

On the heels of explaining that true knowledge loves by going down, underneath, in order to build up the knowledge and faith of its brother, Paul contends with the accusation that he refuses comforts and remuneration because he lacks authority. He unleashes 17 rhetorical questions in such a torrential downpour that his affections pour out of his mouth and run all over the floor. Then, in one final question, he summarizes (v18) just how love for his brothers is what empowers him and compels him to lay down the rights which he does possess in the gospel: He does so that he might share in the joy of God’s salvation of anyone through his free and unmixed participation in the gospel of Christ.

Exhibit A: Love is Not Weakness, the Deficiency of Authority or Right

- 1) Am I not free? (yes)
 - a) That is, is he bound by the cleanness Laws, such as eating or not eating?
 - i) This seems to be the accusation that was leveled against Paul when he explained in 8:13, “For the sake of my brother I will not eat meat again”
 - ii) Some seem to have been saying that this was due to a lack of freedom, which Paul clearly moves to answer in the very next sentence
 - iii) Love is not about being bound externally, but rather it is to lay down your freedom willingly, because you desire the building up of your brother more than your rights.**
 - b) The expected answer is that he is free, as he has taught, from the demands of the Law as the means of acceptance before God.
 - i) It is not moralism that leads a stronger brother to avoid “unclean” things, but it is love for his brother, for he is free from the “cleanliness” laws, and as long as we avoid idolatry (the worship, preeminent love, of lesser things than God), we are free to partake of anything
- 2) Am I not an apostle? (yes)
 - a) One sent by Christ for the establishment of His Church somewhere where is not yet established
 - i) In one sense, a church planter
 - b) This apostleship is different than church planters, for this generation was uniquely established by God for the foundation of the Church in time and history, uniquely empowered by the Holy Spirit for the writing of sacred Scripture (the New Testament)
 - i) This was unique to the those who 1) saw Jesus post-resurrection, and 2) were approved by the 12
 - (1) Thus Paul appeals to his sight of Jesus
 - (2) It is also true that he was approved by the 12 (see Galatians 2:9; Acts 15)
- 3) Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? (yes)
 - a) Exhibit A for his rights as an apostle (see Acts 1:22, “a witness of His resurrection”)
 - b) I have all the authority of an apostle of Jesus Christ!
- 4) Are you not my work in the Lord? (yes)
 - a) Exhibit B for his rights as an apostle
 - i) If I am not an apostle to others, I am at least to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship.
 - ii) Paul appeals to the evidence among themselves that the Spirit of Christ has powerfully effected salvation in them and sanctification within them
 - (1) “you are our letter of recommendation” (2 Cor 3:2)
 - b) This is my defense to those who would investigate me.
 - i) To those who wondered if Paul’s refusal to act on the freedoms of the gospel implied that he didn’t have the authority (power/rights) to do so, he gives this evidence

- ii) It is also possible that seeing how Paul would sometimes eat with Gentiles and sometimes not eat with Jews implied such vacillation implied an untrustworthiness, he give a defense

Exhibit A1: It is Love Which Lays Down its Rights to Creature Comforts

- 5) Do we not have the right to eat and drink? (yes)
 - a) Paul is arguing that he and Barnabas have the right to eat and drink whatever that God has given to them, for “the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17)
 - b) Paul doesn’t reject eating something because he somehow lacks the “right” to eat it, but rather because exercising such right may lead his brother to eat against his own conscience
 - i) “I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who reckons it unclean.” (Rom 14:14)
 - c) He also seems to be arguing about material support from the churches – connecting the food and drink offered to them for service to the church
- 6) Do we not have the right to bring a believing wife in our company? (yes)
 - a) Paul is making two points about rights here:
 - i) He has a right to be married, but remained single
 - (1) This argument is exactly the argument that he is making in this context: he has a right, but forgoes it for the sake of expediency of gospel ministry
 - (2) So, he has the right to be married, just like the other apostles, and this is something that nobody can deny.
 - (a) This is a direct and clear rebuttal to the Roman Catholic doctrine of priestly celibacy.
 - (b) Pope Siricius, (4th c), left his wife to ascend to the papacy, then demanded that all priests abstain from sexual relationships, claiming that marriage is “an uncleanness of the flesh in which no one can please God.”
 - (c) Apparently, Peter, the so-called first pope, had a wife
 - (3) Paul clearly also states that this right to marriage is only to a believing spouse
 - (a) Literally, “a sister, a wife”
 - (b) What Calvin called blessed union of believing spouses who have a “double-bond” in marriage
 - (i) That of husband and wife in marital covenant oneness
 - (ii) That of brother and sister in family of Christ covenant oneness
 - ii) If he were married, he would also have a right to support his wife in ministry
 - (1) This is why the following question exists
 - (2) There was the assumption that food and drink would be provided to the apostles by those whom they served
 - (3) This was not only the case for the individual apostles, but for their families as well
 - b) Again, note that Paul’s claim of singleness in chapter 7 indicates that he has forgone this right as well

Exhibit A2: It is Love Which Lays Down its Rights to Restitution

- 7) Or, is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from work? (no)
 - a) Gospel ministers have a right to material support from those they serve, not to divide their efforts in work “bi-vocationally”
 - b) For those gospel ministers who choose to do so, do not do so because they have no right, but because they desire not to place any foreseen obstacle between themselves and their accusers

- 8) Who, when formerly a soldier, waged war at his own expense? (nobody)
- a) Soldiers are those who are paid to fight, not merely trained to fight
 - i) In fact, the word, "soldier", in our vernacular comes from the French *solde*, which means "to pay".
 - ii) A *solidus* was a solid gold coin in the Roman world, from which derives the French
 - b) Roman legionnaires were paid an annual salary of 200-300 denarii
 - i) They would also enrich themselves by taking goods off the bodies of the defeated
- 9) Who plants a vineyard without eating its fruit? (nobody)
- a) Who labors through the tilling and rock-clearing, the plowing and furrowing, the planting and the waiting without expecting a return on such investment of time and labor and resources?
 - b) Paul's point is that it is good for the farmer to partake of the profit of the land in which he has toiled
 - c) He and the other apostles also have this right to gather from the produce of the land in which they labored
- 10) Who tends a flock without eating (?) its milk? (nobody)
- a) See vineyard, but with more bleating and complaining, i.e. higher cost ☺.
 - b) Tending vineyards and flocks require great sacrifice in order to bring them to flourish: good feed, protection, binding up broken parts, etc.
 - c) These investment require a laying down of comforts, of convenience, of the freedom to go and do things more enjoyable *because the joy of the harvest is worth it*

Exhibit B: These Rights are Granted by God in the Scripture

- 11) Do I say these things on human authority? (no)
- 12) Does not the Law say the same? (yes)
- a) For it is written in the Law of Moses: "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain."
- 13) Is it for oxen that God is concerned? (no)
- 14) Does he not certainly speak for our sake? (yes)
- a) It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher in hope each of sharing in the crop.
 - i) Note that it is *hope in the sharing of the crop* that enables the worker to work hard
 - ii) That is just a truism, something about work which we must remember, and see what the crop truly is in our labors.
 - (1) What are you working for? Why are you working for it? What is your hope of sharing in the crop?
- 15) Is it too much if we reap material things for spiritual sowing? (no)
- a) Should we not eat as we thresh or drink as we labor in the fields?
 - b) Are we not due our wages, too?

Exhibit C: It is Love Which Lays Down These Rights for the Sake of the Gospel

- 16) Do we not have a rightful claim more than others? (yes)
- a) Paul is showing that their labor was not in a far-off field in another man's granary, but it was in *their* field and in *their midst*.
 - i) The crop which is being produced is amongst them, so he states that Paul and Barnabas have a greater right to share in their blessings
 - b) Yet, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.
 - i) Paul knows that, in Corinth particularly, travelling philosophers were commonly looking for patronage and support from their students.

- ii) He did NOT want to be like them, but to set he and Barnabas apart from them by laying down their right to such patronage
- iii) In fact, he so believed this that he calls such patronage an *obstacle to the gospel*
- 17) Do not those who serve in the temple receive their share from the offerings? (yes)
 - a) In the same manner, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.
 - b) But I have made no use of these rights, nor am I writing to gain such provision now.
 - i) He did in Thessalonica (Phil 4:16), but something must have happened there that led him to conclude that it would be “better” for him to fund his gospel work differently
 - ii) For, in Corinth, he immediately took up tent-making with Aquila, as his means of funding, so that any material support would not be seen as a *reason* for his preaching
 - c) For, I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground of boasting.
 - i) He wants to boast in the gospel as the sole reason for his labors, without any indication or inkling of other causes
 - (1) For, if I proclaim the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting, for necessity is placed upon me to do so.
 - (2) Woe to me if I do NOT proclaim the gospel!
 - (a) He is doomed to destruction if he does not preach
 - (b) He knows that he is under direct orders from Christ Jesus, and it will be to his demise to ignore his Lord’s command
 - (3) 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.
 - (a) Note: either way the fruit is the same
 - (b) Thus, the reward is not contingent upon his “willing attitude” but upon the completion of the orders from the Lord, i.e. preaching.
 - (c) The difference between the “reward” and “stewardship results” is the value which he attaches to the crop.
 - (i) If he enjoys the crop, it is a reward, a valuable reception of joy.
 - (ii) If he is indifferent to the crop, it is a stewardship, but the joy is lesser.
 - (iii) He WANTS the crop!
 - ii) The Gospel itself IS his ground of boasting
 - (1) Note that it is his ‘ground’ of boasting, not the object of his boasting
 - (2) The object is the people, the crop, the redeemed, and the gospel is the ground of that boasting, not comforts of the world, not remuneration of the workers, but the joy of the redeemed is his joy

Conclusion: The Strength to Lay Down Comes from the Reward of the Redeemed

- 18) What, therefore, is my reward, that proclaiming without charge I might present the gospel so that I do not make full use of my rights in the gospel?
 - i) v18 should be translated as one long question meant to determine what it is that makes it worth it to Paul to forgo his temporal rights, which are good, for something better
 - (1) Breaking it into a question and an answer ruins the flow of the argument
 - ii) His answer to this question is in the following section, evidenced by the word "profit" or "gain", as an answer to the inquired “reward” or “wages” in v18:
 - (1) "I have made myself a servant to all, *that I might gain (profit) many.*" (v19)
 - (a) "...that I might gain Jews" (v20); “those under the Law” (v20); “those outside the Law” (v21); “the weak” (v22)
 - (b) "...that I might rescue some" (v22)

- (2) Paul views the reward, that reward which is worth laying down his rights and other remuneration, to be *the people who are redeemed by Christ through faith!*
 - (a) They are his reward, his profit for the investment of his freedoms
 - (b) They are his gain, his wages, for the work which he labors in and the toil in which he pours out his life as an offering
- iii) He also gains the glory of sharing in the gospel work with Christ, as summarized in v23:
 - (1) "I do it all for the sake of the gospel, *that I might become a partner of it.*"
 - (a) Paul loves the gospel. Sharing in its powerful work of salvation is his reward. That is, those who are redeemed through its proclamation and the glory gained to the worker of such salvation, His Steward, is his joy.
 - (b) The glory of God as a Redeemer by the means of the Cross and the inclusion of those from every tribe and tongue and history who cling to Jesus by faith
 - (c) This is the glorious call of Heaven's song, the gospel proclaimed for all eternity of the worthiness of Christ Jesus for His redemption of those who have been purchased by His laying down His life:
 - (i) Revelation 5:9-10
- iv) Amazingly, this is what God calls His reward, too!
 - (1) Isaiah 40:9-11
 - (a) God views His redeemed people, whom He has sovereignly rescued, gathered, covenanted with, and bound Himself to, as His great reward
 - (2) YOU are the reward of Christ Jesus' labors!
 - (a) Do not doubt His delight of you, O laboring Christian, burdened by fears and anxiety, for you are His delight and the apple of His eye.
 - (b) He LOVES you in such a way that He laid down his comforts and other rewards to gain you for His Father, for the Father so loved the world...
 - (c) Thus, the gospel is a salve for the wounded, fearful, heart, and even in the revelation of the bad news of our sin and evil, God worked glorious redemption through the blood of His only unique eternal Son

Paul has been expounding on chapter 8, what it means to "not eat meat", in order to edify a brother. Love builds others up by laying down its rights. Though he has rights that are good, to rejoice in the comforts of this world, to be remunerated for his labors, he has chosen to defer such goods because he sees his more valued reward is those added to the community of the called in Christ Jesus through his proclamation of the gospel and his laying down of such rights.

What is the profit for laying down? It is that "the many" are built up in Christ and share in the joy of the redeemed. They are his seal of such stewardship. They are the fruits of his labor. They are worth the blessings passed over for the future profit of the salvation of people.

And Paul didn't come up with this theme, but he was granted such divine character from the One who loves perfectly. The Son of God, eternally existing in His godness, loving and glorifying the Father and the Spirit together as One, laid down His *rights* to such glory, in order to be born in a dung-laden stable in a far-flung village on the terrestrial sphere which he had made. Jesus made Himself so little, so insignificant, so bound, not by necessity, but by willed love. God became human that we might be edified through His self-giving work and word. This is love: he laid down His rightful glories that you and I might be redeemed from our slavery to sin and death and brought to share in His divine joy.