

*A certain pastor was having difficulty with his parking spot at church. The problem was, although there was a sign saying: "**This space reserved.**" , everybody assumed it was reserved for them, and people just parked in it (willy-nilly) whenever they liked.*

*Obviously "communication" was the problem. More clarity is what's required, so he erected a different sign, "**Reserved for Pastor Only.**" And that made no difference at all.*

*"Maybe if the sign was a bit more forceful," he thought. So he devised a more intimidating sign, which announced, "**Thou shalt not park here!!!**" Well, that didn't help either.*

*Finally, he came up with a cunning plan (One which actually worked), and nobody ever parked in his spot, ever again. The sign read, "**The one who parks here preaches the sermon on Sunday morning!**"*

Who would want to be a preacher, hey?

Today we're going to be talking about the cost and the reward of preaching the Gospel.

Sometimes we can be a bit oblivious to the personal effort, and the personal **cost**, that is often borne by those in ministry. And today, we get a bit of a glimpse of this, in what is "quite an emotional passage".

I thought I might do the Bible Reading myself today, because I want it to come across, "Just how personal this is", for Paul.

The Apostle Paul didn't make a habit of talking about himself, because he had something far more important to talk about.

His main message was always about Christ crucified, and Christ raised from the dead. But today, we **do** get a little glimpse, of the personal side, and the very real personal cost, of Paul's ministry.

In these 18 verses, I counted up, that Paul referred to himself, some 42 times. And yet, at no point, was it some kind of ego-trip for Paul – it's so **we** can learn how to give **ourselves** away, as Paul gave the example of **him** giving **himself** away...

So, 1 Corinthians 9:1-18

9 Am **I** not free? Am **I** not an apostle? Have **I** not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you **my** workmanship in the Lord? ² If to others **I** am not an apostle, at least **I** am to you, for you are the seal of **my** apostleship in the Lord.

³ This is **my** defence to those who would examine **me**. ⁴ Do **we** not have the right to eat and drink? ⁵ Do **we** not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? ⁶ Or is it only Barnabas and **I** who have no right to refrain from working for a living? 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?

⁸ Do **I** say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? ⁹ 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? ¹⁰ Does he not certainly speak for **our** sake? It was written for **our** sake, because the ploughman should plough in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. ¹¹ If **we** have sown spiritual

things among you, is it too much if **we** reap material things from you? ¹² 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. ¹³ 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? ¹⁴ In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

¹⁵ But **I** have made no use of any of these rights, **nor** am **I** writing these things to secure any such provision. For **I** would rather die than have anyone deprive **me** of **my** ground for boasting. ¹⁶ For if **I** preach the gospel, that gives **me** no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon **me**. **Woe** to **me** if **I** do **not** preach the gospel! ¹⁷ For if **I** do this of **my own** will, **I** have a reward, but if not of my own will, **I** am still entrusted with a stewardship. ¹⁸ What then is **my** reward? That in **my** preaching **I** may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of **my** right in the gospel.

Wow. Is Paul full of himself??? Not at all... Let's see what he's talking about.

As we've been reading Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians (especially in the first 4 chapters), it's been pretty obvious, that the church in Corinth, was divided, and there were **some** in that church, who disagreed with Paul's teaching, and they were running him down.

They questioned his authenticity. They didn't agree with Paul, and so they alleged, that he wasn't really an apostle... Really what they were doing, was "they were questioning his authority"... "If we can find something wrong with Paul, then his teaching has no authority, and we don't have to pay any attention to him."

But Paul defends his ministry, **and** his calling, as that of an "apostle". He could personally testify to the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead, because he'd seen Him, when he was blinded on the road to Damascus. But the **best** evidence that Paul could give, of being an Apostle, was the Corinthian church itself. **Paul** is the one who took the gospel to Corinth. It was **his** preaching, that converted them. He says "you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord". A seal is a stamp of authenticity.

And in essence, what he's saying is, "You know me." "I preached the Gospel to you." "I brought you to Christ". "I planted the church". If others question my authenticity, **you** certainly shouldn't, because you know me...

But even so, there **were** some who **did** question his authenticity; They questioned his authority; and it seems they were even questioning his integrity...

In V3, he says: ³ **This is my defence to those who would examine me.**

And, in the Greek, that's "Legal jargon". The word *anakrinō* (translated here as "**examine me**"), means to "interrogate" him; to "investigate" him; to "cross-examine" him, as if Paul

was on trial... It's the same word from which we get our word "critic" or "criticise"....

How sad it is, hey? – that Paul, a preacher of the gospel, was being falsely accused, and was being put in a position where he had to defend himself against his accusers...

What was he accused of??? Well, his authenticity was questioned, but it seems that one of the accusations might've been, that he was just in it for the money...

Some churches, are very generous in providing for those who preach the Gospel. But not always.

And it seems that the church in Corinth (or at least some there), weren't very generous to Paul. They were supporting some preachers who came to them, but not Paul & Barnabas... I guess we can probably assume that they supported the preachers who told them what they wanted to hear, but Paul didn't do that – Paul always told it like it was, even when his message was unpopular...

But Paul lays down the principle, that those who preach the Gospel, are entitled to earn their living, **by** preaching the Gospel. In V6, he says: ⁶ **Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?**

Alright, so the principle, is that those who preach the Gospel, are entitled to earn their living, **by** preaching the Gospel.

God calls **all** of us to be “ministers”. We are **all** ministers of Christ. But right from the beginning, God has called some, to leave **behind** their jobs, and to become preachers of the Gospel (full-time) – unhindered by other work responsibilities...

*Now, because I've been a full-time pastor of a church, and **now** (being in a smaller church), find I have to work another job a couple of days a week, I've become very aware, of how the added pressures of 'having to work for a living', impacts on one's ministry...*

And so, I want to apologise to you this morning, if you've found I haven't been doing everything you feel a pastor of a church should be doing (I apologise). But I am doing as much as I can, when the church can only afford to pay me for 2 days a week...

*And I am very grateful, that the church is able to pay me for 2 days a week... It's a response to the principle that those who preach the Gospel, are entitled to earn their living, **by** preaching the Gospel. Paul's telling us, “It's not a privilege. It's not a favour. It's a right.”*

And it's a right, that he confirms in 4 ways:

1.

Firstly, human practice and human wisdom, have enshrined the principle “A fair day's work for a fair day's pay.” That's what's right, isn't it???

- Does a soldier have to fork out for his own provisions when he's away with the army? (Of course not)

- Does the one who works in a vineyard, not get to eat any of the grapes???
- Doesn't the one who looks after the sheep get to have a killer every now and then???

That's the common, occupational order of things...

2.

Secondly, he appeals to the Old Testament, and the Law of Moses...

Deuteronomy 25:4 "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain. And Paul explains: It's not only Oxen that God's worried about – it's the principle – that those who work, are paid **for** their work.

Even the Levites who served in the temple, and also worked as public servants, were paid – That's what the Old Testament Tithe was about. The Levites didn't have any land of their own. Their job, was to work in the temple, and to monitor weights and measures, and do various other public services. And so, the other tribes tithed a tenth of all that they grew, and that was given to the Levites. That was their right. That was what their living. And the Levites then, tithed a tenth of what was given to them, (so a tithe of a tithe), and this went to the priests who served in the temple, and it paid for the upkeep of the temple.

And so, the principle of being paid (for full-time service to God), was enshrined in the Old Testament.

3.

Thirdly, he appeals to the general practice of churches... It was normal, for those who were called to full-time ministry, to receive a living, from those they ministered to.

4.

And fourthly, It was a command of Jesus...

In Luke 10, Jesus tells the disciples that, when they're on mission, to go to one house, ⁷, **eating and drinking what they provide, for the labourer deserves his wages.**

So Paul, firmly establishes the principle, that it is his right, as a preacher of the Gospel, to be provided for, by those that he's was preaching to... And so we may expect, that at this point, he's going to say *"So pay up buddy, before the Lord smites you and your money, into a pile of smouldering ashes in the church's foyer..."*

But he turns the tables completely – First of all, he establishes this right, but then he says: "But I haven't made use of this right. Nor do I want to."...

Wow....

In fact, he says, "nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision."

I'm not teaching this because **I** want your money either.. I'm teaching this, because it's part of the word of the lord – this is

actually part of the Gospel – that as a church, we partner with those who preach the Gospel, by providing for them...

But why does Paul, after establishing his right, to receive payment for his preaching, then choose to give up that right??? ... Two reasons:

1.

Firstly, he would **endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.**

That word “obstacle” – literally means “cutting up a road, to make it more difficult to pass”... A retreating army, destroys a road (taking out bridges) and cutting out mountain passes, to hinder the progress of their pursuers...

And now Paul is saying, “I would endure anything, rather than cut up the road of the Gospel.

But, how can a preacher being paid for preaching, hinder the gospel of Christ? Well, I can think of 3 ways: The first, is if the preacher is so fixated on his earthly rights, that he will only preach if there is financial reward in it for him...

If a preacher will only work the hours he's paid for, the Gospel of Christ is greatly hindered.

The second way the Gospel of Christ is hindered, is if the preacher cares so much about his pay-packet, that he alters what he will (or will Not) preach...

Not every week, but **almost** every week, as I prepare the message for Sunday, I can't help but assess:

- How's this person going to take this?
- And that person's going to think that I'm preaching at them.
- And if I don't water it down, this person's going to be upset and probably cry;
- And that person might get angry;
- And that person might stop giving....

And if the preacher is more worried "not offending people", so he can protect about his pay-packet than being true to the gospel, the gospel is hindered...

And thirdly, 'payment for preaching', can make people suspicious of one's motives – "You're just in it for the money".

And so Paul would do anything rather than hinder the Gospel. He would rather work a second job (to pay his own way), than for the gospel to be hindered...

His second motivation, I think I can best describe as "his thankfulness to Christ."

For those who are called to preach the Gospel, it's an obligation...

When I first started telling people that I was going to quit my job and go to Bible college to train to be a pastor, the general response was "OK, if that's what you want to do"....

But then I'd throw them into a state of confusion by saying "That's not what I want to do. I love my job here. I love rural training. I love working on farms. I want to one day own my own farm... That's what I want to do... But I know that God has told me that he wants me preaching the Gospel..."

And non-Christians couldn't get that...

- *They could get "giving up a good job", **if** it was to enable me to do something I really wanted to do.*
- *They could get "selling the house and uprooting the family and heading off to the city", if that's what I wanted to do.*
- *They could even get "The fact that I was turning down a promotion that others weren't even going to apply for, because they knew it was mine"*

But what they couldn't get, was giving up anything, to go and do something that I didn't really want to do...

You see, for those who are called to preach the Gospel, preaching the gospel isn't a choice – it's not a preference – it's a compulsion – it's a duty. Paul says: **For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!**

It's something he has to do anyway, whether he's paid for it or not... *It's the same for me. Offerings go down... It makes no difference – It'll just take a few more years for the house to get paid off... I keep preaching, because - **Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel***

How is Paul's preaching, an offering to God, if it's an obligation??? I'll tell you how – he gives up his right to payment, and he does it free of charge, as a gift to God...

Last week, we learned about “Giving up our rights, for the sake of our brothers and sisters in Christ.”... And today's reading, is Paul's living example, to the Corinthian church, of how **he** gives up **his** rights, for the good of others...

Paul surrenders his right, for the sake of the Gospel.

In our world, most people stand up (very strongly), to maintain their rights, but the way of Christ, and the way for His disciples, is for us to give up our rights.

Questions:

ⁱ Richard W. Patt, All Stirred Up, CSS Publishing, Lima, Ohio, 1977 in www.holwick.com