

INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to 1 Corinthians chapter 9. 1 Corinthians 9. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to 1 Corinthians 9.

INTRODUCTION: YOUTH PASTOR SUNDAY

Well, welcome to what, in every church in the universe, is called "youth pastor Sunday"

- The 4th of July Sunday is called "*youth pastor Sunday*",
- cause it's one of the lowest attended Sundays each year,
- and thus, it's when the youth pastor gets a preaching rep.

Well, not today!

- First of all, most people, on first glance,
- mistake me for the youth pastor...
- but I am not.

And yes, I was a youth pastor for many years, but as I've said:

- you can take the man out of youth ministry,
- but you can't take the youth ministry out of the man.
- So, that might just explain some things about me, alright.

INTRODUCTION: HAPPY 4TH

But I'm glad you're here. Happy 4th y'all. Happy Independence Day.

- Man, I love living in America.
- I love grilling meat...
- and hanging out with my neighbors...
- and blowing things up,
- just to show how much I love America!

And I love the freedoms that we have.

- Freedom of speech.
- Freedom to practice religion openly.
- Freedom to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Right?
- Let freedom ring!
- That's what we about.

And that's actually what Paul's gonna talk about today in 1 Corinthians.
Freedoms...and what to do with them as Christians.

EXPLAIN: CONTEXT

So first, the context: the Corinthians are likely upset with Paul because he's NOT charging them for his ministry. Which sounds weird, and some debate this, but I think it makes sense based on what we learned at the beginning of our study of this book.ⁱ

- Remember when we talked about the Sophists in chapter 1?
- The Corinthians are enamored with these popular philosophers
- who travel around the Roman Empire
- giving ancient Ted talks,

- and they were greatly compensated for that work.
- They were like the celebrities of their time.

And, it's kind of like how some prosperity theology has worked into some churches,

- and the more successful
- and boujee the pastor's life is,
- the better he must be
- and more blessed he is.

ILLUSTRATION: SNEAKERS

You ever see the Instagram account [preachersnsneakers?](#)ⁱⁱ

- It's a funny account where they take pictures
- of mega-church pastors
- and zoom in on their sneakers
- and figure out what they cost.
- And some of it is lavish, alright!
- One preacher was in Air Yeezy 2s
- which go for \$3,700 dollars.
- Woah!

I'm thinking I'll start [preachersnplaid](#)s...

and just see how many different plaid shirts I can find out there.

TRANSITION

This is what's happening in Corinth. They want to boast in how great their guy is, and his status! But Paul will have none of that. He won't accept payment.

- Thus, this made some question whether or not he was legit.
- He wasn't taking all the glory they were trying to give him,
- and they wondered, "*is this guy the real deal?*"
- Well, Paul's gonna answer all that today in our text.

So, let's work through it.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:1-2

[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? [2] 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.

EXPLAIN: APOSTLE

Paul begins with rhetorical questions,

- to make a point that he is, indeed,
- worthy of their respect.
- That even though he's not going about this thing like others do,
- he is, indeed, an apostle,
- and worthy of their respect.

He asks, **Am I not free? Am I not an apostle?** You see, there was some debate in the first century over the legitimacy of Paul's apostleship because he didn't fit the mold that the other Apostles did.

- He wasn't one of the 12, and thus, was kind of an outsider.
- But his answer is *"yes, I am an apostle!"*

He asks, **Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?**

- This is asked because in order to be an apostle,
- you need to have witnessed Jesus.

And Paul's like,

- *"Yeah, I saw him.*
- *I encountered him on the road to Damascus.*
- *He knocked me off of my horse and blinded me.*
- *He ruined my old life,*
- *and called me into this life."*

This is also why we don't believe that there are apostles today in the same way as there were in Paul's day.

- There are apostolic giftings.
- But I would hesitate in calling any person an apostle
- in the same way that Paul is an apostle.

Ok, people may have some apostolic giftings, but, like, pastors are not apostles.

- I preach the word.
- Paul and Peter and James **WROTE** the word.
- That's different!

TRANSITION

So, Paul opens up with a clear statement: *“I am an apostle. I am the real deal.”*

But then he turns to a defense of his apostleship by arguing that he actually deserves to be paid for his work as an apostle.

So, let’s work through this, but I want to buffer these next verses with this:

- it’s totally awkward for a paid pastor
- to preach these verses about paying pastors, ok?
- Let’s just acknowledge this awkwardness of this.
- Embrace the awkward...

But let me say,

- while Paul makes valid points,
- about paying people in vocational ministry.
- This isn’t his MAIN point.
- His main point will come at the end of his argument.

So, here we go. Verse 3

1 CORINTHIANS 9:3-6

[3] This is my defense to those who would examine me. [4] Do we not have the right to eat and drink? [5] 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? [6] Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?

EXPLAIN

So, Paul is addressing the fact that

- the other Apostles
- not only travel around
- and are paid for their work,
- but that they even have wives who accompany them.

So, they are taken care of enough for them to support their families.

And then in verse 7 he begins to use illustrations to make his defense.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:7

[7] 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?

SOLDIERS, FARMERS, & SHEPHERDS

He uses the illustrations of soldiers, farmers, and shepherds.

- Soldiers aren't expected to buy their own gear.
- Farmers are allowed to eat their own crop.
- And shepherds can drink the milk from the goats they tend to.

So, Paul's first three illustrations are from obvious human precedents. But then he turns to divine commands. Verse 8:

1 CORINTHIANS 9:8-10

[8] Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? [9] 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? [10] Does he not certainly speak 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.

SCRIPTURE

So, Paul doesn't just rely on common wisdom and experiences people would have shared, but he also says,

- *“Hey, don't take my word for it.*
- *God's word backs me up on this, too.*
- *God even made provision for an Oxen*
- *to eat from the grain as he is working.*
- *Aren't you more valuable than the Oxen?*
- *If God provided for them,*
- *don't you think he would provide for us, too?”*

So, he points to pragmatic illustrations, scriptural backings, and then he moves on to common sense arguments. Verse 11:

1 CORINTHIANS 9:11-12a

[11] If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? [12] If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more?

He's saying,

- *"We've done the work.*
- *We've sown spiritual things among you.*
- *It's only common sense that we be compensated for it."*

But Paul's not done yet. Verse 13:

1 CORINTHIANS 9:13-14

[13] 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? [14] In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

PRIESTS

So, finally, Paul points out that even the Old Testament priests were fed with some of the meat offered in the temple. They were taken care of as recompense for their service.

And he even says that Jesus commanded that those who preach the gospel should get their living from the gospel. The Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

APPLICATION

So, all of this is Paul laying out a case that Christian workers:

- pastors, ministers, preachers, teachers...
- those who pursue vocational ministry work...
- are deserving to make their living from that vocation.

Now, Paul,

- in other places in the New Testament,
- actually makes it clear
- that he is willing to accept payment for his ministry,
- and does so from other churches,
- but Paul doesn't do so in the case of the Corinthians.

We'll get to why in just a minute, but first, I'd like to talk a little more about paying ministry workers.

And once again, this is kinda awkward for me to talk about. It just feels a bit self-serving.

- But hear me,
- we are committed to preaching through all the Bible.
- And here we have this.
- And it's not only here.
- Jesus even talks about paying ministers.
- So, let's apply this.

This passage teaches that Christians in churches are to support the vocational workers who serve those ministries.

- So, this is a part of what we say every week
- when we talk about our giving of our tithes and offerings.
- When you give your first and best to your church,
- part of that goes to pay me,
- and Amanda,
- and Kyle,
- and Whisper.

We sow spiritual things among you, and we reap material things from you.
And thank you for that!

And honestly,

- this is also why I say, every week,
- that if you're a guest, you are not supposed to give.
- This is the responsibility of the church.

Heck, it's my responsibility.

- Maryse and I give our first 10% to Fathom every single month.
- My tithe goes to pay me!
- That's weird.
- But we feel compelled to do this.

And there are lots of churches who don't pay their pastors, and that's fine...that's their right. But let's not pretend that the Bible doesn't clearly teach that ministry workers CAN be paid.

ILLUSTRATION: POVERTY THEOLOGY

You see, in the introduction to this sermon we talked about how some problematic prosperity theology can lead churches and pastor to lead lavish lifestyles.

- But the pendulum can swing to a poverty theology,
- where the pastor just barely scrapes by.
- And it's justified like,
 - *"We just wanna make sure he stays humble.*
 - *Just give him a little bit of money*
 - *because this is God's money after all."*

One of the first churches I worked at practiced this at some level.

- I was single, and about to get married,
- and my \$18,000-a-year full-time-salary was enough for me,
- but I couldn't add another mouth to that.
- Like, I just wanted to buy TWO Chipotle burritos...
 - instead of one...ok?
- But when I asked for a raise
- they said that's what the job paid...
- and they could easily replace me with another young guy...
- which they did...
- when I quit!

It's sad, but I hear it all the time from guys and gals who get out of ministry because they simply cannot make ends meet.

It's a shame. Let it not be so with us, church.

TRANSITION

So, yes, it is good and right to pay our pastors, but why not Paul in this circumstance with the Corinthians?

Well, he answers in verse 15:

1 CORINTHIANS 9:15

[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.

He's saying,

- *"This isn't some backhanded plea for you to pay me.*
- *I have laid down my right to be paid.*
- *I would rather die.*
- *I didn't preach to you to get paid.*
- *I did it because I was compelled by the Spirit to do so!"*

ILLUSTRATION: PLANTING

Now, I cannot say that I have a one-to-one illustration, but I felt like I should share a little from my own journey to plant this church.

- Before planting Fathom 5-years-ago
- I was working at another church
- where we'd been for almost 7 years.

Maryse and I had a strong community,

- a steady paycheck,
- we liked the ministry we were doing.
- But we started to feel compelled to leave and plant.

And goodness,

- we had just bought a house,
- and we were trying to get pregnant,
- I hadn't even finished seminary at that point,
- and so, it wasn't a "good time" to step away
- and risk it on a new endeavor.

But the input we received from wise counsel, and the confirmations from the Holy Spirit were that we needed to leave, and plant.

And so, we did.

- And started with just a few families in my in-law's living room.
- No money.
- No support.
- Just trusting that we should go and plant.

And I asked the first elder candidates

- about whether I should get a second job,
- to try to bridge the gap until the church could pay me, if ever.
- And they said they wanted me to try to
- fundraise enough money for my family
- and the church to survive for six months...
- and then we'd go from there.

So, that's what I did, and we raised the money...from some of you, frankly!

- And between the little bit that the church could pay us,
- and living off our savings account,
- we somehow managed to survive the
- first two years of planting the church.
- Nothing was lavish.
- And honestly, we just barely scrapped by,
- and slowly our savings drained.

And about 2-years-in, Maryse and I got hit with a bill we weren't expecting, and we saw our savings account go to zero.

So, I met with the elders, and said,

- *"Guys, this is awkward,*
- *but I need a raise.*
- *The church has grown and is stabilizing.*
- *But I can't go on financially the way we are right now.*
- *We've run out."*

And the guys lovingly and graciously gave me a raise.

- But I felt the compulsion to plant the church.
- And it overshadowed the "right" I had to a good salary,
- or comfortable community,
- or whatever.

But as things have progressed, my family has been well cared for by our church, and that is our hope for the future with staff here at Fathom.

- We never want staff to HAVE to leave us
- because they CAN'T afford to work here.
- We want to find the middle ground
- between prosperity and poverty,
- which we think is the biblical way to pay our pastors.

TRANSITION

Let's finish our text. Verse 16:

1 CORINTHIANS 9:16-18

[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! [17] 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. [18] 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.

EXPLAIN: RIGHTS

He's basically saying,

- *"You Corinthians think that this life*
- *is about eating and drinking*
- *and prestige and power*
- *and fame and fortune.*

But it's not!

- *Yes, you are free to pursue all these things.*
- *But that's not what the Christian life is about!*
- *The Christian life isn't about flaunting our freedoms.*
- *The Christian life is about self-sacrifice."*

So, this is Paul's main point.

- He uses his own illustration
- of being free to get paid for his work,
- and laying that freedom down...
- to teach us about self-sacrifice.

We are **SLIDE** FREE TO SACRIFICE.

Paul is saying,

- *"I'll lay down my freedom,*
- *I'll sacrifice my freedom...*
- *for edification...*
- *for love.*
- *I'm free to sacrifice my freedoms!"*

This is the same stuff we talked about last week when talking about eating and drinking and education and politics and, frankly, masks.

As Christians we are free to do so many things! But our greatest freedom is to sacrifice for one another.

BLANK SLIDE

CONCLUSION: ONE ANOTHER

The Christian life is lived in self-sacrificing love. And I'll close with this: The New Testament is replete with commands to Christians that are called the "one-another's".

In fact, 59 times in the New Testament, we are instructed on how to self-sacrificially love one another. So, I want to end by reading just some of these to you.

- Be at peace with each other. (Mark 9:50)
- Wash one another's feet. (John 13:14)
- Love one another. (John 13:34)
- Be devoted to one another. (Romans 12:10)
- Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)
- Live in harmony with one another. (Romans 12:16)
- Stop passing judgment on one another. (Romans 14:13)
- Accept one another. (Romans 15:7)
- Instruct one another. (Romans 15:14)
- Greet one another. (Romans 16:16)
- Serve one another in love. (Galatians 5:13)
- Carry one another's burdens. (Galatians 6:2)
- Be patient, bearing with one another in love. (Ephesians 4:2)
- Be kind and compassionate to one another. (Ephesians 4:32)
- Forgive one another. (Ephesians 4:32)
- Submit to one another. (Ephesians 5:21)
- Admonish one another. (Colossians 3:16)
- Encourage one another. (I Thessalonians 4:18)

- Spur one another on toward love and good deeds. (Hebrews 10:24)
- Do not slander one another. (James 4:11)
- Don't grumble against one another. (James 5:9)
- Confess your sins to one another." (James 5:16)
- Pray for one another. (James 5:16)
- Love one another deeply, from the heart. (I Peter 3:8)ⁱⁱⁱ

Christian, you are free in Christ. Free to love one another. Free to lay down your rights. Free to show self-sacrificing love.

Let's pray together.

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

ⁱ Garland, David. *1 Corinthians*.

ⁱⁱ <https://www.instagram.com/preachersnsneakers/>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://storage.cloversites.com/wakarusamissionarychurch/documents/59one_another_scriptures.pdf