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**BIBLE STUDY**

**Refuge Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc.**

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**FREE TO SERVE FREELY**

**1 Corinthians 9:13-27**

***I Corinthians 9:13-14***

***13 "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live [of the things] of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?"***

***14 "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."***

Paul once again points to the Old Testament. Paul knew the Mosaic law. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. The priests who served in the temple had the right to receive the sacrificial offerings as their food (Numbers 18:8-32). The high priest and his family lived of the offerings in the temple. The Levitical tribe had no land allotment. Their inheritance was the people. They were to share with the altar the offerings made thereon.

***Numbers 18:21 “And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.”***

In the same way, the Lord Jesus had commanded that those who preach the gospel should earn their living by the gospel.

***Matthew 10:8-10***

***8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.***

***9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,***

***10 Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.***

***Luke 10:7 “And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.”***

***1 Corinthians 9:9-11***

***9 For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?***

***10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.***

***11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?***

***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."***

Clearly, scripturally, Paul had every right to receive financial support for his missionary work, but he refused to exercise those rights so that he couldn’t be accused of acting from wrong motives. Strangely enough, this instruction that Paul had given the church on taking care of their minister was not to receive for himself, but that they might take care of those after him who came to minister. Paul was very independent and did not want it said that he had gone into this as an avocation. He was not in the ministry for the benefits that he might gain. He was called by the Lord Jesus Christ as a minister. He was compelled to do this. His desire was to do the will of the Lord. Paul learned to be abased and to abound. He did not let anything keep him from carrying the message God had given him. Paul was proud that he did not have to depend on sustenance from those he had converted to Christianity. Paul would rather die, than feel that he won them to the Lord to support him. Paul did not glory in himself, but in the call of God on his life that he fulfilled.

***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 tells them here that he has nothing to brag about. As we said Paul was compelled to preach to everyone who would listen. The apostle wasn’t motivated by money but compelled by God to preach. The moment he encountered the great Light {Jesus Christ}, Paul's entire life was changed. He had been zealous to capture the Christians and imprison them, because he thought he was doing God's will. Now he knows that he is doing God's will, and he is even more zealous to tell of Jesus.

***Acts 26:12-18***

***12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,***

***13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.***

***14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.***

***15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.***

***16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for 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;***

***17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,***

***18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.***

Paul wanted to please God all the time, he was just not fully informed. That is the way with many people today that are off in error. They are just not fully informed. They want to do the will of God; they just do not know what His will is for their lives.

***Romans 7:18 “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”***

After Paul became fully informed by revelation, he used the rest of his life to preach the good news of Jesus Christ. Paul was not caught up in boasting, but in thanksgiving that he had learned the truth. We likewise should be thankful that we know the truth!

***Matthew 11:20-27***

***20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:***

***21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.***

***22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.***

***23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.***

***24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.***

***25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.***

***26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.***

***27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.***

***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."***

Paul was called of God to carry this message. He had been entrusted with a commission from the Lord Jesus to serve as his ambassador, proclaiming the gospel to the world. So, he was willing to give up compensation and relinquish the full use of his rights in the gospel and offer it free of charge. He had a choice to do it or not. He willingly chose to carry this message of Christ. Since he followed the will of God, there will be a great reward awaiting him in heaven. "Dispensation", in the verse above, means administration. The gospel, then, was given to him to administer.

***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 was seeing lives transformed by God; therefore, he preferred to secure his own financial support rather than lose out on that joy. Paul decided to work as a tentmaker to make his own way, so he could give freely to all who would receive the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul explains that great power had been given unto him pertaining to the gospel. He refused to use that power to further himself. His reward is the satisfaction of knowing that he has freely given the gospel to all who will receive it. Later he seemed to apologize for this decision.

***2 Corinthians 12:13 “For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.”***

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

Even though Paul was free and no man’s slave, he made himself a slave to everyone, serving all people so that he might win them to Christ. Many in that time element were slaves. Paul is saying that he owes no man anything. He serves others by his own choice, not from necessity. Through serving others, Paul has led many to the knowledge of Christ.

***I Corinthians 9:20 "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;"***

This, and the verses following, explain a lot of the things that most do not understand about Paul. Paul brought the gospel message to each group in a different way. He did not alter their customs but brought the gospel message to each within their customs. In non-essential matters, he was willing to adopt the ways of either Jews or Gentiles so that he might gain a hearing among them for the sake of the gospel. Since Paul was himself a Jew, he was willing to engage in Jewish practices and live like one under the law, even though he was free from the law, so that he might win Jews to Christ. When Paul was ministering to Jews, he was quick to remind them that he was a Jew. He would tell them that he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He even went so far as to sacrifice with them on occasion. He even took a Nazarite vow long after the church had agreed this was not for Christians. He did it to get his foot in the door to minister to these Jews. He kept the law, to impress those who were under the law, that he was not trying to do away with the law. He wanted, at any cost, to be allowed to tell them of Jesus {their Messiah}.

***I Corinthians 9:21 "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."***

Similarly, he was willing to live like one without God’s law in order to win Gentiles—though, of course, Paul was still under the law of Christ. In other words, through Paul was free from the Old Testament law, he wasn’t free to sin. As a Christian, he was obligated to God’s moral law in accordance with God’s character. He proclaimed grace through the sacrifice of Jesus when he was speaking to non-Jews. To these people, he was a Christian and nothing more. He tried to reach each group where they were.

***I Corinthians 9:22-23***

***22 "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."***

***23 "And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with [you]."***

Thus, Paul was willing to become all things to all people, so that by every possible means he might save some. To understand Paul and his writings, this is the most important thing to learn. Many of the things Paul did and taught were for a certain group, and not to be taken as over-all doctrine. A good example is, after Paul was teaching and preaching, he took a Nazarite vow, grew his hair long, and later cut it, and took it to the temple. If everything he taught is for everyone, then we must do that, also. Paul, also, taught that it was better to stay single in the work of the Lord. You see everything he taught was very true for someone, but it was not necessarily to be practiced by all.

***1 Corinthians 6:12 “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”***

***1 Corinthians 10:23 “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.”***

Paul subjugated his personal preferences to the gospel, so that [he might] share in the blessings. He ministered to people at their level of understanding. He did not try to stop them from being weak, he just appeared as weak with them. He became whatever was necessary to reach them at their level. After he got his foot in the door, then he gave them the gospel message. Because of God’s call on his life, Paul would do whatever he had to do to fulfill it. Paul explains that his goal is to further the gospel. Whatever it takes for Paul to be allowed to bring the gospel message, is what he is doing. Paul's aim is to take the gospel message to everyone.

***I Corinthians 9:24 "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain."***

The apostle knew that payday was coming. One day God will reward us for our sacrificial service to and love for him. Therefore, Paul was motivated to receive God’s blessing. Using athletic imagery, he asks the Corinthians, “Don’t you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way to win the prize.” Racing was very prominent in Corinth in those days. The races were very similar to what is done in the Olympics today. Again, Paul is giving an example that they will understand. Life is very much like a race. We are all trying to make it to the finish line. Christianity is a race that is run on a narrow path. We are to look straight ahead to the Lord. Our path is lit by the Light of Jesus. We must never stop, until the end is reached. We must not wander off the track and lose our way. We must never turn back. This race is for everlasting life. The prize that the Christian wins is everlasting life with the Lord Jesus. We must run and not be weary. In the race of the Christian life, Paul wasn’t content to receive a participation ribbon. He wanted to obtain the gold. True athletes don’t compete for mere exercise; they compete to win. Followers of Christ shouldn’t merely go through the motions either. Instead, we should run the Christian race for the prize. There is nothing wrong with wanting to climb the ladder to reach the top. Just ensure that your ladder is leaning against the right wall. You want to scale the ladder that has Christ at its top. You should long to hear him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

***I Corinthians 9:25 "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."***

Paul again uses athletic games to illustrate his point. Those who compete know they must exercise self-control in everything if they are to win. Without maintaining strict control over their eating habits, sleeping habits, and training routines, an athlete can’t expect to be in the running for the prize. These young men that ran in the physical race took really good care of their bodies. They did not indulge in strong drink, or in anything else that might cause them not to be strong. They disciplined their lives, so their body would be in good condition to run. Christians must live disciplined lives, as well. We must not allow ourselves to get involved in worldly things. The very worst thing a Christian can do, is to eat or drink anything that will alter their ability to think. Christians must be totally free of drugs and alcohol, so they will be able to think clearly enough to make correct decisions. In ancient times, they competed to receive a perishable crown. In other words, they labored long and hard to obtain something that lacked long-term value. Paul tips his hat to such devotion but nevertheless says, in effect, “That’s not our plan. We aim higher. We strive from an eternal perspective.” We seek an imperishable crown. God’s rewards do not fade, rust, or perish. For what are you living your life? All Christians will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to be “repaid for” our service to our Master (2 Corinthians 5:10).

***I Corinthians 9:26-27***

***26 "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:"***

***27 "But I keep under my body, and bring [it] into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."***

Whatever the Corinthians decided to do, Paul’s mind was made up. He says he has no intention of running aimlessly or flailing his arms like a boxer who doesn’t know his purpose. Rather, he disciplines himself so that after preaching to others, he’s not himself disqualified. Paul is saying, you don't run just to be running, but to finish the race. Paul is saying, he is not preaching just to hear himself speak, but to get results. There must be a goal in ministering, just as there is a finish line in a race. "Beating the air" just means action in futility. Paul is saying here, that he practices what he preaches. He disciplines himself to the teachings of the Bible. He not only preaches the gospel, but lives the gospel, as well. He does not allow his body to rule his spirit. He disciplines himself, so that he will not be a hypocrite when he is teaching others. Paul lives the Christian life before all that he ministers to. Paul’s mission was to fulfill his King’s agenda. No matter what happened, he was not going to let anything prevent him from maintaining that focus and receiving Christ’s approval. Only one passion in your life is worth your total commitment and pursuit: Loving Christ and serving him. Don’t disqualify yourself for the prize by quitting the race, running in the wrong direction, or breaking the rules. Run to win.

**QUESTIONS**

1. What do the ministers live of?
2. Why did Paul know the Mosaic law so well?
3. What tribe had no land allotment?
4. They which preach the gospel should live of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
5. Paul's ministry was not an avocation, but a \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Why are many in error today in their belief?
7. Paul was not caught up in boasting, but in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
8. Was it within Paul's power to refuse his call to preach?
9. What is Paul's reward?
10. Verse 19 says that Paul has made himself what?
11. What was Paul to the Jews?
12. What did Paul become, when he was speaking to non-Jews?
13. Why must every little thing that Paul did and said not be taken for general doctrine?
14. Paul's goal was to further the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
15. What is Paul really speaking of, when he speaks of running a race?
16. What one thing was needed to be able to run a good race?
17. What is meant by "beating the air"?
18. Paul not only preaches the gospel, but \_\_\_\_\_\_ the gospel, as well.