

The minister has the right to be supported

1 Corinthians 9:3-11 (NASB)

³ My defense to those who examine me is this:

⁴ Do we not have a right to eat and drink?

⁵ Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?

⁶ Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?

⁷ Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?

⁸ I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things?

⁹ For it is written in the Law of Moses, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING.” God is not concerned about oxen, is He?

¹⁰ Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher *to thresh* in hope of sharing *the crops*.

¹¹ If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

(1 Corinthians 9:4-11) **Minister, Rights:** the minister has the right to be supported. Paul asserts three rights dealing with the church supporting the minister financially, then he gives five supporting arguments. The word “**right**” (*exousian*) means power, authority or right throughout this passage.

1. The right to be fed. The minister and his family have to eat; therefore, it is the church’s duty to provide food for their ministers.

2. The right to receive travel support. The ministers of Paul’s day were always travelling about ministering among a number of churches. Ministers of every generation have had travel expenses; therefore, it is the responsibility of the churches to provide the travel expenses.

Note two things.

- a. The apostles and other ministers took their families with them as they travelled about ministering. This seems to indicate that most of them were married.
- b. The reference to the “brothers of the Lord” is a strong testimony to the deity of Christ. His own half-brothers who had lived with him day by day became followers and ministers after His resurrection (cp. [Matthew 13:55-56](#)).

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3. The right to receive enough income that he can minister full time (**1 Corinthians 9:6**). Paul says that he and Barnabas worked and earned their own living while ministering in Corinth. But they had the right to be supported by the church.

4. The supportive arguments. Note how clearly the issue is illustrated and seen in these arguments. The church is unquestionably responsible for the support of its ministers.

- a. **The soldier's right:** What soldier goes to war at his own expense? The minister is a soldier of Christ. He is leading the people of God in their spiritual warfare. He is, therefore, to be supported by those who engage him to lead the battle.
- b. **The farmer's right:** What farmer plants his vineyard and does not eat of the fruit? The minister is a farmer who sows the seed of the Word of God. He plants and harvests the fruit for the Lord and for the church. Therefore, the church is to see that he reaps of the harvest and eats of the fruit.
- c. **The shepherd's right:** What shepherd feeds a flock and does not eat of the milk of the flock? The minister is the shepherd of God's flock and feeds God's flock; therefore, he is to be fed and supported by the flock.
- d. **The law or Word of God says this right belongs to a minister.** Paul says he does not have to speak as a man using human illustrations to prove his point. The Word of God says the same thing:

1 Corinthians 9:9 (NASB)

⁹“For it is written in the Law of Moses, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING.” God is not concerned about oxen, is He?”

Deuteronomy 25:4 (NASB)

⁴“You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.”

Note the question: “Does God take care of oxen?” Yes, he has provided in His Word for oxen. Men are to feed the oxen, for the oxen serve men. If God expects men to take care of the beasts who serve them, how much more does He expect men to take care of the ministers who labor for their spiritual welfare?

- e. **The conclusion is forceful:** these things are written for the sake of God's people. The Greek is emphatic in its stress: these things are said entirely, with all certainty, most assuredly for our sakes. Therefore, the minister or preacher of the gospel should *labor and labor diligently* in hope, for God shall reward his hope. God will see to it that the minister shall partake of his hope. God will see to it that the minister has the necessities of life. (Cp. **Matthew 6:24-34.**)

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5. The central question is direct: Does spiritual labor merit material wage? Does ministering the highest qualities of life to people deserve pay? Such qualities as proclaiming and teaching and encouraging...

- salvation and redemption
- life, both abundant and eternal
- love, joy, peace
- longsuffering, gentleness, goodness
- faith, meekness, control

The answer is obvious. There is no question, for there is no greater need than ministering to people in proclaiming and teaching the great qualities for which all men long.

Matthew 10:9-10 (NASB)

⁹“Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts,
¹⁰ or a bag for *your* journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff;
for the worker is worthy of his support.”

1 Corinthians 9:14 (NASB)

¹⁴“So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.”

Galatians 6:6 (NASB)

⁶“The one who is taught the word is to share all good things [give, share, support, provide for] with the one who teaches *him*.”

Philippians 4:14 (NASB)

¹⁴“Nevertheless, you have done well to share [give, share, support, provide for] *with me* in my affliction.”

1 Timothy 5:18 (NASB)

¹⁸“For the Scripture says, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”