

## **“I Have Used None Of These Things ...”**

*“But I have used none of these things; and I write not these things that it may be done in my case; for it were good for me rather to die than that any man should make my glorying void” (1 Cor. 9:15).*

Paul had asked a series of questions at the opening of this chapter to show he had the right to be supported as he preached the gospel. He further established that right by saying, *“Have we no right to eat or to drink? Have we no right to lead about a wife who is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? or I only and Barnabas not a right to forbear working?” (1 Cor. 9:4-6).*

The apostle next moved to arguments which established not only his right to be supported, but also the right of any preacher to be supported. First he showed that no soldier served at his own charges and from there proceeded to show that one who planted a vineyard or tended a flock had the right to partake of the fruit of his labor. In such an argument he reminded brethren that these arguments was not just the logic or wisdom of men (*“do I speak these things after the manner of men?” 1 Cor. 9:8*) but that the law itself recognized the inherent right of those who labored to taste the fruit of their labor. *“Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn” (1 Cor. 9:9; Dt. 25:4).* Those who plant or reap ought to labor in hope of being recompensed, he said (1 Cor. 9:10). He reminded them he had sowed unto them spiritual things and it was nothing but right that he should share in like turn in their material things (1 Cor. 9:11). To this he added an additional argument: the Levites and priests partook of the sacrifices in which they helped to minister (1 Cor. 9:13). His concluding argument, which within itself was sufficient to prove the preacher’s right to support was this: *“Even so did the Lord ordain that they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14).*

In view of his convincing arguments showing the right to provide support to gospel proclaimers one is almost “taken aback” when he quickly added: *“But I have used none of these things ...”* That took care of the past. Still, he did not intend to alter that course in the future. *“I write not these things that it may be so done in my case.”* He explained this stance by writing, *“it were good for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.”*

Those was something in which Paul gloried (or could boast). Yet it was not that he preached the gospel: *“For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:16).* Paul was not saying, as some understand him to

say, *"Woe is unto me if I corrupt the gospel."* That was certainly true of not only him, but of all men and he affirmed this in his Galatian letter: *"Though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema"* (Gal. 1:8). Paul meant, in 1 Corinthians 9, when he wrote, *"Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel"* that he had been called of God to preach and he would be condemned if he failed, refused to fulfill that charge.

What did he mean, then, when he said, *"if I preach the gospel I have nothing of which to glory (boast) for necessity is laid upon me. Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel"*? The key is in the verse itself, *"Necessity is laid upon me."* Added to that are his comments which immediately followed. *"For if I do this of mine own will, I have a reward, but if not of mine own will, I have a stewardship intrusted to me"* (1 Cor. 9:17). Was Paul unwilling to preach? Of course not. He showed his complete submission to Christ's will by his sacrifices, which he did freely, uncomplaining. Yet he was called to preach, none of whom today are called as was he.

So, his reward, glory, boasting, could not come because he preached -- God called him to do that -- his reward was, but let him tell us in his own words what his *"reward"* was: *"What then is my reward? That when I preach the gospel, I may make it without charge, so as not to use to the full my right in the gospel"* (1 Cor. 9:18). Paul's reward or satisfaction in preaching the gospel was not simply that he preached the gospel; his reward was that he did so without being supported by those to whom he preached!

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