

# 1 Corinthians 9:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus  
Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?

## Analysis

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### **Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?**

Paul opens with four rhetorical questions asserting his apostolic credentials. The Greek *eleutheros* (ἐλεύθερος, "free") introduces the chapter's theme: Christian liberty. Paul's freedom rests on three pillars—apostolic commission, resurrection encounter with Christ (Acts 9:1-9; 1 Cor 15:8), and fruitful ministry. **Are not ye my work in the Lord?** The Corinthians themselves are the living *sphragis* (σφραγίς, "seal" v. 2) authenticating his apostleship.

This defense (Greek *apologia*, v. 3) responds to critics questioning Paul's apostolic authority—likely because he refused financial support (v. 12-18) and lacked connection to the Twelve. But chapter 9 is not merely self-defense; it's a strategic pivot from chapter 8. Having urged the "strong" to surrender their freedom to eat idol-meat for the sake of the "weak," Paul now demonstrates his own willingness to surrender apostolic rights for the gospel's advance. He models the very self-limitation he commands.

## Historical Context

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Paul writes from Ephesus (c. AD 55) during his third missionary journey. Corinth—a commercial hub notorious for pride, factionalism, and libertine ethics—questioned Paul because he worked with his hands (Acts 18:3) rather than accepting patronage like Greek philosophers. Ancient teachers expected financial support; Paul's tent-making was seen as undignified, casting doubt on his status.

## Related Passages

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**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

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1. How does Paul ground his apostolic authority in Christ's resurrection appearance, not human appointment?
2. Why does Paul appeal to the Corinthians themselves as evidence of his apostleship?
3. How does surrendering Christian liberty for others' sake actually demonstrate greater freedom?

## Interlinear Text

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οὐ εἰμὶ ἀπόστολος οὐ εἰμὶ ἐλεύθερος οὐχὶ Ἰησοῦν  
**I not** **Am** **an apostle** **I not** **Am** **free** **have I not** **Jesus**  
G3756 G1510 G652 G3756 G1510 G1658 G3780 G2424

Χριστὸν τὸν κυρίῳ ἡμῶν ἐώρακα οὐ τὸ ἔργον μου  
**Christ** **Lord** **our** **seen** **I not** **work** **my**  
G5547 G3588 G2962 G2257 G3708 G3756 G3588 G2041 G3450

ὁμοῖς ἐστε ἐν κυρίῳ  
**ye** **are** **in** **Lord**  
G5210 G2075 G1722 G2962

## Additional Cross-References

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**Acts 9:17** (References Jesus): And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

**Acts 23:11** (References Lord): And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

**Acts 9:3** (Parallel theme): And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

**1 Corinthians 3:6** (Parallel theme): I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

**1 Timothy 2:7** (References Christ): Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

**1 Corinthians 9:19** (Parallel theme): For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

**Romans 1:1** (References Jesus): Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

**2 Corinthians 6:1** (Parallel theme): We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

**Galatians 5:1** (References Christ): Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

**2 Timothy 1:11** (Parallel theme): Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.