

Christian Liberty: The Support of the Apostles

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Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 9:7-14

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Open your Bibles then, if you will, to 1 Corinthians chapter nine. And if you will, let's ask you to follow along as I read out loud verses one through 14 and then we will go to the Lord and ask his grace and his mercy upon us as we meet to hear his Word.

1 Corinthians nine starting at verse one.

Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we have no right to eat and drink? Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.¹

And let's go to the Lord in prayer.

¹ 1 Corinthians 9:1-14.

Gracious God, we ask your mercy that your Word would be precious to us. Father, we know in and of ourselves because of our sin your Word is not precious, that left to ourselves we would be seeking the things of this world and valuing the things of corruption more than we value spiritual things. If your Spirit has opened our eyes at all, then to some degree our hearts yearn to have the Word of God explained to us. We ask that your Spirit will do that task today. Use me and use the means that you have appointed that we may be made more in the image of Jesus Christ our Savior, more in the image of God. We humbly ask that you will do this for us and believe that you will because you have promised it and because you have shown us the great love that you have for us in your Word and in the sacrifice of your Son. And so in confidence, based on your love and your promises, we pray and ask these things in the name of Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

I want to start this morning by giving us a panoramic view of the issue of ministers and their task and their value. So in proper historical fashion, if you will, let's start with the creation of Adam and Eve. When God created Adam and Eve he created them in immediate and close fellowship with himself. Adam and Eve did not have a preacher in that sense of the word. There was not another human being with whom they met on a regular basis who instructed them about God. They had no need of it because each and every day was a moment spent in personal and direct communion with God himself. No one had to teach Adam and Eve to know the Lord because God spoke with them directly. They knew him personally.

However, when Adam and Eve sinned that direct relationship, that direct knowledge of God was completely disrupted. We, as a human race, became darkened in our imaginations, foolish in our minds, corrupt in our thoughts. Now on one hand as a corrupt human being or, as I should say, as a corrupt race of human beings, we have tried to get ourselves back to the garden ever since through our own philosophy or man made religion of one kind of another.

However, the real salvation is not through our efforts, but through God's. God has also been at work not allowing us to reach up to him, but informing us that we are completely incapable of it and thereby reaching down to us.

Part of his work of salvation is restoring this broken communication, this communion that Adam and Eve had which is broken by our sin, God is in the process of restoring. The initial movements of that process, the initial moments, if you will, in which God begins that work is the Old Testament prophets. It is the pictures and the types and the shadows and the prophecies of the time to come. But the highest and the greatest method that God has ever used to communicate himself to us is the incarnation of his own Son Jesus Christ.

John chapter one. "No one has seen God at any time. [But] The only begotten Son... has declared Him."²

² John 1:18.

God has given us information. Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. He perfectly lived out the character of God.

If you want to see God, look at Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Christ himself claimed in John 14, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”³

Now that is sufficient to restore the broken communication. But there is a problem for us. And that problem is that none of us has ever seen Jesus Christ. Adam and Eve saw God, if you will. There was a personal relationship. That relationship is broken. In the person of Christ God comes to us and communicates perfectly everything about the character of God. But we weren’t alive then and none of us has ever seen Jesus Christ. We have never seen God. We have never seen Christ.

Ah, but there were men who were alive then, the apostles. The holy men appointed by Christ himself to be with him, to hear his teachings and then to record them after his death.

Problem. We have never seen an apostle either. But we do have their writings. But that, in itself, does not finish or close the link. It does not finish the chain.

If our communication with God is broken because of our sin and if God is in the process of restoring that communion through the giving of his own Son Jesus Christ who is the perfect revelation of God and then Christ appoints 12 men who are perfectly inspired by the Spirit to remember and record everything that Christ has said and that we have the Word of God perfectly kept for us in our hands, we still lack one part of the chain. And that is we need to understand this Word.

Now how valuable is it that we be able to correctly understand this Word? I want you to see it in that light. If we are completely incapable of understanding anything of God, but God has given us information and God has given us revelation in the person of Christ and in the teaching and then we have recorded for us both types and shadows that look forward to Christ, the event of Christ himself and the apostolic writings that look back and explain Jesus Christ to us, and all of that is recorded and kept for us and you hold it in your hands, then how important is it that someone be able to accurately be able to explain the Word to you?

You see, what we do here on the Lord’s Day is not chalking off another check box on the to do list. It is not just another duty. It is a law. It is a commandment. But it is more than that. It is an opportunity to hear God speak. It is an opportunity to have what God want you to know explained to you.

I want you to consider several things. First of all, God is extremely gracious to us. When we sinned and rebelled against him and decided that we would decide what was good and

³ John 14:9.

evil, that we would possess the knowledge of right and wrong, God could have left us in our blindness, but instead he gave us the Word and sent his Son.

On top of that God has been gracious to you in that he has given you a desire to hear that Word. He has done a work in you... consider how absolutely radical it is that you are even here today. Consider how absolutely revolutionary it is that you are not out on your boat or riding your motorcycle or doing whatever it is that you love to do, watching football, playing football, that whatever it is that you love, that instead you are here to listen to some man rattle.

Why? Because you hope in your heart. You desire in your heart to have the Word of God opened and explained to you. And that is a gracious work of God. He has given you the Word. He has sent his Son. He has spoken to us in these last days by his Son. And then he has given you a desire to hear that message.

Accurately and carefully preaching the Word of God in this sense becomes of utmost importance. And having men called and gifted by the Spirit of God to that end is crucial, essential, pivotal to your own spiritual growth.

So I ask you again. In this light, how valuable is it to you that someone be able to open the Word of God and accurately and carefully explain it to you?

Paul, I think, has a similar idea in mind because in verses one through six as we have seen last week, he starts talking about apostles and the right of an apostle to be honored, to be respected and to be compensated.

But in verses seven through 14 that we are going to tackle this morning he moves from talking about apostles, if you look at verse 14, to those who preach the gospel, not just apostles, but those who take the apostolic message, the message that Christ gave them and who, in turn, preach it as well. And so now he is not just talking about apostles and the honor and respect due to that office. Now he is speaking of all who take the apostolic message and who explain it and proclaim it and announce it to all, who preach it. And how valuable is that office? Those who preach the gospel should live from that work. They should find their sustenance, the things they need for day to day existence supplied to them from the work that they do as preachers of the gospel.

It is not an option either. Do you see in verse 14, the Lord himself has commanded that it be that way.

Those who preach the gospel, those who explain and expound the Word of God to us are worthy of financial support.

Now what Paul is going to do is he is going to continue his defense, his apology in classic concepts. He is going to continue his argument as to why this is true. Why those who preach the gospel should receive financial compensation for their work. And basically verses seven through 14 are going to break down into three answers that Paul is going to

give as to why we should support or financially support those that explain the Word of God to us.

There are three reasons why. First, ministers who explain the Word of God to us should be compensated for their work on the principle that anyone who works should enjoy the profits of their work.

In verses seven through 10 Paul gives what I consider to be a universal principle. It is just the way God structured the world that those who work have a right to profit from their own work.

Let's look at verses seven through 10, if you will, and let's kind of break it apart into its pieces.

First of all there is a general principal itself in all sorts of vocations. Let's look at verse seven.

“Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?”⁴

Now, again, Paul has got that rhetorical question going. And the answer to each one of those is: Well, no one.

“Who ever goes to war at his own expense?”⁵

When was the last time that you knew of a soldier who turned down his paycheck?

“Oh, no, I do this for fun.”

Now, it is possible that you do enjoy it. But quite honestly to my knowledge there are no pure, you know, free soldiers. They want to get paid. And they want to get paid and compensated in a manner worthy of the job that they do. Soldiers especially in Paul's day did not serve for nothing. They are paid for putting their life on the line.

“Who ever goes to war at his own expense?”⁶

Nobody.

“Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit?”⁷

And, again, the answer is: No one. You plant a vineyard or you plant a garden. You put seed in the ground. You put labor into it. You are going to let somebody else come and

⁴ 1 Corinthians 9:7.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

just have all the food for nothing? No, you put the work into it, you get the compensation for it.

“Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?”⁸

Or for that matter who tends a flock and doesn’t occasionally have veal for dinner? You put the work into raising the animals, you get the profit from it.

Now, I would love to just kind of camp there for a moment in nice American capitalistic fashion. But I think it is a rabbit trail, although an important one. Any economic view that removes the reward of labor from the one who does the labor is unbiblical. Paul cites verse seven as if it is just universal principle. When does this every happen?

Well, the answer is: Only when the government makes you. Anything that takes and removes by degrees or completely the profit of your work from you is stealing from you. And I think Paul cites this as a universal principle because he believes in the moral core of the Scriptures, “Thou shalt not steal.”⁹

Now, I found the rabbit, chased it down. That is far as I am going to go with that.

Notice, however, that it is not just a universal principle from life, but it is a principle from the law of God as well. Look at verse eight.

“Do I say these things as a mere man?”¹⁰

Am I just using human authority to say this?

Or does not the law [Of God, that is, the law of God] say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.¹¹

Paul says it is not just a universal principle, verse seven, it is a principle of God’s law itself.

The picture is the idea that in the Old Testament when you harvested your grain and you brought it in, you had to separate the grain from the stalk and from the chaff. And you could take a threshing instrument and you could sit there and beat it yourself in the old days. That is a lot of work. Or if you happen to have an ox or some other heavy farm animal then you could put all of this in a kind of a pit like area, get your farm animal

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Exodus 20:15.

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 7:8.

¹¹ 2 Corinthians 7:8-10.

down in there and just walk him around in which case you didn't have to do the threshing. All you had to do is just walk. You could even set up some sort of a rig where the animal is kind of tethered and they just have to walk in circles and you train them to do that. And the weight of the animal on the grain, on the stalk would crush it and separate the raw grain out from the stalk and then all you got to do is go down and throw it up in the air and let the wind blow the light chaff away and you kept the grain.

Oxen, however, do get hungry. And so while they are walking around, guess what they want to do? They want to eat. Ok?

Farmers, however, are greedy and they don't want the oxen eating their grain so quite often a farmer would muzzle the ox so the ox couldn't bend down and get the grain. The Old Testament commanded, "Don't muzzle an ox while he is treading out the grain."

Why? Because God cares about oxen? I don't think so. Oxen were sacrificed by the hundreds and thousands. It is not like God was a member of PETA here, ok, just to be blunt. He is not concerned about the oxen. There is a moral core to the law.

And, by the way, you should interpret all Old Testament laws that way, whether it is don't sow two different kind of seeds in the same field or, you know, wear the ribbon of blue or whatever, here is a moral core to every law that God has ever given.

Paul says the moral core is this, that someone who does the work has the right to profit from the work and it is illustrated in the fact that an ox doing the work has a right to receive direct compensation, if you will, by way of food for his work.

I always think it is rather humbling, but adequate and appropriate that God compares ministers to oxen.

It is a universal principle. Don't separate the profit of the work from the work. The one who does the labor has a right to expect a profit from the labor. Anything else violates the universal principle of, "Thou shalt not steal,"¹² and anything else violates the Old Testament principle, the moral core of not muzzling an ox while it treads out the corn.

This connection of reward and labor applies to ministers as well as it does to oxen. Ministers who work, who labor in word and doctrine, 1 Timothy chapter five and verse 17, are no different from the person who goes and who works a job out there doing their nine to five or whatever the hours are who also has a right to be paid for your labor.

Labor and compensation for labor are connected in the Word of God on the moral grounds that "Thou shalt not steal."¹³

¹² Exodus 20:15.

¹³ Ibid.

So the first reason that ministers should be compensated for their work is from the general principle that anyone who works should enjoy the profits of their work and the benefits of it.

The problem is the kind of work that a minister does. And I am not talking about the thinking and the typing and the reading. I am talking about the nature of the work, that it is a spiritual work. You don't see monetary results as a direct result of what the minister does.

If I am a farmer and I plant wheat I harvest the wheat. I take it to market. I sell it. There is a direct correlation of monetary results to physical labor. Ok?

You run a business. You turn a profit. There is a direct correlation there. You see the monetary results.

Ministers, the kind of work we do doesn't work that way. And so it is difficult to correlate the two together. This leads us to the second principle that Paul comes to in verse 11 and that is it or that is this, that those that minister should be compensated for their work because spiritual work is of greater importance than material things.

Spiritual work is of greater importance than material things.

Now, very quickly notice what Paul does not say here and what this does not mean. It does not mean that the spiritual work of the minister is somehow innately more holy than the secular work of the non minister. That is not what Paul is getting at. It is not true that the minister's work is somehow inherently more sanctified than the person who scrubs floors or works on cars or whatever you do for a living to get money. That is not Paul's point. Paul's point is that spiritual things are more valuable than material things. And so the nature of the minister's work is about spiritual things and therefore they are valuable and, in fact, the spiritual fruit that you reap as a result is more valuable than the material or monetary result you reap from your own labor.

Which is more important to you, reaping spiritual things or reaping material things.

Paul, again, uses the imagery of a farmer here, of sowing and reaping, someone who puts into the work or puts the work in and then has a right to receive from the harvest. The minister sows spiritual things much like a farmer sowing seed. There is no instant results. There is no obvious results, at least not at first. But a consistent approach bears spiritual fruit. Unseen, you can't go out to a field and see it.

Here is spiritual fruit. But it is real, nonetheless. And it is more valuable than material things.

The spiritual fruit of a minister is that the people who hear him should increase in their understanding, increase in their knowledge of doctrine, that they increase in their desire

to be holy, to resist sin and temptation, to be like Christ, to produce the fruit of the Spirit, “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance.”¹⁴

That, in fact, there is real spiritual change that takes place. There is real progress in holiness. That over a period of time is the work of the ministry.

Since he sows these spiritual things and since they are not visible or tangible or readily so there is no direct correlation between his work and the material results of his work. But Paul in verse 11 is basically asking this question. Which is greater, the material or the spiritual?

“If we have sown spiritual things,” he says, “is it a great thing if we reap your material things?”¹⁵

If we have given you something more important than money, is it really such a big deal if we receive your money in exchange so that we can continue on in our work?

“Is it really that big of a problem,” Paul is saying to the Corinthians, “that if we can come and give you spiritual things is it really that big of a problem to you Corinthians that we would receive back your material things so that we can continue on to greater work?”

Which is greater the material or the spiritual? And the answer is, it depends on your perspective. Is your perspective short term or eternal? If your perspective is about your house and your car and all the burdens and all the problems that you have and all the bills that have to be paid and all the things that have to be handled in life and that is your major concern then when that offering plate goes by and it is time for you to put a check in, it is going to be hard. It is going to be difficult. You may have to use one hand to kind of pry it out of the other.

But if you think of eternity and the spiritual fruit of the Word of God in your life, then it is a no brainer.

Let me put it to you this way. When you die and enter heaven, what do you want to bring with you? Now this talking about money they say, “You can’t take it with you.”

What if you could? Just for a moment, what if you could? What if you could take a whole truckload full of gold with you when you die?

Folks, they pave the streets with gold in heaven. They don’t need more asphalt.

What do you want to bring concrete for? What do you want to take with you? Maybe like Judah a reputation that towards the end of our lives our feet were on the neck of our enemies meaning that Satan and the flesh and the world were something that we fought

¹⁴ Galatians 5:22-23.

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 9:11.

against by faith in Christ, by the grace of God, we produced some measure of holiness in our life and we resisted the evil one because that is a trophy to God for all eternity.

Which is greater?

So here are the first two principles. Ministers should be compensated for their work on the simple principle that anyone who works should enjoy the profits of their work. Second principle ministers should be compensated for their work because spiritual work is of greater importance than material things.

Here is the third principle. Ministers should be compensated for their work because God himself has commanded it. God himself has commanded it. Look at verse 13, if you will.

Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.¹⁶

I believe verses 13 and 14 actually refer to two separate events and two separate commandments, one from the Old Testament and one from the New. Ministers should be compensated because God himself has commanded it. First, he commands it in the Old Testament. When the priests worked in the temple or in the tabernacle and someone brought an offering, the priest was entitled to receive part of that offering. So if it was an offering of a lamb, that part of that lamb when it was roasted or boiled or whatever, went to the priests. Furthermore, when the people brought in their harvests, a tenth of everything they brought in went to the Levites to support the work of the temple and the ministry. Worship was so important that God commanded it for the nation of Israel. Those who worked in the ministry, those who worked in the temple, those who were the priests and the Levites were supported by the offerings of the people.

But it is not just in the Old Testament. It is in the New. In verse 14 we read, “Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.”¹⁷

When Paul uses the term, “The Lord” in 1 Corinthians more often than not he is referencing the earthly life of Jesus Christ and the teachings of Christ. So, for example, back in chapter seven when he uses that enigmatic phrase, “Yet not I, but the Lord,”¹⁸ he is talking about different commandments about marriage. He doesn’t mean that he is giving a commandment that God hasn’t given to him, or that he is giving his personal advice apart from the Spirit of God. What he is saying is: I can’t point to you a time in Christ’s own life when he taught this, but as an apostle I am extrapolating from the Word of God and here is the commandment.”

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 9:13-14.

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 9:14.

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 7:10

So in verse 14 when he says, “Even so the Lord has commanded,”¹⁹ he means even so Jesus Christ when he was on earth commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

Where did he command that? Our Scripture reading, Matthew chapter 10. What did he tell the apostles? “Don’t take any money with you. Don’t even take your wallet. Don’t take a change of clothes. Just take what you have got, one pair of sandals, one outfit, one staff and go. And those who recognized the worth of your message will receive you into their house and take care of you. And you go on that basis. You are not a soldier paying your own expense. You are a shepherd who has the right to profits from the flock.

Ministers should be compensated because God himself has commanded it. The Old and New Testament, the offerings and the giving of the people were the means by which that God’s prophets and God’s priests and God’s men were compensated for their work.

This is done so they may devote themselves to that work without distraction.

The bottom line, for these three reasons Paul concludes this. Those whose work and vocation is in the ministry should be compensated by those who profit from their ministry. Those whose work is the ministry should be compensated, financially compensated, by those who profit from their ministry, spiritually profit that is.

Let me give you some doctrine, some application, some ways to use this in our life this morning.

First, you will agree with that statement that is the value that you place on the minister and the preaching of the Word of God will be in direct proportion to the value you place on the Word of God.

What is it that you want to hear? If you want to hear the Word of God explained to you, if you value this book so much so that you want it opened to you, then you will find men and you have found men, I hope and will continue to do so, whom God has gifted to open the Word of God to you and you will say so valuable is having the Word of God explained to you that you are willing to give your money to have it so. So valuable is opening is hell opening the Word of God to you that you are willing to give what God commands you to give, 10 percent of your income so that the men of God may be undistracted and devote themselves to the gift and to the task of sowing spiritual fruit among you.

The more you value the Word of God, the more you value this communication from God to you, the easier it will get to give that money in the offering plate.

Now I don’t take that lightly because I know there are a lot of things you can do with 10 percent of your money. There is a lot of things you can do. If you are just, I mean, I am

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 9:14.

just going to pull a figure out of a hat. If you make 50,000 a year or you tithe on 50,000 a year, let's just put it that way, that's 5000 dollars a year going into the offering plate. What can you do with 5000 dollars? That is probably average for most workers around here. Let's just say it is. What can you do with an extra 5000 dollars?

I am not trying to talk you out of tithing. I am letting you know I understand and I appreciate it. But my appreciation is nothing. God sees it and God will reward. We will come to that in just a minute.

The only way that you are going to make sense of that command of the Word of God is if you place a high value on having the Word of God open to you.

Let me add a second point or a second application. The value that you place on the minister opening the Word of God to you is in inverse proportion to the value you place on your own abilities. In other words, if you trust yourself as an individual to open up the Word of God for yourself, if you think you can do it just fine and you don't need someone to explain it to you, you don't need the expert, then you are not going to have a high value of the ministry and the preaching of the Word of God.

And our modern world makes it very hard not to take that approach. Why you can go get all kind of study Bibles. You can buy commentaries by the dozens. There are computer programs where you, once you learn how to do it you can type in numbers and codes and search the Bible and find all kind of information. We have a glut of biblical information.

You come across a passage that is hard to understand, you get on the internet. What does John Piper say about this? What does MacArthur say? What does R C Sproul? I don't need those preachers, you know, to paraphrase a movie from Hollywood. We don't need no stinking preachers. I can do this myself. I have my daily devotions. I do my daily prayers and, in fact, I don't even need the Church.

Corinthians had that kind of an attitude. They were individualists who prided themselves on their individual holiness.

When you understand that you are depraved then you understand that you can't trust yourself. And I find it personally comforting that I have other pastors who hold me accountable to the Word of God and you should find the same comfort in the same thing, that you do not trust yourself to sit at home with just you and your Bible and a church of one and open the Word of God and say, "I don't need a preacher."

The blindness of our hearts and the method that Christ has chosen says differently. You need a shepherd to open the Word of God. You need men who have been gifted by the Holy Spirit to explain, to expound the Word of God to you.

Third, for those who consistently pursue this course of action, for those who consistently realize that the Word of God is valuable and precious and worth more than gold itself, God promises a spiritual harvest. For those whose attitude is that spiritual things are

more important than material things, God promises like the farmer sowing and reaping, God promises to you spiritual fruit.

Turn, if you will, to Galatians chapter six.

Verse seven is one of those verses that has been mangled in modern religious culture. Just for a moment look at verse seven all by itself, Galatians 6:7.

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”²⁰

So at this point I now thunder away from the pulpit that if you go sow sinful things, you will reap sin and you will destroy your life which is true, but has nothing to do with this particular passage of Scripture.

This verse is not about you go lead a sinful life and you will have a miserable life in the end. True, not here.

Look at verse six. Let’s look at the context.

“Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.”²¹

What? You who are taught the Word of God by your ministers, what are you supposed to do? Share your good things with us. Why? So that we can continue to teach you the Word of God?

Now, here is the principle.

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”²²

Ok? Verse eight.

“For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”²³

Meaning, what are you going to do with your money? Where are you going to invest it? You can invest it on the things that you like. You can invest it in boats. I am preaching to myself, Jack, guitars, ok? You can invest it in toys. Ladies, I don’t know what, material? The one who dies with the most material wins. You can invest it in the, you know, things that you like.

²⁰ Galatians 6:7.

²¹ Galatians 6:6.

²² Galatians 6:7.

²³ Galatians 6:8.

But what is going to happen to those things? They are going to rust. They are going to break. They are going to corrupt.

So you can sow to your flesh and what will you reap? Corruption. If you can sow to your pleasures and what are you going to get? Nothing. Or you can take that money and you can sow it in spiritual things and what will you reap? Life. Everlasting life for your own soul, everlasting life for the souls of your children who hear the gospel, everlasting life for people who come in and hear the Word of God preached. Life.

Now which would you rather have: 2010 Corvette 50 years from now with a bucket of rust or spiritual life?

Galatians six is a promise. Whatever you sow is what you are going to reap. Yes, if you put your money into material things then you are going to reap just material corruption and have nothing. But if you put your money to spiritual things you will reap spiritual things. The promise of the Word of God is this that when you value the Word of God so much so that you will do whatever it takes to hear the Word of God, you will profit from it. You will grow in Christ likeness. You will grow in having the gospel preached to you and to your children and to others. You will profit from these things and it will be eternal, everlasting profits.

Now where do you want to put your money? That is better than the stock market. Where do you want to invest?

There is a promise in the Word of God that if you value the Word of God and wish to invest in it, you will receive the spiritual fruit of your investment. It will come.

In a sense you might put it this way. A church really gets from the pulpit what it really wants to hear. The bottom line, a church gets from the pulpit what it really wants to hear. And if you value the Word of God that you want to hear the Word of God, you will get the Word of God. And may I say it has been astounding to me how God has placed in your hearts a desire to hear the Word of God, that you would support not just one or two, but three full time and one part time ministers. And I will add, a part time secretary, that the Word of God can be preached.

The value you place on the minister is in direct proportion to the value you place on the Word, it is in inverse proportion, if you will, to the value you place on your own ability and the promise that you hold that sowing spiritual fruit will reap spiritual fruit.

The means, finally, by which that spiritual fruit is produced is the preaching of the Word of God. In the Word constantly they thing that is focused in on is not for private studies or devotions. It is hearing the Word of God opened to you. Paul places a value on the minister and sowing spiritual things is of far greater value than reaping material things.

The Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies has a logo and on it in Latin are these words, *Praedicatio Verbi Dei Verbum Dei Est*. “The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God.”

It doesn't mean that the minister stands here with the authority of the New Testament as if we are inspired by the Spirit. It means that if you wish to hear the Word of God, there is a place where you can go. There is a means to which you can attend. It is called the preaching of the Word.

Let me close with this encouragement to you. I opened with the lapse of communication that occurred in mankind in the Garden of Eden when we and our first parents revolted against God. And there has been this communication disruption ever since. God has, in part, mended that communication disruption through the preaching of the Word. There is coming a day when you won't need a preacher. There is coming a day in Revelation chapter 22 when you will, with all of the saints in the great city, have restored to you that which Adam and Eve lost.

If you will, let's look at Revelation chapter 22 verse one.

I am going to read verses one to four. And as we do, or as I do I want you to notice the comparison from Revelation 22 to the book of Genesis at creation. For example, he is going to talk about rivers. Do you remember the river in the Garden of Eden? Split into four, ok? You remember the tree of life in the Garden of Eden? Ok? These things are come back to us in Revelation chapter 22. The purpose is to show that what we lost from our sin has been restored to us in heaven.

Revelation 22 verse one.

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.²⁴

Adam and Eve were in this perfect garden with this river that flowed through it and a tree of life and they saw God. And they communed with him in the cool of the evening and they lost it all because of their rebellion, because of our rebellion. We lost it all. And there is coming a day when all of that will be restored and we will see God again face to face.

You need preachers now because you need the Word of God now. But there is coming a day when the Word of God will not be a book so much as it will be the person of Jesus

²⁴ Revelation 22:1-4.

Christ. There is no temple in that city. The Lamb himself is the temple. There is no organized worship services. It is all one eternal worship service. And the Word of God is innate. It is instinctive. I will know even as I am known.

You won't need a preacher then. In the meantime, as we all wrestle against sin, we need the Word of God open to us. How valuable is the Word of God to you in that light?

Close with this exhortation. If the Word of God is not valuable to you at all, it is because your heart has not been tuned to love it. The sounds of the Word of God are like, as far as you are concerned, are like grating music on your ears. They just make you bite your own teeth. The doctrines and the teaching of the Word of God just is not harmony at all. It is just nothing but discord. The problem is not the music. The problem is your taste. And you need the Holy Spirit of God to open your heart, to love the Word of God.

If that is you this morning and hearing the Word of God preached is nothing but tedium, is nothing but task, nothing but boredom, now there is no appetite for it... give you new life, new appetites, new desires, new ears to hear the music of the Word.