

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S EXAMPLE

TEXT: I CORINTHIANS 9:1-18

INTRODUCTION:

1. The Bible has a lot to say about the apostle Paul's example. Paul was much different from the Pharisees who basically said, "Do as I teach, but not as I do" (cf. Mathew 23:3, 4).
2. The Pharisees did not practice what they preached, but Paul practiced what he preached.
3. Paul said in I Corinthians 4:16, "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me."
4. And Paul said in I Corinthians 11:1, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."
5. Paul said in Philippians 3:17, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample."
6. There are other similar verses. Tonight, we will look at Paul's example.

1. PAUL'S POSITION
2. PAUL'S POLICY
3. PAUL'S PREACHING

I. PAUL'S POSITION (9:1-6)

1. Paul was called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God (9:1). The word "apostle" means, "one sent under commission."
2. Hebrews 3:1 says, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."
3. The Lord Jesus is called an apostle because He was "one sent under commission."
4. On two occasions, the Greek word *apostolos* is translated as "messenger" in the King James Bible. And that is basically what the word means – "one sent under commission" (cf. II Corinthians 8:23; Philippians 2:25).
5. The word is often used to describe the twelve apostles chosen by our Lord. Since Paul came later, he considered himself "one born out of due time" (I Cor. 15:8).

6. In I Corinthians 15:9, Paul said, “For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”
7. The apostles, together with the New Testament prophets, laid the foundation for the New Testament church.
8. Ephesians 2:20 says the church is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”
9. The foundation is no longer being laid. Therefore, modern-day “apostles are fakers. “Churches” today with their own so-called “apostles” are really nothing but cults.
10. One of the qualifications for being an apostle was a personal experience of seeing the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:21,22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39-43).
11. Also, the apostles were given the ability to perform special signs and wonders to confirm the message that they preached (Heb. 2:3, 4).
12. Paul defended his claim to being an apostle (9:1, 2). Paul was referring to himself in II Corinthians 12:12, when he said, “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”
13. Therefore, as an apostle, Paul had he right to receive financial support from the people to whom he ministered (9:3-6).
14. The word “power” (9:4, 5, 6, 12, 18) in this context means “the right.” Paul is saying, “Don’t we have the right to eat and drink?”
15. Paul made tents (cf. Acts 18:1-3). Personally, I believe this is the best way to start churches and it is the way I started this church. Paul made tents in order to set an example for others to imitate (II Thess. 3:7-10).
16. Note II Thessalonians 3:9 – “Not because we have not power (the right), but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.”
17. Paul taught that as a Gospel preacher, as a church-planter, as a missionary, he had the right to receive financial support from God’s people.
18. He was free to set aside that right – and he sometimes did – but the principles he brings out here in I Corinthians 9 apply to all full-time Christian workers today.
19. Paul was unmarried (Peter was married – vs. 5). Mark 1:30 refers to Peter’s wife’s mother. Paul had the right to “lead about” (9:5) a wife but he did not exercise this right.
20. Paul also had the right to devote himself full time to the ministry, as the other apostles did (cf. Acts 6:1-4).
21. Paul did not have to make tents. However, Paul and Barnabas worked at making tents (I Cor. 9:6; cf. II Thess. 3:7-9).

II. PAUL'S POLICY (9:7-14)

1. Both the Bible and our everyday experience teach us that a workman deserves to be paid (9:7).
2. If a man joins the army and is sent off to war, the government pays his wages.
3. The man who plants a vineyard gets to eat the fruit. The herdsman has the right to drink the milk from his animals (9:7).
4. Here is Paul's point: in the secular realm there is a principle – a day's pay for a day's work. This same principle applies in the spiritual realm.
5. If anyone should argue that Paul is using human illustrations, and that things are different in the Lord's work, Paul says, "Say I these things as a man? (i.e. "Am I using human reasoning?") So, he reminds them that the law of God teaches this same principle (9:8).
6. Paul quoted Deuteronomy 25:4 to prove his point (9:9; cf. I Timothy 5:17, 18). It would be cruel for a farmer to bind the mouth of the ox and prevent him from eating the grain. After all, the ox is doing the work; the ox is treading out the corn.
7. "Doth God take care for oxen?" (9:9). Paul is teaching a spiritual principle: the laborer has the right to share in the bounties. The ox had plowed the soil in preparation for the sowing, and now he was treading out the corn that had been harvested.
8. Paul had plowed the soil in Corinth. He had seen a harvest from the seed he had planted. And it was only right that he enjoyed some of the fruits of that harvest (9:9, 10).
9. When we receive spiritual blessings, we should in turn share material blessings (I Cor. 9:11; cf. Rom. 15:25-27).
10. "Carnal things" (9:11) here means, "things for the body" (Scofield margin).
11. Those who teach us the Bible have the right to expect us to support them (cf. Gal. 6:6-10).
12. The main purpose of the tithe is to support ministers, not the building fund or other things, important as they may be.
13. Sadly, some Christians do not give their tithes to their church, and this hurts pastors and their families. And it hinders the church from growing.
14. Paul made tents in order to support himself as a church-planter, but he also received financial support from other churches (cf. Phil. 4:15-19; II Cor. 11:7-9).
15. The Old Testament believers paid their tithes in order to support the priests and Levites (9:13; cf. Num.18:21, 24).

16. "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (9:14).
17. Paul is saying that this same principle is still in effect. If the Old Testament ministers under the law were supported by the people to whom they ministered, should not pastors who minister under grace also be supported?
18. The Lord Jesus Christ frequently spoke about money. And He clearly taught "that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (9:14; cf. Luke 10:7, 8; Matt. 10:10).
19. It is unfortunate that Christians, who are supposed to follow the teachings of our Lord, oftentimes miss this important principle – a principle that goes back to Abraham giving his tithe to Melchizedek, "the priest of the most high God" (Gen. 14:18-20).
20. And then this principle was incorporated into the law under Moses. And then we see in the New Testament that it was taught by our Lord and the apostle Paul.

III. PAUL'S PREACHING (9:15-18)

1. In verse 15, Paul says, "But I have used none of these things (his right to receive a salary): neither have I written these things (in order to receive a salary), that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void."
2. The idea of glorying is "rejoicing," as in Philippians 1:26 – "That your rejoicing (same word in Greek) may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again."
3. Paul stated that he would rather die than have anyone deprive him of his ground for boasting. Paul was not pushy about his right to be paid. He chose to support himself by making tents.
4. Albert Barnes said the sense is, "Though my right to a support is established, in common with others, both by reason, the nature of the case, the examples in the law, and the command of the Lord Jesus, yet there are reasons why I have not chosen to avail myself of this right, and why I have not urged these claims. I have not presented this argument now in order to induce you to provide for me. I do not intend now to ask or receive a support from you. I urge it to show that I feel that I have a right to it...I neither ask you to send me now a support, nor, if I visit you again, do I expect you will contribute to my maintenance."
5. Paul preached the gospel without expense to anybody, and by doing so he had prevented the charge of avarice (9:18).

6. Paul preached the gospel out of necessity (9:16). Paul knew that his life would be miserable if he did not preach the Gospel.
7. Barnes said, “Probably none now have evidences of their call to the ministry as strong as this. But there are many, very many, who feel that a kind of necessity is laid on them to preach. Their consciences urge them to it. They would be miserable in any other employment. The course of Providence has shut them up to it.”
8. The same word translated “reward” in verses 17 and 18 is translated as “hire” in Luke 10:7. Jesus said, “The laborer is worthy of his hire.”
9. Paul’s “reward” was preaching the Gospel and seeing souls saved. A pastor friend of mine said that he loved preaching so much that he would pay the church to let him preach.
10. Furthermore, Paul preached the gospel anticipating a future reward (9:17, 18). Our Lord said in Matthew 5:12, “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.”
11. First Peter 5:4 says, “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

CONCLUSION:

“It is a great reproach on the church of God when its representatives turn to a Christ-less world and beg and wheedle money out of ungodly men to support the work of the Lord. The divine method is that the gospel of God should be supported by the people of God who give out of love for Christ” – H.A. Ironside.