

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Lecture 22, 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1, Paul's Response to the Question of Food Sacrificed to Idols. 1 Cor. 9

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This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is session 22, 1 Corinthians 8.1-11.1, Paul's Response to the Question of Food Sacrificed to Idols. 1 Corinthians 9.

Well, welcome back to our conversation in regard to 1 Corinthians chapters 8-10.

We're on page 121, and we want to continue this. We're right in the midst of this issue concerning chapter 8 and this biblical worldview question in verses 9-13. After we've, Paul has talked about what we know, and then he's talked in verses 7-8 about how not everyone possesses this knowledge, and some have a weak conscience as regards that, and I will come back and talk more about that later.

Verse 9, be careful, however, about the exercise of your rights. Let's see how the NRSV translates that in verse 9. If I can find it here, they don't separate the paragraphs as the NIV does but take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block. Well, that's interesting. I like the way the NIV did it here because the word rights at that point would be addressed to this community known as the strong because they have knowledge, but the other part of it is this, is that this is also the same term that's applied to the group we call the elite out of the earlier chapters of 1 Corinthians.

This right of yours, so we may be drawn back a little bit into understanding some of this conflict and to be in regard to the high social status going to the temple for banquets, for social meetings, could be anything from the Isthmian games which would have been exceedingly important to even imperial cult and so forth, that those kinds of contexts drawing them in there and Paul is warning them that while they may have the right and the status to be involved in that, they have got to be careful that that participation, that status does not cause a stumbling block to others who are not able yet to follow the line that you can do that. You're participating with idols in guilt by association, and in some settings, it may well be that the strong were. They weren't willing to give up that social status, and they were in troubling contexts.

I'm sure it's troubling to Paul, but Paul was now looking at it in a larger way. We know that these idols are nothing, but at the same time, you can't participate just because that's your social status. The word liberty and freedom are usually brought in at this point.

In fact, I even have it in my outline of 3C. It's a hang-on sort of thing, this application of the principle of liberty. Well, I think it's a little more complicated than that.

It's not just because they have a good worldview they're free to do what they want, but more than likely, Paul is bringing back up the issue of just because you have that social status and because you have the right, the *exousia*, the authority to participate doesn't mean that it is the best thing for you to do as a Christian. And so, there's more cultural nuancing that needs to go on here. The right is not just simple freedom or liberty.

Status is involved in this issue of rights. Paul even had the right to citizenship as a Roman citizen. He was born free, if you'll remember, but he chose not to exercise those rights.

So, it's freedom and liberty in a sense, but it's very easy to isolate ourselves from the original context and think about freedom and liberty in a more general sense. And that's probably not what Paul was saying, that just because you know something, you're free. Knowledge actually brings you back to sacrifice your elitism for the good of the total community.

For if someone with a weak conscience, now he's not applauding them, someone without knowledge sees you with all your knowledge eating in an idol's temple, and I think the assumption would be here, perhaps in that social setting, business class sort of an approach to things. Won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? In other words, they haven't gotten to the place where they can have the right worldview. You're pushing them to a worldview they're not ready to assimilate.

Therefore, you will destroy them because you will mess up the mechanism and the process of changing their minds. It would be like someone in that Christian serviceman center grabbing me by the nape of the neck and carrying me to the pool table and forcing a cue stick into my hand and saying, this game of pool is nothing. Break those billiard balls.

Well, I wasn't ready for that. That would have been, that would have, I would have felt like I was being asked to sin because that's the context I knew pool and billiards in regard to. Well, these were the same way.

So, Paul was balancing knowledge and community to move the community forward in the right kind of ethics in relation to participation with idols. But that social elitism and everything that was attached to that, their entire world of power, of money, of prestige, of honor, was being threatened because they have all of a sudden found themselves in a situation where they can't be the way it used to be and be faithful to God. Monotheism and anti-idolatry are major themes in early Christian preaching.

So, you could destroy the weaker brother by making them do something against their conscience. And you wound their weak conscience. You sin against Christ by doing that.

Now, let's think about some of the things I've got here on page 121 under 3c 1d. The strong are exhorted to bear the burden of responsibility. People with knowledge have got to learn how to maneuver the community without manipulating the community into maturity.

It's what's known as there's a book by a man named Thomas Groom called Shared Praxis. How do you get a community on the same page? This is what Paul's trying to do here.

He's trying to get the Corinthian community educated so that they can think the same way. It all starts here. He's working on their transformation.

Some have moved quickly. Maybe they had a selfish reason to do that. They grabbed onto it quickly so that they could justify their social status and participation as an elite person.

Others were moving much more slowly. Ministry leadership is involved in delicately and truthfully handling this domain of what we know and what we do. The problem of failure in this area is delineated.

For the weak, their failure is captured under the statement of conscience. Now, I'm going to do a whole lecture on conscience. There will be probably three lectures in 1 Corinthians 8 through 10.

And the third one will be like in 7. An excursus on the issue of conscience. I'm going to say some things here that I can't build you up to, but I will later. Conscience.

What is a conscience? Conscience is a witness. Underline that term. Highlight that term.

That's what conscience is. Conscience is not an outside thing. It's internal to you.

It's God created. It's your capacity for self-reflection. And conscience becomes a witness to the norms and values that you recognize and apply.

I've used that definition a long time. I think that that has connections back to F.F. Bruce and his treatment of conscience many, many years ago. I don't have it in quotes here, but I've adapted it and used it so constantly that I probably might have some of his words here.

So, I want to give him credit for that. And so, conscience is a witness. Conscience is not an entity in and of itself.

It's an aspect of the created capacity for self-reflection—a witness, not a judge. Don't ever think the conscience is a judge.

No, it's a witness. It's a witness to something. It's a witness to the norms and the values that we recognize and apply.

You might think of it: let's go back to our head again, our little model, our head model. And we've got data coming in and data being signified, and we have meaning stated over here according to the grid that exists here. Well, how does conscience fit in relation to this grid? The grid is your worldview and values.

It's that which you have worked out, and you recognize and apply. A lot of people haven't worked them out. You don't think about them, but you still have them.

Everybody's got a worldview. Everybody has a value set, whether it's good or bad. Christians are to be transformed by the renewing of their mind, which means we've got to get engaged with our worldview and our values.

That's the grid through which we run data to give meaning. Well, where does conscience fit in this? Conscience is like a bunch of little policemen in there. When the data comes in, if you try to kick out a meaning that the worldview and value system doesn't like, you're going to feel pain.

You're going to feel, no, that's not the way I really think. If you're pressed to do something you don't want to do, say you're in a job situation, and you're a supervisor, and your upper supervisor says, do it this way. And you say, no, that abuses that person.

And they say, you're going to do it, or you're going to get fired. All of a sudden, you've got a value conflict because your conscience, not your knowledge, your conscience is witnessing to your knowledge and your values saying, this is not the way you operate. Then you've got to stop and say, do I operate correctly or not correctly? Let's think about my illustration of playing pool and billiards.

I developed a worldview with my uncles about what a pool hall was. It's a place to gamble, a place to drink, a place to carouse. It was bad.

When I became a Christian, I immediately understood. Don't ask me why, but I immediately understood that the pool hall wasn't the place where a Christian should live and should have activity in what I knew about pool halls. So I go to a Christian

service center, and they have pool tables. I came to them with a worldview and values grid, and the data for pool billiards is a no-no.

I had given it that meaning. All right. Well, I went through an educational process where I came to understand better that it's not the pool table; it's the context in which it occurs.

And that now I've got that same thing in a new context. I can't transport the old context into that. And while it bothered me, in other words, my conscience kept probing me about that pool table in the servicemen center because that was my worldview and value system.

It's bad. But as I educated my worldviews and value system, I didn't educate the conscience. Conscience is a mechanism.

I've educated my worldview and value system the way I think. When I got to the point where I had absorbed and owned this new understanding, guess what? My conscience didn't bother me anymore. Now, there are good and bad aspects to that.

Paul says you can cauterize your conscience. That means you can teach your worldview and values to be so bad that you accept they're true. And then your conscience doesn't bother you because the conscience is linked and is a servant of your worldview and your values.

It is not an entity in itself. So, if you say, let conscience be your guide, you've said something that's not appropriate. Let worldview and values be your guide.

Conscience will remind you if you're keeping your worldview and values. But when you go through re-education, which is what conversion is, conversion is a huge re-education. When you go through that, you've got tension with your conscience.

Why? Because your conscience knows the old system. You haven't yet owned the new system. But when you make the transition and own the new system, your conscience won't bother you anymore.

Why? Because conscience adjusts to your worldview and your values. That's why Paul could kill Christians and feel good about it. Why? Because his worldview and values saw the church as a threat to Judaism.

But when he was saved on the Damascus Road, converted, and changed his mind, he could no longer kill Christians. He could no longer persecute the church. Why? Because he changed his mind.

And now the conscience is saying don't do that. Before, the conscience didn't say it was bad. You go ahead and do that.

Why? Because of his worldview and values, the church is a threat. But when the church ceased to be a threat, the conscience didn't say. The conscience said you can't do that anymore.

So, the conscience goes with the worldview and the values. But as a human being, it takes some time for all this stuff to adjust in transition and process. And that's what's going on here.

The strong had made a big leap pretty quickly, probably. Why? Well, they were motivated to do so. They were the elite.

They were the social status. So, idols or nothing was advantageous to them. So, they could go to their business meetings.

They could be part of the banquets. They could be part of the social structure in a powerful and profitable way. But some of the others in that community hadn't been able to make the transition about those idols.

And so, therefore, they were bothered by the behavior of the elite. And they didn't want anything to do with it. Or they were tempted to make a jump before their mind changed before their worldview and values were adjusted.

Now you've got real problems. Because, in a sense, God created the mind the way it is, the conscience the way it is. And it's through the process of being transformed by the renewing of your mind that you adjust and make the transition.

But it's a process. And conscience doesn't come along immediately. However, the reason that it says their conscience is weak is that those individuals have not been able to own that idol or anything.

And they were right in some ways about the elite. The elite were pressing the envelope. And they were right in some ways.

But they still hadn't owned the issue of the idols or anything. If they had, they could stop and say that idols are nothing, but you're still wrong for this reason. It would have been a completely different conversation.

But instead, they were struggling with that. Their conscience is weak. It wasn't their conscience that was weak.

It was their worldview and value system that was weak to which the conscience was testifying. Conscience testifies to something. It is not an end in and of itself.

I'm going to come back to that. That's a pretty big thing for you to get a hold of because the idea of conscience is so huge in culture. Psychology uses it.

Philosophy uses it. It's used on the street. And it's used a lot, I'm afraid, as a self-justifying way of doing what you want to do.

Well, my conscience doesn't bother me, so it's okay. That's not the issue. The question is, is it right or wrong? Is it good, better, or best? I don't care about your conscience.

I care about your worldview and values. Where are they? Are they right? I've known some prominent Christians who basically were wicked. Why? Because they use their power to want to get their way in the Christian community.

They would put down others with whom they did not agree. If you didn't own the way they saw things, they saw you as a threat. I've seen that operate in the professional Christian community.

They think they're doing God a service, just like Paul did. Their conscience doesn't bother them. It's their guide.

Why? Because it supports the poor worldview and values from which they operate. And therefore, they feel just fine. Conscience is not a judge.

You could call it a guide if you please, but only if you understand that it is a God-created function to keep you in touch and keep you in conformity to your worldview and values. So, if something changes, what has to be renewed, according to Romans, is your worldview and values. Conscience isn't going to be happy with that.

Why? It's been conditioned to follow what you've owned. And if you're vacillating in regard to new knowledge, conscience is going to help you vacillate because it's going to take you right back to where you were. You've got to make the break.

You've got to become convinced and convicted. And then all of a sudden, boom, conscience is on board. Why? Because it witnesses to the worldview and values.

And now that you have confidence in them, conscience goes along. So, conscience is never the judge. It is the witness.

And the Bible uses the term witness. It does not use the term judge. Get that metaphor.

They're emboldened, acting without a changed perceptual set, is what Paul means in verses 9 to 13. They're emboldened to actions that they shouldn't do. Why shouldn't they do them? Not because they're wrong but because they aren't ready to handle it.

That's the whole point. They're not ready to handle it. This term actually means edify or build up.

In 8:1, love builds up. Paul may be playing on the term since the strong claim to strengthen the weak. He's told them not to destroy them in verses 10 and 11.

Let me get back in there. If someone has a weak conscience, what is a weak conscience? A conscience that's still living by an old worldview sees you with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple. Won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? Now, if they do that, what's going to happen? They're going to feel horrible inside. They're going to break down the God-created process of worldview values and conscience in a relationship.

You don't want to do that. You want to transition them. Now, you see, if you're a ministry leader and you've got a congregation, you've got all this mess at one time.

You don't get the privilege of just having a strong or a weak congregation or whatever. You've got the whole mess at one time. You've got to work people through that.

Frankly, the best way to do that is to educate them on the fact that that's what has to happen. As a congregation, we're being transformed by the renewal of our minds. Some of you are more transformed than others.

We as a congregation have to work through the content of that transformation, the worldview, and the value system. And as we do, we as a community will have strength because we will be united around that worldview and value system. So, this weak brother or sister for whom Christ died is destroyed by your knowledge.

What is destroyed? The worldview, value system, and conscience interface, which God created to control human beings as they live their lives and make decisions. And if you destroy the mechanism, you have set them up to be an absolute mess in life because now they don't know how to operate. They'll jump on every wagon train that comes through and not think anything about it.

It's a very, very delicate, rational basis in the way that God has created us to operate. In what sense are they destroyed? Certainly not eternal loss. And it's not physical death.

They're destroyed in their process of discernment. Let me say that again—bottom of page 121.

They're destroyed in their process of discernment. Notice there's a reaffirmation of brother and sister. There's a reference to a wounded conscience.

Now, I know it sounds like he's talking to conscience as an entity. No, he's talking to conscience as a function. It's been messed up because of the conflict in your worldview and values.

The flow of this context leads us in these directions. The use of the term in 11:9 suggests a reference to discernment, not eternal salvation. That is the word destroyed.

And the double use of stumble in 8:13 is doing the same thing. One's process of discernment is destroyed when actions precede re-education—top of page 122.

Let me say that again. One's process of discernment is destroyed when actions precede re-education. In Corinth, there was a major problem with knowledge and non-knowledge, and those who had knowledge were not sensitive to the community.

Paul came in and supported their knowledge, but chided them in relation to flirting with destroying the community, even by doing something that's okay. You've got to bring everybody along. For the strong, verse 13 is pretty strong, isn't it? You sin against Christ.

You transgress the community. Therefore, if what I eat is causing my brother or sister to fall into sin. And what is their sin? Their sin is to violate their worldview and values, which your conscience is going to bother them about.

And they squelch instead of understanding. And as a result, you have destroyed the God-given process of how to understand your world, how to go through transitional changes in worldview and values and be okay. What an amazing portrayal of how the inner person operates that Paul was going through here.

Paul's conclusion is striking, to say the least, in verse 13. Now, the alternate view. They introduced the issue of idle food.

They refute the practice because of its danger to fellow Christians, which we just saw. Paul's own example in chapter 9 that we're going to look at. The refutation of their practice from the negative example, which the traditional view would do.

The refutation of their practice is from the example of the Lord's Supper, which is later on in chapter 10. And then the practical advice for dealing. So, the big point between these two views is really where we've just been.

In chapter 8 particularly, versus all of chapter 8 as far as I'm concerned, particularly 4 through 13, but the whole chapter. That's really where it rests. I think if you were to read the alternate, you would hear a lot of the voice that I'm saying and that the traditional view says.

It's just that nuance of the motivation behind it. And the question of the legitimacy or not legitimacy of making a weak literary method here. It doesn't read like a literary method to me.

At the same time, I respect the people who hold that view. So, for the time being, I'm taking the traditional academic view. And we'll continue that way in chapter 9. So, we've talked about the issue of this idol meet and what it meant in Roman Corinth.

You've got the temples everywhere. I mean everywhere. If you read Pausanias and his trip through Corinth and the description of Corinth, even maybe a hundred years later, it's still there.

It probably has not been built up too much because Rome was at its peak during the first century. He walks through, and there are idols, just like in Athens. They're everywhere.

It's part of the fabric of their culture. And then you've got the community centers, the temples. And then you've got the social status and banquets that are specifically for idols.

Well, that's bad. Chapter 10 will bring the changes to that. But you've got other issues going on with the community, with the meat market, and so forth.

That they have to work with, particularly since Rome had pulled back on concessions to the Jews in terms of kosher meat in the meat market. That's a piece of the background that probably helps us to understand that they were thrown into a mix here, where all of a sudden, their whole source for meat in their daily parlance is not available to them as it might have been available before.

Now Paul's got to deal with that, the abuse, and the lack of knowledge. Paul doesn't accommodate either side in this discussion. He rings the changes on both of them.

Now, so Chapter 9, Apostolic Rights, Liberty and Community Ethics. Now there's some interesting things in this chapter. We talked about rights in 8, 9 as having most likely a reflection back to the elite.

But now we're going to see, I think, a little change in the nomenclature. Or, to some extent, maybe Paul is teasing some things out here. You remember he's a freeborn Roman citizen.

He has rights. He used them in the book of Acts on occasion. I chose not to use them on other occasions.

He's different than many of these people. A freeborn man. He even can bring a Roman soldier to stop in their tracks on that basis.

And as a result of that, maybe he is nuancing toward the elite that you're not such big shots after all. I've got rights. The apostles have rights.

What makes you better than the rest of us? You know, that's just a little imagination. But imagination doesn't hurt because we've got to fill in the blanks here in terms of what it would have been like to be in that setting. Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? Now, that is an extremely important statement that has ramifications way beyond what we're doing right now.

I'll talk about it a little bit when we get into the issue of gifts in chapters 12 through 14. But what Paul enumerates and alliterates here is his proof of apostleship. He's seen the Lord.

That was an expectation to be one of the special apostles. There were all kinds of apostles in the first century. It just means messenger.

There are people described as apostles all over the place. But there is a special group. We refer to them as the 12.

Then Judas is gone. Matthias comes in. Paul is called an apostle born out of due time.

Some interesting things in chapter 15 we'll see. But Paul is putting the pedal to the metal in 9-1 and putting on record that, Hey, I'm elite. I'm an apostle.

How do I handle this world? Even though I may not be an apostle to others, I certainly am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord, taking credit for the foundations of this Corinthian church. Apostolic rights.

And it could be a play on words. It could be a transition into Paul's options that he has. And yet, it is a right.

So, I think there's a bit of a play. Is Paul really arguing for rights to be set aside in 1 Corinthians 8 when he follows up with an argument for the exercise of apostolic rights in 9? Yet his reflection is twofold. Rights are rights and only an informed setting aside is valid.

Not a setting aside for setting aside's sake. We could say it this way. The elite had rights that we were going to live with.

And it's okay as long as they handle those rights correctly. Paul says I got rights. And my rights are going to be handled in this way.

So, this is an interesting dynamic that, on the face of the page, is hard for us to get into. How do we transport ourselves back and watch this from our seat in Corinth in the first century? Not quite as easy. When one reads 1 Corinthians 8 to 11, the question of how chapter 9 fits between two chapters clearly deals with the issue of meat offered to idols. You know, you got meat offered to idols.

Boom, here comes chapter 9 and part of chapter 10. And then boom, we're back to meat offered to idols. Well, this is an afterthought.

He's not chasing rabbits and forgetting what he's talking about. This is all integral to the whole argument. We just have to ask how and why.

The traditional view of strong versus weak and the view that Paul has had actually taught the Corinthians not to participate in any way with known idol meat. Both explain the content of chapter 9 the same from what I've been able to tell. The issue is how the content of chapter 9 fits the thesis of each view.

And, of course, the lens will do that. From the traditional view, Paul's restriction of apostolic rights is a nice illustration of a strong person, even perhaps a person of privileged social status, practicing self-sacrifice for the sake of the community. For the alternate view, Paul's restriction is actually a continuation of his argument to restrict one's rights.

I've told you to restrict them. I've restricted them. Get on board.

So, it's a very modest nuance here. Important to some. You've got to remember that in biblical scholarship, when there is nothing new under the sun, individual treatment is what gives a person status if you please, and presence in the guild.

So, coming up with another idea to explain something is important. Scholars, it gets to be a challenge, and many views don't last. This one hasn't been around long enough to answer that question.

It's got some good points, so I would rather see a synthesis of these two rather than an isolation of the two. Now, they might not think that's possible. Some argue that Paul was defending his apostleship against the Corinthian rejection in 1 Corinthians 9. This, however, is unlikely.

Paul was actually counting on the Corinthians to know what it meant for him to be an apostle. To make his argument of restricting one's rights, it depends on that. Now, in a sense, he's given an apologetic there in verses 1 and 2. And yet, at the same time, he proceeds on the basis of they know how he's operated.

9:1 is crucial in the apostolic debate that will arise in chapters 12 to 14, as I mentioned. In 1 Corinthians 15, we have Paul saying he's the last apostle, which is very interesting. And these things need to be correlated.

It has a lot to do with answering questions about apostolic succession and the nature of other apostles in the first century. There is a unique group, like Ephesians 2:20. It talks about the prophets and the apostles. That's talking about some unique people, not just generic and general.

And I think that can be upheld. And there's strong implicational evidence to that regard, but it has to be pulled together. We'll talk a little more about that in chapters 12 through 14 when we get there.

The delineation of rights in 9.1 to 14. Now, this is an extremely important passage for other reasons besides Paul pointing out how to sacrifice. Because in our Christian ministries, sometimes you'll come across groups who have a problem with what they call a paid ministry.

Now, this is not as common as it used to be. But as I came up through the ranks, I was in churches from time to time that had a problem with a paid ministry because they thought you were supposed to do it out of your own pocketbook and the goodness of your heart. They talked about how we don't pay for hospital visitation.

I was in a church; it was about 50 to 80 miles to one hospital, 50 miles to another hospital, and 30 miles to another hospital. Okay, you're not going to pay mileage to help me here? I'm a poor student. How do you deal with that? So, in some Christian traditions, there has been negativism toward a paid ministry.

And there are several places in the New Testament that undermine that mindset. And I think this is one of the great passages. So, if you need help in that domain, you better read this one really closely.

But in context, it has to do with Paul illustrating how you deal with your rights. And it also has a lot to say about reward and non-reward in relation to how you fulfill your

ministry. Now, reward and non-reward is more along the lines of God's judgment about how you've done.

You'll notice this with me in 9.1. Well, we've already been there. 9.1 to 6, an initial series of rhetorical questions. Verse 3, this is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me.

Don't we have the right? And there's our term, 9:4, do we not have the *exousia*? That's the word for authority. That's a strong term. It's the same word used of the elite back in earlier chapters.

Do we, that is, and by the way, here we have this apostolic community. Don't we? Some might call it an editorial or a courtesy, but it's talking about that community. Don't we, as apostles, have the right to food and drink? Don't we have the right to take a believing wife? Interesting that he said it that way.

Were there apostles with unbelieving wives? Along with us as do the other apostles. And the Lord's brother and Cephas. Well, the Pope had one, that's too bad.

Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living? Oh, I wonder, there are some nuances here. Had they been criticizing Paul for being paid to do what he does? Why didn't they do it for the Lord? And then he goes on in verses seven and following, a series of analogies as arguments for, if you please, remunerating ministers. Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends the flock and does not drink the milk? Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the law say the same thing? For it is written in the law of Moses, do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.

Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely, he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in hope of sharing in the harvest. If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But, verse 12, we did not use this right. There you go.

This word right is repeated in these early chapters, particularly here in chapter 9. Do we not have this right? Am I not elite in this situation? Just as an analogy, not trying to claim it, but he's pushing it here. Paul has a way of doing that. He's not going to give up on reality and truth to accommodate people.

Yeah, I got the right. You better believe I have it. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.

Don't you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple and that those who serve at the altar share what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. Rights, okay, it's an analogical argument that Paul was using here to those who wanted to use their rights in a bizarre way. So, he calls upon a series of arguments: an argument from human analogy in verse 7, an argument from scripture verses 8 to 10, an argument from common sense verses 11 and 12, an argument from actual practice in verse 13, an argument from dominical tradition in verse 14, which I didn't read.

Where is it? Okay, my eye is focused here. In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive from it. And that's in I've given you the passages Luke 10 and Matthew 10.

Wow. So, don't isolate this text from the context. It is an illustration to those who were trying to exercise their rights that having rights and exercising them are two different things.

And I just love the next part of this because there's so much for us to get out of this. If you're a ministry leader or a Christian who is in professional ministry, I'm going to use that word, and I like it. It says there's a standard that you have to meet.

So, does the Bible say that? All right, now let's think about this: I turned my page too fast. The voluntary declining of rights in verses 15 through 18. Look at this.

But I have not used any of these rights. This is kind of like a narrative, and I can help you better by reading it and emphasizing things. It yields itself very well this way.

Verse 15. I have not used any of these rights. I haven't exercised my status.

And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me. In other words, I'm not trying to manipulate you. For I would rather die than allow anyone to deprive me of this boast.

Now, please underline this because here comes a point that's going to come out. Do you think Paul should be allowed to brag a little bit? Well, on what basis? Well, here it comes. For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast about that.

Since I am compelled to preach, woe to me if I do not preach the gospel. What's going on here? It says I can't boast when I preach the gospel. What does he mean? He means this.

That's his job. That's what God called him to do. And he has to do it.

He can't boast about that. That's his job. He's doing his duty.

There are no rewards for doing your duty. This is a big issue in American culture right now because the culture has diminished heroism to almost nothing. It's diminished the idea of winning to nothing.

Because everybody's a winner, so if you have, and it takes it down into the grade schools, so you have a race, everybody gets a ribbon, not the top three. It's carried over into daily culture, so many think that if they do their duty, they ought to get a big reward.

No, you don't get a reward for doing your duty. You get what's stipulated. Because our culture has an inflated view of itself, it has lost a sense of duty and has gone to the point where if people get up in the morning, they ought to get a reward.

Well, Paul says, hey, I can't boast if I do what I'm supposed to do. If I want to boast, I've got to go beyond, as the military says it, above and beyond the call of duty. You don't get a medal for being at Normandy.

Well, you get a ribbon. You get a medal for being at the top of your class. A person who went above and beyond to make that beach landing successful, even to the point of your own life.

What a horrible situation in life. In our Christian service, we don't get a medal just for being Christian and doing what we're supposed to do. You got to go above and beyond the call of duty.

Before you get a reward, notice what he says in the following, in verse 17. If I preach voluntarily, I wonder how the NRSV says that because there's some nomenclature that's not ringing with me all of a sudden.

For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward. But if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. All right, well, that doesn't help, does it? The NIV's done a better job.

If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward. Okay, now the context is getting paid. Paul was saying, okay, if I do my duty, your duty is to pay me.

Nobody gets any rewards. That's our duty. But if Paul preaches and refuses to be paid or doesn't ask for it, then he's going above and beyond the call of duty.

Therefore, he gets a reward. He says, if I preach voluntarily without your taking care of me, I have a reward. If not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.

What, then, is my reward if I just do my duty? Just this: I may offer preaching the gospel free of charge. There's the reward. He's not obligated on the basis of anything to that audience.

And so, make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel. A very, very interesting analogy here with Paul. The voluntary decline of rights is where the reward is.

So if you have strong elitism, social status, and people want a reward, you get the reward not by the exercise of your elitism but by the sacrifice of it for the sake of the gospel, for the sake of the community. Very strong. There is a lot of incidental teaching that comes out of chapter 9 up to that point, but it is very strong.

The voluntary declining of rights. We are not rewarded for doing our duty but for how we go above and beyond the call of duty. In academic terms, one does not get an A just because they fulfill the assignment.

Of course, I spent my career teaching after graduating from the Navy. I can't tell you how many times I've had students in my office with a paper that maybe they've got a C. And they want an A. And they come in after the fact and act like I should have got an A. And then I point out why they didn't. And they said, well, can I redo it? No, the deadline's over.

Well, can I do some extra reading to bring myself to an A in the class and go above and beyond? No, we stipulated the duty at the beginning of the class, and you failed. You can't make up for it by doing something else after the fact.

I didn't like those kinds of situations, but I sort of enjoyed them because they build character in students to be put in their place in terms of the issue of duty, fulfilling your responsibility, and doing it above and beyond. A's are for above and beyond. A's aren't for doing your duty.

A B, you get a B, you did your duty well. You get an A, you went above and beyond. Yeah.

Are you a student? Do you like that? All right. We're not grading this. So, hang in there.

In academic terms, one does not get an A just because they fulfilled the assignment. Doing your duty is at least a B, I suppose. Maybe.

Doing it the best you can is a B. A's are for going beyond the call of duty. More resources. Better compositions.

More cogent compositions. More footnotes. All right.

Verses 19 to 23. The deliberate decision to serve all men. Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone.

To win as many people as possible. This is a follow-up variation on his denying his rights. To the Jews, I became a Jew to win the Jews.

To those under the law, I became like under the law. Though I myself am not under the law. So as to win those under the law. To those having the law, I became like one not having the law. Though I am not free from God's law, but am under Christ's law. A lot of interesting give and take here.

By the way, if you hear a little bit of noise, it's yard time in Florida. And so that's what's going on. To the weak, I became weak.

To win the weak. I have become all things to all people. So that by all possible means, I might save some.

I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings. Then he says in verses 24, following where he applies this principle.

I see. I kind of got ahead of myself. Let me back up just a little bit because of the reading and thinking about the law.

And I don't suppose you can hear it all that much, but we're going to have to live with it. I forgot about it. All right.

Page 124. How does he apply this principle? Well, the Jews, the law to which Paul refers is the Jewish law. Such law included 613 written precepts of the Pentateuch.

Perhaps the oral amplification by the Jewish elders would be later on. While Paul might have observed the regulations of such law, he was quick to add that he had done so voluntarily.

Not because he had any moral obligation to do so. He was not under that kind of law, but he was under the law of God. Paul's vow in Acts 21:23 is an interesting illustration.

Some people don't know what to do with Paul shaving his head and taking a vow when he was on his way to Jerusalem. They almost act like Paul had backslidden. No, Paul was being cultural.

He was doing something that was part of Jewish culture to show the seriousness of his commitment. It wasn't a demand by God, but it was an acceptable religious exercise that Paul was using to identify with his Jewish auditors and to try to forward the gospel of Christ. On the other hand, the moral law of God abides, especially as summarized in the law, to love God and neighbor.

The Gentiles in 9:21. Sorry, I got to get my eyes. To those not having the law, I became like one not having the law.

He uses the law here, as in verse 20. He had no reason to observe the non-binding normative Jewish law while among those with whom such law was no issue. The phrase not free from God's law is a general statement to confirm his obligation to God in the broader sense.

Nobody is lawless. The law of Christ, perhaps, reflects 1 Corinthians 11:1, Christ's example, and the teaching that he gave. James talks about the royal law later on.

The believers in 9:22 to 9:23. Paul's motive for self-control. Don't tempt or provoke God.

In 9:22, to the weak, I became weak. To the, to win the weak. Now, that's a different weak than previously.

I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means, I might save some. Do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings. You know, as I work over these texts, I think about all these things to all men, and even this phrase of the weak, as weak, he became weak.

Paul made a lot of accommodations. They were not moral accommodations, but they were accommodations for the sake of trying to communicate to the people to whom he was making those accommodations. That's pretty tough to do.

Do you know how mature a person it takes to not demand the truth in the sense of, not moral truth, but demand he's right, but to give in and go along with something? That's not a moral issue but some sort of cultural issue. Something they're having trouble with. Paul was able to flex with that, to be able to bring them along, and later, they woke up and said, ah, now I understand.

That's a huge domain of ministry with people. But it's not an easy row to hoe, as we use the metaphor of tilling a garden. It's not an easy row to hoe.

To have the maturity for some people to get on you for your accommodation, and yet have the sense that you're doing the accommodation for the end game of helping

these people to get to another place. That's an interesting piece in life. I pastored a rural church a long time ago, and we wanted to have a church picnic.

And the young people wanted to do it on Sunday. The young professionals are actually working with children. The old people pushed back because they thought Sunday was nothing but a day of rest, and you can't play ball or do activities like that on Sunday.

It was an interesting situation of two generations in the church. How do you pursue the truth? And it's okay to do some things on Sunday. In fact, those young teachers and lawyers might relax by wearing themselves out and, in that way, fulfill the Sabbath.

Do you ever think about that? It takes their mind off things, and physical exertion has a way of refreshing them. It's a different way. But to them, even to their parents, who were part of that older group, that's not acceptable.

So, there's a non-moral issue that needs to be worked out in terms of accommodation on both sides of the fence. We worked through it in different ways, and finally, we had a picnic on Sunday and had a good time. Everybody.

You'll have to figure that out in your own settings. The Discipline of Self-Control, verses 24 to 27. Do you not know that in a race, all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Not everybody got a medal from Paul's vantage point in the race.

So, you need to run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games, there's the Isthmian Games, goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last.

We do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like someone running aimlessly. I do not fight like a boxer beating the air.

No, I strike a blow to the body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. Do you want an A on that paper? Well, you may have to burn the midnight oil, or you can get yourself organized and have worked on it the whole semester and not have to have a crisis. Otherwise, you do your duty, you get it done, you hand it in, and you get something less than what you think you deserve, but you got exactly what you do deserve.

You know, teachers don't give grades. Students earn grades. God doesn't, in a sense, give rewards.

Paul earned this reward by going above and beyond the call of duty. Well, as if that's not enough, he moves us into chapter 10. And I'm going to stop there.

I had intended to do it all the way through chapter 10, but next time, we're going to combine chapter 10 and the idea of conscience in our third lecture on this section. Have a good day.

This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is session 22, 1 Corinthians 8.1-11.1, Paul's Response to the Question of Food Sacrificed to Idols. 1 Corinthians 9.