

1Corinthians 9:10-18
Dig Deeper, May 21, 2003

If we have sown unto you spiritual things, [is it] a great thing if we shall reap your carnal (material) things? (The term “carnal things” (KJV) used here simply refers to material things, things for the needs of the human body.) With this statement, Paul continues his teaching on the principles of supporting a servant of the Lord. The Lord Himself laid down the basis for it when He sent out His disciples.

...freely ye have received, freely give.

Matthew 10:8

We have freely received redemption, eternal life, and grace from God at infinite cost to Him of giving His only begotten Son to die on Calvary’s cross. See also 1 Corinthians 2:12. So we are motivated to freely PASS IT ON! And to support others who are gifted and sent by the Lord to pass it on. We do this, not simply out of a sense of duty, much less by compulsion, of but out of love for the Lord and for souls as lost as we were once. He desires that all men hear the gospel and come to repentance, 2Peter 3:9. Scripture is full of the gospel and exhortations to present the gospel to sinners.

2Corinthians 5:11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.

While freely giving the gospel the preacher is still entitled to voluntary support by **those who have already received it.** Clearly, the idea of taking collections at a gospel meeting is forbidden in scripture.* Such a practice **contradicts** the very essence of the gospel. Salvation is offered free and without cost, to any who will take it.

Romans 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

2Corinthians 11:7 Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

Revelation 21:6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

Revelation 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

But God has been giving freely from the very beginning.

Genesis 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

But having freely received we are to freely give.

3John 5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; 6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: 7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. 8 We therefore ought to receive such, that

we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

The believers, freely saved by grace, are to freely, and sacrificially, support those who bring the gospel. And as we see from 3John this principle extends to those who freely bring the truth. And it also applies to all who minister in any way to the spiritual needs of the saints of God. This is not optional! The worthiness of the laborer to receive support is based upon the worthiness of what he brings from the Lord. The TRUTH is the standard of excellence in a laborer. It is the truth of God (whether the message of the evangelist or the ministry of the teacher/pastor, public or personal) that commands him to the care and support of the saints. And it is that which draws out the loving, prayerful concern for the one who has put all on the line in faith to serve his Lord. It is love that moves them in their service and love which motivates their support by saints receiving the blessings of their ministry. Love edifies! 1Corinthians 8:1.

But the Corinthians were not forsaking all of the servants of Christ. They were supporting others. Who? Perhaps local leaders competing with Paul for power? Why else would they be cool toward Paul? Was this an early inkling of a tendency toward selected and salaried ministers? There is no scripture supporting the idea of a salaried minister of the word or pastor of a congregation. The closest thing to it is perhaps found in *1Timothy 5:17*.

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. 18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer [is] worthy of his reward.

Elderly men who exercise godly care in the assembly and minister the truth are to be given “double honor” over and above the honor due all elderly saints. Here we have the scripture about the ox quoted again. But the context in 1Timothy 5 is instruction regarding assembly support of the needy, that is, of widows and of elderly brothers unable to provide for their own needs. The word “honor” used here can carry the idea of financial support or reward. Even here it is only for those older men who are unable to support themselves. No clerisy is established here

Having clearly established the scriptural precedent for his not working, Paul proceeds to lay aside his rights to receive support from them and does secular work to earn his living. But why? He apparently was led by the Spirit to realize the Corinthian’s background of self indulgence would be difficult for them to set aside in favor of a self sacrificial attitude and life style. As an example for them, he does secular work to provide for his physical necessities. To stir them up, Paul describes the driving force behind his fervent labor for the Lord in the gospel and in establishing assemblies of those converted

by his work. At his miraculous conversion he was commissioned by the Lord to preach the gospel unto all men.

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake...19...Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. 20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

So he says: *y16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!*

He was going at it full tilt! Yet He was only heeding the personal charge given (dispensed to) him from his Lord. And if he had dared to refuse? “*Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.*” He would have been an unfaithful, disobedient servant. Yet a willing servant does receive a reward. But not the reward of “filthy lucre” as Peter characterizes it, 1Peter 5:7. See also 1Timothy 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7, 11. Nor did he seek recognition from men, but counted himself as one of many on a team of God’s fellow-laborers, chapter 3:5-11. Rather Paul seeks a higher reward. What is it? The glory of having made the

gospel freely and widely available to all. That is enough for Him! The gospel itself is so precious, so glorious! It presents Christ and Him crucified.

He does not appear to be “results oriented.” He leaves the results to God. The prospect of reaping of souls did not propel him as much as his making sure the marvelous story of God’s infinite gift of love in giving His one and only Son was publicized to all.

2Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks [be] unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. 15 For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 16 To the one [we are] the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who [is] sufficient for these things?

This attitude stands in stark contrast to those in Corinth who were seeking eminence and power amongst their self satisfied peers at the cost of the unity of the Spirit in the Assembly. We need to beware of nurturing fleshly lusts, personal ambitions and aspirations in the local assembly, or in our service for the Lord today.

By Ron Canner, May 21, 2003

* Collections seem to be authorized in scripture **only** as a part of an assembly meeting for worship, **never** at any other meeting of the assembly. Nor are collections authorized for any other meeting or function undertaken by individuals apart from the assembly, or for any service, speaker, program, public or private, for believers or unbelievers. Obviously solicitations for funds by mail, phone or in person are not scriptural either.

On the other hand a voluntary personal gift prayerfully given privately (best anonymously) to a servant of the Lord, or to someone in need, seems to be in the spirit of love, grace and mercy encouraged by the Lord.

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