

“You Get What You Pay For?” (1 Corinthians 9:1-23)

My wife and I are very careful about how we spend our money. Some call us cheap, others call us frugal; I like to call us shrewd stewards of the Lord’s resources. Yet, over time I have noticed something rather discouraging. In my attempt to save money, I buy inexpensive items that quickly break down or fall apart. Whenever this happens, I tend to say, “You get what you pay for!”

However, this worn-out cliché does not always prove true. Occasionally, I buy brand-name goods that fall apart while the cheap merchandise lives on. It’s rather frustrating and unpredictable. Hence, I’ve learned that you don’t always get what you pay for. This is true in other areas of life as well. Hollywood can spend millions of dollars seeking to produce the latest and greatest movie, only to watch the movie bomb in the box office. At the same time, a small-time producer can spend peanuts producing a flick only to see it become the latest rage. In the world of sports, it is all too common to see an athlete sign a ridiculously lucrative contract only to be injured or have a sub-par season. Simultaneously, a rookie can sign the league minimum and have an explosive year. You can’t always judge a movie by its budget or an athlete by his salary. Furthermore, you can’t judge a servant of Christ by his pay or lack thereof.

Take the apostle Paul, for example. He chose not to receive payment from the church at Corinth. Instead, he established a church in this sin-hardened city at his own expense. He served them freely so that the gospel would have an open door to travel through.¹ Paul’s personal sacrifices brought about great results for God’s kingdom. Likewise, we have been called to have a godly work ethic as ministers of the gospel. Some of us will be paid, others will serve as volunteers. Yet, we are all called to represent Christ and to offer Him our lives. We will learn that *proclaiming Christ demands paying a price*. In 1 Cor 9:1-23, Paul is going to share with us an autobiographical sketch of his ministry.² In doing so, he will exhort us to follow his example. First, Paul will argue that...

1. We must relinquish our individual rights (9:1-14).³ Paul builds a lengthy argument for ministers being paid. I know what you’re thinking: I picked the wrong day to come to church. Well, believe me when I say, this is as awkward for me as it is you...probably more so. Nevertheless, I will proclaim God’s Word as faithfully as I can. In 9:1, Paul begins by reminding the Corinthians of his apostolic identity. **“Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?”** Paul’s four rhetorical questions all expect a positive answer, and they become increasingly specific.⁴ Certainly he enjoyed the liberty that every other believer had. Moreover, he possessed the rights and privileges of an apostle. The proof of his apostleship was twofold. He had seen the risen Christ (Acts 1:21-22) on the Damascus road (Acts 22:14-15; 26:15-18), and he had founded the church in Corinth, which was apostolic work (cf. Rom 15:15-21).

In 9:2, Paul continues, **“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.”** Although some may have doubted Paul’s apostleship, that should not be the case with the Corinthians.⁵ They themselves were the proof that he was an apostle.⁶ If the Corinthians deny Paul’s apostleship they deny their own existence. Paul, therefore, takes the opportunity to work that issue into his discussion at this point, hoping he can nip it in the bud.⁷ He explains that the Corinthians are the “seal” of his apostleship. A seal in the ancient world was a warm blob of wax into which a signet ring was pressed to seal a letter or package. It was an assurance that the contents had not been opened; it showed who owned the contents; and it showed the genuineness of the contents, that it was sent by the right person.⁸ Paul is saying that the Corinthians are his work in the Lord.

If you are a Christian, it is critical that you have your own “seal” of people you have impacted and influenced for eternity. Like Paul, our goal must be to see lost people trust in Jesus Christ and then grow to maturity in Him. In light of eternity, nothing else will matter.

In 9:3-14, Paul shares his apostolic rights to make his living from the gospel.⁹ His argument is based on a barrage of rhetorical questions.¹⁰ This seems to be Paul's way of going for the jugular in a natural and persuasive way. By using this device, he presents rationale for his financial support. Yet, in the end, Paul will conclude that it is best for him to forgo these rights in Corinth (9:12b). Paul lives what he preached: *proclaiming Christ demands paying a price*. Unfortunately, the Corinthians assumed that "you get what you pay for." Since Paul was serving for free, some questioned his credentials. In Corinth, orators, teachers, and philosophers were well paid. It was unthinkable that someone like Paul would not receive a paycheck. So Paul builds an air-tight case for remuneration and then insists that he will not make use of his rights. For Paul, *proclaiming Christ demands paying a price*.

In 9:3-4, Paul writes, **"My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we not have a right to eat and drink?"** In the context, "the right to eat and drink" is a figurative reference to financial support. It means to "eat and drink" at the expense of others.¹¹ Six different times the word "right" is used in this chapter. It's a very central issue. Paul is saying that he had a legitimate right to receive financial support from the people to whom he ministered.

Paul continues his argument in 9:5-6 by raising two other issues: **"Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord¹² and Cephas? Or do only Barnabas¹³ and I not have a right to refrain from working?"**¹⁴ All of these questions expect a positive answer.¹⁵ Paul states that apostles have the right to be married and to cease to work.

Now, in 9:7-14, Paul is going to give five reasons why he has the right to be supported by the churches to whom he ministered, why he shouldn't have to work at a trade to earn a living, so he can devote his energy to study, prayer, preaching, and teaching. He begins with an appeal to common sense in three illustrations from everyday experience in the workplace. **"Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?"** Paul is pointing out that soldiers don't fight all day and then go to civilian jobs at night so that they can pay for their food, lodging, clothing, and armaments. No, the government provides all the necessary resources for them to function as a soldier. Paul makes the same point about farmers. You don't plant a vineyard or cultivate crops for somebody for free, and then take a night job to subsidize the farming work. You expect that if you work hard in the vineyard or on the farm, you'll be paid, perhaps in kind with some portion of the crops. He makes the same point about shepherds who care for flocks or sheep owned by other people. At least they have the right to have some of the milk. In the same way, a Christian worker has a right to expect benefits from his labor.¹⁶

In 9:8-10, Paul uses the Scriptures to back up his point. Paul writes, **"I am not speaking these things according to human judgment,¹⁷ am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? For it is written in the Law of Moses, 'YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING.' God is not concerned about oxen, is He?¹⁸ Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops."** Paul demonstrates a most unusual use of God's Word. Quoting the Old Testament law regarding the treatment of oxen, he noted that Deut 25:4 commanded God's people not to muzzle the ox while it was in the process of threshing. Instead, God commanded that the ox be allowed to eat the grain. If God cared so much about the animals who served His people, how much more must He care for the people who serve them?¹⁹

If something is true on a lower scale, it is certainly true on a more important, higher scale. In other words, if mere animals are given the right to eat as they are working in the fields, certainly human beings made in the image of God have that same right. In fact, God is more concerned about getting across a principle for human beings in this text than He is about getting across a principle for animals.²⁰

Several times Paul asserts that the Old Testament was written as an example for New Testament believers (cf. 10:6, 11; Rom 4:23-24; 15:4).²¹ This is an important reminder that the Old Testament is of great benefit to each and every one of us. We should read it frequently and look for opportunities to study and preach from it. Perhaps the price that you need to pay in proclaiming Christ is to spend some time studying the Old Testament. After all, the Old Testament makes up $\frac{3}{4}$ of your Bible. In order to proclaim Christ, we must be familiar with His Bible and that of the apostle Paul.

In 9:11-12, Paul appeals to the inherent fairness of it. He argues, **“If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance²² to the gospel of Christ.”** Spiritual things are intrinsically more important than physical things. The former will last forever whereas the latter are only temporary. Consequently, those who benefit from spiritual ministry should physically support those who minister to them (cf. Gal 6:6). In spite of this spiritual principle, Paul surrenders his rights because *proclaiming Christ demands paying a price*.

Now, in 9:13, Paul makes a reference to Old Testament Jewish history and custom pertaining to the temple: **“Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar?”** This refers to Old Testament priests and Levites.²³ The concept of paying God’s servants is not a New Testament notion; rather, it goes back to the Old Testament. Paul saw his gospel ministry as priestly service (cf. Rom 15:16).

Paul closes out his argument in powerful fashion by stating: **“So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel”** (9:14).²⁴ Paul explains that the Lord Jesus taught the same right for servants to be paid (Matt 10:10; Luke 10:7). Case closed: full-time vocational servants have the freedom to be paid.

Like Paul, I am not asking for a raise. But I do supervise a number of staff and I would say this: I want our staff to always be free from the distraction of money. I would also suggest that there are other ways we can honor those who serve. An encouraging email, letter, or phone call would mean the world to any of our leaders. There are other creative possibilities as well (e.g., child care, providing services, etc.).

[Having argued vigorously for his right to the Corinthians’ support, Paul now proceeds to argue just as strongly for his right to give up this right. This section gives the reader a window into the apostle’s soul.²⁵]

2. We must fulfill our individual calling (9:15-23). In these nine verses, Paul explains that his passion for lost people and for preaching the gospel consumes him. Consequently, he will go to any and every length to share Christ. In 9:15, Paul writes, **“But I have used none of these things [i.e., financial provisions]. And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one.”** These are certainly strong words! Paul actually felt it was better to die than to receive any financial support from Corinth and lose out on freely boasting in the free offer of the gospel. This idea of boasting is used in Paul’s Bible—the Old Testament, of glorying in God.²⁶ So when Paul uses the word “boast” in his writings, he isn’t talking about personal accomplishments. He is talking about what the Lord has done through him in spite of his weakness.

Why is Paul so adamant that he should not be paid for preaching the gospel? If he has the right, why not capitalize on it? He explains his reasoning in 9:16-17 (note the two uses of “for” that begin each verse): **“For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me.”**

Paul says that he cannot legitimately boast in his ministry of preaching, because God ordered him to do it. He states that he is “under compulsion” (9:16) and has been entrusted with a “stewardship” (9:17). There is an irresistible call of God on his life, and he can’t take any personal credit for doing it. He is a man on fire for God! Hence, Paul says “woe is me if I do not preach the gospel” (9:16). The word “woe” occurs frequently in the Old Testament prophets to denote coming disaster and even divine judgment.²⁷ Paul felt the weight of severe consequences if he chose to forego preaching for another profession.²⁸ Since God dramatically called Paul to preach, he had to proclaim the gospel. There was no reward in simply doing what God had called him to do (cf. Luke 17:10).

This leads Paul to raise a question in 9:18: **“What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.”** Paul’s “reward” is demonstrating love to people by freely preaching the gospel. His highest pay was the privilege of preaching without pay.²⁹ Of course, Paul also believes that his loving service will be recognized in the future by his Lord (cf. 3:12-14).³⁰ However, Paul recognizes that we do not get rewarded for our calling in and of itself, only for the manner in which we fulfill it.³¹ Thus, Paul sacrificed much and served well so that he might one day be rewarded for his service.³²

So how do you know if you are called to preach? If within your heart there is an inner “compulsion” to preach,³³ you most likely have been called to preach. If I am talking to you right now, let me ask you a question: “Do you *have* to preach the gospel (cf. Acts 4:20)?” Is preaching God’s Word what you constantly think about? If so, consider these additional questions:

- Do I love to study God’s Word? I have told staff pastors and interns who love to preach to not go into the preaching ministry, because they do not like to study. If you want to preach effectively and glorify God, you must be willing to work hard in study.
- Do I love to study preaching and preachers? Do you listen to sermons and read books on preaching? Do you desperately want to improve as a communicator? These are all positive signs. But don’t be like the young man who made an appointment with his pastor and said, “I can’t stand to listen to anyone else preach. You reckon that means God is calling me to ministry?”³⁴
- Does my character back up my preaching? If you aren’t living a godly life, please don’t pursue the preaching ministry. I would encourage you to meditate on 1 Tim 4:11-16.
- Do others confirm my gift? If you are the only one who thinks you’re a fabulous preacher, beware of self-deception and pride. Wait for others to say, “You can flat-out preach. I think God may be calling you to ministry.”
- If money were no object, would I do this for free? Do I love preaching so much that I would preach for free?

Ultimately, what I want us to see is that Paul’s spirituality is evidenced by his willingness to sacrifice his rights for the sake of the gospel. One such right is that of having a full-time ministry. Let us be very careful not to assume that God’s servants can be more effective by ministering “full-time.” The great apostle Paul chose to serve in “part-time” ministry, for the sake of the gospel. I don’t think anyone would argue that Paul could have been more effective if he had been serving full-time. Likewise, there are many people in our church who could be in full-time ministry, but they are incredibly effective and fruitful in part-time unpaid ministry. Such people never ask to be paid and faithfully serve year in and year out. They have the reward of offering the gospel for free. Additionally, they will be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ for faithfully serving the Lord. *Proclaiming Christ demands paying a price.*

[Paul now moves from the subject of giving up his right to financial support to giving up cultural rights.]

In 9:19-22, Paul is going to describe his passion to do whatever it takes to win lost people to Christ. Paul explains, **“For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win³⁵ more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law;³⁶ to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law.³⁷ To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.”³⁸** Six times in this paragraph Paul states his desire to reach the lost. He reaches the lost by adapting his methods according to the group he tried to reach. Paul goes after anyone and everyone: (1) Jews; (2) “those who are under the law” probably includes Gentile God-fearers and proselytes to Judaism as well as ethnic Jews; (3) “those who are without law” refers to Gentiles apart from any Jewish influence; and (4) “the weak” most likely refer to Christians with weak consciences. Paul must therefore be using “win” in the broader sense of winning to a more mature form of Christian faith.³⁹

Paul’s missionary principle, of course, has practical applications. For missionaries it means learning the local language and customs to make the gospel understandable in the local environment. For those doing inner-city work it means ministering in a way that does not patronize the inner-city mentality. For those in campus ministries it means bringing to college students a message that challenges them in an academic environment and shows that Christianity is not anti-intellectual. The applications of “being all things to all people” are endless.⁴⁰ I have had friends share Christ in bars, homosexual clubs, and Mormon churches. If Christianity is to make a mark in the 21st century, fresh and radical methods will need to be pursued. As Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), the third President of the US once said, “In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock.”⁴¹

Why does Paul go to such great lengths to win lost people? He tells us in 9:23: **“I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.”** The work of the gospel was the great axis around which everything in Paul’s life revolved. He made it such so he might share in its blessings.⁴² Paul still has in mind what he said in 9:17-18. He is looking for reward. Paul lives in the way he does to become a “fellow partaker” of the gospel. The thought continues the ideas of 9:12-14. He does not “share” the financial blessings of the Corinthians. But he expects to get a “share” in the rewards of the gospel eventually. He might turn down rewards from particular congregations, but he expects that God will compensate him for that which he has lost. To become “a partaker of the gospel” means to receive its ultimate reward: to gain “the prize” that Jesus gives.⁴³

The designer of the famous yellow smiley face received a mere \$45 for his work. Harvey Ball, a Massachusetts commercial artist, created the simple yellow face in 1963 as a morale-boosting campaign for two firms that had recently merged into the State Mutual Life Assurance Companies of America. Because Ball never copyrighted his design, he received no proceeds when the cheery icon appeared countless times worldwide. In 1971 alone, 50 million buttons were sold. After Ball’s death in April 2001, his son, Charles, said in an obituary that his father was never bitter about the small amount of money he earned from the smiley face and never regretted foregoing a copyright. He considered his greatest achievement not his famous logo but the bronze star he received for his heroism during the Battle of Okinawa.⁴⁴

As wonderful as that bronze star is, Jesus Christ promises us eternal reward for faithfully proclaiming Him. One day, we will stand before Him in a glorified body and He will evaluate our lives. My prayer is that when you see Him face-to-face, He looks you in the eyes and smiles a big smile and says, “Well done good and faithful servant.” Whenever you see a smiley face, please remember your life in light of the judgment seat of Christ. *Proclaiming Christ demands paying a price.*

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Scripture Reference

1 Corinthians 9:1-23

1 Corinthians 4:3-4

2 Corinthians 11:5-7, 12-13

Luke 8:1-3; 9:1-6; 10:1-12

Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 5:17-18

Hebrews 12:1-2

Philippians 2:5-11

Study Questions

1. Is it ever appropriate for a servant of Christ to defend oneself (9:1-2)? Why or why not? Under what circumstances is this proper? How should I go about interacting with my detractors?
2. Why is it so important to financially provide for those serving in vocational ministry (9:3-14)? How can I increase my practical support for Christian workers I know? What will this look like for my family and me? In addition to financial giving, are there other ways I can support and encourage my pastors and other Christian leaders?
3. What have I freely sacrificed for Christ in my life and ministry (9:15-18)? Are there legitimate things that God is requiring me to give up for the sake of His calling on my life? If so, am I willing to do so?
4. Do I have a calling on my life like the apostle Paul (9:16)? Is there anything that God has led me to do that I feel obligated to fulfill (i.e., “Woe” if I don’t do...)? Am I currently living out the life of a faithful steward (cf. 1 Cor 4:1-5)?
5. Am I serious about going “above and beyond the call of duty” in order to please God and earn temporal and eternal rewards (9:17-18)? Are rewards important? Why or why not?
6. Do I have a burden for lost people (9:19-23)? Will I do whatever it takes (“become all things to all people”) to see my family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, and acquaintances saved? If not, why not? Will I commit this week to pray that God will give me a passion for those who have yet to believe in Christ?

Notes

¹ But in the present discussion of receiving support for his ministry, how could accepting money from his converts hinder the progress of the gospel? There are several possible answers to this question: (1) Some people might not believe the gospel if they knew it would lead to financial obligations. (2) Others might see a contradiction between Christ's grace being free but becoming a Christian not being free. (3) Paul perhaps did not want to become a "slave" to a patron donor who supported his ministry and who could then control the content of his preaching ("money is power"). (4) Paul wished to dissociate himself from other religious hucksters in the ancient world, some of whom made a good living from flowery rhetorical appeal. David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 419.

² This is a long passage so we won't unpack every detail, but we will summarize many of the big issues. Blomberg writes, "Verses 1-12a therefore present the case in some detail for Paul's right to charge for his services. Yet in keeping with his "yes, but" logic, and in defense of his actual behavior, verses 12b-18 then explain why Paul has in fact renounced this right. Verses 19-27 generalize to the even broader principle that lies behind Paul's behavior on the issues in both 8:1-13 and 9:1-18. But these verses also tie in closely with the beginning of chapter nine by completing a chiasm (an ABBA pattern). In verse 1a, Paul raises two questions: "Am I not free?" (A) and "Am I not an apostle?" (B). Verses 1b-18 then defend the answer to the second question—of course he is an apostle (B); while verses 19-27 elaborate on the nature of his freedom, in response to the first question (A). Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians: NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 174.

³ The absence of the key phrase "now concerning" (*peri de*) is the clue that this chapter does not deal with a new subject. It is a continuation of the discussion of Christian freedom that Paul began in 8:1.

⁴ All four of these rhetorical questions begin with *ou/ouk*, which means that they imply an affirmative answer.

⁵ The word "if" (*ei*) marks a first-class conditional sentence which shows that Paul's authority was rejected by several factions in the early church (cf. Acts 15 and Galatians). Cf. 1 Cor 1:1, 12; 4:1-5, 8-13, 14-21; 5:1-2; 2 Cor 11:5-7, 12-13)

⁶ Thomas L. Constable: *Notes on 1 Corinthians*: 2005 edition:

<http://www.sonlight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1corinthians.pdf>, 90-91.

⁷ Verlyn D. Verbrugge, "1 Corinthians" in the *Revised Expositors Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming).

⁸ Dr. Bob Utley, "1-2 Corinthians": <http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/pdf/VOL06.pdf>, 107. Morris writes, "A seal was important in an age when many could not read. A mark stamped on clay or wax, or some similar substance, was first of all a mark of ownership, and then a mark of authentication. All could see the mark and know what it signified. The Corinthians had been won for Christ by Paul, and they were thus the sign that attested his apostleship." Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1958] 1990), 132.

⁹ Fee notes, "Philosophers and wandering missionaries in the Greco-Roman world were 'supported' by four means: fees, patronage, begging, and working. Each of these had both proponents and detractors, who viewed rival forms as not worthy of philosophy." Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*: The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 399.

¹⁰ The UBS Greek text has 14 questions while other English translations vary (e.g., NASB 17; NRSV 16; NKJV 15; TEV 14; and NJB 12).

¹¹ See NET rendering of 1 Cor 9:4: "Do we not have the right to financial support?"

¹² Mary did indeed have further children after Jesus (cf. Matt 12:26; 13:55; Mark 6:3; John 2:12; 7:3, 5, 10; Acts 1:14; Gal 1:19).

¹³ Acts 15:39 shows that there was an occasion when Paul and Barnabas, his one-time mentor, good friend and colleague, separated in hot anger (*paroxysmos*). It could be that the reference in 1 Cor 9:6 to Barnabas suggests that the two were eventually reconciled. In Christ, divisions can be healed; it is not impossible for old friendships to survive knocks.

¹⁴ Paul's references to the Lord's brothers in this verse and to Barnabas in the next do not necessarily mean that these men had visited Corinth. Probably the Corinthians knew about their habits of ministering second-hand. Constable, *Notes on 1 Corinthians*, 91.

¹⁵ These questions begin with *mem*, which means that they assume a negative answer, but by virtue of a Greek double negative, in essence these questions turn out to expect a positive answer.

¹⁶ Doug Goins, "Personal Priorities in Leadership" (1 Cor 9:1-23).

¹⁷ Utley remarks, “Paul uses these contrasting phrases several times (cf. 1 Cor 3:3; 9:8; 15:32; Rom 3:5; Gal 1:11; 3:15). It was his idiomatic way of contrasting earthly human ways with his new Spirit-led (i.e., Jesus’ teaching or Spirit’s insight) way of thinking and acting.” Utley, “1-2 Corinthians,” 110.

¹⁸ Thiselton cites the work of Richard Hayes who points out that Deut 24 and 25 are concerned with laws which promote dignity and justice *for human beings*. “The unexpected insertion of one verse about threshing coheres most closely with the encouragement of *human sensitivity* and *humane compassion* toward the suffering or defenceless (e.g., the immediately preceding context concerns the plight of widows, orphans and victims of punishment). Paul’s question, then, ‘Is it perhaps about oxen that God is concerned?’ (i.e., oxen *as such*) genuinely conveys the thrust of the context that constrains the force and direction of 25:4, although in this case it is more likely that *me...theo* is the *me* used to express a *hesitant* question (‘is it perhaps ...?’) rather than the question which invites an emphatically negative answer...To suggest that this is the ‘true and primary referent’ of Deut 25:4 may perhaps overpress a point which is otherwise helpful. No doubt Paul sees Deuteronomy 25 as being written *more* for humankind than for animals (but not exclusively so).” Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000),

¹⁹ Paul quotes this same verse in 1 Tim 5:17-18, where he makes the point that the church ought to pay its pastors well.

²⁰ Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians.”

²¹ Utley writes, “In the context of Deut 25:4 this application would have been unknown and unnecessary. The hermeneutical question is, “Was Paul using the original intent of the inspired writer?” The answer is clearly, no! But is he using a valid application of the principle? Paul is inspired! He sees truth at a level we cannot! However, we are not inspired, but illumined by the Spirit. Modern interpreters cannot reproduce the hermeneutical methods of the NT authors. Therefore, it is best to let them speak, but restrict ourselves to the historical-grammatical approach, which seeks the intent of the original author as the determinant meaning but allowing many applications which are related to the original intent!” Utley, “1-2 Corinthians,” 112.

²² A word “used of breaking up a road to prevent the enemy’s advance. Paul had avoided doing anything that might prevent a clear road for gospel advance.” Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, Cf. Isa 40:3-4.

²³ Paul used a term that was used in the Greek OT for priestly work (cf. Num 3:7; 8:15) as well as work in general (cf. Gen 2:5, 15; 3:23; 4:2, 12; 29:27).

²⁴ Fee is correct when he states, “All too often, one fears, the objective of this text is lost in concerns over ‘rights’ that reflect bald professionalism rather than a concern for the gospel itself.” Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 414.

²⁵ Constable, *Notes on 1 Corinthians*, 93.

²⁶ For OT uses of the Greek verb boast (*kauchema*) see Deut 10:21; 26:19; 33:29; 1 Chron 16:27; 29:11; Ps 89:17.

²⁷ E.g., Isa 3:11; 5:8–25; Ezek 13:3, 18; Amos 5:18. Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians.”

²⁸ Preachers have both a privilege and an awesome responsibility (cf. 1 Cor 4:1; Gal 2:7; Eph 3:2; Col 1:25).

²⁹ Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 137.

³⁰ Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians: IVP New Testament Commentary Series* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 147.

³¹ Michael Eaton, *Preaching Through the Bible: 1 Corinthians 1-9* (Kent, England, 1998), 120.

³² Deffinbaugh writes, “A Christian is not really free to refrain from proclaiming the gospel. It is our duty to do so. When we tell others about Christ, we should not expect to be rewarded for doing so. If we wish to be rewarded, we must do something above and beyond our duty. Paul’s duty is to preach the gospel, and his right is to be supported in so doing. But when Paul chooses to set aside this right to food and drink, he enters into the realm of voluntary sacrifice, and thus into the realm where he can anticipate a divine reward. Surrendering our rights is a basis for rewards, and so Paul gladly surrenders his right to be supported.” Robert Deffinbaugh, “When a Right May Be Wrong” (1 Cor 9:1-23).

³³ This compulsion was also shared by certain OT prophets (e.g., Jer 20:9; Amos 3:8). Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians.”

³⁴ Preaching Today citation: Adapted from an original cartoon by Mary Chambers, “The Best Cartoons” from *Leadership Journal* Vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999).

³⁵ The verb “win” (*kerdainein*) appears five times in 1 Cor 9:19-21. It is related to conversion (1 Pet 3:1) but can also apply to winning a faltering believer (Matt 18:15). The word is also a business term related to profit (Matt 25:16, 17, 20, 22; Jas 4:13). Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 429.

³⁶ Naylor writes, “The apostle does not acknowledge his conduct to be irregular, the reason being that he believed that the law had never been more than a provisional apparatus in the plan of salvation. Cf. Rom. 7:7, 12; 2 Cor. 3; Gal. 3:24 and the surrounding context. Although he never encouraged fellow-Jews to disregard Moses’ legislation

(cf. Acts 21:24), he regarded it neither as an instrument leading to justification nor as an ultimate rule for believers within the new dispensation... Yet he was prepared to observe its stipulations, never wrong in themselves, in order to empathize with fellow-Hebrews." Peter Naylor, *1 Corinthians* (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 2004): http://www.rheader.com/ebook_excerpt/c5/AStCommemoCorint.html.

³⁷ Barrett writes, "This is one of the most difficult sentences in the epistle, and also one of the most important, for in it Paul shows how the new relation to God which he has in Christ expresses his debt of obedience to God." C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*: Harper's New Testament Commentaries (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 212.

³⁸ It is sad to say that the last phrase of 9:22 gives a hint that most who heard him did not respond to his message.

³⁹ It is unclear who "the weak" are. In 1 Cor 8:7-9 the weak referred to Christians, but here Paul seems to be talking about those who need salvation. Is he using the term as in 1 Cor 1:27 or Rom 5:6 for the powerless of society? Yet this meaning seems out of place in this context. Given the explicit sequence of 10:32, with which Paul concludes his discussion of idol meat ("Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether *Jews, Greeks or the church of God*"), he probably is referring to the same three groups here, in the same order. See Blomberg, *1 Corinthians* 184. See also David K. Lowery, "1 Corinthians" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, Victor, 1983), 524-525; Kenneth V. Neller, "1 Corinthians 9:19-23: A Model for those Who Seek to Win Souls," *Restoration Quarterly* 29 (1987): 129-142. However, Paul may also be referring to his coming to the Corinthians "in weakness" (2:3) rather than trying to cater to the wise and sophisticated (as he had done in Athens). Since so many of Paul's converts in Corinth could be classed sociologically as "the weak" (1:27), he is reminding them of his initial style of ministry among them. See Verbrugge, "1 Corinthians."

⁴⁰ Some of these applications come from Verbrugge, "1 Corinthians."

⁴¹ Preaching Today citation: Thomas Jefferson, *Christian Reader*, vol. 34.

⁴² Constable, *Notes on 1 Corinthians*, 95.

⁴³ Eaton, *1 Corinthians 1-9*, 123.

⁴⁴ Preaching Today citation: Submitted by Van Morris; source: Biography Magazine (September 2001).