

Message #33

I Corinthians 9:15-18

One of the great tests that truly determine where we are at in our love for God is the test of money.

Money is something that many people worship and money is something that most people want. Money IS a fact of life. We ARE to earn it, we ARE to provide for our families with it, we Are to use it, we Are to give it and we ARE NOT to love it.

The Apostle Paul wrote much concerning the subject of money. There were times in his own ministry when he had a great amount of money and there were times when he had no amount of money (Phil. 4:10-12). Through these types of experiences he learned to be content in whatever his financial status. As we saw last time, he taught the church of Corinth how they ought to care for a gifted servant of God (I Cor. 9:1-14).

He warned that many would lose rewards because many would make money their primary focus in life (I Tim. 6:9-10). He warned the rich to use their money for God and not solely for themselves (I Tim. 6:17-19).

Paul also told of one man, who had been in ministry, whose name was Demas, and he forsook the ministry because he loved the things of this world, which of course included money (II Tim. 4:10).

For Paul, it was an “either/or” proposition; you either loved God or you loved money. His basic philosophy of ministry was this: “I tell people the truth of God when it comes to money. I inform them what they ought to do and how they ought to think toward ministry, the minister and money; but if they don’t respond or do it, I don’t demand it.”

THE GIFTED MINISTER WHO WILLINGLY CONTINUES TO MINISTER AND DOES NOT DEMAND FINANCIAL REMUNERATION IS A MINISTER WHO WILL BE ABUNDANTLY REWARDED FOR HIS WORK.

TOPIC #1 – What Paul DID NOT demand. 9:15a

Paul did not demand that the Corinthians meet any of the financial responsibilities he set forth in the previous verses. The word “used” is one that means to make use of or to exercise. Paul did not exercise his right as an apostle nor did he demand or force the Corinthians to respond to his instruction on ministerial giving.

There is no question that there are times when Paul demanded obedience. For example, in I Cor. 5 Paul demanded the Corinthians get the wicked person out of the church (5:7). Paul NEVER demanded money even though he had a right to; he DID NOT demand it.

TOPIC #2 – What Paul DID NOT write . 9:15b

Not only did Paul NOT make use of his right to demand money, he did NOT write so that the Corinthians would give him money. Paul wrote on this subject for at least two Biblical reasons:

Reason #1 - To defend his ministry. 9:1-3

Paul wrote to defend both himself and his ministry.

Reason #2 - To teach God's truth. 9:9-10, 13-14

The Corinthian church and all churches need to know God's truth concerning the ministry and money. This church was accountable to God to obey the Law of God and the command of Jesus Christ. The minister's job is to present God's truth to people. That IS the assignment for which he will be highly judged (i.e. James 3:1).

TOPIC #3 – Why Paul DID NOT demand . 9:15c-18

Reason #1 - Because Paul wanted integrity in his ministry. 9:15c

Paul's critics were attacking him on the subject of money; in fact, these attacks were satanic (II Cor. 11:8-14). There were false apostles claiming Paul was in ministry for money. Paul literally would rather die than to have anyone be able to make his ministry an empty one through allegations that he was only in it for the money.

There is real irony in this text. Paul was willing to give up his life for the work of God, but the Corinthians were not willing to give up their money for the work of God.

The greatest calling of all is God's calling to ministry. There is nothing as rewarding or as fulfilling as being called and gifted by God for ministry.

Reason #2 - Paul wanted to fulfill his ministry. 9:16

Paul's ministerial assignment was to proclaim Jesus Christ and unlock the doctrine of the grace of God and the Gospel to the Gentile world (Acts 26:12-18). To Paul, ministry was not an option; it was a necessary part of the entire program of God to reach the non-Jewish world. In fact, Paul's ministry was so critical that had he not preached the Gospel, he believed there would have been a "woe" judgment upon him.

Paul was "under compulsion" to preach.

Reason #3 - Paul wanted rewards for his ministry. 9:17-18

No matter how prosperous or how poor, Paul ALWAYS kept his sights on the eternal, not the temporal.

Paul preached willingly. He was willing to preach the truth of God anytime and anywhere.

Paul NEVER wanted to lose ANY reward so he NEVER demanded anything. If a church functioned in conformity to God's instruction on money, he rejoiced. If it didn't, he just kept ministering and kept going.

What is your perspective of life? What do you live for or dream about? What do you serve, money or God?