

3 May 2015

## Suffer, Serve and Sow to save the lost.

### Introduction.

This is our first study on the topic of “suffer, serve and sow”.

Three points are established from the Scriptures for this study.

1. Suffer all things to not hinder the gospel.
2. Serve all to gain the more, to save some.
3. Sow seeds of the gospel when called to do so, woe unto those who refuse.

Our three points in more detail.

1. Suffer all things to not hinder the gospel.

### Supporting Verse

1Cor.9: 12 “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.”

### Context and meaning of our verse.

\* Verses 1–6 Paul affirms the authenticity of his apostleship. In verse 6 he sets the context of our chapter as the “work”. Verse 7 Paul uses the example of war and says, who pays for a man to go to war? the soldier doesn’t pay his own way. Then in the same verse he uses two farming-type illustrations, one of a vineyard owner and the other a keeper of sheep, and says who plants and does not eat of the fruit? and who feeds the flock and does not eat of the flock? Verse 8 Paul refers to the law as also providing this instruction, with verse 9 being the example from the law, where the oxen that works gets fed. Paul then uses the agricultural terms of ploughing and threshing and aligns them to the work, that he that does these should do them in hope. Verse 11 Paul associates the previous works of sowing and reaping to spiritual things, and says “we (the workers) shall reap your carnal things” (i.e. receive a reward for their labour). Then we have our verse, where Paul points out there is a power attributed to the work (see also verse 18) and if others partake of this, he asks, “are not we rather?”, are we not better than they? Nevertheless, a worker (preacher of the gospel) should not use his power in the work but: “suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.”

### Application of our verse today.

\* Paul is writing to the Gentile church at Corinth so this chapter and our verse are applicable to those who preach the gospel today. But given that we all have a role in proclaiming the gospel to the lost when given the opportunity, then we make a general application from our verse to all believers in the body of Christ and say: “suffer all things to hinder not the gospel.”

### Illustration.

\* Imagine for a moment that you are living next door to a Hindu family that have idols in every room of their house. Do you (a) break break down their door when they are out and smash their idols into a million pieces because that is the example of the obedient kings in the days of Israel? (2Chro.34: 4), or (b) knock on the door when you see them home and tell them that they are idolators, on their way to hell, and begin criticising them for their false beliefs?

### Learning from our Illustration.

\* Do any of our suggestions put up barriers to us going over to our neighbour and proclaiming the gospel? Both of them hinder the work of the gospel. We know that the heathen stir up our spirits and we can become emotionally charged when they “taketh his name in vain” (Deut.5: 11) with every second breath. How often does their sin make us respond in anger, make us say something that is contrary to ploughing the ground in preparation for the gospel? So next time you see two sodomites walking arm in arm down the street, ask the Lord for wisdom on what to say, that when we open our mouth we do not put up obstacles to Christ.

### Challenge & or encouragement.

\* Whether it be suffering while our unsaved or backslidden children languish in their worldly lusts, or whether we suffer our neighbour’s idols whilst we pray and ask the Lord for an opportunity to

proclaim Christ, let us do so with patience and with all longsuffering so that our efforts to proclaim the truth do not hinder the gospel. Because when we condemn the lost for the repugnance of their sin we do nothing “to suffer all things” (1Cor. 9: 12) with them, that some may be saved. Let us remember to suffer all things to not hinder the gospel.

## 2. Serve all to gain the more, to save some.

Supporting Verse.

1Cor.9: 19 “For though I be free from all [men], yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.”

Context and meaning of our verse.

\* Given that our supporting verse is in the same book, and only seven verses on from our previous point, we continue with the context from our previous point, where Paul, in reference to the work, was encouraging his readers to suffer all things, lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. Then in verse 13 Paul goes back to the Old Testament law to support his words with an example of those who ministered “about holy things” should “live of the things of the temple?” So in case we have not yet got the context being a worker (preacher) being worthy of his hire, Paul reiterates his point with an Old Testament example. Then we have verse 14, where Paul likens his previous illustrations to this age, and the work of the gospel, saying that those that have been ordained (called) by God to “preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” And then just when you have understood what he has been saying, he then says but what I have said is **not** what I do. Paul is so firm on not applying this point to himself that he says, “it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.” That is right, Paul gloried in not being paid by the churches for his work. As verse 16 says even though he preached he has nothing to glory in (of the work) for “necessity is laid upon me”. And verse 17, if he does it willingly he has a reward. Verse 18, and what is Paul’s reward, “that when he preaches he makes “the gospel of Christ without charge”. Then we have our verse: “For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.” And then he goes on in verses 20 – 22 with examples of being a Jew to those who are a Jew, “that I might gain the Jews”, in doing so, “that I might by all means save some.

Other scriptural support

Rom.15: 27.

Scriptural examples

\* The Lord Jesus Christ was among the Jews that he might serve them (Lk.22: 27) and in doing so “save that which was lost” (Lk.19: 10).

Application of our verse today.

\* We have already established that our verse applies to us today, and just as in the previous point where the context is instruction to workers (preachers), we also make application for every believer who is called to be like Christ, to serve others and so prepare the ground for the seed of the gospel of Christ crucified (1Cor.1: 23).

Illustration.

\* We know that we are called to serve one another by love (Gal.5: 13), but in this point we are to be a servant to **all**, hence it refers to non-believers, in a way that we serve the heathen and so prepare the ground for them to receive the seed of the gospel. Mother Teresa had the idea that we speak of, but was part of a counterfeit religious system. But imagine if a person gave up their whole life, to serve the poor in India, with the motive of gaining some to Christ?

Learning from our Illustration.

\* People on the street come up to preachers and ask for money, because they have learnt that Christians generally want to help other people, like the poor. So when they see Christians they believe that they would be the most likely to give them money. But what if we take an active role in giving, in serving them, without being asked. Would that contribute to ploughing the ground for the seeds of the gospel to be sowed? Would that prepare their heart to read the tract or listen to the gospel, where previously their hearts were hardened?

Challenge & or encouragement.

\* Have you ever served the heathen, have you ever gone out of your way on a plane when someone is struggling with their heavy bag and no one else is looking in their direction to help, or passed drinks, food and dirty dishes when most do not, and then found the person more receptive to receiving a gospel tract? Try it, make some extra effort to plow the ground by serving the lost and preparing their hearts to receive the blessed gospel, to gain the more, and save some.

### 3. Sow seeds of the gospel when called to do so, woe unto those who refuse.

Supporting Verse.

1Cor.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!"

Context and meaning of our verse.

\* Remembering again that our verse is in the same book, and was part of establishing the context for our previous points, where Paul is speaking about workers being worthy of their hire, but not for him, he would rather die than be unable to glory in making the gospel "without charge". So Paul has nothing to glory of though he preaches the gospel. But rather given that there is laid on him a necessity to preach, he has been called to preach, then woe unto him if he "preach not the gospel!" (verse 16). Note the exclamation mark!, and note that woe is a sign of grief, that Jesus used for the Pharisees. Woe unto him if he does not preach when he is called of God to do so.

Scriptural examples.

\* Consider the dramas that Jonah went through when he was called to preach the gospel but instead ran and hid from God (Jonah 1: 1-3).

Application of our verse today.

\* Paul is writing to the Gentile church at Corinth and so this verse is applicable to the church today. Are you called to preach the gospel but you are running from God? Woe unto you! Has a door opened for you to share Christ and you chose not to do so? Woe unto you!

Illustration.

\* Before going to BCNZ I remember going to a men's event where a preacher stood up and talked about believers being unable to share Christ to their friends and it was like God was speaking to me. I remember leaving the event and racing out the door to find the preacher before he drove off, and it was clearly the Lord, because among all those people, there he was, and I went up to him and told him of my fear of talking to people about Christ, and wept, and wept. That was the turning point for me.

Learning from our Illustration.

\* If you are called to preach the gospel, woe unto you if you do not! If you are called to preach, get the Bible issue, and do not preach without the Holy Scriptures! If you are called to preach but you love the world more than the things of God, and you love what men say about you more than God, then deal with that before you preach. If you are not called to preach, then ask God for opportunities to share Christ with those you meet, and also pray for those who are called.

Challenge & or encouragement.

\* Let us today pray for **all** those whom God has called to preach, for the Lord to open up opportunities for us to proclaim Christ to our neighbour, and for those who are called and are running from the Lord that they would turn from their wicked ways (for to know to do good and do it not is sin – Jam.4: 1&), And "love not the world" (1Jn.2: 15). It is only when a man gets over himself and his own personal need for love, acceptance and doing what he wants, that he will be ready to sow seeds of the gospel of Christ when called upon to do so. Woe unto those who refuse!

Summary of our three points.

1. Suffer all things to not hinder the gospel.
2. Serve all to gain the more, to save some.
3. Sow seeds of the gospel when called to do so, woe unto those who refuse.