

Series: 1 Corinthians
Title: Provision Honoring to Christ
Text: 1 Corinthians 9: 1-6
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Paul is dealing with the believer's liberty in Christ. But he is teaching liberty as it regards weaker brethren. In 1 Cor 8, his illustration was meat sold in the market which was left over offerings to idols. Those strong in faith know:

1 Corinthians 8: 8: But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. 9: But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

But a weak brother, from a motive of glorifying Christ, thinks he should not eat meat offered to idols. He is wrong. But his motive is good and right. And Christ receives him. If he sees the strong brother eat, he may eat but his conscience will be wounded because he does not have faith to eat. So the stronger brother has caused him to sin against Christ. So Paul says the stronger is not to eat while the weaker brother is around.

This applies to many other works, for instance, observance of days. It is not our exterior works that God looks on but the heart—the motive—“for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.” (1Sa 16:7)

Now, in chapter 9, the apostle Paul uses himself as the illustration. Paul had right to be fully supported financially. Yet, for the sake of weak brethren, Paul did not use his liberty. We may have every right to our liberty but for the glory of Christ and the good of our weak brethren it is better not to use our liberty if it will cause a weak brother to stumble

Subject: Provision Honoring to Christ

Proposition: Before speaking of liberty, Paul gives five reasons why he should have been fully supported which show us that Christ is honored when we provide for our pastors.

AN APOSTLE

The first reason Paul gives that he should have been fully supported is—**1 Corinthians 9: 1: Am I not an apostle?**

The emphasis here is that Christ himself called Paul and sent him as Christ's gift to the Corinthian church. That is how all the apostles were called. We have no apostles today. Yet, all true preachers are the gift of Christ to his church.

Ephesians 4: 11: And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Apostles, as well as all true preachers, are Christ's gift to his church. Imagine if someone gave you a gift but you told them, “I do not really like your gift.” You would not be honoring the gift-giver. It would be disrespect. That is what the Corinthian were saying to Christ when they refused to receive Christ's gift by fully supporting Paul.

Let see how that being called and sent by Christ glorifies Christ our Prophet. It is glorifying because it is patterned after Christ. Christ was called and sent of God our Father. Through Moses, the LORD promised Christ our Prophet, saying, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak all that I command him." (Deut 18:18,15) When Christ came into Israel some said "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world" (Jn 6:14)

The words of God were "put into the mouth" of Christ; the doctrine, he preached was not his own, but his Father's; he spoke not of himself but as the Father said unto him, so he spoke; and he spoke "all" that he received from him, and so was faithful to him that appointed him, (Jn 7:16 8:29 12:49,50 15:15) He was given gifts through the Holy Spirit without measure. He said, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek" (Is 61:1)

In a more limited way, this is what Christ does when he calls and sends his apostle and preachers. Faithful ministers preach not themselves but they preach what Christ bids them to preach and all that he bids them preach. They do so by the Holy Spirit of God.

So Paul was a great gift from Christ to his elect in Corinth. So it is honoring to Christ when his people honor those Christ sends to minister to us. The preacher he sends is one with Christ and his Father so that whatsoever is done to his preacher is done to him. Christ said,

Luke 10:16: He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

However we receive Christ's preacher is how we receive Christ and God our Father. If a man thinks little of a faithful gospel preacher, if he thinks little of not hearing the gospel he declares, it is a sure indication that he has little regard for Christ. That is what Christ said.

You would think all believers at Corinth who wanted Christ and God their Father glorified would have fully supported Paul since they knew he was an apostle sent by Christ. So since Christ gives all his preachers, we should provide for them. Honoring Christ and the Father is our motive to do so.

LIBERTY, RESPONSIBILITY, AUTHORITY

The second reason Paul gives that he should have been fully supported is that Christ gave him liberty, responsibility and authority to oversee Christ's church—**1 Corinthians 9: 1:...am I not free?**

Here "freedom" speaks to the authority Christ gave his apostles to oversee Christ's house. They were not only free from the yoke of the law by Christ's finished work, as all his redeemed are. But also, Christ made his apostles free from men's authority so that they might minister to his saints as servants of Christ, with Christ ruling over them.

The worst thing in the world is to have a preacher who bows to men rather than Christ. He will compromise the message. So to give the Corinthians a minister who was under the command of Christ was a great blessing from Christ to the Corinthians.

This freedom of authority also glorifies Christ: it is patterned after Christ.

Matthew 22: 16: And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for *any man*: for thou regardest not the person of men.

Christ served God the Father and could not be turned or swayed by men. This is what Christ makes his preachers to do.

There are titles used interchangeably in the New Testament for Christ's preacher, each showing a different aspect of his responsibilities, each glorifying Christ.

Christ's minister is a "pastor" [shepherd] patterned after Christ our Shepherd, our Pastor. As Shepherd, Christ laid down his life for his sheep taking away all our sin, our curse, our death. Christ seeks and saves his lost sheep, folds us together. He gathers the lambs in his arms, and gently leads those that are with young. Christ provides us with green pasture. He preserves us from beasts of prey He will not lose one sheep he redeemed. Christ has authority, he was given commandment from God, so that he does not bow to men as do hirelings.

John 10: 11: I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. 12: But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. 13: The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. 14: I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. 15: As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16: And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd. 17: Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 18: No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Likewise, Christ gives commandment, authority, to his preachers. So the responsibility of his under-shepherds, his pastors is: to lay down their life to lead his sheep, feed his sheep, and to stand between his sheep and the wolf.

Also, Christ's preacher is called a "Bishop" or "Overseer" patterned after Christ our Bishop. A bishop has the oversight of the church. Christ takes the oversight, overseeing, his house. He looks to and ministers to our needs. Since Christ has authority over his house, he does not bow to men, therefore he saves all his people.

1 Peter 2:25: For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

So Christ frees his under-bishops, giving them authority and responsibility: to look over his house and minister to their needs. Paul speaking to preachers in the various churches at Ephesus said,

Acts 20:28: Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Lastly, Christ's preacher is called an "elder" from the Greek word "pres-boo-ter-os" where we get the word presbytery—patterned after Christ our Elder. The elder governs the house. Christ rules or governs his house. Christ governs by teaching us his word. And Christ is that Word. "The government is on his shoulder."

So he shows us a picture of his rule by setting his under-elders in his church. So the responsibility of Christ's under-elder is: to govern Christ's house, to study the word and teach Christ's household, while Christ governs him.

1 Timothy 5:17: Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

1 Peter 5: 1: The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2: Feed the flock of God which is among you, [Pastor or shepherd the flock of God] taking the oversight *thereof*, [being a bishop, overseer] not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3: Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 4: And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Paul is not saying we ought to glory in the preacher. Faithful preachers do not want to be gloried in, they want sinners to glory only in Christ who sent them. No preacher is sufficient for these things, Christ is our sufficiency. But Paul says out of respect for the office—patterned after Christ our Shepherd, Bishop and Elder—and for their labors sake—we ought to bestow upon faithful men double honor—meaning, we ought to fully support them.

WITNESS OF CHRIST

The third cause Paul gives that he should have been fully supported is that he was a witness of Christ—1 Corinthians 9: 1...have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" (am I not a witness of Christ?)

Christ sent Paul tell the Corinthians what Paul had seen and heard of Christ. That's the charge to all Christ's preachers. This too is patterned after Christ. Christ is the Preeminent Witness.

John 5:36 But I have greater witness than *that* of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. 37: And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me...

The works Christ was given to finish bear witness of him, same as the Father who spoke from heaven. Christ finished the work of fulfilling the law. He finished the work of purging the sins of his people. Christ finished the work of being our forerunner into glory at the Father's right hand. He finished the work of calling us out of darkness into his light making us righteous in him through faith. Christ shall finish the work of raising us in the resurrection. It is not what the rebel has not seen that troubles him, it is what he has seen that troubles him. Christ's finished works bear witness to the total depravity of mankind and the necessity that Christ save his people from all our sins.

So Christ called Paul to bear witness of him.

Acts 26: 16:...I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

Christ's preacher is a chosen vessel unto Christ, like Christ is a chosen vessel unto the Father. Christ's preacher is sent to minister and bear witness of what Christ has shown him like Christ was sent by the Father to do the same. This is a great gift from Christ to his people the same as Christ was God's great gift to his people..

Therefore, all Christ's preachers—like Paul—are a voice for Christ—a witness of Christ to his people.

2 Corinthians 5:20: Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God

Brethren, can you put a price on the witness of Christ—his gospel is unsearchable riches. At the end of this month, we will be sending our missionaries another offering. We do it to relieve them of worldly cares so they can freely seek a word from Christ and bear witness of Christ to his people.

CHRIST SAVED THEM

The fourth reason Paul gives that they should have fully supported Paul is because through Paul's preaching Christ saved them and many of their children—**1 Corinthians 9: 1...are not ye my work in the Lord? 2: If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.**

When we think of how rich we are by God's free salvation in Christ it is simply astounding. Believers, you are chosen children of God.

1 John 3:1: Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Believers, you are born of the Holy Spirit of God—sealed with an earnest, a foretaste, of eternal inheritance.

2 Corinthians 3:3: *Forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

And believers, ye are complete in Christ. We have complete forgiveness in Christ, complete righteousness and holiness in Christ, complete wisdom and redemption in Christ. "He that hath the Son, hath life!"

When I think of the faithful preachers, Christ has used to minister to me—by which he saved me and continues to save me—if I emptied my bank account it would not come close to the riches I have been given through them.

CHOSEN TO HAVE THE SAME NEEDS

The last reason Paul gives that he should have been fully supported is that Christ has chosen his preacher from among his brethren so that we have the same needs as every other believer—**1 Corinthians 9: 3: Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, 4: Have we not power to eat and to drink?**

Have God's preachers not a right to receive recompense equal to their labor the same as believers in a secular occupation? They have the same bills that every other believer has. Someone asked Bro. Henry, "How much should we give our preacher?" Bro. Henry said, "However much it takes for you to pay your bills?"

Then Paul asks "has Christ's preacher not the same right to provide for his family as those to whom he ministers"—**1 Corinthians 9: 5: Have we not power [right] to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?**

Christ's preacher has the same responsibility and desire to provide for his family as every other faithful husband. It presents great difficulty when he cannot because he is constantly torn between serving Christ's house and providing for his own family; so he feels like he is neglecting one or the other all the time.

Then Paul says Christ's preacher has a right not to have to take a second job—**1 Corinthians 9: 6: Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power [right] to forbear working?**

Faithful prayer and study and ministering the gospel is a full time job. So Paul says to them, “In your jobs, when you are qualified, when you do a full day’s work, your employer sees to it that you do not have to take a second job.” Paul said, “Is it only I and Barnabas who do not have the same right?”

The way this glorifies Christ is Christ was chosen from among his brethren that he might be our faithful high priest to offer the sacrifice for us to God and so that he might be able to comfort us in all our affliction since he has experienced it firsthand. He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities: he hungered, he had daily needs, same as his brethren. God chose him to be like his brethren so that he might know what we suffer so that he might be merciful and faithful toward us. For the same reason, Christ chooses his preacher from among his brethren.

So these are Christ-honoring reasons that Christ’s preacher should be provided for. Christ gave his preacher this right:

- 1) By Christ calling and sending him.
- 2) By Christ giving him authority over his house.
- 3) By Christ sending him to bear witness of Christ to his people.
- 4) By the free salvation Christ bestowed on some of you and your children by calling you.
- 5) By calling him from among his brethren and giving him the same needs as every other believer.

Yet, for Christ’s glory, for the sake of weaker brethren, for the good of the whole church, Paul laid aside his liberty and took a second job. When it comes to not supporting a pastor fully, it is common to hear men say “Paul worked a second job making tents.” That is not a testimony to the strength of the Corinthian’s faith. I wouldn’t put myself in place of the Corinthians who did not support Paul.

But it is great testimony to the liberty and love Paul had in Christ. Paul knew there were believers at Corinth who would have done more if they could. He knew some needed to be grown by Christ and only Christ could do it. So while teaching liberty—he declared these Christ-honoring reasons to support a faithful pastor. And he waited on Christ to teach them.

Brethren, we can be assured of these two things:

- 1) Christ will fully provide all for all who he gives a heart to fully support his preacher.
- 2) And Christ will provide his preacher grace and love to forego his liberty while he waits on Christ to do so.

Amen!