

1 Cor 9 pt.2 v. 13-23 - Deferring liberty

STAND - (READ THRU)

Following the main thought from chapter 8 - and really one of the defining principles of our belief - serving others, deferring our liberty in favor of an authentic, Christ like service towards others - Paul addresses the issue of pastoral pay, or paid ministry.

He paints quite a detailed picture of the scriptural foundation for supporting those in ministry and offers a fair bit of correction to the Corinthian church even as they challenged his credentials and criticized his life's work.

We ended on the thought that Paul had arrived at after clearly portraying the biblical basis for providing in material things those who serve in spiritual things - he says in verse 12 - "Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ."

This cuts to the heart of the issue in a dynamic way.

1. Paul says it was their right to be supported by the Corinthian church
2. He DEFERRED this right that they would not be hindered

"While robbing other churches (said metaphorically and for dramatic effect, but no doubt that was how Paul felt about the matter" - 2 Corinthians 11:7-9

Picking up in that Spirit we see the final details of Paul's instruction to the church on caring for those in ministry.

v.13-14 Paul alludes to the Old Testament example of the Levites, the priests of Israel taking their sustenance from the offering of the people.

Having previously drawn out the teaching - you shall not muzzle the ox while it treads out the grain - he now appeals to direct human example in the service of God's temple.

He points out that this is a parallel experience to those who serve the church in holy things.

[Deu 18:1-5 NKJV] 1 "The priests, the Levites--all the tribe of Levi--shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and His portion. 2 "Therefore they shall have no inheritance among their brethren; the LORD is their inheritance, as He said to them. 3 "And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, whether [it is] bull or sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach. 4 "The firstfruits of your grain and your new wine and your oil, and the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him. 5 "For the LORD your God has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons forever.

More detail in Numbers 18 and Leviticus 6&7

Why? Their time was physically consumed by serving in the temple before the Lord, and serving the people in teaching, interceding, prayer, etc. It's hard to be a farmer when you're taking care of everybody else.

AND, the Lord had chosen them especially for this work.

So, Paul points as fine a point on this as possible - the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should leave from the gospel.

That's as plain as it gets.

v.15 - BUT - having taught all of that, and made it as clear as possible Paul declares that he has purposefully and with full knowledge of the scriptural basis to be supported he CHOSE to DEFER this in favor of the greater goal of reaching their hearts and not their pocket books.

[2Co 12:14-15 NKJV] ... And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. 15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.

Their relationship was complicated. As is the case with many churches. Love flows down.

My thoughts are always towards you - when we are apart. I am very often in prayer in the mornings and evenings for you guys. Love flows down.

better for me to die - Paul felt very strongly toward the Corinthian church and for his ministry that he would be faithful to what the Lord had set him to.

v.16 - I can't boast about this, necessity is laid upon me - I am compelled to preach - such a fiery heart for Christ's sake. His life had been demonstrably changed by meeting Christ - in his mind and as ordered by Christ he had no other option but to preach the gospel - no matter the circumstances he found his self in - paycheck or no.

[Phl 4:10-14 NKJV] 10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. 14 Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.

*Did you wonder which other churches were helping him?

v.17 - either or - willingly or not - the gospel goes forth from Paul's lips, he can't help it. Sometimes you don't feel like it for one reason or the other. We have deemed the timing to risky or (in our cowardice) we have deemed the good news to radical, brusque, offensive, etc. BUT YOU HAVE BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH A STEWARDSHIP! - AND WHAT IS REQUIRED OF A

STEWARDSHIP BUT TO BE FOUND FAITHFUL (1 COR 4:2)! THIS ISN'T YOUR TREASURE TO KEEP AS YOU WISH IT IS THE MASTERS AND HE DECIDES HOW TO SPEND IT WE MUST BE OBEDIENT.

We are SUPPOSED TO share this treasure with others. Whether we feel like it or not. You may ask, what if the holy spirit tells me not to?

[Jhn 15:26-27 NKJV] 26 "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. 27 "And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

Willingly = reward, participating enthusiastically in the gospel - it's glorious against my will = that's our role as stewards. do your job.

v.18 - Paul took great pleasure in preaching to the Corinthians and shepherding them without their support. It was a joy to him, a blessing, and he found tremendous freedom in that - as they can be. Since he wasn't a hireling he could give it to them straight - as we see so clearly that he did. Also, he kept himself from ABUSING that authority that the Lord has commanded be given to those who preach the gospel.

REF SAM 1&2 - Eli and his two sons Phineas and Hophni - ripping off the people. They were judged for that.

v.19 - Even though he had this tremendous freedom and wasn't held captive by anybody's purse strings he DEFERRED his liberty intentionally

for others. He put himself in a position to suffer for the sake of others -as Christ did for us. He was living out his faith and as we said earlier he did this consistently whether he was “feeling it” or not.

v.20-22 - pointed examples that need to be extrapolated to gain a better understanding of how Paul put this into practice...

-20 - to the Jews I became a Jew - Paul was by birth a Jew.

REF: [Phl 3:4-6 NKJV] ...If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, [of] the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

BUT he made sure to strictly observe Jewish tradition and customs - even though he would never put that burden on gentiles - but he did observe these things so that he might win his countryman for whom he had such a big heart for, desiring that they should come to the knowledge of Christ and be brought into the kingdom.

-21 - to gentiles, as without the law - setting aside his own personal conviction or the strict practice of Jewish custom in order that he might relate to and bring Christ to gentiles. While noting that Christ's new law ruled his life - [Jhn 13:34 NKJV] 34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

This great act of love towards others was born out practically in deferring to the conscience of others - while maintaining adherence to the essential matters of salvation by God's favor through our belief in the redemptive work of Christ.

In Paul's mind everything else was open for him to defer to the other on. A rare practice - most often we demand that people defer to us. That we are right and they are wrong. Rather we ought to pick up Paul's technique of deferring to the other weaker vessel. This is not deference for deference sake but with the eternal soul of our fellow man in mind.

-22 - Paul points out and challenges our thought on this that those who are in fact consumed with the rules, the traditions of men, people who are clinging to one thing or the other apart from Christ, but that one thing is so tightly intertwined with their hold on Christ, that to break it would break their faith - they are the weaker vessel. It might now hurt if we examined those things that we hold so dearly in conjunction with the central figure of our faith and ask are they ancillary or essential? Are we the weak vessel?

REF - eating meat sacrificed to idols from chapter 8

v.23 - why live like this? - the gospel's sake - that's the whole point. That the good news of salvation and a relationship with God is possible through Christ - that message has to go out. —>

-that I might be a partaker of it with you - Paul was not above the fray, he was in it, a partaker a diner at the table of God's grace. Understanding this allowed him to set aside his desire for the benefit of others. May this heart be ours. Even when we do feel like it.