

1 Corinthians: The Body of Christ vs. A Body in Crisis
New Pilgrim Baptist Church Bible Study
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5/15/24

Unity Over Worship (1 Cor 8-11)

“The Responsibility of Working for the Lord Pt 1” 1 Cor 9:1-14

Historical Background

Paul explained in ch. 8 that the church needed people willing to put the needs of others before their own. In ch. 9, Paul will explore how he does that on a daily basis with respect to the Corinthian church. Paul will go on to explain that though the church existed because of *his* obedience to the Lord’s call, he rejects their abilities to pay him. This was an insult, especially to the elites of the congregation. The fact that Paul chose to work manual labor instead allowing the Corinthians to pay him the wage he deserved made many of them angry. It was akin to rejecting a gift from someone. It signified to some in the ancient world the desire to be an enemy. But though Paul had the right to demand wages from them, Paul did not want any wages that might compromise his ability to preach to them.

- **Paul was called as the leader of this congregation (vv. 1-2)**

Paul begins by asking several questions, to which the implied response is yes. He was an apostle sent by God, he had seen the Lord Jesus Christ, and the community to which he wrote was there because he obeyed the Lord’s commandment. They had a responsibility not only to listen to him but also to care for him.

- **Paul had the right to do what other church leaders did (vv. 3-7)**

Paul explains he could be like Peter and other church leaders, some of whom were the very brothers of Jesus. Do they not have a right to sustenance, marriage, or to be completely supported by the church financially? The answer to these questions is absolutely, yes. They had rights to all these things. Why? Paul answers with other questions, those who work have a right to be paid from what they work in.

- **“Do not muzzle the ox that treads the corn” (v. 8-14)**

Paul makes this point more abundantly clear by citing Scripture. The law declared not to place a muzzle on an ox when the ox is working for you (Deut 25:4). In other words, God said, the animal that works for you should be able to eat from the work. This Scripture, Paul explains, was not written just about the oxen but so everyone will know that when you works for the Lord should do so with hope of reward. Thus, it is perfectly normal and expected that if you sow spiritual things into people that you should reap some material reward. In other words, Paul was saying pay the preacher and those who service the word of God. The priests who served the temple were able to receive from the temple service. They ate from the meat they sacrificed. In a similar manner, Paul was saying he had a right to receive payment from his service in the church. The Lord Jesus said that those who preach the gospel should live from it. *But* (v. 12) Paul did not use this right or take what he deserved so no one would claim to have him under their control or defame what he said as partiality. We will find out, however, Paul received help from other churches.