his example personally vivid to his readers".<sup>5</sup> What that means is that he puts himself on the witness stand. I love that imagery. I like that imagery because I think many wonderful things can happen when a witness is under oath...things that are not always expected.

I was once called to give a deposition in a lawsuit. I was, in fact, called as a religious expert and as a member of the management of the company being sued. As I was being deposed, I was asked this question, "**Are you Reformed?**"

To which I answered, **“Yes, I am a Protestant.”**

The lawyer who was questioning me looked at me with the strangest look as if he were asking, “What does that have to do with the question I just asked?” So he asked me again, **“Well, Mr. Browning, perhaps, you did not hear the question properly. What I asked was ‘Are you Reformed?’”**

I answered, **“Yes, I am a Protestant.”**

Then he asked me, and lawyers do not like to this, whether I would mind explaining what I meant by my answer.

**“Yes, I would be happy to,”** I replied. **“In the sixteenth century there was a heated theological debate between Luther, Calvin and their followers and the Roman Catholic Church over the nature of justification. The little soirée that that debate produced turned into something known historically as the Protestant Reformation. So when you ask if I am Reformed, I am happy to answer that I am a Protestant. Is that what you wanted to know?”**

He didn’t know how to respond to that. So he asked me the next question, which is where he really wanted to go in the first place. He was trying to make the point that a person cannot be reformed and abide with Charismatics. So he asked me the next question, **“Well then, are you Charismatic?”**

I answered, **“Yes, I am.”**

He didn't know how to respond to that either. So he asked me again, **"You're Charismatic?"**

And I said, **"Yes."**

**"You're Charismatic?"**

**"Yes."**

**"You're Charismatic?"**

**"Yes, I am."**

**"Would you mind...explaining that?"** he asked.

**"Well,"** I said, **"most people like me. I'm friendly and outgoing. Some people say I have a measure of personal magnetism. A lot of people seem to enjoy talking to me. Some, not a great number but some, even find me winsome"**

**"Oh, that's not what I meant!"** he said.

**"No?"**

**"No! What I meant was are you Charismatic theologically?"**

**"Ah"** I replied. **"Yes."**

**“You’re Charismatic theologically?”** he stammered.

To which my lawyer finally answered, **“Let the record show that my client has thus far answered this question six times in the affirmative.”**

To which the questioning lawyer added, **“O.K. then, tell me what you mean by yes.”**

**“Sure!”** I replied. **“The word ‘charismatic’ is based on the Greek word χάρισμα and usually refers to a “kindness” or “gift.” The Scripture says in Ephesians 4:7-8 that Christ has apportioned to each one of His followers some spiritual gift. It says further that these gifts were apportioned out to the church when He ascended on high. Since I am a Christian and since I believe He has given out gifts, I am pretty sure I am a Charismatic. Does that answer your question?”**

**“Oh!”** he winced. **“Alright then I see where you are going. But that is not what I meant at all. What I meant was, ‘Do you speak in tongues?’”**

I waited for a moment and then answered, **“Yes.”**

He looked at me completely bewildered and asked again, **“You speak in tongues?”**

**“Yes.”**

**You’re telling me you speak in tongues?”**

**"Yes."** I replied.

**"Alright. What do you mean by that?"**

**"Well, I've memorized a few Hebrew Scriptures and sometimes I say them. I know quite a bit of Greek but when I really get vexed I almost always resort to Latin. Hence, I speak in tongues."**

**"Ah, Mr. Browning I think that will be all."**

Now, of course, I was trying to clever and whether I was being clever or just plain old prideful and arrogant is up for you to determine. But what Paul was trying to do was to get the Corinthians to see that he had certain rights as an apostle. That is why he puts himself in sort of an imaginary witness box and gives his testimony. When he does he asks and answers his own questions. And look at what they are in verse 3.

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

The way the question is asked in Greek demands a positive answer. You see what he is asking is, **"Don't we have a right to eat and drink? Well, of course, we do."** You see what he is doing is tying the whole argument about personal rights back to his instruction regarding food in the previous chapter. You see where he is going is that he is going to say just like I sometimes give up my right to eat and drink certain things for the spiritual well-being of my weaker brothers so I have also given up my right to do and have certain things for your sake<sup>6</sup>.

He continues in verse 4.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 9:4**...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?

Now you don't have to be a great Bible scholar to see where he is going. He is making the point that he has a right to be married just like Peter and James and John but that he is not married. And the implication is that he has given up that right for the benefit of the kingdom and especially those that have fallen to his charge, namely the Corinthians.<sup>7</sup>

Then in verse 6, Paul turns from the issue of "the fact that he has the right to eat and drink whatever he chooses" and the fact that he "has the right to be married like the other apostles" to the fact "that he has the right to be supported in his ministry".<sup>8</sup> Look at how he puts it in verse six.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 9:6**...Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? <sup>7</sup> 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?

Now you can see his point I think. He is saying, **"Look here soldiers have the right to be supported by those they fight for.<sup>9</sup> A man that tends and cares for a vineyard has the right to eat of its grapes and drink of its bounty. A shepherd has the right to milk the goats he cares for and to drink of that milk."**<sup>10</sup>

Now in case there is any doubt that that is what he means, Paul quotes Scripture to enforce his point.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 9:8**...Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? <sup>9</sup> 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? <sup>10</sup> Does he not speak entirely 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. <sup>11</sup> If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 9:12**...If 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. <sup>13</sup> 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? <sup>14</sup> In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

Do you see what he is saying? He is asking, **"Don't we have the right to expect you to pay us for preaching and teaching the Word and for doing the work of the ministry?"** And his answer and the answer from Scripture as well is, **"Of course we do!"**

But that is not where Paul is headed in his argument. It sounds like where he is headed but it isn't. In fact, he has made an infallible argument for the right and propriety of being paid for the work of ministry. And yet he is going somewhere completely different than that. Look at what he says in verse 15.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 9:15**...But 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.

Do you get his point? He is saying, **"I haven't made any use of that obvious right. Nor I am trying to make use of it now. I don't want your money. In fact,**

**if I was to take your money, it would deprive me of the one important thing of which I am able to boast and that is, that I preach the gospel for free. And I would rather be dead than not be able to say just that."**

Now I want to be clear that neither Kyle nor I want you to feel any obligation to apply Paul's standard to our case. In fact we want you to remember the infallible nature of his argument. But Paul doesn't and the reason he doesn't is because he wants to drive home the fact that he does what he does without ever having any hope of being paid Look at verse 16.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 9:16**...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!  
<sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> 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.

Here's what Paul is saying. He is saying, **"Preaching the gospel doesn't give me any right to boast. After all, I don't really have any choice in the matter. In fact, woe is me if I don't preach the gospel. You see, I am a man under compulsion...that is, I am like a slave in a sense...given a charge...,and as a slave I don't really deserve any pay. So what then is my reward? Here it is. My pay is that I get no pay...that is I get the high privilege of preaching the gospel for free without getting all bogged down over my rights."**

Now look , at last, at this wonderful conclusion that he draws in verse 19.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 9:19**...For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though

I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. <sup>23</sup> I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

Do you see what Paul is saying? Paul is saying, **“I am willing to forgo whatever rights ought to be rightfully mine for the extraordinary privilege of doing what I do. I am willing to give up those rights in order to reach more and more people.”**

Now Paul wasn't just saying out of blue. He wasn't just saying that to make them aware of his giving manner. No, what Paul was doing was using a personal illustration from his own life in order to reinforce the point that he had been making in chapter eight about food and why they ought to show some restraint in what they ate and where they ate it...for the sake of their brothers and sisters with a weaker conscience. You see what he is doing...what he is actually doing is saying, **“I have all the same rights as the rest of the apostles but when it come to boldly asserting my rights...to boldly getting my way...I just don't. And the reason I don't is because I have given those things up in the pursuit of advancing Christ's kingdom and I want you to feel the same way when it comes to going down to the temple and getting in line to eat meat sacrificed to idols. I want you not to do it...not because you don't have the right but rather knowing you have the right and yet refraining from exercising that right for the benefit of those around you. Now will you do that?”**

And you know what....I think there is a message in that for us here in this place some two thousand years later. And the reason there is a message here for us is because we still have that same old desire to exert our rights...and when I say rights I am not talking about necessary things but I am talking rather about all of those things that don't really matter.

You see we still have that some old narcissistic tendency to want what we want in spite of how much it may wound others around us. And the reason we want what we want regardless of how much damage what we want will do is because we love ourselves more than just about anything around us. That's why Paul gets so personal here and shares his own example of not taking any pay in the advancement of the gospel. He is saying, "What I am willing to do in a big way in preaching the gospel without pay...in preaching the gospel in the bitterness of living alone when it is not required...in preaching the gospel when I am exhausted and hurting and I am asking you to do something similar to what I do by letting that ravenous desire to fill yourselves with a nice piece of steak and I for the benefit of some poor sinner's sensitive conscience."

But you know that is a hard thing to listen to...it's a hard thing to do and the reason that it is because we get so stuck in the mindset that says, "I am going to have what I want because I can...because I want it...because I deserve it." You see it all the time when somebody asserts their right to happiness and destroys the life of their kids. You see it when church members get in fights over the color of the paint in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Sunday School class. You see it anytime someone absolutely has to have their way on some unimportant issue. And yet we know in our hearts...hearts regenerated by God's Spirit that we really ought to have a different mindset altogether.

A few years back, Beverly found out she had breast cancer. She went through all the test...and MRI's and stuff for preparation. And then we scheduled the surgery and went over to Dallas to have it done. I remember we had arrived early in the morning...very early...and we didn't get out that afternoon until 5:30 pm. Her actual surgery started around 9:30 am...and lasted until about 1:00 pm and then she was in recovery until 3:00 and then in a holding area until 5:30 pm. She had to stay in the recovery area a long time because she was so nauseated after the surgery. Anyway, because it was a day surgery, they wanted us to leave so they could all go home. So they more or less kicked us out. So, event hough she wasn't really ready to go home...I simply loaded her into the car with her feeling so nauseated and we just left...we left just in time to get into the worst rain storm in the history of North Texas. It was the night it rained 13 inches in Dallas.

When we left Zale-Lipshy Hospital we went up the ramp to Interstate 30 and drove about from here to that door back there and stopped and sat and sat and sat for an hour. Then over the course of the next hour we made it to Irving and once there we sat for another hour. Then the drive from Irving to Arlington took another 30 minutes. A trip that normally took about 20 minutes took about two and a half hours.

In the course of that trip, Beverly was drifting in and out of consciousness. She was on pain medication but she was still really uncomfortable and then she got really sick. Right before we got to Irving, she threw up on herself not once, not twice but three times and the rain was falling down in torrents and we were stuck in traffic and unable to move and unable to get off the highway and I

looked at my wife and saw how uncomfortable she was...how miserable she was and it just made me crazy.

I prayed for God to hurry the traffic up. I prayed for God to let us get off the highway. I prayed to God to do something...to do anything...for me and for her and I began to think to myself and then to say out loud, **“You know God, I deserve better than this. And even if I don’t, Beverly does.”**

And you know what, God answered my thought by letting us sit and sit and sit. He answered my prayers with a stony silence and this is what I think His silence said, **“You know that pride that you have...that pride that is so deeply ingrained in you...that pride that keeps you from ministering effectively to my sheep...that pride that keeps you from effectively understanding the mind of Christ...that pride that keeps you from getting across God’s kindness has got to go. All I am doing is wearing it away a little bit. Do you think what you are suffering right now is any worse than what my Son endured? It’s not even close. Remember, tomorrow will be O.K. for you.”**

And you know what, it was. In fact, what I see now is that it was an honor to suffer that little bit not because it was redemptive but rather because it taught me...taught Beverly and I, as only experience can do, what it means to listen to, to comfort, to minister to those who are suffering. We just needed...I just needed a little reminder that in the end it is not really about me at all.

Let’s pray.

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians NICNT*, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing: Grand

Rapids, 1987), 395. He writes: “Paul’s own view of apostleship is presented by the second set of questions which serve to establish that he is indeed an apostle. First, “Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” Along with 15:18 this questions establishes two things: (a) Paul believed that his experience on the Damascus road was more than a mere vision. For him it was a resurrection appearance of a kind with all the others—to be sure after the ascension and therefore out of due season (15:3-8). But since others who saw the Risen Lord did not become apostles what most likely legitimized his apostleship was the accompanying direct commission.”

<sup>2</sup> <sup>ESV</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:3...For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup> Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. <sup>8</sup> Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. <sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

<sup>3</sup> C.K. Barrett, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), 201. He writes: “It is a visible token of something that already exists; thus the Corinthian church does not make Paul an apostle, and his apostleship does not depend on it (any more than on the Jerusalem), but its existence is a visible sign of his apostleship.”

<sup>4</sup> That is, “a visible token” as per Barrett, pg. 201.

<sup>5</sup> David E. Garland, *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2003), 406. Garland quotes P. Gardiner.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Hodge, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, 9:4. Hodge see this issue directly tied to being paid for one’s work. He writes: “This, taken by itself, might mean, ‘Have we not the same right that others have as to meats and drinks? All distinctions on this subject are abolished as much for us as for others. Are we not free?’ The context shows, however, clearly that such is not the apostle’s meaning. The right in question is that which he goes on to establish. It is the right to abstain from working, and of being supported by the church.”

<sup>7</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, 9:4. This particular view was not always held by the early church. Some even thought the apostles had female attendants that traveled with them and that that is what Paul is referring to. Of course, such a practice would have opened up the possibility to all kinds of scurrilous gossip. Calvin particularly hammers this view. He writes: “Now, if any one should think to establish Popery from this, he would act a ridiculous part. We confess that Peter was acknowledged as first among the Apostles, as it is necessary that in every society there should always be someone to preside over the others, and they were of their own accord prepared to respect Peter for the eminent endowments by which he was distinguished, as it is proper to esteem and honor all that excel in the gifts of God’s grace. That preeminence, however, was not lordship — nay more, it had nothing resembling lordship. For while he was eminent among the others, still he was subject to them as his colleagues. Farther, it is one thing to have pre-eminence in one Church, and quite another, to claim for one’s self a kingdom or dominion over the whole world. But indeed, even though we should concede everything as to

Peter, what has this to do with the Pope? For as Matthias succeeded Judas, (<440126>Acts 1:26,) so some Judas might succeed Peter. Nay more, we see that during a period of more than nine hundred years among his successors, or at least among those who boast that they are his successors, there has not been one who was one whit better than Judas. This, however, is not the *place* to treat of these points. Consult my Institutes. (Volume 3.)

One thing farther must here be noticed, that the Apostles had no horror of marriage, which the Papal clergy so much abominate, as unbecoming the sanctity of their order. But it was after their time that that admirable discovery was made, that the priests of the Lord are polluted if they have intercourse with their lawful wives; and, at length matters came to such a pitch, that Pope Syricius did not hesitate to call marriage "*a pollution of the flesh*, in which no one can please God." What then must become of the poor Apostles, who continued in that pollution until death? Here, however, they have contrived a refined subtilty to effect their escape; for they say that the Apostles gave up the use of the mar-ridge bed, but *led about* their wives with them, that they might receive the fruits of the gospel, or, in other words, support at the public expense. As if they could not have been maintained by the Churches, unless they wandered about from place to place; and farther, as if it were a likely thing that they would run hither and thither of their own accord, and without any necessity, in order that they might live in idleness at the public expense! For as to the explanation given by Ambrose, as referring to other persons' wives, who followed the Apostles for the purpose of hearing their doctrine, it is exceedingly forced."

Others, of course, held the view that some apostles were married by not intimate with their wives and that their wives travelled with them to help in their ministry to women. This view, however, seems to fly directly in the face of Paul's argument in chapter seven. For more information see Garland, 407.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon H. Clark, *1 Corinthians: A Contemporary Commentary* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1975), 142. He writes: "Paul begins the defense of his conduct by asking a rhetorical question that can only be answered in the affirmative: of course everybody has the right to eat and drink. Nobody is under a moral obligation to starve himself to death. This type of introduction, by requiring an affirmative answer, is a method to prepare for acquiescence in whatever follows.

Grosheide has a different interpretation. He thinks Paul is referring to the right to eat meat offered to idols. This is a poor suggestion because (a) the chapter has nothing to do with meat offered to idols, and (b) since eating meat offered to idols was a matter of dispute, it would not evoke the strong affirmative answer to an introductory rhetorical question.

The first interpretation therefore is the better one, but with a modification. Paul is not concerned with starving to death. His point becomes clear a few verses below: Does he not have the right to eat, therefore to buy food, with money contributed by the churches? The argument concerns the legitimacy of a paid ministry."

<sup>9</sup> Hodge, 9:7. Hodge writes: "literally, *the right of not working*. 'Is there any reason why I and Barnabas should be the only exceptions to the rule that preachers of the word are to be supported by the churches?'"

<sup>10</sup> Calvin, 9:7. He writes: "As natural equity points out this as reasonable, who will be so unjust as to refuse sustenance to the pastors of the Church? While it may happen, that some serve as

soldiers at their own expense, as, for example, the Romans in ancient times, when no tribute was as yet paid, and there were no taxes, this does not militate against Paul's statement, for he simply takes his argument from common and everywhere received practice."