

Sunday, February 26, 2017—I Corinthians 9:15-18: A Dispensation of the Gospel

Introduction

- Two weeks ago, before Becky and I went to California, we began studying I Corinthians 9. In doing so, we uncharacteristically covered 14 verses in one study. Since it has been two weeks since our last study together, I would like to review some of the high points from that message.
- I Corinthians 9:3—we saw that some in Corinth were examining Paul’s apostleship. Within the context of this chapter, this examination was done on the basis of how he was conducting his Gentile apostleship more so than on the basis of what he was teaching.
 - The English word “answer” in verse three comes from the Greek word *apologia*. It is from this word that we get our English word “apologetics.” Paul was an apologist in that he defended himself and the truth from attack and error via reasoned arguments.
 - I Peter 3:15—“answer”
 - Acts 22:1—“defense”
 - Philippians 1:7, 17—“defense”
- We further saw that Paul’s defense took shape in an intense questioning process of the Corinthians in chapter 9.
- I Corinthians 9:5-6—the questioning of Paul’s apostleship in Corinth took shape around how he conducted himself in their midst. We saw in verse 6 that Paul elected to work and labor with his own hands rather than make himself chargeable unto the Corinthians.
- I Corinthians 9:7-10—Paul uses various examples to illustrate the principle.
 - Verse 7—the warrior
 - Verse 9—the ox
 - Verse 10—the farmer
- I Corinthians 9:11-12—Paul explicitly states the he has not used this power over them.
- I Corinthians 9:13-14—just as in time past the priest lived of the service that was conducted at the temple so too has God ordained during the dispensation of grace that “they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”

I Corinthians 9:15

- **But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, 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.**
- Verse 15 marks the beginning of a new paragraph and begins with the contrast “but.” Paul had not used the apostolic authority outlined in verses 1 through 14. He possessed the power to have done so as an apostle, but elected or chose not to. This was a voluntary decision on the part of the apostle Paul.
- *neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me*—the middle phrase indicates that Paul’s intention in writing them about the matter now was not to guilt them into giving him carnal things.
- *for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void*—this statement can only be properly understood by looking at the verses that follow. Paul literally says that it would be better for him to die, then for any man to make is glorying void. In the context, how is one going to make Paul’s glorying void? By providing for Paul’s carnal needs to the extent that he was living of the gospel he was preaching in verse 14.
- Paul would sooner be dead than to take support from the Corinthians and thereby expose himself to their false charges of covetousness.

I Corinthians 9:16

- **For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!**
- Paul is a unique case. He has nothing to glory in via the mere act of preaching the gospel. Necessity is laid upon Paul to do this thing.
- Acts 9:15-16—Paul was a chosen vessel unto the Lord for the purpose of preaching the gospel.
- Acts 22:3-21—Paul is recounting the events of Acts 9. According to verse 14, Paul was chosen to fulfill this task.
- Acts 26:1:19—Paul recounts for the second time in the book of Acts the events of Acts 9. These are more details given in Acts 22 and 26 about what Christ said to Paul on the Damascus Road then there are in Acts 9.
- Paul knows in Acts 9 that is sent to the Gentiles. After a preparatory period between Acts 9 and 12, Paul is sent forth by the church in Antioch in Acts 13.

- Galatians 1:15-16—God had separated Paul unto this task. Is necessity laid upon Paul to preach the gospel?
- I Timothy 1:11—Paul had a gospel committed this trust. It was therefore his job to preach it and make it known.
- I Corinthians 9:16—Paul has no choice when it comes to the issue of preaching the gospel.

I Corinthians 9:17

- **For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.**
- If this preaching of the gospel were done willingly, Paul would have a reward in willingly having done so. The problem is that he just said in verse 16 that “woe is upon me, if I preach not the gospel.”
- We learn why in verse 17, “a dispensation of the gospel” was committed to Paul.
 - Romans 2:16—“my gospel”
 - Romans 16:25—“my gospel”
 - I Timothy 1:11—“my trust”
 - II Timothy 2:8—“my gospel”
- Romans 3:9, 23-24—both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin and there is no difference.
- Romans 3:24-25—both Jews and Gentiles are justified “freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” This justification and redemption is received freely by faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Romans 3:28—the law has nothing to do with our justification.
 - Acts 13:38-39—“ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”
- Ephesians 6:19-20—Paul was in bonds for preaching the mystery of the gospel.
- I Corinthians 9:17—in the context Paul is talking about the gospel that was committed to his trust during the current dispensation of grace.

I Corinthians 9:18

- **What is my reward then? *Verily* that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.**
- Paul's reward is found in making "the gospel of Christ without charge." Paul's reward is found in not abusing his power in the gospel.