

Just A Minute! *With Scripture*

The King James Bible is used for all references. Verses may be made bold or numbered for emphasis.

Theme: Application of I Cor. 9

Constant Examination of Paul and His Ministry

What can we learn from how Paul dealt with scrutiny by his own countryman and, worst of all, the very saints he taught? *"Mine answer to them that do examine me is this..."* (I Cor 9:3) His response was to nurture others as beloved children, focusing on their needs, and not on how he was being treated. Paul could have become bitter, yet he patiently & boldly held forth the Truth in love. (Eph. 6:20-21) He taught and lived "the grace" Christ revealed to him.

Legalism naturally leads the flesh to be critical of others, even dear saints. When we put people down, it actually reveals where we are in our own spiritual maturity. The answer is to "renew our mind" and learn how to apply the gospel of grace. (Rom. 6-8) This teaches charity to prefer others and look for opportunities to edify and share the Truth. Recall last month's study in *I Corinthians 8*: *"...Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifies."* (vs. 1)

Paul's actions showed Christ's selfless love. For example:

I Cor. 9:19: *"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more."*

II Cor. 12:15: *"And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."*

Galatians 4:19: *"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."*

I Thess. 2:9: *"For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God."*

This reminder may prompt us to ask a couple of questions: "Do I act as a quality control inspector toward others by examining their behavior, even quietly in my mind?" (If we micro-analyze others' behavior or motives, it can be injurious, preventing their growth.) Or "Do I actively encourage people to read the Word in order to grow spiritually?" Paul's love-driven attitude is our example, enabling us to see how to prefer others: *"...I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."* (I Cor. 9: 22)

Reflect: Each person has a unique journey and walk. Sometimes it's a long, heart-wrenching process to purge bad thinking and traditions. It takes time to think through a verse and then acquire it as a regular part of life's decision-making. As an ambassador, we can use charity and kindness toward others to love them to the Truth. This takes grace: patient endurance, yielding to live godly charity.

Is It All About The Money?

Are we required to give financial support to pastors and teachers? Scripture states: *"If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things...Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."* (I Cor. 9:11,14) Also: *"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."* (II Cor. 9:7)

What does godly giving in grace look like, especially within a local assembly? Let us first understand what grace means: unearned favor or blessing; free and without condition. We certainly do not 'have to' give to those who teach us. Rather, it is to be seen as a privilege or joy.

When we give out of obligation or as a necessity, this is placing ourselves under the law and is not grace. These works are filthy rags to God (Is. 64:6) and therefore will burn away: *"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."* (I Cor. 3:13) If this 'law' motivated giving is unacceptable, adjust your thinking to renew your mind (Rom. 12:2), so it is NOT a fleshly work.

Blessing a member of the Body of Christ for doing the work of the ministry is an honor, and being a cheerful giver is acceptable unto the Father. *"If any man's work abide which he hath built there-upon, he shall receive a reward."* (I Cor. 3:14) We have many opportunities to support saints who serve in the Church, but also ministries that we've benefited from or that bless others. Give by love.

To Do: Frequently check your heart: Is giving an obligation or love opportunity in thankfulness?



Search it out!

Choose Something to Study in This Section

Study Methods: Bible Character Analysis

Examine verses!



Bible character analysis: This study is an examination of a person in the Bible. Let us start with the writer of I Corinthians. We can look at the Apostle Paul's character, accomplishments, and struggles, but also key events in his life. This method is found on p. 31 of "Exploring the Bible Using Study Skills," available on Amazon.

1. Skim through Acts, and then Romans thru Philemon, or use a Concordance to find verses about Paul and his life: Jot down what you learn. Be sure to look

at the context of the passages to assure a clear understanding. Write down questions to follow up on later.

2. Categorize learnings: Organize what you find in your studies. One suggestion is to arrange your notes in categories such as family, relationships, achievements, difficulties, experiences, journeys, how saved, etc.

3. Ask yourself questions: "What can be learned from this person and his decisions?" "What does God want to teach me through this character?" "What areas in life can I apply what I learned?" or "How was this character analysis a profitable study for me personally?"

**Newer students: Focus on reading Scripture rather than on using many new study insights.*

Grace Opportunities

What did Paul's decision about accepting gifts teach us about the motive for doing ministry work in I Corinthians 9? He relayed that it was absolutely fair and just for teachers, especially him as the Apostle of the Gentiles, to receive a blessing for serving in the gospel. However, he personally chose not to use this power, modelling a deeper level of grace service: *"If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ."* (I Cor. 9:12) Though clearly able to receive gifts, he chose not to, but why?

Paul saw opportunity to teach saints grace and to confirm his love toward them, so he did not receive donations from them. He depended upon his tentmaking wages and gifts from other Churches. *"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)

Paul knew money could stumble some believers, especially those weak in the faith. So he preached the gospel without charge, minimizing occasions for others to find fault or for troublemakers to scrutinize his motives. So, for the gospel's sake (verse 23) and in love, he desired to serve in grace that others could be saved to grow in the gospel. Of course, we know many still did accuse him. (verse 3)

As we reflect on Paul's example, we have opportunities to learn a few things about grace living. To avoid an appearance of evil and to prefer others, he decided not to receive support while teaching in their midst: *"Abstain from all appearance of evil."* (I Thess. 5:22) Paul's utmost concern was to hold forth the Word so that others could be saved; he didn't want anything to hinder this endeavor.

Application: You can also follow Paul's example, purposing to live a love motive. In cases where your motives may be misinterpreted and to prefer others over yourself, you can serve freely, without charge. What would this look like? Remember that all things, even your own body, are God's. (I Cor. 6:20) Thus, you have the glorious privilege to use your body to become a living sacrifice. (Rom. 12:1) If you are a pastor or teacher, you can choose not to take wages or use the money to serve others, though it's within your rights according to the Word. If you pick up and deliver meals to the sick or elderly, you can do it as a blessing to them. If an older widow needs help with lawn care, you can mow her grass free, as a love gift. Could you charge for your services? Yes, but you can also do it unto the Lord, as a gesture of love. **To Do:** Prayerfully apply grace to others in your circle of influence this month. Think about how it went.



The Reward For Service

Some saints may wonder what is our compensation for being a servant, soldier, and a living sacrifice unto God. Those in paid positions in the Church have a financial support for their service. However, this is merely a physical benefit. First, we have the wondrous privilege to serve, on Christ's behalf, constrained or motivated by all He has done for us. (II Cor. 5:14) Of course, there is much, much more as we examine things further.

Paul did not want to use his apostleship as a power over the Corinthians to coerce support in legalism. Instead, he held forth the Truth patiently, in grace, knowing of his 'eternal reward' for service: *"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."* (I Cor 9:18) God knew his heart, but he wanted everyone to be sure of his intentions.

Reward is spoken as a **spiritual crown and glory** through Paul's epistles: *"And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you...And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."* (I Cor. 9:23,25) Through suffering, as Paul allowed Christ to work in him, motivated by selfless love, **glory would be revealed.** (Rom. 8:18) We also can be confident, relying on God's way to compensate us at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10).

At the end of life, Paul relayed what he learned about life's priority to Timothy, his spiritual son: *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."* (II Timothy 4:7-8)

Reflect upon this: Do you have this focus? If not, is it because you don't want to or perhaps don't know how? This teaching is progressively taught in Romans thru Philemon. Be led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14) to search it out to live it.



Extreme Living

There are many Scriptures that relay the importance of serving others, preferring them over ourselves: *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."* (Phi. 2:3) God abundantly provides all and as we mind these things, we see our privilege to serve in love: *"Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God."* (II Cor. 9:11)

The Lord Jesus Christ left His throne of glory to be our Savior. He was a servant and became obedient even unto the death of the cross. In what some may call 'extreme living,' Paul followed Christ to become whatever others needed, seeing and loving each individually. Paul approached saints uniquely, where they were spiritually:

*"And unto **the Jews** I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are **under the law**, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are **without law**, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To **the weak** became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: **I am made all things to all men**, that I might by all means save some."* (I Cor. 9:20-22)

Some may ask, "Can't we just live our own lives; aren't we important too?" Of course, we have been made heirs with Christ Jesus the Lord and the Living God is our Father. This exalted position can motivate us to serve. Yet God teaches us to grow to have Christ's mind: a servant living God's will: *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."* (Phil. 2:5-8) So, what is 'extreme living?' It's allowing God to work His will in our inner man, motivating service to others, even enemies.

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Stamp

To:

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...” (Romans 3:24)

Our Duty in Christ

By Erin Alexander

As saints, the most important job we have is sharing the salvation gospel. We often get distracted by our secular world, forgetting what our jobs is. Including doing things in God's name. *Romans 12:3 “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”* There's nothing wrong with giving and helping, but we must remember to point others toward Christ. *2 Corinthians 1:12 “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.”*

We also have a duty to members in the Body of Christ. Laying down a foundation and building each other up in Scripture. *1 Corinthians 3:10 “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.”* We must remind each other to study the Scriptures daily and hold each other accountable. If we don't, how can we testify to the world? *Romans 14:19 “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.”* Share the gospel and once someone has accepted it, build. *1 Corinthians 3:2 “I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.”* We all have a purpose to fulfill, to point others to the glory of God.

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