

The Necessity of the Gospel

Big Idea— To see that nothing we do hinders the advance of the gospel. We must advance the gospel!

1. Just because we have rights doesn't mean we have to use them!

- **Paul's point with this section of the letter is to illustrate the point he was making in chapter 8:**
- **Yes, we have rights. We might even have authority. But that doesn't mean we always exercise those rights or authority. If the exercise of our rights is going to hinder the faith of another, we need to consider foregoing our rights.**
- **Paul could have exercised his right for them to financially support his ministry:**

A. He was an apostle. (1-6)

- **1 Corinthians 9:1-12a,14 (ESV) [1] Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? [2] If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. [3] This is my defense to those who would examine me. [4] Do we not have the right to eat and drink? [5] Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? [6] Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?**

B. It was customary common sense. (7)

- **[7] Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?**

C. It was the OT practice. (8-12a, 13)

- [8] Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? [9] For it is written in the Law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned? [10] Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. [11] If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? [12a] If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more?... [13] Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?

D. It was the Lord’s command. (14)

- [14] In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.
- Luke 10:7 (ESV) And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house.

As a believer in and a follower of Jesus Christ, what is more important –living in our rights or living for Jesus and the gospel?

Paul elevates two principles that are critical if we want to understand our daily life in Christ.

1. We must get out of the way of the gospel.

- 1 Corinthians 12:b [12] ...Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.
- 7 times in verses 12-18 the word “gospel” is used!
- Paul will describe the sharing of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15 as “first importance.”
- We need to have the mindset that we will endure anything as long as nothing hinders, impedes, gets in the way of the gospel.
- There are 91 uses of the word “gospel” in the NT. Paul accounts for 67 of those!

- When we surrendered our lives to the lordship of Jesus Christ, we surrendered all our rights and all our authority. The purpose of our lives now becomes the Lord's purposes. That's a hard thing to do—surrender our purposes to the Lord. That's why the Bible describes it as “dying to self.”
- If the point of all of life is Jesus, then it makes sense that we put up with anything and everything in order to stay out of the way of the gospel.
- We label ourselves “evangelical christians.” We get the word “evangelical” from the greek word for “good news” or “gospel.”
Basically we are calling ourselves “gospel christians.”
- **Are our rights and preferences becoming a hindrance to the gospel?**
- Let me encourage each of us see the priority of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to make sure we are not doing anything that would get in the way.

2. We must advance the gospel.

- 1 Corinthians 9:15-18 (ESV) But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting. [16] For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! [17] For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. [18] What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.
- Jeremiah 20:7-9 (ESV) O LORD, you have deceived me, and I was deceived; you are stronger than I, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me. [8] For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, “Violence and destruction!” For the word of the LORD has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. [9] If I say, “I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,” there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.

- Advancing the gospel is not easy. It never has been. Jesus told the disciples that people were going to hate them and kill them because they followed him and called others to believe the gospel and to follow too.
- Paul quoted a line from Jeremiah. Do we feel the struggle that Jeremiah is under in our own lives when it comes to the gospel.

Do we feel like Jeremiah?

- He was a laughingstock.
- He was mocked.
- He had been imprisoned.
- All because of his obedience to the Lord to proclaim the message God had given him.
- His message was not popular. His message wasn't welcome. His message wasn't believed.
- He grew weary of proclaiming what God had said, so he determined that he would no longer speak the message.
- "I won't mention him or speak in his name." It's too hard. It's too difficult. I don't like being mocked. I don't like being persecuted. So I'm not going to speak anymore.

Have we come to the place of agreement with Jeremiah when he declared: "there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot."

Is the gospel of Jesus Christ a burning fire within our bones?

We have rights and authority, but we may not exercise them if they are going to get in the way of advancing the gospel.

One last example:

John 10:17-18 (ESV) For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. [18] No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

Jesus had all right and authority and yet he chose not to exercise them, but lay down his life. This is in fact the ushering in of the gospel.

The gospel is of the utmost importance. This is what our lives should be all about. Nothing must get in the way of the gospel and we must do all we can to advance the gospel.

Life Group Discussion Guide

1. How can the exercising of our rights get in the way of the gospel of Jesus Christ?
2. Why do we struggle to keep the gospel the main thing in our lives as believers?
3. Consider Jeremiah's statement in Jeremiah 20:7-9. Do we ever feel the way he did? How do we move past those feelings?
4. What does it mean to you when you hear Paul say that proclaiming the gospel was a necessity in his life?
5. Discuss the implication of the gospel feeling like a burning fire in your bones that you can't contain. What would happen in the life of the church if we really felt that way?