

### **Gospel Implications, Part 10: Giving to Gospel Ministry (1 Cor. 9, 16)**

Please turn in God's Word to 1 Corinthians 9 and let's continue the series of message we've been doing on communion gospel implications, preparing for the gospel picture of communion we do today in remembrance of Christ and His gospel. This letter Paul wrote to the Corinthians is the NT epistle that teaches the church about the gospel ordinance of communion in chapter 11 and it's also a letter that teaches the church about gospel obligations and implications in the other chapters. This is our 10th message looking at some of the ways Paul applies the gospel to the church. I'm not unpacking every section of this book, but looking at sections where God's Word speaks to an issue by bringing up the gospel and its implications. Today in chapter 9 we come to the next time where Paul brings up the gospel for another subject. He moves from the law to the gospel to show those who believe the gospel should give to support gospel ministry and gospel ministers in the trenches of the Lord's army, laboring in the field here or overseas. 1 Corinthians 9:7

*Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? <sup>8</sup> Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? <sup>9</sup> For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? <sup>10</sup> Does he not certainly speak **for our sake**? It **was** written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. <sup>11</sup> If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? <sup>12</sup> If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of **the gospel** of Christ. <sup>13</sup> Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? <sup>14</sup> In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim **the gospel** should get their living by **the gospel**.*

Paul says in v. 23 it's all about the gospel that he might share it further. For Paul if he needed to work as a tentmaker to plant this church for the sake of the gospel, that's what he did. It would have been right if he was supported by the giving of believers, but he chose to work long hours in another job and develop other men to be the full-time gospel ministers of that church. Paul's ministry was to move on to other churches to spread the gospel but he makes clear here it's the Lord's will and usual ideal for gospel ministers to be supported whenever possible to be able to devote to ministry full-time.

He chose not to exercise that right in Corinth as a missionary church-planter so all financial giving supported the ongoing gospel ministry and ministers. In God's providence this next section ties in with why it's important for us to support those in gospel ministry like one of our missionaries in need that I'll talk about a little later, laboring in another part of the Lord's vineyard and on the frontlines of battle in the Lord's army overseas. Those he ministers to can't support him; we have that opportunity and privilege. In God's timing, this next text in our Corinthians studies also ties in with where we are as a church praying about adding a future gospel minister for this church that we hope our giving will support in the year ahead of us, if possible full-time on staff with our ministry team to help us in shepherding and outreach. Since last summer we've been sharing with you our desire to pay down one of our loans to free up giving for gospel ministry, and this ties in with that as well.

I haven't preached very often about giving. Some preachers talk about it all the time, that's a turn off on Christian TV, we turn it off. But the pendulum can swing too far the other direction and not talk about it enough. We fail our people when we do that, and have at times, but this is one of the gospel implications in the series of subjects Paul applies the gospel to in this book, so here it is and here we go. Paul took great pains to make sure teaching on giving didn't appear self-serving, he belabors that in Acts 20 but balances it with this: *"I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God ...remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'"* (v. 27, 35). There's more blessing in giving than receiving, so not declaring God's whole counsel will miss that blessing

What Paul does in 1 Cor. 9 is give several reasons WHY we who believe the gospel should give to support gospel work in a local church and abroad. And later Paul will tell the Corinthians HOW to give to gospel ministry. For the first part of the message we'll see the WHY, then the 2nd part the HOW. 1<sup>st</sup> why should believers in the gospel give to support the gospel ministry?

### **#1. Soldiers and Laborers in the Field Need Support**

He starts with soldiers in v. 7: *Who serves as a soldier at his own expense?* If you're in the army you don't fight as a soldier at day but have to work a civilian job in the evening so you can eat and cover your expenses. A man doesn't pay to be a soldier, he doesn't give money to his commander to let him fight and risk his life. The recruiter isn't looking for a few good men to pay the army a few thousand a month so they can be in the army. Soldiers by occupation don't pay their own way and expenses, they need support.

Men who fight for their country in war have to be devoted to that day and night. Those they serve and represent need to provide them food, housing, clothing, expenses, so they can do their job well and fight the battles for them. Paul argues it's the same for those in the Lord's army. Soldiers for Christ, ministers in the trenches of ministry need the same kind of support. Laborers in the field need support as well. v. 7 talks about a farmer and a shepherd of milk goats, laboring in a vineyard or field is hard work, full-time work. Paul's point: laborers in the Lord's vineyard, those the Lord calls to shepherd the flock of God as an occupation, also should have their needs provided for. It's right for the Lord's servants to share the fruit of their labor

But that's not just a human analogy or based on human authority, Paul says in v. 8, it's God's Law. v. 8b: '*... Does not the Law say the same? <sup>9</sup> For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? <sup>10</sup> Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.*'

God's Law in the OT isn't irrelevant to the Christian. It shows God's heart and character and His moral will, and there's abiding principles behind the precepts Moses wrote for Israel. A working animal wasn't expected to work all day and then find its own food for itself at the end of the day. Oxen need water and to be able to eat during the work day, if oxen will work well. You shouldn't put a muzzle on an ox while it works or it will be dehydrated and weak. Paul argues from the lesser to the greater: God's concern isn't only for animals, the beasts of burden that serve us, how much does God care and should we care for people who serve us and bear our burdens. v. 10 says this applies to us, it's for our sake, to hope and help those plowing the fields of gospel ministry. Muzzling the gospel missionary is muzzling the gospel.

Plowing a field that hasn't been plowed before is hard work, but farmers do it in hope for a harvest to come. The Lord of the harvest sends out laborers into His harvest, some plow, some plant seed, some water, all for harvest. If you look back at chapter 3, that's the analogy Paul used of gospel ministers: **3:8** *He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor.* <sup>9</sup> *For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field ...* The 'we' are the ministers like Paul and Apollos, the 'you' are God's field, the church. Not every minister has the same gifts or calling, but Paul says in v. 8 '*each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers...*' God's workers are to be taken care of.

So you can go back to chapter 9 but that's the analogy of ministry, working in fields with planting, watering, sowing and reaping. **9:11** *If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?* <sup>12</sup> *If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more?* In other words, it's right for those who sacrificially give their lives to labor in the spiritual realm to be given to in the material realm, for those who sow to reap so they can devote more time to sowing and growing. In Galatians 6 as Paul talks about this sowing and reaping principle he says '*Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches*' (Gal 6:6)

Why do we support ministers? #1. Soldiers and laborers in the field need it  
**#2. The Lord commands us to support His ministers (9:13-14)**

<sup>13</sup> *Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?* <sup>14</sup> *In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.*

v. 13-14 moves from the law to the gospel, from the OT to the NT to show God's will has always been for those fully devoted to His ministry to have their needs met by His people. In the OT temple ministry, the priests whose lives were dedicated to ministry received tithes and offerings that supported them, and they were amply supplied for, and Paul says it's the same in the NT economy for those whose livelihood is gospel ministry. Some decline remuneration, like Paul did in Corinth for his church-planting strategy (tent-making with Priscilla and Aquila). He didn't want to be a burden or obstacle to the gospel, but did receive missions support from other churches (Phil 4).

Most church planters are bi-vocational and missionaries usually get support from others not in the fields where they serve, but as churches are planted and grow, the biblical ideal is pastors whose material needs are taken care of so they can fully devote to spiritual needs undistracted by outside jobs.

v. 13 is talking about the Jewish temple Levites and priests '*employed in the temple service,*' and applies that to those employed gospel ministers in v. 14, who earn their living from and are provided for by offerings of the church. In the NKJV v. 13 says '*Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?*' <sup>14</sup> *Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel* [NASB '*get their living from the gospel*']. A more dynamic equivalent has '*those who preach the Good News should be supported by those who benefit from it.*'

Paul is paraphrasing what the Lord Jesus commanded. Where and when did Jesus talk about this? Jesus called His apostles to leave their secular jobs as fishermen to be fishers of men instead, to go into all the world and preach the gospel. They left their nets, businesses, in Matthew's case, a lucrative career and position for the Roman government's tax division, and these men enlisted in the Lord's army as spiritual soldiers devoted to a gospel mission.

In Lk 10 Jesus taught how the Lord of the harvest sends out laborers into his harvest, as He sent 72 laborers out as His first missionaries, proclaiming the kingdom of God and ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of the people. Jesus told them *'I am sending you out... Carry no moneybag... eat... what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. When... they receive you, eat what is set before you'* (v. 3-9). They were to receive hospitality and help from those who received the word of the kingdom, but not from the pagan Gentiles of the world who reject it.

Paul applied that to local church staff pastors, 1 Tim 5:17 *Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."*

The apostle John who heard Jesus teach on this understood Christ's words also applied to a local church's support of missionaries who are sent out for Christ's name, who need to be provided for in food, clothing and housing, they deserve wages for laboring. He says in 3 John of gospel ministers *'it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers... who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth'* (v. 5-8).

In Mt 10 Jesus commissioned the 12 to ministry, and told them who had left other earthly occupations: *'go, preach ... Freely you received, freely give ... the worker is worthy of his support'* (10:7-10). He called them to depend on God's provision and the hospitality and support of believers in their full-time ministry of preaching. That's grace giving, because of the gospel of God's free gift to us of what we didn't earn or deserve, we freely give to support the gospel going forth freely, and supporting worthy gospel workers

The biblical motive to give to ministry and to give ourselves to ministry and give the gospel freely is what we've been given freely. Christ gave Himself.

It's the love of Christ that should compel, the Law doesn't have that power. The motive to give isn't guilt, it's grace, it's gratitude, it's the gospel of what we've freely received so we freely give. It's not legalistic tithing, as if giving 10% gains or maintains God's favor. That's not a NT command. We need to step back and see all that we are and all that we have is all God's and all of grace, unmerited and unearned favor that generously moves gospel giving.

God forgave my sin in Jesus' name, I've been born again in Jesus' name

And in Jesus' name I come to you, To share His love as He told me to

He said: 'Freely, freely, you have received, Freely, freely give

Go in My name, and because you believe Others will know that I live.'

That's WHY we who believe the gospel should give to support gospel work in a local church and abroad. In closing, HOW shall we then give? Paul tells the Corinthians in chapter 16, so let's turn there for the application he gives. And this wasn't just instructions for this church, it's for all NT churches and us: **16:1** *Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. <sup>2</sup> On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper ...*

Notice in v. 1 there were collections taken in the churches 'for the saints.' A church collects giving not just missionaries or ministry staff, but for saints, that's the NT word for Christians in general. Other passages talk about how the church is to support its believing widows in need, needy believers, and other benevolence. As NT churches were planted they met in homes or a public place (temple in Acts 2, later in acts synagogues till they got kicked out or in Ephesus for 2 years Paul taught in a school of Tyrannus). It doesn't say whether the Ephesus church had to pay rent to use that school, but when churches need to pay for places to gather like that, either rent or mortgage in our case, church collections cover that also, any and all ministry expenses. v 2 says each person is to set aside for Sunday offerings '*as he may prosper.*'

When God prospers us, we think of raising our standard of living, but Paul wants us to think of raising our standing of giving. Give proportionately and regularly. He talks in other places about first-fruits, the biblical principle is as God provides for you, set aside then for God the first and best portion of what He's given you. We're not to give Him our leftovers, after we give to our daily greeds. As soon as He prospers or provides financially in some way, and this is a good habit for young people to start now as you begin to earn money, before spending, saving, take the first fruits, first things first, set aside a percent or portion to give the 1st day of the week, the Lord's Day

Give the first and best trusting He will provide the rest as an act of faith. As we receive financial blessings, remember Jesus said it's more blessed to give than to receive. As the Lord prospers your work or provides for you, give back to prosper the work of the Lord. Another translation of v. 2 says *'each of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income.'* Now turn to 2 Corinthians 8 where Paul expands on grace giving, and roots his challenge to give more to special offerings, based on God's gospel gifts.

In 2 Cor 8 Paul talks about how the grace of God was at work in the church of Macedonia in giving to a special need, above and beyond their regular giving, v. 3 says they gave voluntarily even beyond their means, It wasn't a rich church, v. 2 says they gave out of their poverty generously joyfully abundantly. In v. 5 they saw it as a favor to take part in giving for the relief of the saints. At the end of v. 7 Paul challenges this Corinthian church to excel in this grace of giving also, he calls it *'an act of grace.'* In v. 8 he says it's not a command, this extra giving was an opportunity to demonstrate love. And the motive is in the next verse: **8:9** *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.* <sup>10</sup> *And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it.* <sup>11</sup> *So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have.* <sup>12</sup> *For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.*

We have some application opportunities, special giving above and beyond regular offerings: 1) ministry staff needs that tie in with debt relief, 2) our missionary Seth Johnston's needs. It's our judgment that it would benefit us as a church to be able to hire a 3rd gospel minister to join the pastoral team here, Lord-willing someone full-time who could help us meet saints' needs. A little less than a year ago I shared the need to pay down one of our loans, as our giving patterns won't support it without funds freed up. Last summer, balance was 162K, it's now down to \_\_\_\_ PTL! We're thankful for many of you who have shared that desire and shared in giving monthly designated to debt relief, and like Paul said in their special giving opportunity, let's finish doing it as well, completing it out of what we have. Not everyone has extra they could give, some can give more or less than others can, but even if you could give \$20 a week extra that you mark for debt, if most of our families here gave extra monthly through this summer to early fall, even just \$60-80 a month marked for debt, we can pay off the rest this year to help free funds

We still have other loans but paying down that one this year will also save us over 65K in interest so we're excited to complete that giving project to free up monthly funds for gospel ministry, so consider, pray, give as able. Our missions giving focus of the month is another special offering on top of your regular giving. Seth grew up in this church, we're his home church and sending church, and he's serving with a tribal group in a place I can't name from the pulpit for security reasons, but he's working with Wycliffe Bible Translators to bring the gospel message to unreached peoples. His support level has dropped to about 80% of his monthly needs and he has some one-time upcoming expenses related to travel and technology that may muzzle or hinder gospel opportunities. To give one-time there's the box on the back wall straight out the double doors, and any month you can give through the regular offering to Seth or any of our missionaries (Dave Owens' medical). By envelope or check you can designate to a missionary, benevolence, debt.

We don't beg for money here, but it strikes me in v. 4 what they begged for: *begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints...* These poor believers were begging earnestly that they could have a part in giving. They got it. Giving to God's work doesn't do God a favor, the favor and blessing is more for those who give than those who receive, Jesus said. Ps 67 says God favors and blesses us so the gospel can go forth to nations.

Our time is gone, so let me just close reading from 2 Cor 9:6, the important principles of investment spiritually: **9:6** *The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.* <sup>7</sup> *Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver...* <sup>11</sup> *You will be enriched in every way **to be generous in every way**, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.* <sup>12</sup> *For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God ...* <sup>15</sup> *Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!*

That takes us full circle to the gospel, God's inexpressible gift of grace in salvation, His generosity should drive ours to others, and make us cheerful and thankful givers. For most of us, these are reminders, but this takes us to the gospel reminders of communion, and how we're not to do any of this as a religious ritual, we're to do it remembrance of what He has done for us at the cross. We can't pay our way, Jesus paid it all, so now all to Him we owe. We give in light of what Jesus said when He instituted the Lord's Supper: *'this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'*