

Day 91, 1 Corinthians 9

by David Servant

Paul's example of sacrificial love and disciplined effort is a model for all ministers of the gospel.

Scripture: Acts 20:34, 1 Corinthians 9:12-24, Galatians 6:6

Topics: "Selfless Love", "Ministerial Integrity"

Description

David Servant preaches on the essence of love as making sacrifices for others, using Paul's example of denying his right to be paid by the people he preached to in Corinth to avoid hindering the gospel. He highlights the importance of ministers devoting their full time to ministry and avoiding any hint of extravagance or the love of money to prevent suspicion and ensure a fruitful ministry. Paul's view on the Mosaic Law is discussed, emphasizing the moral overlap between the Law of Moses and the law of Christ, and the need for sensitivity and disciplined effort in our spiritual journey.

Transcript

This chapter continues the theme of the previous one, that of making sacrifices for the sake of others, which is the essence of love. Paul uses himself as an example.

Paul possessed the God-given right to make his living from the gospel, that is, to be paid by the people to whom he preached. Motivated by love, however, he denied himself that right in Corinth in order to "cause no hindrance to the gospel" (9:12). Remember that we already read in the book of Acts that Paul first earned his living in Corinth by making tents (Acts 18:1-3). When evangelists receive money from those to whom they preach, onlookers are apt to question their motives, using their suspicion as an excuse to reject the gospel.

So is Paul's example the pattern that every minister of the gospel should follow?

First, any minister who serves at his or her own expense so as not to cause hindrance to the gospel deserves our admiration. Sadly, ministers who also work "secular" jobs are often considered lesser ministers, but Paul set that very example before the elders in Ephesus (Acts 20:34-35).

Second, although Paul did make tents when he first came to Corinth, as soon as Silas and Timothy arrived, he "began devoting himself completely to the word" (Acts 18:5). So it seems that from then on, Silas and Timothy provided for Paul's needs by their labor (and praise God for folks like them in Christ's body). Obviously, it was better that Paul devote his full time to the gospel, and when he could do so

without having to receive an offering in Corinth, he did. Generally, it is always best if ministers can devote their full time to their ministry, as they will naturally be more fruitful then.

Also keep in mind that Paul was an apostle, and much of his ministry was directed toward the unsaved. By publicly receiving offerings, it may have hindered his ministry. Those whose ministries are directed toward the saved, however, don't have the same concern. Remember that we read Paul's words to the Galatians, "The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him" (Gal. 6:6).

All of this is to say that any evangelist or apostle who can find a way to keep from asking for money from his audiences will find a less suspicious reception, and he will likely enjoy more fruit. Along those same lines, every evangelist and apostle should avoid any hint of extravagance or the love of money. Otherwise, he will ensure the damnation of many of his listeners who rightfully doubt his sincerity and thus disbelieve his message, which is obviously not powerful enough to deliver him from his own sin. Pity the many modern televangelists who will soon stand before God, after having flaunted their wealth for years while continually manipulating their audiences to send them more money. For every soul that is saved by their efforts, one hundred are damned.

Several verses that we read today leave us with no doubt regarding Paul's view of his obligation to keep the Mosaic Law. Even though he was Jewish, he did not consider himself to be under the Law of Moses, but rather, only under the law of Christ (9:20-21). Modern Christians err who put themselves under the Mosaic Law.

That being said, there is moral overlap between the Law of Moses and the law of Christ, so one who keeps the law of Christ will automatically keep part of the Mosaic Law. Moreover, Paul kept some of the distinctive regulations of the Mosaic Law whenever not keeping them would cause hindrance to the gospel, namely, when he was ministering to Jews. We will yet read examples of that very thing as we continue our journey through the book of Acts. Once again, Paul was setting the example of sensitivity that he also prescribed for the Corinthians.

I'm sure you noticed that Paul also prescribed disciplined effort, not unlike that of athletes, in our spiritual race and fight. There is no hope of spiritual progress or ultimate reward without it. Self-denial is the essence of following Christ. Let's not forget that!

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