

7304

SOUTH WEST BIBLE SCHOOL - July 1998

LET HIM THAT THINKETH HE STANDETH

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Study #3

Am I not Free?

Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:1-14

Dear brethren and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, b&s, when we had a look at chapter 8, you will remember the point that we were making was this, there were the weak and there were the strong. And let's just review that because it will help put this in context, and of course, the strong were those brethren who knew that there was one God and they knew the implications of that, and the implications were that there was no other gods, 'whether they be called gods many or lords many'. They just didn't exist, and because they didn't exist, there's no way that meat could be contaminated by offering unto idols. It was just ineffective, and knowing that, of course, they were free, they were at liberty therefore, to eat meat offered unto idols. And they knew that, intellectually they knew that was true! The weak did not have that knowledge; ah, they believed there was one God, but they did not see the full implications of that, and so for them to eat that meat, it was a conscience matter, and if they participated, of course, it was wrong! As Paul said, 'he that doubted, if he does it, it's not of faith, it's sin', so what may be, b&s, alright for you may not be alright for me, and vice versa. But what is the overriding principle is this, that it is up to the strong, who have room to manoeuvre, to not make it difficult for the brother who has not got room to manoeuvre. And we ought, b&s, to set an example, if we say we're strong, if we say we know, if we know the implications of the truth, and we have certain freedoms, well then, let's exercise that properly, and make absolutely certain, that we try our utmost, not to cast a stumbling block for those who don't know! In other words, we sacrifice personal liberties and even what we might call, rights, if we can call it that! And we're going to see this morning, b&s, one of the most outstanding examples of that in the apostle Paul. An absolutely magnificent brother in the truth, and he's going to shame these Corinthians, by an example, b&s, that apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, of course, apart from Him, it was much less among them, a man who had rights, not only because of his knowledge of the truth, not only because he knew the implications of what was right, but because God had given him rights. He had God-given rights, way and above what they had and was prepared to forego them, that others might be saved for the truth. And this is a remarkable section of Paul's writings, and we're going to deal with chapter nine, verses

1 to 14, b&s. We're going to deal with that!

And so in this section of chapter 9 verses 1 to 14, the chapter opens with the words, 'Am I not an apostle?' but that's not how the Greek opens. The original Greek in which it was written, b&s, opens with the words, 'Am I not free?' That's the first statement of chapter 9, so you have liberty, you have liberty of conscience to do this or to do that, you think you're free to eat this meat because you know, well, am I not free? Now, b&s, comes a powerful argument right through this chapter to prove to them, that he had divine freedom, way and above any they could ever imagine, and yet he never took that and exercised it. And all he was asking them to do was to forego a bit of steak; that's all! and by the time he'd finished this section, they would be shamed by the example that was being set by this wonderful man.

'Am I not an apostle?' Apostles, b&s, were unique! there was only 12 of them, and Jesus had conferred upon them certain rights which Paul is going to finish this little first section with by the end of verse 14, and when we get there, he's going to finish with the words of the Lord to His apostles. Now he's an apostle, ah, he might have been born out of due time, as some would ironically suggest, and of course, infer that he was an imposter! But the fact that he was an apostle, was beyond doubt, b&s. Arrested by the Lord Jesus Christ on the way to Damascus, having had a vision of the Lord, there was no question of his credentials. And he says, 'have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?' and that was one of the credentials of an apostle, he had to see the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, in Acts chapter 1, b&s, we have the credentials of an apostle, and they're absolutely essential. It was like this you see, but here in the first chapter of Acts when they had to appoint a man to take Judas' place, Peter says, 'wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection'. Now it's clearly simple, b&s, that if you're going to be an accredited witness, an apostle, an accredited witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, you'd have to know Him before He died! So Peter says, we've got to have someone that was with us right from the time of John's baptism of Him to now, because what's the good of people being sent up to witness to the resurrection of Christ and saying, 'I have seen the resurrected Lord', oh, they'd say, you've seen Him? Yes, well, who was He? Well, He was Jesus Christ, well, how do you know that, did you know Him before He died? well, no! well, how do you know it was the same man?' See the point! So an accredited apostle, b&s, was one who knew Him as a mortal man and had seen Him again as an immortal man, and said, 'that's the same man!' otherwise, your witness was not true. And Paul had seen the risen Lord on the way to Damascus; the Lord appeared to him in a vision, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?' so he'd seen Him, but the question is, had he seen Him before?

Paul doesn't even bother to answer that because it was clearly obvious, that he did! You see, how could Paul not have seen Him, b&s, when he said of himself, that he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, (and not all Jews did that, you know, only the rich influential families could ever send their children to Rabbinical schools, and Paul's whole life reveals that he was a man of some means because he was able to sustain

himself, so Paul had the privilege of sitting at the feet of one of the greatest teachers of all history, in Jewish history that is, Gamaliel himself. And he says in Galatians, that he was top of the class; top of the class of Gamaliel and a young man of burning zeal for the things of the Law of Moses. You don't mean to tell me, b&s, that when this itinerant preacher from Nazareth was going around the Land, attracting vast crowds of people, from miles from where He lived, and all the doctors of the Law in the front row trying to catch Him in His words, you don't mean to tell me, that Paul wasn't there. And on one occasion when the Lord told the parable of the vineyard and when the owner of the vineyard sent his son to receive the fruits of the vineyard, and they killed him, 'this is the heir, come let us kill him; and they killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. And He said, what will he do? will he not destroy those murderers and burn their city?' And Matthew records that out of the crowd came the words, 'God forbid!' There is only one man of whom is recorded, that used that expression! And there is no question that Paul is a young man, a fiery young man, who would have seen the Lord Jesus Christ; he was there when Stephen died, we know that?

So here was an accredited apostle. And if the Corinthians wanted to argue about that, in verse 2, he said, 'If I'd not been an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you; for the seal of my apostleship are ye in the Lord'. And it was said of the Lord Jesus Christ, b&s, that Him hath God the Father sealed, and how did God seal Him? By the miracles that He did, if nothing else; He said, 'if ye cannot believe my words, believe my works' and those works were the signet ring of the Father in the clay as it were, stamped in there, that that's My Son! And who could dispute that? Well, Paul says, 'you're my seal', and they were there in the earth in Corinth, in the truth, because of this man. Deny my apostleship, he says, and you're illegitimates; you aren't even in the truth. This is my work, I was given this work to do, and you know that and you were part of it; so if others don't believe I'm an apostle, you should! And so he's telling them in strong language, b&s, 'this is my answer, in verse 3, 'my answer to them that do examine me is this', now, he's not referring to something he's about to say, the Greek is referring back; he said, that's my answer to you, you're my answer, the ecclesia was. They were his seal of his apostleship, and if he's an apostle, he has divine rights to partake of his expenses. And he's going to prove that from every conceivable angle, b&s, he's going to prove that from every conceivable angle so that he can shame them for this request that they merely forego a meal. It's absolutely wonderful how this is done; 'so that's my answer to you'.

So he goes on in verse 4, 'Listen, he says, 'you want to eat and drink in the idol's temple, you want to demand your intellectual rights of being justified to do that, because you can prove it from the bible, do you?' Well, he says, 'haven't I got that same authority?' 'Don't I have that right?' You see, b&s, what he's saying, you want to eat in the idol's temple, that's just what you want to claim to do to prove your point. Look at my rights! and he tells them what they are, he said, 'haven't we got authority to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as the other apostles?' You see, it's clear here, b&s, that the other apostles travelled on behalf of the truth, and were paid their expenses. That was reasonable! they were only Galilean fishermen, they had left everything, left their nets and walked away from their livelihood, it was to be expected therefore, they have to eat,

they have to have somewhere to lay their head, and Jesus had commissioned them to go into all the world. And they took of their expenses, and it was perfectly right that they should. And not only that, he says, 'but they paid for their wives as well'. And as if to make the point standup a bit better, he says, 'why, even Peter did that!', and Peter, of course, was truly the leader of the apostles, wasn't he? and he took his wife with him; and that wasn't wrong, there's nothing wrong with that, and Peter had a perfect right to do that. Paul says, 'I don't even have a wife' and he wasn't asking of them anything for himself, b&s, yet all the other apostles did that, didn't he have that right to do that? Wasn't that divinely ordained that it should be like that!

Of course it was, and you see, he brings into this with him, the only one in the world that was like that with him, who had this partnership in this respect, he says, 'and I only and Barnabas', haven't we got the authority to forebear working? and we know who Barnabas was, this is what it says about him. It says, 'And Joses who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, which is being interpreted, the son of consolation, a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet'. It wasn't only, b&s, that Barnabas just did this as an ordinary man, he had the right to partake of his expenses because he travelled with the apostle preaching, and the Law of Moses said, that his class were owners of land, at the people's expense. And God gave them 48 cities, spread them through the Land, 48 cities with the suburbs stretching a 1000 cubits in every direction, that the Levites might have that land free of charge. And here's a Levite, he doesn't even live in the Land, he's over there in Cyprus, and he sells lands that he owns and gives it to the ecclesia; it's the exact reverse of what the Law of Moses said was his right, and then he went to the apostle Paul and both of them worked for their living, and wouldn't take a cent from anybody.

And why did God give the 48 cities to the Levites? and why did God make sure that the Levites were cared for so they didn't have to go to work? It's because God wanted to put them within proximity to every ecclesia, so there wasn't a brother or sister in Israel, who couldn't go to a study-leader in their proximity. That was the purpose of the 48 cities of the Levites. The Levites were those that expounded the Word of God, and they were given to God as a gift from the children of Israel, (Numbers 8 I'm quoting). And when God received them as a gift, He gave them back as a gift to Israel, (this is in Numbers 8 we won't turn these references up). So commenting on the Sinai experience, Psalm 68 which is based upon the Sinai experience, because it opens with the opening prayer of Moses, 'Rise up, O God, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee, flee from before Thee'; it says in that Psalm that He received gifts from men, and when Paul quotes it in Ephesians chapter 4, he said as the Psalm said, 'He lead captivity captive, and gave gifts to men', who's right? They're both right, and in Numbers 8 it says, 'He received the Levites as a gift' and 'He gave them back as a gift'. Psalm 68 said 'He received gifts from men' and Ephesians says 'He gave gifts to men'. What were the gifts? What were they? Some apostles, some evangelists, some teachers, some pastors, says Paul. He gave some apostles, some teachers, some evangelists, some pastors, now they're all different and yet they've all got something in common. They're all teachers of one sort or another; we would say today, they're expositors of the Word,

or another brother might be expert in exhortation, another brother might be good in tutoring a person for baptism, another might be a good lecturer to the public; but they're all teachers. The greatest gift that an ecclesia can have apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, (and I'm not saying that because I'm a teacher) but that's what the bible says, and that's why the Levites, b&s, God ensured that they were in proximity to anybody who lived in the Land, that the people couldn't say, 'I don't understand the bible', they were to knock on his door and say, 'brother, can you tell me what this means?' and he ought to be able to tell them. Yes, it means this!

And I couldn't help but feel in the strength of bro. David's words, when he said how every generation of the truth weakens and weakens, and it sure does, because we're so stupid. And you know, we've got ecclesias and what do we do today? we give everybody 'a go', and people say, 'why don't people come to the bible class?' I can tell you why they don't come to the bible class, oh, they should, it's their duty to come, I know why they don't, because we don't adopt that policy. And because we load the young fellow up or the older brother up who's got the expertise in bible exposition, and he does everything! And we haven't got the brains to see, if we were to put our shoulders to the wheel and give him more time, that we would benefit; we haven't got the brains to do that! And this is what God did with the Levites, and Barnabas was a Levite; and a marvellous teacher at that. He was a gift of God because God had received him as a gift, and the whole point about that is this, and I'd like the young fellows to listen to what I'm going to say now, because it's the whole point of it! And that is this, there's no way that God could have given the Levites to Israel as a gift, if they had not, first of all, given themselves as a gift to God. 'I could give you nothing unless I first received it'; God wanted their heart and soul and mind and when they gave themselves to God, He said, 'Right, now I can give you back'. And our time is God's and when we give ourselves to God, He will hand us back to the ecclesia, and great will be the benefits according to our dedication to His will and His Word. That's the Levites, b&s, and this man came back to reverse the principles of the Law and with the apostle, (there was only the two of them among all those who went preaching who worked), to keep themselves when they have a divine stamp and seal of authority to do otherwise.

But they didn't take it on principle, because they wanted to set an example to those to whom they preached. Now I'm going to read a couple of references to you about this, you just listen to what they did, what the apostle Paul did here. These are wonderful words, b&s, and we need to heed these examples, I only wish I could set this example myself, but unfortunately I can't, but these people did, and Paul said this to the Thessalonians, 'For yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we behave not ourselves disorderly among you, neither did we eat any man's bread for nothing. But wrought with labour and travail, night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you; not because we have not power, not because we didn't have the authority, but to make ourselves an example for you to follow us'. Now you can read those words quickly, you can gloss over them, but here's a man telling you that he went to work for a living, and he didn't work in a government office, b&s, where you twiddle your thumbs all day and sip coffee. He wrought night and day with labour and travail, he worked hard and we're talking about Paul the apostle; that's who we're talking about, here's a man that did that while he preached the truth. Look at his life, b&s, and tell me, what sort of a

life do we live by comparison? Where is anybody who could make his bootlace, and here's a man who had every right, 'not that we haven't got power' he says, but we wanted to set an example for you'.

In the 20th chapter of Acts he said this, you listen to this; 'I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel', and he called upon the Ephesian elders to be witnesses, he said, 'you know, you yourselves know this, that these hands have ministered unto mine necessities, and to them that were with me'. Can you imagine that? Can you even imagine, b&s, this man, the apostle Paul, working for himself in those circumstances, a night and a day in the deep, three times beaten with rods, in perils among robbers, in perils in the sea, in perils among his own brethren, in fastings often, hungers often, thirst, he said, tiredness and all the care of the ecclesias, and he's working for himself and everybody with him! Titus and Timothy, Silas, Aristarchus, Luke, they're free; this man is earning the money for the lot of them! That example would shame you and all he's asking the Corinthians to do, is to forego a bit of meat! because they thought they had rights; I'm telling you, b&s, where have you ever seen an example like that except in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the greatest man that ever followed Christ, no question about it, and my mind boggles to think how he could ever cope with life? How did he ever cope with life when he worked for himself and every body with him? Fancy you being in Paul's party and being told, 'you better go over here and preach the truth in this synagogue, you better go over here and see these Gentiles over there', and then say, 'Look, Paul, we've got no money, we've got to eat'. And he says, 'I'll fix that, I'm going to work tonight!' I'm going to work tonight! Imagine that, and they talk about right, unbelievable!

Absolutely unbelievable! And now he 's going to set out, b&s, his rights to do that; he's already down that, he's an apostle, but he's going to lay it on, he's going to pour it on so that nobody could say, there's just isn't anyone who could pick holes in this argument, and then they'll be able to measure, the measure of the sacrifice that he's making for them. And he's going to tell them by secular practice, by agricultural practice, by the Mosaic Law, he's got rights! You see, he said, 'Look, what soldier goes to warfare and pays himself?' What soldier does that? if he's recruited into the army, the army feeds him, if it didn't it could never win wars because they need them desperately. Well, Paul says, 'I'm a soldier, the weapons of my warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, and he paid himself. He says, 'what man plants a vineyard and doesn't eat the fruit therefore?' If a man has a huge vineyard and he's going to make a big profit out of it, and it's far more in excess to what he needs himself, he is certainly going to keep some grapes, isn't he? he's not going to starve to death when he owns a vineyard, he's going to go out and cut a few bunches for himself and live by that, isn't he? Well, Paul told them that he was working in God's vineyard, wasn't he? In 1 Corinthians 3, he said, 'I'm a labourer with God on His farm' and supplied his own food to do it! Or he says, 'what man who feedeth a flock and doesn't eat of the milk of the flock?' What farmer is there that doesn't have a herd of cattle and a flock of sheep? he doesn't run off to the butcher to buy meat, it's on the property, so when his family needs come about, he goes out there and picks an animal and he dresses the animal for his family meal. Well, Paul told the Ephesian elders 'feed the flock of God',

care for them like a shepherd, and these hands will tell you, he said, 'that I didn't take anyone's meat', but I have a perfect right to do so. But he didn't do that, and of course, b&s, the Jews would say, 'ah, well, that's okay, that's alright for you, Paul, but I speak as a man; but that wouldn't impress the Jews, what about the Law of Moses, he says?

Say I as a man or does the Law say also? You, Jews are not impressed with secular practice, agriculture, the shepherd, you want the bible? well, let's have the bible! It's written in the Law, it's written in the Law of Moses (he gives the full title that they might appreciate where it's coming from) 'Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn', that's what it says in Deuteronomy 25, the question is, does God take care of oxen? Does He? And the clear, unmistakeable biblical answer to that is, YES. And there are plenty of references, b&s, to tell us that God is a responsible Creator who having created the creatures, cares for them. 'Who provideth the raven his food when he wanders through lack of meat?' And in the Proverbs chapter 12 and verse 10, 'The righteous man is the man who is seen to be the one who looks after his ox, and the wicked shows no tender mercy to the animal', so God does care for oxen. The answer is YES.

Well, how do we explain this? 'Or saith He it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written' What does he mean? He means this, that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope'. You see, what the Hebrew said was this, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox whilst he is in the act of treading out the corn; that law was not given out of care for the oxen! God cares for oxen unquestionably, but when He gave that particular law, He did not have the ox in mind because it is not the right thing to do. And when a man yoked 3 or 4 oxen together to walk them around and around over the corn, look, the worst thing in the world was to leave them unmuzzled because they would one by one, bring their head down to eat and pull the yoke against the others, and stop the work and they would all have to wait there while one munched away on a bit of corn. Even if he hit them, and the farmer got them going for a few more stumbling steps, and another one would put his head down and the farmer would stand there and he'd think to himself, 'ah, dear oh dear, God is a wonderful god, but He knows nothing about farming'. He doesn't know anything about farming' and that's the whole point! God was trying to arrest his attention about something, you see, the right thing would have been, b&s, to muzzle them so they wouldn't do that, and when they finished the work, put them in the stall and feed them there, and they can munch away to their heart's content; better for them, better for the farmer, better all round. When God gave that law, He wasn't caring for the oxen, when He gave that law, it was written for that farmer's sake, that when the farmer says, 'God doesn't know much about farming', he should have said, 'wait a minute, He knows all about farming', and there's a magnificent reference but we won't turn it up, which says He knows a whole lot more than that farmer, but at any rate, the farmer would think He's trying to tell me something, and what He was trying to tell him was this, that while that ox is working around that circle he has a right to partake of that corn. The lesson was clear and unmistakeable, that he that plows in hope should thresh in hope, and you know the word 'thresh' there is the same word 'tread'; he that plows in hope should tread in hope, and here's the apostle treading around the ecclesial world,

blowing away the chaff and gaining the wheat for God. A brute beast as it were, working his soul out, b&s, great tiredness and distress, working night and day doing a job that day to get a few pence together, to keep body and soul together, treading out the corn! Can't I put my head down and eat? The Law says I can, but I don't do it!

That's the point he's making, it's absolutely magnificent! In verse 12 he says, 'If others be partakers of this authority over you, can't we?' And they did you know! And the Judaizer came along and he put his hand out for his expenses, he says in 2 Corinthians 11, he says 'For you suffer fools gladly seeing yourselves are wise. For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face', you suffer him because you think that's dignified. So the Judaizer came along, an angel of light, Satan himself was transformed into an angel of light, and he came along and he gave his eloquent speeches about the jots and tittles of the Law, expounding those technical and legal technicalities which left love and mercy and justice, right out of the question. And they loved him because he was dignified and because he was a great speaker, and when he put his hand out for his expenses, they paid him liberally because they thought that he was worth it! And he would smite them on the face, 'you foolish Corinthians, you know not the Law', and they'd say, 'no, rabbi'. 'You suffer fools gladly' he said, they've got a right, you think they've got a right to partake of it, haven't I? Paul never behaved like they behaved! yet they paid them gladly. An incredible situation wasn't it?

But he said that we haven't done any of these things, we haven't used our authority; we suffer all things, he said, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Personal liberties, No, b&s, divine liberties sacrificed for the sake of Christ; not personal liberties, but divine liberties sacrificed for the gospel of Christ, unbelievable! So you see, they couldn't say among themselves, 'what do you think of this apostle Paul? Oh, he's a hard working fellow and you know, he gives off the aura of being very, very sincere and that sort of thing, but not afraid to take his expenses, is he?' They couldn't say that, there could be no stumbling block like that; they were speechless! You know, this is a marvellous example!

He said, 'Look, what about those who minister about holy things? Don't they live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar, are they not partakers with the altar', b&s? Isn't that true? Of course, it was true! So you want the Law, he says, well, we've looked at the Levites, Barnabas was a Levite, now take a look at those who minister around the temple and those who minister at the altar, what happened? Well, of course, they were supported by the tithes, weren't they? as we've mentioned. And when the people of course, had totaled up their income for the year, they then paid a tenth of that, that's what the tithe means, they paid a tenth of it to the Levites, and as I explained to you, that's why the Levites were kept out of work, that they might expound the bible to the people, that's why Sanballat and Tobiah the Ammonite in the days of Nehemiah, stopped the tithes; they didn't only stop the tithes, b&s, because they wanted it for themselves, but if you stop the tithes, you stop the bible. That was their policy, there were no leaders, no teachers, so that's what the Levites did, and when the Levites got their tithe, says the book of Leviticus, they then took of their tithe, and divided it again,

and then they gave a tenth of their tenth to the family of Aaron. And that's what kept the family of Aaron as a livelihood, and Aaron, of course, paid it to nobody else because it stopped with him because he is the high priest and his family represented God in the priesthood. That was the principle of the tithes. The idea was that those people should be able to eat with God, to serve God!

As a matter of fact, b&s, there was known under the Law, as the tithe of three years, Deuteronomy speaks of this, of the tithe of three years, what was that? Well, you see, when Israel paid their tithes, this is what God did with them, they had to bring their tithes to Jerusalem; and they didn't entirely lose all the tithes that they brought. Yes, they had to give a tenth, but they were able in Jerusalem, around the tables with their families, to eat a portion of their own tithes which they gave to God. So they really didn't lose all the tenth at any rate; look at the generosity of the Father; look at His generosity! And He said to them, every three years, he said you don't need to come to Jerusalem. He said, on every third year, He said, you can stay home and you can eat your tithes in your own city, you don't have to make the journey, with one proviso, there was a proviso, and that was, he said, if you're prepared to invite to the meal the poverty-stricken and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow. If you want to do that then you don't have to come to Jerusalem to eat with Me; the whole point of that, b&s, was they learnt by that, that when with their own tithes, such was the generosity of God, that He brought them, and it doesn't matter what their circumstances in life were, they were in God's sight, poverty-stricken, strangers, fatherless and widows, and He took them in and made them rich! members of the commonwealth of Israel, He became a father to them and a husband. He fed them like that around here, and He said, 'you do the same, and you don't have to come to Jerusalem; you do what I do, you can stay home and do it where you are'. And so even with the tithes of the Levites and those who waited upon the altar, b&s, there was a generosity of God; Paul went without all of that, and it was stamped all over the Law, and he had all that authority to do that and he didn't do that! He didn't do it at all!

And you see, the priests were partakers of the altar! What happened, b&s, was this, assuming this lectern is the altar here, there would be a certain portion of the offerings, depending upon what the offering was, of course, as to what was done with it, but let's just take for example the peace offering, which was the final of all the offerings made, in any lengthy schedule. And with the peace offering, it was the only animal that the offerer, the person bringing the offering could eat of (he didn't get anything of anything except that one) but it was treated especially for the peace offering and the distribution of the body of the animal was interesting, but it shows how the priests were partakers with the altar. And what would happen (if you look at me, my body here, assuming I'm a ram or something that probably got its head caught in a barb-wire fence and lost its hair) but assuming I look like a ram, you see, this is what happened to it. They took out of the inside of that ram, the fat that cushioned the vital organs of the body; that belonged to God, that's Yahweh's portion of any offering, and all the vital organs that were mentioned, every one of them, the kidney, and the liver and all else that's mentioned, had to do with the cleansing of the blood stream. So God wanted that protective

covering, that suet, that fat that cushioned those vital organs that regulate life, and that went upon the altar, with all the soul went upon the altar. God wants our life, our purified life, purified by the blood of Christ and the forgiveness of our sins, not that we're pure, but we've been forgiven, b&s. That's what He wants and He called upon that inner man to come upon the altar. That was given to God!

Now the right thigh of the animal, the strongest muscle in its body, was given to the priest who was actually making the sacrifice. And so, of course, as he was making the sacrifice, he got a leg of lamb, didn't he? He got the best part of the animal for a roast meal, and then, the front of the animal, the breast of the animal which was also very valuable in food content, that was given to his family. And the food was divided between holy and most holy, and the most holy food was that which he had, which he had to eat in the precincts of the tabernacle (that was the most holy food) and the holy food was that which he took home to his family, away from the tabernacle and they sat around the table and ate that meal but only if the children were obedient and the family was exemplary were they were allowed to sit and eat that meal with God. And so you see how the Law provided, b&s, with certain conditions that the priests were partakers with the altar, because actually the priest when he ate, he had to stand alongside the altar and eat it there! And God was telling him that what went on there, you share with Me, you share with Me. Didn't Paul have that right?

Paul was as he said in Romans chapter 15:16, 'that I am the minister of Jesus Christ' and the word in the Greek 'leitourgos' means the priest of Jesus Christ, and the proof of it is the context. He said, 'I am the priest of Jesus Christ that the offering up of the Gentiles, might be acceptable to God, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit'; so he was the priest standing at the altar of truth, while the offering up of the Gentiles was made. Well, if he's there, b&s, and if the Gentiles are coming and he's offering them to God, why can't he partake of their pounds, shillings and pences? And he said I'm not asking for expenses in kind, the oxen tread out corn, he ate corn; the husbandman planted the vineyard, he ate grapes; the farmer had sheep, and oxen, he ate beef and lamb. Paul says I'm sowing spiritual things, haven't I got a right to ask for just money and food? I'm not even asking for things in kind, I'm not even asking for that! What an incredible example, b&s, is being set here.

And lastly, if his point hadn't been proven yet, in verse 14 is where we want to finish this morning. 'Even so, he said, this is the last point, 'hath the Lord, (the Lord Jesus he's talking about), 'the Lord ordained that they which preached the gospel should live of the gospel'. You've been baptised into Christ, in 1 Corinthians 11 when he dealt with the memorial supper, (you colour in how many times he used the word 'Lord'); this is not the Lord's supper, the blood of the Lord, the body of the Lord, the cup of the Lord, and so on, about nine to ten times; so He's the Lord is He? is He your Lord? He's your commander! Well, He said that I can partake of my expenses. Where did He say that? He said that in the 10th chapter of Matthew and verse 10, 'And He sent out the 70 disciples, go into all the villages, take neither scrip nor purse, neither gold nor silver. Don't take any changes of garments', don't worry about that, 'for the labourer is worthy of his hire'. And Paul said, 'with all that authority, I'm not going to take it'. I've got all that

authority and I'm not going to take it, and all I'm asking you to do, he said, is to forego a piece of meat! And you can go home and have an equal meal of the same nature that's not offered unto idols, and that's all I'm asking. You have brethren and sisters in ecclesial life, who try to set standards of decency, of decorum, of dignity; and we get people coming to the meeting, (we don't but I've seen it elsewhere because we just won't tolerate it) we get people coming into the meeting looking like they've been dragged off the streets of Sodom and Gomorrah, like it doesn't matter how we appear or what we do; we can go here, we can go there, we can go to the pictures, we can go to the sports arena because that's our freedom of conscience. How do you feel in the light of the example of the apostle Paul? how do we feel in the light of that example? And what if what we do, b&s, hinders the gospel of Christ? What if it offends our brethren and sisters? And we say, 'Ah, yes, but they offend me!' That's not the point; if we say that we're strong then we oughtn't to offend anybody, and we oughtn't to be doing anything that's going to offend the gospel of Christ. I come over here, I try my hardest to preach the gospel, I try to tell you what's in the bible; what if I stood on my dig and said, I demand this, and I demand that because I've come a long way, I've made a terrible sacrifice, I've left my wife home, James has left his wife home, Jim's left his wife home, therefore, you've got to do this! What would you think of us? You'd turn your nose up at what we're saying won't you? and we'd hinder the gospel of Christ. But, I've got to partake of my expenses, I've got no alternative, I'd love to be in Paul's position, but I can't, and I can't speak with his authority. But there it is for us all to consider, b&s, there it is! What a wonderful man, what a wonderful man! 'I know there's laid up for me, a crown of righteousness', imagine the Lord greeting him at the judgment seat; just imagine it! Who did all that, who agonized in all those ways to provide bread and butter for himself and everybody else; when he had the seal, the divine approval to do otherwise. And all he was asking them to do, was to give up their little personal liberties, for the sake that other people might be saved for Jesus Christ and for the kingdom of God. Surely, b&s, we can do something comparable to that!