

Responsibility - Paul

a study for the College and Career Class at Gulf Coast Baptist Church

by Steve Thomas 10/24//21

Introduction

Paul, the apostle by the desirous will of God, called by God, and singled out by God to be the steward of the revelation of the Grace of God, understood and felt very strongly this weight of responsibility. Paul describes himself as “debtor” meaning that he felt something was owed to this calling. He longed to be with Christ, but understood the profit to others that would be given if he continued to suffer in his mortal body. While on this earth Paul would not seek to be controlled by his flesh, but have a mind reconciled to God that would live in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit. Paul was terrified that he would be castaway as unfit for service, and remained useful to God.

I am debtor

In Romans 1, Paul describes a desire to go to Rome. If anyone would like to see what this journey entailed, a reading of the last several chapters of Acts describes this two to three year journey as a captive will detail the experience. I believe that it needn't have been so perilous and filled with conflict, but Paul did not heed the advice of Spirit filled individuals at Ephesus and was compelled to (Acts 21:10-18) go to Jerusalem. But in Romans he describes himself as debtor to Greeks and Barbarians. This is Paul's way of saying he is not going to be limited to a particular circuit. He is not limited to the noble, wealthy, or a certain ethnicity. He is called to be an Apostle to all Gentiles. He also spends time in a synagogue in each city, giving the truth to Jews. Acts 22:21 and 26:17-18 gives Paul's account of this charge from Christ himself.

Paul sees his charge as a debt to be owed. This is not a sin-bearing debt, but a service debt. Paul was called for a purpose and sought to fulfill that purpose with his life's energy.

For me to live is Christ

Phil 1:20-26 gives Paul's mindset on his reason for existing on the earth. Christ was to be magnified in his body, whether by Paul's life or by Paul's death. He was not living for himself. He was living for others, and more distinctly for Other. Paul sought God's desirous will at every turn. The Philippians, and others that lived in Churches that Paul started, needed Paul at this time, to unfold the revelation of Grace that he had been given by Christ. The visits and letters from Paul gave them guidance as the fledgling Church took root and grew. Paul's desire was to depart and be with his savior, but he felt the responsibility laid on him to be a resource to the people of God.

Whether this meant an in person visit or more correspondence, Paul was not sure of. But he was convinced of his usefulness to the people of God. One of the key uses Paul provided the people of God was a warning of false prophets who would do damage to the Church in his absence (Acts 20:29-31).

The love of Christ constraineth us

In second Corinthians chapter 5 Paul is motivated by the Bema seat (9-10), the terror of the Lord (11), and the love of Christ (14). This is a great chapter for the believer to understand and use as motivation for a life well-lived. Paul's charge to the Corinthian church was to be reconciled to God (20-21), not to live in the flesh. The church there was content to practice religious works of the flesh, missing out on the life

God had intended for them. Paul asked that they adjust this mindset. The whole chapter is filled with “we” and “us”. Paul obviously wanted them to share his mindset for service.

I made myself... lest I should be a castaway

First Corinthians 9 gives us more insight into Paul’s motivation. In verse 16 he reveals that necessity is laid on him, for “woe is him” if he does not preach the gospel. In verses 19-23 he shows methods of service in order to be a partaker of the gospel with the believers there. The good news for present tense salvation is something to be experienced and lived, not just to be framed and put on a wall.

Paul reveals that the Christian life is something to be pursued, it is not a lazy river where we take whatever comes. The believer that is not intentional about his Christian life is threatened with disqualification from service (10:27).

Conclusion

Paul is motivated by his calling, feeling very heavily the weight of responsibility. He is balancing the desirous will of Christ and the practical needs of those to whom he serves. What is missing here is selfish service and a fleshly attitude.