1 Corinthians 9:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

> Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?

Analysis

Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Paul asserts a second apostolic right: to be accompanied by a believing wife at the church's expense. The phrase "lead about" (Greek periagō, περιάγω) means to bring along on missionary journeys. Other apostles, Jesus' biological brothers (James, Jude, etc.), and Peter (Cephas) all traveled with their wives, who were supported by the churches they served.

This detail reveals early church practice: apostolic ministry was not isolated asceticism but often a family affair, with wives serving alongside husbands. The mention of Cephas (Peter's Aramaic name) is strategic—Paul references the most prominent apostle to underscore that his own authority is equal. If Peter has the right to material support and a traveling companion, so does Paul. Yet once again, Paul will refuse this privilege (he remained single, 1 Cor 7:7-8), subordinating personal comfort to gospel effectiveness.

Historical Context

First-century Jewish and Christian missionaries often traveled in pairs or groups for safety, accountability, and mutual support. Women served as patrons, hosts, and ministers in the early church (Rom 16:1-2; Phil 4:2-3). The fact that apostles' wives accompanied them suggests they actively participated in ministry, not

merely as dependents but as co-laborers. This also implies the churches provided housing, food, and travel expenses for missionary families.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's reference to Peter, Jesus' brothers, and other apostles establish his equal standing?
2. What does this verse reveal about women's active roles in early apostolic ministry?
3. Why might Paul have chosen celibacy (1 Cor 7:7) despite having the right to marry?

Interlinear Text

μὴ	οὐκ	ἔχομεν	ἐξουσίαν	ἀδελφὴν	γυναῖκα	περιάγειν
G3361	G3756	**Have we**	**power**	**a sister**	**a wife**	**to lead about**
		G2192	G1849	G79	G1135	G4013

ὡς	καὶ	οἱ	λοιποὶ	ἀπόστολοι	καὶ	οἱ	ἀδελφοὶ
as well as	**and**	G3588	**other**	**apostles**	**and**	G3588	**as the brethren**
G5613	G2532		G3062	G652	G2532		G80

τοῦ	κυρίου	καὶ	Κηφᾶς
G3588	**of the Lord**	**and**	**Cephas**
	G2962	G2532	G2786

Additional Cross-References

John 1:42 (Parallel theme): And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.

Matthew 8:14 (Parallel theme): And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.

Hebrews 13:4 (Parallel theme): Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Acts 1:14 (Parallel theme): These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

1 Corinthians 7:39 (References Lord): The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:7 (Parallel theme): For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

Galatians 1:19 (References Lord): But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

Mark 1:30 (Parallel theme): But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.

Mark 6:3 (Parallel theme): Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

Romans 16:1 (Parallel theme): I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: