

Law of Supreme Sacrifice: To Refrain from Behaviors that Could Potentially Hinder the Unbeliever's Objectivity toward the Gospel; Monetary Support for Communicators of Doctrine: Soldiers, Viticulturists, & Shepherds, 1 Cor 9:6-7

Paul was a tentmaker. His hometown was Tarsus in the province of Cilicia \si-lish'-i-a\ located in the extreme southeast corner of Asia Minor noted for its goats' hair cloth, exported under the name of *cilicium* and used largely for tent making.

Since it was considered the responsibility of a father to train his sons in a trade it may be concluded that Paul's father was a tentmaker in Tarsus. Tent making was a laborious task and Paul's knowledge of the trade enabled him to earn an income while teaching doctrine to the churches he founded. The point he is making about himself and Barnabas is that they have the right not to work for income rather than engage in trade for personal income. This removed any criticism from the unbelievers in Corinth who could assert, had Paul and Barnabas taken a salary, that they were making money off the teaching of the gospel message. The other apostles were taking salaries which was proper for them to do. On the other hand, Paul and Barnabas are making tents for their survival under the Law of Supreme Sacrifice.

The word *exousia* can mean "power," "authority," or "right." The latter two are intended in this context:

ἐξουσία is the possibility granted by a higher norm or court, and therefore "the right to do something or the right over something," the right being, according to context, "authority," "permission," "freedom." It is used of the possibility of action given authoritatively conferring authority, permission or freedom on individuals. It is used of any right (permission, freedom etc.) in the various relationships similar to and guaranteed by national institutions, e.g., the rights of parents in relation to children, of masters in relation to slaves, of owners in relation to property, and of individuals in respect of personal liberty. (p. 562)

The authority mentioned is illusory unless backed by real power. Behind legal authority stands the power of the state to give it validity, and the rights mentioned are supported by the law and by the power of the state. Thus it is not always possible to separate between authority and power. (p. 563)

In the LXX [Septuagint] ἐξουσία first means right, authority, permission or freedom in the legal or political sense, and it is then used for the right or permission given by God. (p. 564)

ἐξουσία presupposes responsible use ... as Paul demonstrates in his refusal of support. In this connection ἐξουσία denotes the right, e.g., to be supported by the community, 1 Corinthians 9:4-6, 12, 18.¹ (p. 570)

Paul is making the point with the Corinthians that he and Barnabas have the same rights as the other apostles: (1) to eat and drink, (2) to have a wife, and (3) to take a salary and stop working. These rights are mentioned in verses 4-6 and each is introduced by the phrase: **Μὴ οὐκ ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν, *Mē ouk echomin exousian***: "Do we not have the right."

¹ Werner Foerster, "ἐξουσίαν," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 2:562-64, 570.

Μὴ οὐκ is a double negative that places emphasis on the statements that follow and in Greek it requires a positive response. Do not Barnabas and I have the right to physical logistics from the church? Yes. Do not Barnabas and I have the right to have a wife? Yes. Do Barnabas and I have no right to refrain from working? Yes.

The Judaizers argue that Paul is not an apostle because he does not require a salary from the church for his physical logistics, he has chosen to remain a bachelor, and he continues to work for a living.

Paul's reason for doing all three of these things is not because he doesn't have a right to do otherwise but because his desire is to focus all of his time and energy on spreading the gospel, founding churches, teaching doctrine, and writing Epistles.

This sets up the subject of the Law of Supreme Sacrifice. Paul's choices are to be seen as an exception to the rule which he has freely chosen in order to better serve the Lord. To amplify this he follows with three examples of those who are supported for their sacrifice: (1) soldiers, (2) vinticulturists, and (3) shepherds.

1 Corinthians 9:7 - Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?

With these three examples Paul illustrates the principle of compensation for services rendered to others.

The first example is that of the soldier. He places himself in harm's way at the behest of others and therefore is due just compensation for training, deployment, and execution of his duties. No military officer underwrites his own logistical necessities or costs of living. These are provided by the nation or monarch that employs him.

Secondly, the vineyard worker is employed to tend the orchard which is a process that covers the entire year. The grapes produced by a grape vine occur on what are called shoots. Following harvest, when these shoots harden they are called canes. These must be thinned out so the next season's vintage is of the highest quality. The trimmed canes are either burned or turned into mulch.

The remaining canes are tied to overhanging wires around which the vine's tendrils can wrap themselves the following year.

During the winter months the vineyards must be protected from freezing weather. Fires are started within the vineyard by igniting oil heaters or even old tires to heat up the air around the vines.

During the summer, workers enter the vineyard to trim still-green bunches of grapes in order to thin the crop. Usually up to fifty percent of the young clusters are trimmed to insure timely ripening and good juice concentration for in the remaining bunches.

At harvest the vineyard's most important process begins; the ripened grapes are picked, gathered into the cellar, and the process of turning grapes into wine begins.

Those who assisted in the fulfillment of this sequence of events deserve to be paid.

Here is a good synopsis of the task of tending the vineyard:

Tending the Vineyard. The vineyard is where quality starts. While in the 1970s and 1980s many winegrowers invested in glitzy cellars and in modern winery technology, many of them are now returning to the root of quality: cultivation of the vineyard. It is the art of cultivation—and not cellar work—that ultimately determines whether the full potential for excellence offered by the ground is realized or not. The care of the soil, the training of the vines, the harvest, and prevention of damage by pests and diseases—these things are critical for turning an average wine into a good one, a good wine into a very good one, and a very good wine into a great one. The vintage then becomes the culmination of the wine year; it reveals whether the quality that we diligently created with what nature had given us can successfully be delivered into the safety of the cellar. The better the wine, the harder it is to mechanize vineyard work. The sweat on the forehead of the grape picker who carried the filled pannier [basket] and the steaming body of the horse that pulls the plow, these are the things that make up the price of the wine.²

Finally, the shepherd's duties are to care for the sheep of his assigned flock. He carried a rod about thirty inches long studded with several iron nails at its rounded head. It was used for defense against attack by poisonous serpents, beasts of prey, or thieves [protection]. He was constantly in search of good pasture and water [logistics]. He cared for sick sheep, guarded the mother during her birth of offspring [preservation], and carried the lamb in the folds of his coat until it was able to walk [nurturing].

As for his wages, the shepherd was paid in money but more often than not in kind, in the form of milk, wool, or sheep (Genesis 31; Zechariah 11:12).³

Each of these examples affirms the validity of paying those who perform services. The soldier, viticulturist, and shepherd are each skilled at his profession and hired because of his expertise. Consequently, this principle is rightly applied to those who communicate the gospel as noted in the next two verses of our passage.

Paul's illustrations are drawn from the employment practices of the day. People are paid for their production in the workaday world and therefore it should be even more so observed in the realm of spiritual production.

² Jens Priewe, *Wine: From Grape to Glass*, rev. ed. (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 2001), 29.

³ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Trades and Occupations of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), 201–202.