

Doth God Take Care for Oxen?

1 Corinthians Chapter Nine



~ Our Spiritual Safari continues in this section of Scripture regarding Christian liberty and the restrictions on our freedom in Christ. This report is going to become extremely personal. In our last few reports, we have been examining questionable conduct; carnality, to be specific. These are *not* spiritual questions Paul is answering now. Only the truth of the Word of God can resolve what happens when two people's liberties come into conflict with each other. This report is going to focus on exactly that. Let's all pray for wisdom, judgment and discernment — and that the Word of God will speak to many hearts — before we go any further.

We *MUST* keep this in its proper perspective; which is: this epistle was written to the church at Corinth. They had a temple to a heathen god where they sacrificed animals to idols and sold the meat thereof in the shambles of the day. Many Christians were offended by eating meat offered to idols, naturally; so, Paul said, "*... whether we eat meat or don't eat meat – it makes no difference.*" The question was: how will this affect brothers and sisters in Christ? Would they be caused to stumble by those actions? If yes, then it would be wrong.

Paul has already said our liberty is limited. You have a perfect right to shoot your guns, but the liberty of your bullet ends where my body begins! Paul said, "*... all things are lawful but not all things are expedient.*" Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbors good. If you're having a strict Seventh Day Adventist believer over for dinner, then you shouldn't serve a pork roast. If you haven't read our last report, I suggest you go back and do so now. In fact, you will do well to read *ALL* of the reports so far from first Corinthians....

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1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?

2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

3 Mine defense to them that do examine me is this,

4 Have we not power to eat and to drink?

5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?

6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?

~ Paul is stating his official right as an apostle in a very definite way. He defends the right as an apostle because he was forced to. These people challenged him in every way and at every turn. The only satisfactory answers to the questions in verse one is “yes!” The evidence of his apostleship to these Corinthians was irrefutable. Even so, Paul answers on the defensive as strongly as if he were in court and had been charged with a crime.

Remember, Paul said that if the things he did offended others, then he wouldn't do them. Being able to do something but refraining from doing it just happens to be the highest revelation of free will we can ever exercise! If we can't do some certain thing, then there's no exercise of free will by not doing it. Understanding this principle is absolutely critical to executing proper Christian conduct. We can never think wrong and act right. Impossible.

The 'brethren of the Lord' in verse five is James and Jude. It seems they were married and took their wives out with them on their missionary journeys. As we saw in the last few reports, Paul had that liberty, too; but, he felt that his ministry would have been curtailed and hindered by taking a

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wife. Most people today wonder what's wrong with a Christian leader who isn't married. Those who are married are always accused of not being able to do anything without a wife. Frankly, marriage, in this sense of Christian ministry, is a lose/lose situation.

Further, Paul says here in verse six that he didn't have to go out as a missionary. In fact, Paul could have simply stayed home and done something else. I believe tent making was very prosperous for him at one time. His salvation didn't depend on him writing. No friends, this was all done and written because Paul just happened to honestly love the Lord Jesus Christ. No other reason....

7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?

9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?

10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple?

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~ Here, Paul states his official right to be supported. Paul had an absolute right as their teacher to expect that this church in Corinth would care for him and all of his carnal affairs. Of course, this is very, very personal. I can tell you dear readers it is *VERY* personal for me. Paul illustrates this by referring to an oxen. We've all seen the pictures of the Arab with the ox turning around and around in a circle; they still do it today.

Well, the ox is working doing your hard labor. God has concern for the animals and God says, *"let the animal eat!"* Alright – that means – *".... pay your preacher,"* my beloved. Are these reports a blessing to your heart? Do these Bible studies mean anything to you? The command is to support the place where you receive a blessing. If these reports do *NOT* bless you, then you can just disregard this altogether; in fact, feel free to go listen to some prosperity gospel or something like that. The man that brings you spiritual things — sound doctrine — God says, *"you are to feed that man and provide material provisions."* Just as they are told not to muzzle the ox, likewise, you aren't to muzzle the teacher of sound doctrine *by not supporting him!* They are, at *LEAST*, to be fed and housed.

There was an old, scrawny, and skinny preacher one time who rode on a very fine and beautiful horse. One day a church officer asked him why the horse was so healthy, but he was so skinny. The preacher was happy to tell the officer, *".... I feed my horse, but you people feed me!"*

I believe he had every right to say that, too. See, many people seem to want to eat in one restaurant but pay for the meal at a restaurant down the road. Someone says, *"that's absurd!"* – It sure is! It's as absurd as the state of Christian giving today! Frankly, God has been very good raising up a few people who are helping this so-called safari ministry. I won't name them, but they know who they are, if they read this report. What I pray is that they will continue to feel that way. All I can do is depend upon and trust the Lord now; He said He will see me through – and we're going to find out if that's true.

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That's Paul's application of this. I pessimistically wonder, and I must tell you I *HIGHLY* doubt, that I will receive one single comment from one single reader of the Spiritual Safari in this connection. I have a very strict policy of not asking for money in this ministry because I think it might hinder the teaching of the Word of God! I am very sensitive to the fact that there are *MANY* religious rackets going on. Many men are simply making merchandise of the Lord Jesus Christ. To disagree with that is to be absolutely ignorant. I don't want to be perceived either of those ways, so I have taken my place at the grindstone. I'm sure my sacrifice will ultimately be worthwhile someday; so I'm just going to continue my policy on safari. I can tell you one thing: *NO ONE* can say that Andrew Hunt only does this teaching thing because he receives a free ride.

And I recognize I am probably just an old ox anyways; maybe I don't plow enough or well enough. Maybe I just deserve to have a muzzle put on me? Some people seem to think I am just going around and around in circles and never get anywhere anyways. Well, okay, enjoy the free safari, friends; but remember: I'm the ox who is treading out this corn for you, you know? Alright, we'll leave this alone for now; but, don't worry, we'll revisit the subject in Galatians....

¹⁴ Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

¹⁵ But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

¹⁶ For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

~ If I never wrote another word about the Bible I wouldn't lose my salvation; but, woe would be me! There is, actually, a necessity laid upon my heart. I have tried to quit this so-called Spiritual Safari so many times I can't even count them all. This thing became a taskmaster somewhere

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down the line that put the lash to my back; and tells me to publish another report. Honestly, because I am always honest with you readers, I *HAVE* to do this thing. That's my liberty; and I do it because I love the Lord Jesus Christ and because I love the Word of God; and because there is so little competent Bible teaching out there – even by ordained ministers – that I feel an obligation to this lost and dying world. That's just what the Spirit of God has laid on my heart — and that's just the way it's going to be. I'm not doing this for some ulterior motive. I expect a reward someday from God; and I don't think I am going to be disappointed; even though I am sorely disappointed down here....

17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

18 What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

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24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be disapproved.

~ So, our Spiritual Safari ends this report in a very familiar passage of Scripture at verse twenty through twenty-seven. I almost feel ashamed at how personal this report became – but – I am going through the entire Word of God — and here we are. Paul did all the things he did because he was out on the racecourse of life. That’s where I find myself today, too. I have no compunction telling you I am a spiritual athlete who wants that prize – and second place isn’t going to work for me. Why don’t you pray about being my partner? Ask what God would have you do to support this ministry that is reaching the entire world with the entire Word of God. This isn’t some missionary fraud that does nothing – like most ministries are. No, friends, anyone can easily see what I am doing. God does.

This so-called Spiritual Safari is about *ONE* thing and *ONE* thing only: getting the Word of God to the entire world. I’m not shadowboxing. I’m not playing church with this responsibility. This is not a game to me; and it is much, much more difficult than any job I have ever had in my life. Writing these reports is *NOT* an easy and casual fun time for me. This *IS* work, you may be absolutely sure. It becomes very real to me as I bring my body unto subjection in the Word of God as a living sacrifice. When we get to second Corinthians, we’re going to talk all about rewards and how we all will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Friends – you can just write this down – anticipation of that reward in Heaven is the only reason you’ll ever read one single word from my fingers. Again, quite honestly, when I am

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through, I pray the Lord will take me – if not sooner. In the meantime, there isn't going to be any thumb-twiddling. If *YOU* are going to get any reward in Heaven, you're going to have to work for it. What are you doing – and what are you supporting - for your rewards? ~

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