

1 Cor 9:1-12 - READ THRU THE TEXT - Am I half a Pastor?

-A chance to get some insight from somebody in the trenches as we go verse by verse on an otherwise touchy subject.

The main point of the preceding chapter - eating things sacrificed to idols was summed up in our borrowed conclusion from Paul Hammontree.

If any “freedom” or “liberty” MIGHT cause someone to stumble, we should be glad to give it up. And, if giving up a “freedom” or “liberty” causes us to SUFFER, we should understand, SUFFERING is part of our calling, to follow Jesus. Lord, help us to live these temporary lives in light of eternity... caring more about others than we do ourselves.

It is important that we keep this context in mind as we enter into Paul’s brief repose from addressing the highly controversial topic of consuming meats offered to pagan idols.

We can infer from the text that Paul’s ministry among the Corinthians had been criticized.

Not an uncommon occurrence for ministers of the gospel. I myself have possessed a critical eye towards other pastors and Bible teachers when I neither possessed the experience or humility to make honest judgments on ANYTHING of value, much less the sacred work of one of Christ’s servants.

At the pastors conference there was a very well done session on “what happens when you get stabbed in the back” - the pastor was careful to differentiate between self inflicted wounds and hurtful criticism/betrayal.

In our new pastors bucket we received a package of bandaids for just such an instance.

And, I have heard it said to a group of pastors, “Jesus’ disciples knew him by his scars - and that’s how we’ll judge you.” After all we are to be conformed to His likeness.

So we ought to expect criticism in ministry - cuts and bruises along the way.

[Jhn 15:18 NKJV] 18 "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before [it hated] you.

When we consider this point of instruction we prepare ourselves for enmity with the world - for criticism, mocking, condescending instruction, scoffs, etc. BUT - I think a lot of new Christians are blind-sided when this comes from INSIDE the body of Christ. The verse right before that instruction Jesus says: [Jhn 15:17 NKJV] 17 "These things I command you, that you love one another.

Paul was not new to the ministry. No doubt he was well acquainted with suffering for Jesus’ sake. He doesn’t fly off the handle, pick a fight, or insult his accusers. He takes this time to instruct them scripturally in the things that they have strayed on instead of focusing on how much his feelings may have been hurt - a difficult task. We all want to stand up for ourselves.

v.1-2 Paul's first series of rhetorical questions address the criticism he had received by the Corinthian church and asserts his apostolic authority as granted by God.

-He was an Apostle - having seen the risen Lord in the flesh (not just a vision), and been commissioned by Him to preach the gospel.

-He was free - as a born again believer and previously stating [1Co 6:12 NKJV] 12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. (He will reiterate this in Chapter 10) He could choose to eat what he wished, go where he wished, socialize with whom he pleased, etc.

-He had seen Jesus Christ physically.

-Are you not my work in the Lord? - you tell a tree by the fruit that it bears. Paul established, planted, the church in Corinth in Acts 18.

v.3 my defense - apologia (apologetics) - not to be remorseful for something by to defend it.

This is where we gain our inference that there were those conducting a subversive/whisper campaign against Paul's ministry bringing into question his credentials. This still happens today.

People will ask, who ordained you? Or, did you go to seminary? They will bring into question your credentials. Or what they suppose are credentials.

*What credentials - God ordains, man confirms the work that is normally already taking place. (ELABORATE)

[Act 20:28 NKJV] 28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

If you are looking for credentials they aren't found hanging on the wall or in a frame they are found in God's word -

[1Ti 3:1-7 NKJV] 1 This [is] a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; 3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; 4 one who rules his own house well, having [his] children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the [same] condemnation as the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

v.4 - do we have not have the right to eat and drink? - of course! Paul had just explained that he counts himself free to do such things but purposefully abstains from such practice for the sake of their conscience. That's what pastors do! That what servants do, looking out for the conscience of the flock.

v.5 - marriage in ministry - Paul has addressed this, but there seems to have been the expectation that they ought not if they are truly serving the Lord. This church needed lots of instruction on marriage. Unfortunately the church grasped onto the idea that the truly holy men would not marry - to their own detriment.

-the other apostles had wives - Cephas=Peter, James, and Jude as well. It appears the marriage was common in the early church.

v.6 - It also appears that the other apostles and ministers refrained from working, rather being supported by the church in their labor. Paul calls out the Corinthian church for this. Are we the only two that have to work in order to minister while everybody else is taken care of?

This is one of those weird sticking points in ministry today. Some figures from the Souther Baptist convention place the number of working pastors at around 50% and up to 80%.

There are those who wear this as a badge of honor - kind of like our brother Paul here. And those in the congregation who support this type of ministry as the only way to do it. There are those who do so out of necessity.

There are others who view this type of ministry as aberrant, these people will say things like, "so you're a part-time pastor?" or, "what's your real job?"

As one of these guys - I believe and live my life as pastoring is my full time and first job and my 8-5 job is how I feed my family. Please know that the

only reason we are here is for Christ's service and the church. Not because the employment opportunities are stellar.

Paul begins to teach skillfully on the proper role of ministry in the church in verse 7 using natural illustrations that would be easily understandable.

-in the Army you are provided for in meals, housing, uniforms, pay and anything you need to train and fight.

-a vinedresser most certainly eats a few grapes, drinks its juice, and perhaps sells that from time to time to support himself.

-a shepherd, or farmer lives off of his shepherd for clothing and produce, etc.

v.8-10 He uses a scriptural pattern from the OT to add support to this lesson in supporting those who minister to the church.

REF [Deu 25:4 NKJV] 4 "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out [the grain].

-describe the concept of threshing -

*after so much work, it would be nice to eat, instead of being tortured by a muzzle - and then giving out because you have no strength. (ref 2 guys who burnt out) - the church never stepped up to meet their need, to take care of them, they took for granted that their pastor would just continue to burn the candle at both ends in perpetuity.

-yes God is concerned about the oxen - how much more so people? He wants his people to eat and to be taken care of instead of being muzzled.

Now keep it context - not extravagantly - the ox doesn't get all the grain - then he's just a fat worthless ox. He's not treading out the grain - working for the Lord - he's just standing in a pile of food with no intention to work - I'm sure you can make the spiritual deduction there. Not an uncommon picture for the more heretical FOR PROFIT preachers in our society.

[1Ti 5:17-18 NKJV] 17 Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer [is] worthy of his wages."

v.11 - spiritual things v. material things.

v.12 - the Corinthian church was supporting other ministers - remember there was sharp division in the Body regarding who their favorites were [1Co 1:11-12 NKJV] 11 For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's [household], that there are contentions among you. 12 Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ."

Perhaps there were other unnamed ministers being supported by this church while Paul - who planted the church was not.

Nevertheless, we have not used this right - Paul says it's a right - and having sat on the other side of the pulpit I know it's the right thing to do. REF supporting pastors with families, meeting needs, loving them, letting them know that their labor is not in vain - so important.

endure all things - besides the external suffering Paul had accumulated - quite a bit - he also endured this criticism. And it appears that for some reason this church felt that Paul was a second class apostle.

BTW, Paul wasn't without totally without support as we like to imagine - at least that's the narrative that we "tent makers" tell ourselves...I'm a tent make bro...laboring for the Lord with my own hands, like Paul. I can tell you that it would be great to commit myself entirely to the service of the Body, to the study of the word and prayer. God has met our need and I will continue to work apart from the church as long as the Lord leads. It's my joy to do so, while I do look forward to the day when I can have more time to commit to ministry.

[2Co 11:7-9 NKJV] 7 Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? 8 I robbed other churches, taking wages [from them] to minister to you. 9 And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep [myself].