

How to Silence a Critic (1 Corinthians 9)

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Introduction: "What would you give up for Christ?" (1 Cor 8:13)

- A. Earlier we saw the unselfish heart of love but now we will see the relentless attacks of Paul's critics.
 - 1. Some were trying to destroy Paul's influence out of a spirit of envy. (1 Cor 3:4-5)
 - 2. In their attempt to attack Paul they were gathering any and all "ammunition" in an attempt to destroy his influence. (1 Cor 4:3-5)
- B. We need the proper kind of criticism. We may even gain from unfair criticism.
 - 1. Paul knew that He too could go astray and thus needed rebuke! (1 Cor 9:27)
 - 2. He wanted to see himself as God did and not be moved by men. (Gal 1:10)
- C. How does one respond to the hyper-critical?
 - 1. Those caught up in this are putting their souls at risk!
 - a. There would be two kinds involved in this: followers and leaders.
 - b. The followers could be helped to see their wrong.
 - c. The leaders likely would need another approach. (Titus 3:10)
 - 2. Paul's answer was by his life. He invited his critics to do something they would never do in their present frame of mind, that is join him in a selfless sacrifice!

I. The Proof and the Rights of an Apostle. (9:1-5)

- A. Four questions with an obvious answer.
 - 1. Am I not an Apostle? (9:1; 2 Cor 12:12)
 - a. If no, then what did that make of the Corinthians? (9:2)
 - b. Consistency will be a major problem for these critics.
 - 2. Am I not free? (9:1; John 8:32)
 - a. We are free also from the rules and whims of men! (4:3; 1 Pt 4:15)
 - b. Those who intimidate with their tongues are looking for slaves to own.
 - 3. Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?
 - a. This was a requirement to be an apostle. (Acts 1:22, 25-26)
 - 4. Are you not my work in the Lord? (1 Cor 4:15)
 - a. He appeals to their memory. Paul's past work and example was powerful.
 - b. The inconsistency of the critics screams out at them. Their very words discredits themselves. Sadly some run on emotion rather than reason.
- B. Questions about the rights of an apostle.
 - 1. This was a reasoned defense that any could examine. No emotional twisted whims of a disgruntled Christian! (1 Cor 9:3; 1 Peter 3:15)
 - 2. These questions are common to the rights of all Christians! Some in jealousy and envy put others to standards they would never touch.
 - 3. "Do we have no right to eat and drink?" (9:4)
 - a. Note the critics in the ministry of Christ. (Luke 7:33-35)
 - b. In this case it did not matter what Christ did!
 - 4. "Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other

apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?" (9:5)

- a. Was Peter married? He had a mother in law. (Matthew 8:14)
- b. Many critics are isolated and do not welcome serious thought about their charges. They choose to only be with those who agree with them.

II. Arguments about the right to receive support and to refuse support (9:6-18)

A. Questions about the support of an Apostle. (9:6-13)

- (1.) **Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?**
- (2.) **Who ever goes to war at his own expense?**
- (3.) **Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit?**
- (4.) **Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?**
- (5.) **Do I say these things as a mere man?**
- (6.) **Or does not the law say the same also?**
- (7.) For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." **Is it oxen God is concerned about?**
- (8.) **Or does He say it altogether for our sakes?** For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.
- (9.) **If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?**
- (10.) **If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more?** Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.
- (11.) **Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?**

C. Paul had a right to refuse support in order to silence his critics! (9:14-18)

1. Your life may silence your critics before reasonable men.
2. Paul wanted his critics to attempt to follow him in terms of sacrifice and service! The carnal man would never do this. (Romans 1:14-15)
3. The servant of Christ has no time for pettiness and hyper-critical judging. He is looking at the Lord. (2 Cor 11:8-12)
4. Paul was involved with building men, not personal kingdoms.

III. The Sacrifices of Paul in order to see the Gospel Spread. (9:19-23)

A. Many do not have the all consuming desire to see others brought to the Lord in maturity. (Romans 15:1)

1. What did these things involve Paul giving up?
2. What are the limits of these kind of compromises? (Acts 16:3; Gal 2:3-5)

IV. The Christian's Race --- A Single Minded Devotion (9:24-27)

A. Do you want the crown only God can give? (2 Tim 4:8; Jas 1:12; Rev 2:10)

1. Paul poured out his very life for others. (Phil 2:17)
2. This was a labor of joy!

B. Are there things you need to give up for the cause of Christ? You will not regret it.

1. Some may need to begin with their hearts and then their tongues. (Jas 3:1-5)
2. Some need to change their dress, their habits, their hobbies and schedules!

Conclusion: The Christian life is a God centered life.

A. When based upon God, the whims of man do not stop you from your work.

B. Because of the teaching of God's Spirit, we deny the flesh. (Gal 5:17; Rom 8:7)