

I CORINTHIANS
Chapter 9:7-18

VERSE 7:

According to the natural laws of society, workers are to be paid for their labor. Three illustrations are given - **9:7**. A soldier is not expected to buy his own uniform, lodging, food, travel expenses, and weapons. The phrase - "**at his own charges**" means 'at his own expense'. A soldier does not have to buy his own uniform, gun, ammunition, and meals. His country pays him a salary and provides the necessities to do his job as a soldier.

A farmer, who plants and cares for a vineyard, has a perfect right to eat of its grapes and receive a profit from the fruit.

A shepherd has the right to drink the milk of the flock that he tends. The shepherd takes care of his flock so that the flock may in return take care of him in a financial, material, and physical way. His work is not for free. He is paid for the work he gives.

The point Paul is making is obvious. As Warren Wiersbe wrote: "The lesson was clear: The Christian worker has the right to expect benefits for his labors. If this is true in 'secular' realm, it is also true in the spiritual realm." Just as anyone works a public job expects to be paid, the pastor should be paid as well for the work he does.

VERSE 8:

These human rights - "**as a man**", are supported by divine commandment, **9:8**. The Bible, not cultural standards, must stand alone as the spiritual basis of faith and practice. To prove his point, Paul quoted the rights of animals which were incorporated into the Mosaic law, **9:9**. An ox has the right to eat of the grain that he has trod - **Deuteronomy 25:4**.

Paul continues by making it clear what he saying is not just his opinion about the matter, but what God demands. Paying and adequately caring for the needs of the preacher is not just a matter of love, but a command and requirement of God.

VERSE 9 - 10:

In a series of two questions - **9:9b-10a**, the apostle showed that the rights of working animals, in principle, apply to the rights of human workers. God is concerned about the welfare of animals - **Psalms 104:14, 21; Matthew 6:26**, but the real intent behind the command for the humane treatment of animals was the proper reimbursement of laborers - "**For our sakes, no doubt, this is written,**" - **9:10**. Paul used this same Old Testament verse to demonstrate that church elders should be given proper financial support, **I Timothy 5:17-18**. In conclusion, those who work at the beginning or at the end of a project, (plowing or threshing), should do so with full expectation that they will all equally share in the profits - **9:10; 3:6-9**.

I read a story given by J. Vernon McGee that illustrates **verse 9** very well. The story is told of a Kentucky preacher who rode a very fine, beautiful horse, but the preacher himself was a very skinny fellow. One day one of his church officers asked him the question (which had been a matter of discussion), "How is it, preacher, that your horse is so fine looking and

you are such a skinny fellow?" The preacher answered, "I will tell you, I feed my horse, and you are the ones who feed me.

God says not to muzzle the ox that is working for you, and Paul applies that principle to pastors and teachers. God not only cares for oxen, He cares for preachers - **Deuteronomy 25:4, I Timothy 5:17-18**

The word - **"hope"** does not mean what we normally think of when we use the word - **"hope"**. It speaks of something that is expected. The point is that preachers who work for the Lord should expect to be adequately provided for in their work.

VERSE 11:

Some people have the ideal that a preacher is not to have much or anything in life. Their attitude is, "Lord, you keep him humble and we will keep him poor." How sad that some people feel that a pastor is carnal if he has more than the shirt on his back.

Paul says, if we have provided you with spiritual benefits is it unreasonable that we should expect and receive the needs of life from you? If the benefits which we bestow are spiritual, such as the gospel, knowledge, faith, hope, the fruits of the Spirit, and therefore of eternal benefit, is it too great a thing that we should receive from you carnal things, that are necessary for the support of the body.

VERSE 12:

"If others be partakers of this power over you are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffered all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ." This is an argument especially to the Corinthians. They had recognized in other teachers the right to be supported, they could not, with any show of reason, deny it to the apostle.

Undisputable as this right was in the case of Paul, he did not exercise it - **"but suffered all things"**. This word means to bear in silence. Under the circumstances in which Paul was in, surrounded by enemies, it would have hindered the gospel if he had done anything that would have caused anyone to question the purity of his motives. He was willing to suffer anything rather than to give his enemies an excuse to criticize and oppose him and his work.

VERSE 13:

We are reminded in - **verse 13**, that priest in the Temple lived of the offerings to God - **Numbers 18:24**. Should not God's preachers then be supported by those who have been won, blessed and helped spiritually by his ministry? That is the teaching also of **Galatians 6:6** - **"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."** The one who is taught is to - **"communicate,"** that is, "share" material things with the one who feeds him and teaches him spiritual things. So the pastor, the man of God, who blesses others with spiritual food, should be blessed by the carnal and material means of those he helps.

The support should be more for the zealous, faithful, sacrificial minister. ***I Timothy 5:17-18*** says - ***"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And the labourer is worthy of his reward."***

VERSE 14:

Just in case someone might argue that the law no longer applies, Paul made it clear that it was something Jesus Himself commanded. The word ***"ordained"*** speaks of that which has been instituted. What the Lord had ordained and instituted was those who preach the gospel were to live by the gospel. That is, they were to be materially and financially provided for by the churches and their ministry.

Once a gifted man planned to lay by enough support, so that along with retirement income he could, upon retirement, become a preacher with no offering or salary, but he would give his labor free. Therefore he gave the main part of his life to the secular world. He thought he could have more influence and win more souls if he never took an offering. He was wrong. Perhaps it was sinful pride, a determination to pay his own way, but that is not God's way. God's plainly announced way is that - ***"they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."***

Actually, when people are taught to give in order to support the work of God, they are taught to be better Christians. They will prosper more materially. They will love God more. They will renounce the world earlier and more readily, and will trust God more, having more daily proof of God's care and faithfulness. So Paul was inspired to urge that the Christians must be taught - ***"this grace also,"*** the grace of sacrificial, joyful giving even out of great property, as he said about the Macedonian Christians when he urged these Corinthian Christians to learn this grace - ***II Corinthians 8:1-6.***

VERSE 15:

Verse 15 - "But I have used none of these things," Paul did not demand what they should have given gladly. He had worked at tent making with Aquilla and Priscilla when he first came to Corinth, earning his own way while preaching - ***Acts 18:1-4.***

Deserving support, Paul did not demand it for himself, though he taught them it was right and proper. Money must not be the pastor's main concern. It must not be a factor about where or how he preaches.

Salary is not wrong for a minister, it is completely necessary, but he should not be overly concerned about it. Having a love for God and the pastor, a church that is obedient to the Word of God will want to properly and adequately care for their pastor.

A spiritual and Biblically obedient church will take the oversight to see that he is properly cared for. They care for him as to his temporal needs as he cares for them in their spiritual needs. As the pastor seeks wisdom and guidance from the Lord and to the spiritual needs of the church and that which is best for it; the church in turn is to seek wisdom and guidance as to what they can do to properly care for his temporal needs.

Many of God's good men have been hindered from doing great things in the Lord's work because untaught, selfish, careless, or just plain thoughtless people keep him poor and praying that God will keep him humble. If the church doesn't properly care for the pastor then there are two alternatives left. First, the pastor will have to do as Paul did and that is to go work at a secular job. Second, the Lord will lead his man to a church that will properly care for him and his family.

A church that has a good pastor should see to it that he is properly cared for, so that his time and energy can be devoted to the things of the Lord and the care of the church, and not have to carry the load that financial stress can bring. Does the Bible not say - **"the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" - I Timothy. 5:17.**

In closing let me sum up all we have seen. Down through the years I have gotten to know several pastors and been in many churches, I must say that it is tragic how churches often treat their pastors and take care of them. There are some churches and some church leaders that are going to answer to God for how they financially and materially provide for their pastors.

Let me give a few examples to make my point. First of all, I remember one pastor that did not get paid for fifth Sundays. According to the church leaders to pay the pastor for a fifth Sunday would be doing an injustice to the church. Another example is a church that had two boxes at the entrance door. One box was for the church and one was for the pastor's salary. Of course when members got crossed- ways with the pastor, or if the pastor stepped on their toes his salary went down. Also, when it was time for the pastor's salary to be considered another church had a deacon who felt that it was only fair to the elderly members if the pastor didn't make more than they did on their Social Security. Of course some were on fixed income, but the majority of the church was making well in excess of \$20.00 per hour. One pastor stayed at a church for nine years and a raise was never considered. How sad that this kind of treatment of a pastor is true.

It's sad when people fail to take into consideration the additional cost of being a pastor. From his vehicle and gas expense, library, his study furniture, computer, evangelist staying in his home, and the list could go on. In public work many of the expenses a pastor incurs out of his salary are paid for by the employer.

Sometimes, I think the neglect of the pastor is due to an ignorance of what God requires and commands His churches to do. Sometimes I think it is due to the fact that no one will stand up or speak up and give leadership to see that the pastor is taken care of. At other times I think it is just plain old down right being sorry.

A pastor should be appreciated and compensated. His appreciation and compensation should not be based on the size of the church, but based on as Paul told Timothy, their ruling well - **"especially those who labour in the word and doctrine" - I Timothy 5:17.**

The attitude of churches should not be that he makes more than me, or more than the preacher down the road, or he already makes so and so a year. A church cannot do enough for a pastor who rules well and - **"labours in the word and doctrine"**. He deserves twice as much (double-honor). As Paul said, "He has the right to expect such."

VERSE 16:

"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of." Paul was saying that in himself, he had nothing of which he could boast. He was not a preacher because he deserved to be a preacher or had met some "ministerial" qualification. The only reason he was a preacher of the gospel was because God had chosen him. He had not chosen the ministry. The ministry had chosen him.

The truth is, none of us can boast in and of ourselves when it comes to anything God does in our life or through our life. It is all a matter of the grace of God that has been experienced and the gifts of God that have been given. All of us must say with Paul - **"But by the grace of God I am what I am" - I Corinthians 15:10.** We may glory only in what Christ has done for us in the gospel.

"...for necessity is laid upon me." The word **"necessity"** speaks of being constrained or compelled. The word - **"laid"** speaks of that which is imposed upon a person. God had called and burdened Paul to preach the gospel. Note - **Acts 9:16.**

"...yea, woe is me, if I preach not the gospel." Paul realized there would serious consequences in his life if he did not do what God had called him to do. The word **"woe"** carries with it the idea of painful and tragic results.

VERSE 17:

He says in **verse 17 - "For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me."** Paul was saying that if he did what God called him to do willingly, there was a reward. But even if it were not what he wanted to do, he must do it because it was something committed to him.

The phrase - **"a dispensation of the gospel"** describes the management of a house. The preaching of the gospel was his role as a believer and he was under a responsibility. Again, Paul knew that if he did not do what God had assigned and appointed for him to do there would serious consequences.

The truth is, God has a will for every believer. It may not be the preaching of the Gospel as it was in Paul's life, but none-the-less each has a certain assignment. It is always a serious matter when one disobeys the will of God for their life. Each believer can say, **"Woe is me"** if I don't do God's will.

VERSE 18:

"What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel." The word - **"abuse"** means to "to use up". He did not want to "use up" his ability to reach others. His burden and desire was to be an effective preacher of God's Word.

The believer should be very careful and cautious so as not to be a stumbling block or hurt their ability and testimony in their service to God and being a witness to others.

Paul was very serious about protecting the gospel to the point he says in - **verse 15 - "for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void."**

Paul said, "I would rather die, than to be a hindrance to the Gospel. I would rather die than hurt my ability to preach." In Paul's mind, nothing could be worse than to hurt his ability to reach others.

The worse thing that could happen to a child of God is to become "not fit for spiritual use." As far as Paul was concerned, he would rather die than such a thing happen to him.

I CORINTHIANS 9:7-18
Study Guide

1. What are the three illustrations that Paul uses to prove that workers are to be paid for their labor? _____
2. What animal had the right to eat of the grain he had trod? _____?
3. The word - **"hope"** does not mean what we normally think of when we use the word - **"hope"**. It speaks of something that is _____.
4. Why did Paul not require nor ask for support from the church at Corinth?
5. What does the phrase - **"but suffered all things"** mean?
6. Why did the apostle Paul quote - **Numbers 18:24**.
7. What does the word - **"ordain"** mean **in verse 14**?
8. What does the phrase **"this grace also,"** mean that is found in **II Corinthians 8:1-6**?
9. What profession did Paul have to provide for his needs of life?
10. In **verse 16**, what does the phrase - **"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of."**
11. Explain what Paul meant by - **"But by the grace of God I am what I am" - I Corinthians 15:10**.
12. What does the word - **"necessity"** mean?
13. Why did Paul preach? Why should any man pastor or preach the Word of God?
14. What did Paul say was the basis of rewards? _____
15. In **verse 15**, Paul would rather _____ than be a _____ to the _____.