

MOTIVATION'S SECRET

Rights Met or Responsibilities Fulfilled
Text: I Corinthians 9:1-18

In Kimberly, South Africa, there is a place called, "The Hole." It is one mile in circumference and hundreds of feet deep. Some say it is the biggest man-made hole in the world. In an office near "The Hole," there is a picture on the wall showing that where the hole is now there once stood a large hill. The question most often asked by those who see this picture is, "How did the hill become the hole?"

The answer makes for an interesting story about motivation. One day children playing on the bank of a nearby river, were throwing pebbles. A man walking by saw a glint of light reflect off one of those pebbles. Curious, he picked that pebble up and quickly realized that this was no ordinary pebble. He was right. It turned out to be a 21-carat diamond!

And that was all it took to turn the hill into the hole. As word got out about this discovery, people began to arrive with little spades, leather buckets, and ropes. They were highly motivated to the task.

When you think about it, one of the great needs in life is for people to be highly and properly motivated. And it is no different in the body of Christ. When you choose to serve the Body of Christ, you quickly become aware of two needs: (1) the need to motivate others to serve and (2) the need to stay motivated yourself.

Motivation is extremely important. To accomplish a ministry:

- ❑ You can teach methods, but unless people are motivated the methods won't be used.
- ❑ You can purchase materials, but unless people are motivated the materials will sit on the shelf.
- ❑ You can supply manpower, but unless you can get the

manpower moving it is of no use.

- ❑ You can even throw money at the ministry, but it won't amount to much without motivation.

One of the great needs of the church of Jesus Christ is to continually, adequately, and effectively motivate believers. Yet, one of the great problems of our society — the world within which we exist — is this: People are more interested in having their rights met instead of insuring their responsibilities are fulfilled. And that effects motivation.

We recognize the problem. What we might not recognize as quickly is that sometimes we bring into the church those attitudes and ways of life that do not belong in the church because they are a part of our pagan society. Thus, one of the major problems today in the church at large is not having enough people motivated properly. Why? Because the world's problem has infiltrated the church. People in the church are more concerned with having their rights met than they are in fulfilling their responsibilities.

Here's a suggestion for two Bible studies. If you want to do a Bible study on some afternoon because it's too hot to do anything else, do a Bible study on your rights. It won't take long because the Bible doesn't say a whole lot about your rights.

But if you want to spend a much longer period of time in Bible study, study the topic of the believer's responsibility. You will discover at least two things. First, you will discover this irony. The degree to which responsibilities are fulfilled often determines the degree to which rights are met.

Paul asserted as much when he addressed believers who were not fulfilling their responsibilities. We find his instruction to these believers in I Corinthians 9.

Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? [2] If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my

apostleship in the Lord. [3] My defense to those who examine me is this: [4] Do we have no right to eat and drink? [5] Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? [6] Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? Verses 1-6

Paul says to these believers, "Quite frankly, I have a lot of rights!"

- ❑ I am an apostle. I have the right to be appreciated.
- ❑ I have seen Jesus. I have the right to be respected.
- ❑ I have given myself wholeheartedly to this ministry. I have the right to support.
- ❑ I have personal needs. I have a right to have these needs met.

Paul argues his case for his rights from several viewpoints:
Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Verse 7

- ❑ Political realm: soldiers have the right to be supported by others rather than fight at their own expense.
- ❑ Agricultural realm: the vine grower eats of the fruit of his work.
- ❑ Animal husbandry: the shepherd drinks the milk which his flock produces.

Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? [9] For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? [10] Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. Verses 8-10

Paul then argues from the viewpoint of the OT law. Those who benefit from the work of the ox have a responsibility to reward the ox. And Paul says the inclusion of this responsibility in Moses' law was not just for farmers and oxen. There

was a relevant application to the Corinthians and those who ministered the word of God to them.

If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? [12] If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. Verses 11-12

In summary, Paul says "I have my rights and I have my freedom to insist on my rights." But then, he says something absolutely superb. "I won't!"

Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? [14] Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel. [15] But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void. Verses 13-15

While reminding them once again of his legitimate rights, Paul says he has no intention of insisting on his rights because having his rights met was not the motivation for his ministry.

One reason people are not motivated properly in ministry is due to their belief that their rights must be met. People feel like quitting a ministry the Lord has given them because their rights are not being met. "I'm not appreciated, so I won't serve anymore!" Why? "Because I have the right to be appreciated!" For those in vocational ministry, there is the temptation to quit because of inadequate pay. So they quit. Why? "Because I have the right to be paid adequately."

Guess what? If you are going to work in the Christian environment, you will seldom be appreciated fully or paid adequately. Since that is the case and if it is your motivation, you can settle for this, you will not last long in the ministry.

Another discovery you will make when you do a Bible study on fulfilling responsibilities is this: You need a servant's heart! This cuts cross-grain to the way of the world. It has been that way through the ages.

Paul points out that there is something far more powerful in motivating him in ministry than having his rights met, however legitimate those rights might be. What is it? It is having a tremendous sense of responsibility — having a servant's heart. You see, a servant must be responsible whether he is appreciated fully or paid adequately.

When we peek into the next part of this chapter, we read how Paul was motivated as a servant.

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; [20] and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; [21] to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; [22] to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. [23] Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you. Verses 19-23

Two thoughts from this passage:

v. 19 Paul made himself a servant. It was his choice. He was not coerced. So it must be for you.

v. 21 As a servant to Christ, Paul operated under the Law of Christ, that is, the law of liberty & the law of love.

He operated under the principles of Christ. He came under the control of Christ. He was responsible to Christ. He chose to live in obedience to Christ. Paul was not at liberty to live as he pleased. But he was free to live under the perfect law of liberty — the law of Christ.

So the thing that motivated Paul, and should motivate us, was not an insistence on his personal rights, but rather an insistence that his responsibilities under Christ be fulfilled.

When this is true in our lives it is amazing:

- ❑ how much we can survive not being appreciated fully - if at all;
- ❑ how long we can get by not being adequately paid;
- ❑ how much we can keep on keeping on;
- ❑ how much we can initiate;
- ❑ how much we can thoroughly bring to culmination all those ministries we have a responsibility for.

People who start and keep on and press right on and fulfill their ministry thoroughly are always people who have a clearly defined sense of responsibility — so clearly defined that they are prepared to shrug their shoulders when their rights are not met.

How do you know what your responsibilities are? How did Paul know? There were three factors: a Divine Burden, a Divine Warning, and Divine Accountability.

*For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for **necessity is laid upon me**; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! [17] For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, **I have been entrusted with a stewardship.*** Verses 16-17

First, Paul sensed a **Divine Burden**

There are two phrases relating to Paul's divine burden in verses 16 and 17: "Necessity is laid upon me" and "I have been entrusted with a stewardship." Paul had heard Christ speak and he obeyed. What responsibilities has Christ given to you that you must obey?

- General: Scriptural principles & guidelines.
- Specific: Spiritual gifts and the prompting of the Holy Spirit to be involved based on your gifts & abilities in ministries benefiting this community of believers and the world in which you live. Teaching, counseling, helping, caring, singing — there is so much to do.

The sense of having *necessity laid upon you* — a divine burden — as Paul did has a parallel in a story found in Matthew 14 and Mark 6. Christ compelled his disciples to get into a boat to cross the Galilee at night without Him. Perhaps there was some discussion among the disciples. Night was coming. A

storm was brewing. There were fishermen in the group who knew what happened to a small boat at night in a storm on Galilee. The scripture picks up the narrative at that point and states,

Immediately, Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side . . . Matthew 14:22

The word *made* means to speak with authority, to compel. This was not coercion, but it was the authoritative voice of Jesus telling his disciples to get in that boat. His authority caused them to forego their rights and they got in the boat, not to get out until their journey was completed on the other shore.

The expression that is used for *made* in Matthew and Mark is the same expression that is found in our text for *necessity*. Think of it as the expression, "Get in that boat." Such was the sense of Jesus' authority; such was the sense of the disciples' responsibility to His authority, that they got into that boat and stayed in that boat, because He said so.

One very good and simple reason why you should be involved in a ministry in this community of believers is because Jesus says, "Get in the boat!"

That is also why you should keep doing what you started and don't stop doing it until Christ tells you to stop as clearly as He told you to start because Jesus says, "Stay in that boat until you get to the other shore."

Divine Burden provides proper motivation!

Not only was there a divine burden upon Paul, but there was a **Divine Warning** verse 16

Best way to understand what Paul meant by this expression is to see how it is used elsewhere. In both Old and New Testaments the word, "Woe" was a prophetic word of judgement, a word of future calamity. Jesus used it against those who rejected Him.

Woe unto you Chorazin! Woe unto you 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. But I say to you, it will be

more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of Judgement than for you. Matthew 11:21:22

So how does Paul's usage of it in this verse impact upon believers? Simply put, unless you shape up and do what is required of you, you are in big trouble. Not trouble as in the loss of your salvation, but trouble as in the loss of God's blessings and eternal rewards.

What Christ is saying to Paul and to us is something like this, "Get in that boat, stay in that boat, and if you dare get out of that boat you are in big trouble!"

Isn't it simply marvelous to know that the Lord is leaning out of heaven, looking at His saints who are whimpering and whining because their rights are not being met, who are not being appreciated enough, who are not being paid adequately, or who are not being cared about sufficiently, and He says to them, "Excuse me. You are not here to have your rights met. You ARE here to be my servants making sure your responsibilities are fulfilled. And, your responsibilities will be fulfilled when you get in that boat and stay in that boat, and woe be to you, if you don't fulfill the ministry I have given you." When we realize that along with a divine burden comes a divine warning, we begin to find motivated Christians!

A Divine Burden & a Divine Warning provide proper motivation!

Along with these two, there was a third factor in Paul's motivation. It was understanding that there was:

Divine Accountability verse 17

Paul states that whether he wanted to preach or didn't want to preach the Gospel, he was still accountable.

Although not explicitly recorded, there must have been times when Paul wondered about preaching the gospel again. Perhaps after being almost stoned to death at Lystra or when he sat down to write his first letter to the Corinthians who were divided in their loyalties. We just don't know. But Paul holds open the option that such a time could occur. And should such a time occur, Paul would fulfill his responsibilities. Why? He tells us it was something called *stewardship*.

Another way of saying it is *duty*. Paul's duty was to be accountable to Jesus for presenting the gospel whether his circumstances were favorable or not. This was the irreducible minimum that motivated his service.

In other words, you and I should serve Christ willingly. We should act as the salt and light we are because of our love for Him. We should live for Christ out of a heart of gratitude for all He has done for us. Yet propelling all of those more compelling motives along is simply this one underlying motive: it is our duty. We are accountable to Christ.

David Carling, a medical missionary at Lake Chad, Africa¹ is a modern day example of duty. In the dry season, the weather is unbearable — 100° day & night. His ministry is to Muslims and to victims of leprosy. He received no support from the locals. His wife had experienced three miscarriages.

A special boat was made in England for the purpose of traversing the lake to reach the villages on the other shore. The construction took longer than expected and when the boat arrived, he received no help from the natives in launching it. A young man who came from England to assist was killed soon after arriving. David was in a difficult situation.

A church in the United States heard about David and brought him and his wife over for a rest. He visited a mission group to answer their questions about his ministry at Lake Chad.

They asked, "What are the people like?"

His response was, "They smell."

They said, "They must love you."

"There is no indication of that," Carling replied.

They asked, "How have they responded to the gospel?"

He said, "None so far"

They said, "Tell us about your home."

"It's impossible to keep cool," David stated.

They asked, "What about your children?"

He told them, "My wife has had three miscarriages."

Then it happened. One lady, cried out in exasperation, "Why do you stay?" David Carling thought to himself that he had never heard such a stupid question in all his life. But in meekness, he responded, "Madam, the reason we stay is duty! God told us to go there. God told us to stay there. Go we did. Stay we will, until God moves us out. And I'll tell you something else, the only kind of people who will go to Muslims, who will work with leprosy patients, and will live in conditions such as we live, are people who have lost all sense of romance and sentimentalism and understand responsibility and duty."

Do you know what the church of Jesus Christ needs today? People who will stop all this nonsense of having their rights met. People who will say, "I come under the Law of Christ. And I understand that by coming under the Law of Christ means that necessity is laid upon me and woe is me if I don't fulfill my responsibility, for I have an overwhelming sense of duty."

Beautiful thing about people who begin to serve on this basis is that they become remarkably reliable, durable, and versatile. Good ol' tough, rugged believers who serve the living and true God. They are the stuff ministry is made of.

When we are willing to get in the boat, stay in the boat — when we obey Jesus — just as it happened to the disciples, in spite of storms that threaten our very existence, Christ will bring us safely to the completion of our task. The same One Who is Master of the seas is the Lord of the Church.

And as we come under the law of Christ — having a high sense of responsibility, we look to that day when we go to be with Christ. And when we go to be with Him, we can look forward to those words the servant longs to hear from his master, *Well done good and faithful servant*. (Matthew 25:21)

¹ Lake Chad, West Africa, on the edge of the world's largest, desert - the Sahara - borders four countries in West Africa: Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon.