

March 11, 2018

What's Right or What's Left?

1Corinthians 9

Paul seems a bit agitated in this chapter. *Why?* It seems that some Christians & churches (*Corinth, Jerusalem, Antioch*) questioned his apostleship and authority. Perhaps the reason they did is because, unlike others (**3-6**), Paul refused the “*right to payment*” demanded by most apostles/teachers/leaders. He voluntarily relinquished the monetary support due him as Christ's apostle. But instead of gratitude, his brethren met him with apprehension & disdain. The churches had become so twisted in their mindset that the validity of Paul's ministry was questioned because he declined to charge for his service.

No wonder he's angry! Paul is obediently taking a “higher road” than other leaders/teachers by forgoing expected payment for ministry among the churches. But this *higher road* has led to lower esteem, disparagement & distrust by the very Christians he is relieving of financial support! *TWISTED!*

ILLUS. It's like choosing a speaker for an event based solely on the highest fee – *as if it were proof that he/she is the best!* So, Paul proceeds to defend himself to the very churches he is called to serve and trying to teach – who don't trust him because he's not gouging them! (*let that set in!*)

READ: 1Cor 9:1-18 (NLT)

1-2) Paul defends his apostleship with rhetorical questions

3-6) Paul defends his authority (from God) to the church

7-10) Paul defends his rights thru life experiences & scripture
13-16) more

11-12, 17-18) Paul explains stewardship & his reasoning
-an “*even greater right...*” *Why?* b/c he's not itinerant!
-like supporting televangelists but not your church staff

READ: 1Cor 9:19-23 (NLT)

19-21) I become like the people to whom I'm witnessing
-identify with them: fears, beliefs, strengths, weaknesses
-Always true to Christ & His Gospel!

-21b) – what is the *law of Christ?* It is LOVE
-*For what purpose?* “...that I might save some!”

In the last chapter (8), Paul admonished mature Christians to forgo the liberties their faith provided to maintain unity among believers. This whole chapter proves that Paul himself was taking his own advice! He laid down his rights to monetary support, to lead his own life, to freedom from the Law, & to spiritual strength. Paul proves that no one/nothing will impede him from preaching the Good News to both saved and lost.

I bet Paul wished he had penned **Hebrews 13:16,17.**

But Paul most assuredly did write **1Cor 16:15-18**

PLEASE your Leaders (*pastors, deacons, M.A., facilitators, Committee, Ministry & Event leaders*)

- PRAY** for your leaders: *what we pray for, we care for*
- LOVE** – *Love is a choice that directs words & actions*
- ENCOURAGE** – **Root** for them; *their success is yours*
- ACCEPT/ADAPT** – *called/given by God for GOOD!*
- SUPPORT** your leaders – *not blindly, but passionately*
-Expect them to be right; Forgive them when wrong!
- ENJOY** – *find reasons to celebrate what/when you can!*

In other words, give your leaders “*What's right...NOT What's left*” after you've poured yourselves out in the world! The church is not like any worldly organization: it is a divine organism – designed to be nurtured (not oppressed) by those ***God calls, equips and assigns to local congregations...***

For His GOOD and your GROWTH!

INVITATION TO RESPOND PERSONALLY:

- 1) Do you ask leaders for the help you need?
- 2) Are you learning to find common ground with others in order to share Christ?
- 3) Are you participating in church-wide ministry?

WORSHIP IN MEDITATION: 1Samuel 8:10-20

10) So Samuel passed on the LORD's warning to the people who were asking him for a king. **11)** "This is how a king will reign over you," Samuel said. "The king will draft your sons and assign them to his chariots and his charioteers...some will be forced to plow in his fields and harvest his crops, and some will make his weapons and chariot equipment. **13)** The king will take your daughters from you and force them to cook and bake and make perfumes for him. **14)** He will take away the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his own officials. **15)** He will take a tenth of your grain and your grape harvest and distribute it among his officers and attendants. **16)** He will take your male and female slaves and demand the finest of your cattle and donkeys for his own use. **17)** He will demand a tenth of your flocks, and you will be his slaves. **18)** When that day comes, you will beg for relief from this king you are demanding, but then the LORD will not help you." **19)** But the people refused to listen to Samuel's warning. "Even so, we still want a king," they said. **20)** "We want to be like the nations around us.

This is one of the saddest events in all of scripture! God's people – ***chosen to be separated & unique among all the peoples of the world*** – were determined to give up their greatest differential: *their Divine King!* A Divine King has no needs to be served and therefore, prioritizes & meets the needs of His people exclusively, always acting in their best interest.

But the Israelites traded God as their King for a mere mortal king, complete with flaws, failures, weaknesses, ungodly passions & selfish ambitions! He took from them the first and best of everything, and then dominated & oppressed them. As his government grew, so did their indebtedness to him until they could barely meet their own needs by what was left over!

Today, the church will answer the question: "**Are we supporting our leaders with what's left or what's right?**"

Sermon in a Sentence: *What's Right or What's Left?*

Heb 13:16,17 (NLT)

15) Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. **16)** And don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God. **17)** Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.

1Cor 16:15-18 (NLT)

15) You know that Stephanas and his household were the first of the harvest of believers in Greece, and they are spending their lives in service to God's people. I urge you, dear brothers and sisters, **16)** to submit to them and others like them who serve with such devotion. **17)** I am very glad that Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus have come here. They have been providing the help you weren't here to give me. **18)** They have been a wonderful encouragement to me, as they have been to you. You must show your appreciation to all who serve so well.

"Be kinder than necessary; everyone you meet is facing some kind of battle!"

"I was regretting the past and fearing the future. Suddenly my Lord was speaking: "My name is I AM!" He paused. I waited. He continued: "When you live in the past with its mistakes and regrets, It is hard. I am not there. My name is not I WAS! When you live in the future with its problems and fears It is hard. I am not there. My name is not I WILL BE! When you live in this moment it is not hard. I am here. My name is I AM!"