

The Weekly Word

December 4-10, 2023

Greetings Bible readers: This week we read 1Corinthians 9 and start chapter 10. Happy reading...

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, December 4: 1Corinthians 9:1-6 NIV2011

^{9:1} Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? ² Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

³ This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. ⁴ Don't we have the right to food and drink? ⁵ Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? ⁶ Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?

What does the passage say? (Put it in your own words.)

Hey folks, I am an apostle. I have been called by the Lord Jesus. And you are the result of my calling my work in the Lord. I may be an apostle to others, but I am certainly Jesus' apostle to you. You are the proof of my apostleship in Jesus.

All of you who want to judge me, don't we (apostles) have the right to food and drink? Aren't we allowed to take a faithful wife with us, just like other apostles, like the Lord's brothers and Peter? Are Barnabas and I the only apostles who have to work for our food and lodging?

What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers every where in the world.)

It seems as if people in Corinth are doubting or challenging Paul's authority, so he pauses to assert his authority in Christ. He has been called by God and the fact that they all have come to faith is proof of his apostleship. Not that he needs proof for himself; but some in Corinth apparently need it.

Authority in the church is an issue in every era. Now a days authority is built on preaching and teaching God's Word, and a calling we may have in the Lord, which is affirmed by the congregation of God.

And those who lead the church deserve to be provided for by the church.

What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?

Although I rest in the knowledge that God has called me to pastor... I feel I must be true to this calling by teaching and preaching God's Word as best as I can with all the expertise the Lord has given me...

Regarding care, I am thankful that for my 4 decades of ministry the church has provided for my family's welfare.

What does this passage mean and say to us?

I am reminded of the questions put to a congregation at the installation of a pastor in ECO. They go like this:

Do we, the covenant partners of this congregation, accept (name) as our pastor, called by God through the voice of this church to lead us in the way of Jesus Christ, according to the Word of God and the Constitution of ECO?

Do we agree to pray for him (her), to encourage him (her), to respect his (her) decisions and to follow as he (she) guides us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?

Do we agree to pay him (her) fairly and provide for his (her) welfare as he (she) works among us?

Will we listen to the word he (she) preaches, welcome his (her) pastoral care, and honor his (her) servant leadership and authority as he (she) seeks to honor Jesus Christ?

Reading these congregational vows, they clearly grow from this passage and certainly others.

Tuesday, December 5: 1Corinthians 9:7-12 NIV2011

⁷Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? ⁸Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? ⁹For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." ¹⁰Is it about oxen that God is concerned? ¹¹Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. ¹²If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? ¹³If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more?

But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.

What does the passage say? (Put it in your own words.)

Does a soldier serve at his own expense. Doesn't a vineyard owner eat their own grapes. Doesn't a shepherd drink the milk from his goats. Scripture teaches this same point, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out grain." Is God really concerned about oxen? No, God is really speaking to us. People who harvest their fields do so in belief they will reap from their harvest. Likewise, we who sow a spiritual harvest among you should be supported by you. Like the others you support we should receive support from you as well.

But we didn't exercise this right! As a matter of fact, we care of ourselves so that we would not in any way hinder the spread of the Gospel of Christ.

What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers every where in the world.)

Paul continues his instruction about caring for apostles and church leaders.

In this paragraph Paul argues that apostles (and church leaders by extension) should be cared for and provided for by the flock they are serving in the name of Jesus.

What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?

I am thankful that I have served a church that has supported me and my family fairly. Thank you, Lord!!!

What does this passage mean and say to us?

Paul continues the word: support your pastoral staff fairly.

Wednesday, December 6: 1Corinthians 9:13-18 NIV2011

¹³ Don't you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? ¹⁴ In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

¹⁵ But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me, for I would rather die than allow anyone to deprive me of this boast. ¹⁶ For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! ¹⁷ If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. ¹⁸ What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.

What does the passage say? (Put it in your own words.)

You realize that people who work in the temple and at the altar receive their food from the temple and the altar. In the same vein the Lord says that those who preach the Gospel should receiving form the Gospel.

But I have not exercised this right. I am not asking you to do this for me -I would rather die than be denied this boast! I cannot boast in preaching the Gospel since I am compelled by the Lord to preach. I get no reward from preaching since I am only discharging the trust and calling God has put on me. My reward is that I offer my preaching of the Gospel free of charge, releasing my right of support as a preacher of the Gospel.

What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers every where in the world.)

Paul gives us a piece of his life... he doesn't exercise his right to support and care by the church as a Gospel preacher/teacher/evangelist.

This however is not meant to be precedent setting. In fact, churches everywhere should support their Gospel teachers so that they can be dedicated to the task of instructing the church in the way of Jesus.

What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?

As a preacher I have been one who has been cared for by the churches I have been called to serve. And I am grateful for this gift of God through God's people.

What does this passage mean and say to us?

This is a continuing theme from yesterday... support your pastors/teachers. This is fitting in the Lord and is in fact a command of the Lord.

Thursday, December 7: 1Corinthians 9:19-23 NIV2011

¹⁹ Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. ²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³ I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

What does the passage say? (Put it in your own words.)

You must understand that I am free and am not bound to anyone. However, I made myself a slave to everyone, desiring to win to Christ as many as possible. To Jews, people under the Law, I lived like someone under the Law (even though I was not personally under the Law). I did this to win to Jesus those under the Law. To Gentiles, people who are not bound by God's Law, I lived like a person not bound to God's Law (even though I am bound to live by Christ's law). I lived this way so that I might win to Christ people who are not under the Law. To the weak I lived as someone weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by every possible way I might convince some to follow Jesus. I lived this way for the sake of the Gospel so that I may effectively share the blessing of the Gospel.

What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers every where in the world.)

This paragraph of personal sharing by Paul is incredibly instructive about how to live a Gospel-centered, Gospel-sharing life. In essence Paul reduces any person-to-person barrier that he controls so that he can enter the other person's world to effectively share the Gospel of Jesus. When with Jews, Paul observed Jewish law so as not to offend them, which in turn gave him the best possible platform to share the Gospel. Similarly, he lived as a Gentile when with Gentiles and so on. Paul himself is not bound by the Law; he is only bound to Christ and the way of Jesus... (Note that Paul mentions he lived as if he was weak to win the weak... this harkens back to his discussion on food sacrificed to idols and what he teaches here is similar to what he taught in that section of the letter.)

This is a great word to all of us.

What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?

I wish this kind of living came as naturally to me as it did Paul. I am still working on this... O Lord, may my life be a witness to you every moment of every day...

What does this passage mean and say to us?

Putting on the lens of the church, I wish the witness of the corporate church was less self-righteous than it often appears. Self-righteousness rarely if ever provides an effective platform for sharing the Gospel. We can live for Jesus but do so in a non-condemning manner in the hopes of gaining a hearing for people not yet in the grip of God's grace.

Friday, December 8: 1Corinthians 9:24-27 NIV2011

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

²⁶ Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. ²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

What does the passage say? (Put it in your own words.)

You realize that in a race everyone runs but only one person gets the trophy. Run the race of life with all your might so that you win the trophy. All athletes train diligently; they do this to get a trophy that will tarnish over time, but we Christians train to get a trophy that will last for eternity. Therefore, I train diligently. I train my body and mind treating them as a slave to the Gospel so that after I have preached to others, I won't be disqualified for the ultimate prize.

What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers every where in the world.)

Work hard at living the life of Jesus. Treat your faith with the diligence of a world class athlete training hard for her or his sport. Work at your faith, controlling your passion so that they serve the cause of Christ rather than derailing you from it.

Pursue your faith with diligence, effort, and hard work.

What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?

Finish well... keep on keeping on with Jesus so that my life is a tool in the Lord's hands extending His Gospel as I serve Him and His Kingdom.

What does this passage mean and say to us?

The goal of the church is not and never has been converts; it is disciples. Women and men who are constantly following and learning from the Master Jesus so that they can emulate Him in life and like Paul win some to the cause of Christ.

Saturday, December 9: 1Corinthians 10:1- NIV2011

^{10:1} For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. ² They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. ³ They all ate the same spiritual food ⁴ and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

What does the passage say? (Put it in your own words.)

Let the history of ancestors teach you. They lived under God's cloud, and they all passed through the Red Sea. In doing so they were 'baptized' into Moses. They all ate God's manna and drank water provided by God. God's water went with them and was a gift from Christ. Still, most of them were unfaithful to the Lord, as a result they died throughout the wilderness.

What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers every where in the world.)

Paul is setting up a teaching moment from the history of Israel. Even though God was with them, and God provided for them in miraculous ways: cloud by day and fire by night, Red Sea parting, manna, water in the desert, etc. they grew casual in their faith, and many stopped following the Lord and died as a result of unfaithfulness.

In the ensuing verses Paul will call the Corinthians to faithfulness lest they suffer the same fate as their OT brethren.

Even when miracles abound, faithfulness can shrink and disappear. The Lord is calling us to maintain our faith... remembering yesterday's reading, we need to continue to work and train in the faith like an athlete works and trains for her or his sport. Don't grow complacent in faith.

What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?

As a pastor, it can be so easy to slip into "professional Christian" mode. We go through the motions, doing tasks we have done thousands of times even as our faith in Jesus grows cold.

God's Word to me is first and foremost... be a 'son,' a child of God, a servant, a disciple, a follower of Jesus, maintain my personal faith in the Lord. This is job #1. Then out of the overflow pastor the people of God in my care.

What does this passage mean and say to us?

Church... teach and model diligence in faith. Elders, deacons, pastors, missionaries, etc. work on your individual walk with the Lord... model a life in love with Jesus so that all God's people see in you the importance of a robust living faith that affects every aspect of life.

Sunday, December 10, 2023 –Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the Living Hope website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Linda at office@LivingHopeCT.org.

Click here for an audio link to my sermons, <https://livinghopect.org/resources/audio-sermons>. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days. We also livestream our full services which are up on our YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgKURRsX92qqIFgDF1iRWA>