

A DISPENSATION OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

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OUTLINE OF TALKS ON THE THEME: A DISPENSATION OF THE
GOSPEL OF CHRIST

TALK 1: THE NECESSITY OF PREACHING THE GOSPEL

TEXT: 1COR.9:15-18, LUKE 17:7-10

INTRODUCTION

Our text is set in a context in which Paul was admonishing the church in Corinth to prioritize the spiritual well-being of their brethren above their personal interest, convenience and pleasure (See 1Cor.8:13) Even though it was their right to eat meet whenever they like, and they could give all the reasons why it was not wrong, yet for the sake of those who may not have same understanding as they do, and who may be offended by their liberty, they have to give up their pleasure...

It is against this background Paul pointed out his own personal sacrifice for the sake of the gospel and for the church. Indeed as an apostle he is entitle to some rights and privileges, which would not be wrong if he takes advantage of. However, he gave up those rights, so that he could gain some extra value beyond the basic expectations and demands on his life. This is something worth our consideration. For Paul, to merely preach and go about his apostolic duties is a necessity; there was nothing special about that. What will make his work special, what will bring about the extra value (for which he could boast – if such word may be used) is the extra personal sacrifice, the extra mile he would go.

His call then to the brethren (and the call of the Holy Spirit to us in this meeting), is to go beyond the ordinary expectations in their commitment to the gospel, and stretch, as it were, to exceed expectations. That is the only ground upon which one can boast, otherwise you have only done your duty.

Paul was so determined to go this extra mile, that he would rather die than for anyone to take away this ground. When we consider that the vast majority of us have not even met the basic expectations, Paul is here challenging us that to merely meet the expectations, to merely do his duty, is not good enough. The issue of preaching the gospel, is his basic job description, it is a necessity, it is a must do. It is worthwhile to ponder how much of this necessity, of our basic duties, we are fulfilling. We will also consider the great woe of not meeting these basic expectations, and as the Lord will help us we shall consider what more can be done beyond what is ordinarily expected of us.

We here consider a few reasons why the preaching of the gospel is a necessity. I will list them, and we shall look at it one after another as the Lord enables us:

1. The debt of love
2. The state of lost men
3. The glory of God
4. The call and grace of God
5. The kingdom, and the eternal purpose of God.

THE DEBT OF LOVE (Read Luke 7:36-50, Rom. 1:14-20, 11:28-12:1, 1Cor.13:1-3, 16:22, 2Cor.5:14)

Last year, we considered the theme “Trusted with the gospel”. Our concern was on what qualifies a man for divine trust. We concluded that it is love for God, a true passion for God that is the basic qualification. There is need to refresh our mind on this issue of Loving the Lord. This is because when we look at the great demand before us, the only thing that would compel us is love for God. When all other motivations fail, the only thing that will keep us going is sincere love for the master.

When we look at our theme text, the first thing we see is a man with a sense of indebtedness. He viewed his labour not as a work to be rewarded, not as something that deserves some fringe benefits, but as a debt that must be paid at any cost. What was this debt Paul owed? Well, we see that in the last scripture we read: “... the **love** of Christ constraineth, compels me...” It was a debt of love. Paul thought of the great love which the Lord had to him and felt eternally bound as a slave to that love.

Our biggest problem today is failure to comprehend the great love of God shown in Christ Jesus. This is because we have a very wrong misconception of love; we have lived in a world so full of hate and false love, we hardly know if there is really a thing called love. The other reason would be that we have such a lofty thought of our “innate goodness” that we do not realize how miserable, evil, and hell-deserving that we are without the redeeming love of Christ coming to our rescue. When we become “Christians” without first realizing our sorry state, we presume we are doing Christ a favour by “choosing Him” – very unfortunate term to use. This poor misguided understanding will no doubt show itself in our commitment to the Lord. We must be dragged, cajoled, and given incentives and loads of promises of reward in order to get us to be zealous for

the Lord. May I announce up front that this meeting is not for such coercing and cajoling. My earnest prayer is that the loveliness of Christ may be revealed to your heart, and the world will not be able to contain the conflagrations; indeed many waters cannot quench love.

No doubt this is an age of much activities, a great deal is being done for and in the name of the Lord, many are busy here and there. Our desire is not to add to the activities, but to ensure that the fire that is burning is bringing about real value to the kingdom of God. From 1Cor.13:1-3 where we read, we see that such true value can only come by the way of LOVE. We may do all, sacrifice much even to the burning of our bodies, but if it is not in love, sincere love for God, it is NOTHING. Again, it is unfortunate that many of us, when we came to the Lord, we were introduced more to activities, line up of programs and events and duties, instead of a person, instead of a relationship. We have gotten so used to the running around, and have lost sight of the person of Jesus. If there is any thing we desire God to do for us in this meeting is that we may find Jesus, we may gaze, and gaze on Him we may look upon the nail pierced hand and His wounded side, until our heart resonate with His.

In Luke 7:36-50 Jesus told the story of a master who freely forgave two debtors (one had a much bigger debt compared to the other). He asked Simon the Pharisees, whom among both will love the master more, Simon replied: "I supposed the one whom he forgave more". Of course, Simon did not realize that it was out of mercy that Jesus even came to his house. He did not realize how much of a sinner he is, he was even prejudging Jesus of not being a true Prophet for not discerning that the woman weeping at his feet was a sinner. The question to us is: "do we realize how much we have been shown mercy?" I supposed that If the one with less debt could consider, he would realize that had he been more indebted, he would equally have been forgiven freely and fully. The issue here is not necessarily the amount of debt forgiven, but the largeness of the heart of the master who forgives all. This was what the Lord wanted Simon to see; we are all equally indebted. That is what Rom 11:28-12:1 is pointing to. Note v.32 "for God has bound all me over to disobedience, so that he may have mercy on all". We are all debtors to His mercies. V.35 showed clearly that God does not owe any of us salvation: "who has ever given to God that God should repay him?" But rather as indicated in v.36 we owe him all; everything we ever became is to the credit of his great love and mercies. Therefore our expected response is as stated in 12:1: "to offer yourselves as a living sacrifice". This is not a call to a special consecration, but just the basic and reasonable response to such a love.

Think of your sinfulness, your many failures, your self-righteousness, your pride and rebellion, your secret sin, your lust, your pursuit of mammon, etc. Your heart and mine were harden in sin, we were lost men, all we like sheep have gone astray, but the shepherd of our soul sought us, he went through the way of Calvary, and reached into hell just to pull us out. He paid the price for your sins and redeemed your life from eternal death. He turned you from being a profligate, a rebel to being a son. May we never lose the wonder of redeeming love. May we remember our many failures even as Christians, our slowness to learning the first alphabets of the faith, yet He is patient, and committed to our life.

Can we for once get free from the yoke of ingratitude. We are much occupied with the suffering in the land, the lack of necessary supplies, and the cravings for the world, that we have lost sight of the loveliness of Christ. We go about grumbling and complaining, instead of going out singing the song of redemption and bring the good news to a dying world. Think of it, we want to preach the “gospel”; the good news; who will believe a good news devoid of the excitement and emotions of love? Oh may we meditate deeply on the love of God in Christ, and the world will become so small and we could go round it a million times preaching the good news. May we be men and women intoxicated by His love.

What interest me in Paul was the way he took this duty so personal as though Christ love to him is very exclusive. This love is not exclusive to Paul. The Lord Jesus loved us same way, “And as He had loved those who were His own in the world, He loved them to the last *and* to the highest degree” Jn.13:2 (AMP). What made the difference in Paul is the apprehension and personal realization of that love. It is the same God who is rich (in love and mercies) to wards all. The problem is that for many of us, we have not come to take God’s love personal, we often generalize it. Think of this: “God love me personally; therefore, I am personally indebted to that love...” When we come to this point, we begin to view our commitment to the gospel a personal duty. Like Paul we would say: “necessity is laid upon **me**”, “...the gospel is entrusted to **me**” (1Tim.1:6). It is this personal ownership of the gospel that seem to be missing today, and that is because we have very little apprehension of Christ personal and special love for us as an individual. If you were the only one that was lost, Christ would still have come and died. He would leave the 99 sheep and come looking for you. If this is true, then the debt we owe is a very personal one. Each one of us should be able to look back and say like Paul: “... I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and violent man yet... he loved me, he saved me... Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am the worst...” (1Tim.1:12-15)

Look back at history, everyone who have wholly given themselves to the gospel, whether it be Augustine, or Rutherford, John Newton or Wesley, the each had a great sense of their misery and wretchedness without Christ, and Oh the depth of appreciation that flowed from their heart, and how much labour they gave themselves for the gospel. Indeed, “He who does not love the Lord, let him be eternally damned” 1Cor. 16:22. The true evidence of your salvation is the Love of God poured out in your heart by the Holy Ghost. Salvation is the captivation of our heart by the love of God. Have we experienced such a salvation? If we will preach the gospel rightly the scripture much be true of us: “The love of Christ compiles me, because we thus judge that if one died, then all died, so that these that live may live no longer to themselves...” 2Cor.5:14. The debt of love truly can never be repaid:

*“Love so amazing, so divine
Demand my soul, my life my all”*

THE STATE OF LOST MEN (Rom.1:14-18)

Should anything provoke our heart to duty, this is it. May we say it emphatically: “men are lost without the gospel” The gospel is the only hope of men. Think of it, you hold the light that would deliver men from eternal night. Consider the state of our young people, the ignorance of God, the falsehood many billions hold as religion, the hopelessness, the wars, etc. If all of these human woes did not move you, remember hell, the lake of fire, the final destiny of all lost men, forever separated from their creator, and from everything good, and turned into devils eternally. The soul of your fellow men condemned to live restlessly and troubled with the never dying worm of guilt forever and ever.

Oh brethren, that the Lord will reveal to you and I the state of lost men. Oh, the many who will go into eternal night without even hearing that a saviour died. Was this not what Paul saw and cried out: “...that I meant by all means save some...”? Would it not be considered a criminal negligence if we do not zealously spread the gospel? To be cold towards this duty means that we either do not really believe the gospel in the first place or our own heart is hardened.

THE GLORY OF GOD (2Cor.1-12)

We are created for God’s glory, we are redeemed to give Him pleasure. How best do we exude that glory other than in the proclamation of the gospel. It is in relation to this duty we read: “for God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shine in our hearts, to give the light of the glory of God in the

face Jesus Christ” To proclaim the gospel is to bear this image of Christ; and though it is an earthen vessel, the excellency of the power would be of God. The highest glory we can give to God in time is to carry the gospel, and the highest glory we would bear for eternity will only be the reward of our sufferings for the gospel” (2Cor.4:17)

It is not the will of God that sinner-s should perish; he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. The state of lost men robs God of the glory and worship He should have out of their life. More than the fact that they are lost, this should exasperate our heart, that the king is being denied the worship due him by virtue of creation and redemption. How much is God glorified in our lands and nations? Do we not rather see men turning into the image of devils rather than redeemed into the glorious image of God. How we see hate, lies, lust, and all forms of wickedness increase in the land. Should we not be provoked seeing the many idolatrous altars in business, sport and entertainment, religion, education, etc, and yet the true God is unknown?

God made man for his own glory. Through sin man has fallen short of that glory, the gospel is the only means of restoring that glory; for in the gospel death is abolished, life and incorruptibility is brought to light. May the Lord not be denied His right by our negligence to duty.

THE CALL AND GRACE OF GOD (Ref. Luke 19:11-27, Read 1Cor.15:10, Heb.6:4-12)

The call and the grace given to us, makes it compulsory, a necessity, for us to proclaim the gospel. You are not doing God a favour or giving him a privilege serving Him. Like the servants in the passage above, we have been called, it is simply our duty to serve.

Think deeply of God’s investment on your life, from birth so many of His servants have had to minister to you and labour over your life. You have been graciously exposed to the truth of His word, you were privileged to have an education, a means of daily sustenance, etc. what spiritual value will all these amount to? will they be a waste? Will you take all these investment and labour over your life for granted?

For some of you, not only has the Lord so blessed you by His providence, but He has also given you a clear sense of being called to His service in a special way. Such call is not a suggestion, it is a command, a command from one who have absolute right over your life. Necessity is therefore laid on you to obey. For many of us, we have not only been called, but have been granted great

spiritual endowment; the Lord has poured out His Holy Spirit on you, released a great measure of grace to you, granted you depth of insight and revelations to His word, and even given you a platform to proclaim the gospel. Shall we bury the talent of the master and not be thought wicked and slothful? Should much not be expected of us to whom much has been given? There is a grave danger in wasting God's investment, as we can see in Heb.6:4-12.

May the fact that the Almighty has called not put a trembling in our heart? Has He called once and should not we hear twice, or even thrice, must he repeat His call? Should we not be moved with fear like Noah and obey the Lord?

When our heart is discouraged, when we seem to lag in zeal, when we are tempted to be carefree, let us think again, that our call is a rare privilege, that the grace of God given us is a sacred trust, that necessity is laid upon you. Like a soldier called into battle, the only thing that matter is to fulfil your mission. You have no reason to fail, you have no reason to give up.

THE KINGDOM, AND THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD. (1Cor. 15:21-28, Eph.1:9-10)

A kingdom is at stake upon our call. God's eternal purpose is of concern here. Should we not fight with beast if need be? We see what a grave cosmic warfare that rages against the gospel. This is because the gospel is the only means of securing God's right among the nations. The enemies of our king have insisted: "This man would not reign over us!" But we have a clear command: "occupy till I come". And as we see in 1Cor. 15:25 "for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet..." How does He reign today, it is through the gospel witness of the Church. His ultimate purpose is that He might deliver the kingdom unto God the Father. Indeed, this was God's purpose in Christ, that in Him all things may be gathered up, may be brought again into God's orbital. Any thing not gathered up in Christ, is lost eternally.

The gospel is the means of achieving this. It is called the gospel of the kingdom, because the kingdom is in view: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Matt. 24:14. What this means is that in every place there will be such a gospel witness (by the church) and men may have an opportunity to be brought into the kingdom, or otherwise reject it. The Lord is committed to this purpose, and shall not such grand design place a necessity on us?

TALK 2: CARRYING ON THE DISPENSATION OF THE GOSPEL

TEXT: 1COR.9:15 -18, EPH.3:7-12

INTRODUCTION

We are responsible for the spiritual tempo and tune of our generation. History is replete with the fact that the spiritual state of the people are determined by just a few men (sometimes just one man) who are responsible enough to rise to the challenge of their day. We may either sit like Eli and watch the lamp go out – no open vision, no revelation from God, and the priesthood is all but gone – or we could cry out like David to see the glory of the Lord in the land of the living. We can cry like Isaiah: “That thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down...” Which shall we chose?

Yesterday, we saw that the call to preach the gospel is a the basic, ordinary expectation of us; it is a necessity, a responsibility that is not subject to our convenience or choosing, but something of which we must adjust all other things and give a large place. In stating the reason why it is such a necessity, such an obligation, the apostle said it is because “**...a dispensation is committed unto me**”

The word dispensation is variously translated as: stewardship, administration, government, etc. The idea is that: I have been put in an office; this is my ‘tenure ’in God’s scheme of things. I am faced with only two choices: take responsibility or become irresponsible. The choice of whether to accept the stewardship or not is not given; it is not whether I am willing to accept it or not, it is that by God’s divine ordering, it is now my turn – a dispensation of the gospel is committed to my trust! Whatever I do with this stewardship will be recorded for or against me for eternity. The way I go about this dispensation will determine if God’s purpose concerning this time, and concerning the sphere I must reach will come to pass or not. The state of the gospel, of the church, the prevailing philosophy in the land, and the general spiritual state of the nations will be determined by how I go about my administration.

The effect of this administration touches beyond the earth realms. It is my duty “*to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” Eph. 3:9-12. Brethren, this is not a small trust.

Our aim this morning is to examine the situations and conditions that demands such a stewardship as this, then we shall examine how Paul went about discharging such a grave responsibility, so that we may be guided in discharging our trust also.

THE DEMAND FOR THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE GOSPEL

1. **The misrepresentation of the gospel by the church:** You will no doubt see how the gospel is being much misrepresented in the Church in Corinth. There was need for the Apostle to send Timothy to come and remind them of all his ways. We see the division, the infighting, carnality, outright sinfulness, disorderliness in worship, etc. When we see things like this we must look again to how the stewardship of the gospel is being carried on.
2. The grounds yet to be conquered (Rom.15:17-21)
3. The Repudiation of the Lord's Right (Luke 19:14, 2Cor.10:5-6)
4. The imminent coming of the Lord

DISCHARGING THE STEWARDSHIP

We shall consider the following:

1. A total reliance on the grace of God.
2. A Complete dependence on the wisdom of God.
3. A life marked by the cross.
4. A heart hungry for a growing revelation of Jesus.
5. A passion for Christ and the church.
6. An eye set on eternity.
7. A mind to exceed expectations.

A TOTAL RELIANCE ON THE GRACE OF GOD (1Cor.15:10, 2Cor.3:4-6, Eph.3:2,8)

The call to the dispensation of the gospel is a dispensation of grace. (We look at this in our last CLR building up to this conference, and it would be good you get the messages or talk outline, it will soon be on our website). We said that a man who must preach the gospel of grace must have experienced grace himself. Grace is the influence of God on a life. The ministry of the gospel is such that it can only be carried out by the grace of God. It is those who have received abundance of grace that will reign in life. We cannot depend on our own strength, our wisdom or personality. We must realize our complete helplessness without God. We must always come to the throne of grace that we may obtain

mercy and find grace. May our heart never be lifted up, for God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. As we look at this grave task, let us mutter in trembling: who is sufficient for such a task, our sufficiency is of God. And may we be ever determined to maximize the grace of God. May we not frustrate this grace.

We pointed out in our last retreat that it was this grace that enabled the apostles to live victorious over sin, that empowered them for divine service, that gave them influence on the people, that showed forth in utterance of speech so that hearts were broken. It was this great grace that produced signs and wonders, and even brought their daily supplied (Acts 4:33). Indeed, for them living was by the grace of God. In their weakness, and limitations it was this grace that was sufficient for them (2Cor.12:9-10). Shall we then take on the same labour with such grace? What a mess we would make of our vocation.

A COMPLETE DEPENDENCE ON THE WISDOM OF GOD. (1Cor.2:1-16, 2Cor.10:1-6)

We will not win the world by buying into the philosophy of this age. They seem to suggest that the gospel may be preached by employing some form of public relations strategies: adverts, promotions, aesthetics, soothsaying, etc. Well, the apostles did not turn the world upside down that way. Paul was highly learned as far as the standard of this world is concerned, but when it comes to proclaiming the gospel, it was a complete reliance on the supernatural wisdom. And many times such wisdom looks foolish to the world, it goes against the popular appeal. But that is what it takes to preach the gospel.

Paul's prayer for the church was for the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ (Eph.1:17). Oh, how we need this wisdom of God in a mystery. And what is it, but the bringing in of Christ and him crucified into every course we undertake, making this the ground of our decision and our singular motive. We must always ask ourselves: How does this increase Christ, how is the gospel promoted. Anything outside this is foolishness. And you see, only the Holy Spirit can guide you in judging the spiritual value of things, in discerning the mind of God. May the Lord grant us wisdom that the world cannot resist (Acts 6:10).

A LIFE MARKED BY THE CROSS. (Gal.6:14)

Oh, how I wish you and I could come into the reality of the cross. When you see a man carrying the cross, you know that everything about that man is finished, every personal ambition, every business plans, every thought of the future, every interest, every wealth accumulated is finished. Much of our distractions is that we still have many other things we are pursuing alongside the gospel. We even want to use the gospel as a means to meet other personal ends: sustenance, popularity and even identity. Is it not true that we all seek our own, not the things of Christ? For me, this is an issue for sincere heart cry: Oh, that my life might be marked by the cross. Such was the mark on the apostle, and he would not let any man trouble him. Nothing of this world could agitate him, the world is crucified to him, and he is crucified to the world. It was easy for him to be focus on the single task of bearing about the dying of Christ. Let it be true of me, that: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me" Amen

A HEART HUNGRY FOR A GROWING REVELATION OF JESUS. (Phil. 3:7-16)

Nothing promotes the gospel like a personal hunger after God. Years ago, we described revival as the upsurge that trails our pursuit of God. Oh, that our hearts were captivated by this one thing: knowing Jesus! That there would be a deep hunger in our soul for a deeper and fuller revelation of Jesus. The law of the kingdom is that only the thirty are filled. Our lack of fulness only reveal our very low appetite and hunger after God. In this new year, I am resolved to pursuing after a fuller revelation of Jesus. Brethren, it is revelation that brings revolution. And we need nothing short of a spiritual revolution right now, but where are the men who will gaze on Christ until they are transfigured, until the light of the glorious gospel shine through them.

Is the third heaven no longer accessible? where is that revelation that Paul saw, and he would not confer with flesh and blood, he would not consider convenience or consequence, but went immediately into Arabia. When you do your calculations it was just about this time he referred to in 2Cor 12:2 of being caught into the third heavens. The issue here is not in the esoteric experience, but in the revelation he got; a full understanding of the person of Jesus that completely defined the course of his life.

[Many learned theologians believed that what he heard was the name of God, a name which mortals are not permitted to pronounce and the jews uses the tetragrammaton YHWH. Every man who have seen God has come out with utter silence. On this phrase Albert Barne wrote: *The word which is rendered here as "unspeakable" arreeta may either mean what cannot be spoken, or what ought not to be spoken. The word means unutterable, ineffable; and whichever idea we attach to it, Paul meant to say that he could not attempt by words to do justice to what he saw and heard. The use of the word "words" here would seem to imply that he heard the language of exalted praise; or that there were truths imparted to his mind which he could not hope to convey in any language spoken by people*].

It is not a revelation extra outside the judgment of other enlightened mind. He would later meet with Peter, who would later testify of Pauls insight, designating Paul's writings as canon. What brought Paul to this point, what placed him at pal with those who were apostles before him was simply this, HUNGER. And in the text we read (Phil.3) he invites us to have same hunger, forgetting all that is behind, pursuing this one thing: a revelation of Jesus Christ. Please don't get us wrong, it is not hunger for some mystical experience we are advancing here, but hunger to know Jeus in a real and living way. It is not so that you may be filled with words, for such revelations may not necessarily be spoken, but all who meet you will acknowledge that you have touch something of the divine. Lord grant us a hungry heart indeed.

A PASSION FOR CHRIST AND THE CHURCH. (Phil.1:20-26, 2Cor. 11:21-29, Col.1:24 -2:2)

Brethren, should we not weep when we think of the Church? "If I forget thee Oh Zion, let my right hand forget her cunning. You cannot be passionate about the gospel without being passionate about the church. The church is the embodiment of the gospel; it is the vehicle through which the gospel moves. The message of the gospel is only as good as the Church. He that must labour for the gospel must labour for the church. Beloved, let Zion come into thine heart! For the apostle, he was ready to lay down his life for the service of the church, he was going to endure all things for the sake of the elect (Phil.2:17, 2Tim.2:10). The churches chiefly occupied his praying day and night, he ministered to them in many tears, entreaty, warnings constant instructions, teachings, setting examples even at great personal cost, and much love (See 1Thess. 2 for instance). His was not just a desire to grow a crowd, but as much as possible he was committed to each individual member, and he sort to present each one mature in Christ.

Christ business in this world is the church, and if you love Him, the Church will be all that mattered to you. Much of our failures in our dispensation of the gospel is on this ground. Perhaps the Lord will help us consider this matter closely in time to come

AN EYE SET ON ETERNITY AND ON THE JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST. (Acts 20:26, 2Cor.4:16-18, 5:10-11, 2Tim. 4:1-6)

There is one thing we cannot miss as we read through Paul's writings, it is the fact that he has his eyes set on eternity. He lived with the consciousness that he would stand before an infallible judge to give account of his stewardship. He understood that his labour here has eternal consequences both on him and on them that hear him. He was determined to be pure from the blood of all men. He would not stand ashamed before the Master who have so loved him and given His all.

To think of not carrying out this necessity, Paul said "woe is me..." To think of not loving Jesus commensurately Paul said it is an anathema. Then he added the word "Maranatha" i.e. "the Lord comes. Did you get the picture; it is like a bride putting all things ready for the coming of her Lord. The Lord comes, to judge and to reward. If we will live with eternity in view, if we would consider the eternal consequence of our actions and inactions, it would change completely our value system, our priorities, and indeed our lives. Let us remember that eternity beacons, a time is coming when no man can work. What account shall we give when we stand before the Lord Jesus Christ

TALK 3: THE EXTRA, AND THE REWARD

TEXT: 1COR.9:15-18

We shall continue our meditations for today by looking at the last point on our list yesterday. I thought it should be treated separate as that is the icing on the issue Paul was raising. To him, that would be the only legitimate ground to “boast”.

A MIND TO EXCEED EXPECTATIONS.

Permit me to start by quoting this:

"If I do this thing willingly I have a reward." Paul desired to bring a little more than was required, in token of his love to his Master and of his thankful acceptance of the obligation. The artist who loves his work will put more work into his picture than is absolutely needed, and will linger over it, lavishing diligence and care upon it, because he is in love with his task. The servant that seeks to do as little as he can scrape through with without rebuke is actuated by no high motives. The trader that barely puts as much into the scale as will balance the weight in the other is grudging in his dealings; but he who, with liberal hand, gives "shaken down, pressed together, and running over" measure, gives because he delights in the giving. And so it is in the Christian life. There are many of us whose question seems to be, "How little can I get off with?" And what does that mean? It means that we are slaves. It means that if we durst we would give nothing and do nothing. And what does that mean? It means that we do not care for the Lord, and have no joy in our work. And what does that mean? It means that our work deserves no praise, and will get no reward. If we love Christ we shall be anxious, if it were possible, to do more than He commands us. Of course He has the right to all our work; but yet there are heights of Christian consecration and self-sacrifice which a man will not be blamed if he has not climbed, and will be praised if he has. What we want is extravagances of service. Judas may say, "To what purpose is this waste?" but Jesus will say, "He hath wrought a good work on Me." And the fragrance of the ointment will smell sweet through the centuries. A. Maclaren, D. D.

When you read through the text, you will notice that Paul's aim was far beyond preaching and labouring for the gospel. The obligation of stewardship no doubt is daunting, but Paul aimed to go beyond what was ordinarily expected. For

some of us, we are yet to take our place in the gospel scheme, we are still striving to fulfil the “necessity” laid on us, but here is a man who is not only carrying out his assignment but is doing far beyond expectation. For him, claiming any reward can only be on this ground of the extra, otherwise, he has only done what was necessary. For Paul, the extra meant: giving up recreation, giving up marriage, giving up holiday, giving up the right to salaries and dependence on church resources. It meant accepting personal inconveniences, being sensitive to other people’s consciences, and ensuring that all that will constitute a stumbling block to the gospel, even if it is legitimate, is removed.

May we not begin to ask ourselves, how can I fulfil my obligation, and do even more? What is that extra I must put in for the sake of the gospel? Perhaps you are already doing so much for the Lord, but is that all you can really do? Look again into the eyes of Him that gave up heaven and the fathers throne just to come and seek you, and consider if you should not adjust your budget in order to give more to the furtherance of the gospel, if you cannot skip a meal and adjust your schedule in order to give your self to prayer for the church and the gospel. Does it seem much to you to give up your ambition and go for cross-cultural missions? Look again into the face of Christ, and you will count all things but nothing. For some of us, the extra may be to adjust our lifestyle so that we can relate better to people in the place of work, and even though it would inconvenience us, we do not mind becoming all things to all men, that by all means we may save some.

If we will sincerely pray, and ask the Lord, what more can I do for Chris, the church and the gospel, the Lord will lay a burden on your heart, which if you follow through will make very remarkable impact in this dispensation.

THE REWARD OF THE STEWARDSHIP IN THE GOSPEL (1TIM.4:1-8, REV. 2:7, 10,11,12,26-28; 3:5,12,21)

We will close these meditations by a brief look at what reward awaits those who truly carry out their stewardship:

1. The satisfaction of keeping the faith, and not constituting a hindrance or scandal to the gospel and an injury to many. How many servants of the Lord has end tragically, how many on whose account the name of the Lord is blasphemed, how many has led generations into error. To look back and say, I have kept the faith how satisfying that would be.
2. The relieve of being pure from the blood of all men. Look at Paul leaving the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20), a free man indeed. Or consider Samuel before the

elders of Israel, boldly affirming “I call God to bear witness that I have coveted no man’s goods...” What is more rewarding than to have the judge of all the earth stand by your side to bear witness for you? The joy of having no guilt in your spirit, of knowing you offended no man, but have fulfilled your obligation to all men.

3. The joy of seeing the fruit of the gospel in the lives over which you have laboured. In 1Cor.9:23 Paul called this the “blessings of the gospel”. SEE ALSO Phil.4:1, 1Thess 2:19-20

4. The joy of seeing your contribution to the realization of God’s eternal purpose when all things are gathered in Christ, and the kingdom handed to Him whose right it is to rule

5. The exultant joy of being personally crowned by that nail pierced hand, as one who have been partaker of his suffering, and who now enters into the rest of His Lord.

6. The reward of eternal life, when we are clothed upon with our house from heaven and truly taste the fruit of the garden of God, even the quality of the life of God. That life that defines the true meaning of satisfaction

7. The spiritual ascendancy and authority to occupy a place in the eternal government of Christ, the King.

Well, may we think over this, and ponder the words in 1Cor.15:58, and 2Cor 4:16-18.

Let us Pray.

(Written by Val Obioha) - PWC 2024

ABOUT GOSPEL ALLIANCE

Welcome to Gospel Alliance, the Christian body that aims to raise mature and balanced Christian workers who will lead reformation and revival in the Church. Our vision is for the Church to fulfil her vocation in this age, and we believe that this can be achieved through prayer, fellowship, training, and a strong emphasis on family life.

Our mission is to provide a platform for Christian workers to come together in fellowship and receive ministerial support. We believe that through this, we can labor for the reformation and revival of the Church, as we seek to align ourselves with the Word of God.

As part of our mission, we are committed to mobilizing the Church to take responsibility for evangelism and missions in all its various forms. We believe that the Church has a vital role to play in bringing the good news of Jesus Christ to a lost and hurting world.

Join us on this journey as we seek to make a difference in the world, one life at a time. Send us a mail at info@gospelalliance.org.ng or gospelalliance2016@gmail.com or call **08163331057, 08160530658 or 08137048222** or visit our website now at www.gospelalliance.org.ng