

The Reciprocal Effects of Grace Giving; Paul Founded the Corinthian Church but Refrains from Taking a Salary: The Law of Supreme Sacrifice Is Required When Others Lack Grace Orientation, 2 Cor 9:7-12

1 Corinthians 9:11 - If we sowed spiritual blessings among you, is it too much to reap material things from you?

Paul reminds the Corinthians of his ministry to them by means of a protasis of a first class condition: (1) The conditional particle **εἰ, ei**: "If," plus (2) the culminative aorist tense in the indicative mood of the first person plural verb **σπείρω, speirō**: "we have sown," plus (3) the dative plural of the pronoun **σὺ, su**: "to you for your advantage," plus (4) the neuter plural of the noun **πνευματικός, pneumatikos**: "spiritual things."

The first class condition indicates it is a fact that Paul has communicated – or sown – doctrine to them. The culminative aorist contemplates the action of the verb in its entirety, thus gathering up all of Paul's teachings into one entity. The dative plural of the pronoun "you" indicates this teaching was to the advantage of the Corinthian believers.

This is followed by the apodosis which is made up of one word, the singular neuter pronoun: **μέγας, megas**: "a great thing." This is emphasized by the absence of the verb to be: **εἰμί, eimi**: "is it a great thing."

This is followed by the second use of the conditional particle *ei*, "if," which introduces a second protasis in the first class condition, followed by: (1) the nominative plural pronoun **ἐγώ, egō**: "we," plus (2) the first person plural future active indicative of the verb **θερίζω, therizō**: "reap," plus (3) the genitive plural pronoun *su*: "your," plus (4) the accusative plural neuter of the noun **σαρκικός, sarkikos**: "material wealth."

The expanded translation of the verse reads this way:

1 Corinthians 9:11 - If, and it's true, we have communicated to you for your advantage spiritual wealth, is it a great thing if, and we assume it is, we receive compensation from your material wealth?

The principle is the same as we find in the marriage of right man~right woman. When there is soul rapport between the two, each benefits from the other. The man provides in grace, the woman responds in grace. Each gives to the other and each receives from the other.

Likewise, there is a marriage between the pastor and his flock. He gives the sheep spiritual things in grace; the sheep respond by giving to him material things in grace. There is giving and receiving being transmitted by both parties. The principle behind the process is grace orientation.

1 Corinthians 9:12 - If others receive this right, are we not more deserving? But we have not made use of this right. Instead we endure everything so that we may not be a hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

What Paul has done is establish the principle that pastors and evangelists have the right to remuneration from the congregation. Therefore, the church at Corinth is obligated to remunerate Paul and Barnabas.

Having established the principle that, as the founder of the Corinthian church, he has an even greater claim on the right of remuneration than other communicators, Paul opts for the Law of Supreme Sacrifice.

Paul explains that he and Barnabas have chosen not to take advantage of the right to take a salary while in Corinth. This clarification is made by the negative particle **οὐκ, ouk**: “not” plus the culminative aorist middle indicative of the verb **χάρω, charō**: “we have not used this right.”

The aorist tense is culminative denoting the attainment of the end of an effort or process. This indicates that Paul and Barnabas choose not to take advantage of this right only while in Corinth where they perceive to do so would be a distraction from their message of grace.

Paul and Barnabas have received remuneration and will do so in the future from the churches they visit but not from the one in Corinth.

The middle voice indicates Paul and Barnabas were benefited by their refusal to take a salary since their major emphasis in Corinth is grace modus operandi.

Apparently there were unbelievers in Corinth who viewed Paul and other apostles and teachers as con men who were pushing a strange new religion for personal profit. Paul made the decision to work for his own logistics in order to remove all barriers to his and Barnabas’s communication of the gospel. The indicative mood indicates this is a statement of fact.

The final phrase is introduced by the alternative conjunction **ἀλλά, alla**: “but,” indicating the volitional decision to choose the alternative of taking a salary which is to work for their own support. This effort is referred to by the present active indicative of the verb **στέγω, stegō**. This is translated “suffer all things” (KJV), “put up with anything” (NIV), “Endure all things” (NASB), and “endure everything” (NET). A better translation is “But we refrain from all this.” Here’s why:

στέγω. A. Linguistic Aspects. Etymologically the verb belongs to the Indo-European stem *teg* “to cover,” “to conceal.” From this basic sense come the Sanskrit *sthaḡati* “covered,” “hidden,” Greek *στεγανός*, “covering,” “sheltering,” “covered,” “hidden,” ... words which in their wide range of meaning are all embraced by the Greek *στέγω*: “I cover,” “conceal,” “protect,” “hold back,” “hide,” “bear,” “endure,” “persist.”

The basis of this broad range is probably that *στέγω* was from the very first a durative verb probably found at first only in the present stem. In this case the basic meaning would be “to keep covered.” The covering is for protection. Thus *στέγω* takes on the sense “to protect.” (p. 585)

The tendency of Greek towards linguistic ambivalence helps us to see why $\sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omega$ can have an outward as well as an inward reference and mean not only “to protect” but also “to ward off,” “to hold back.” The sense “to ward off” seems to be the starting point for the further meanings “to endure,” “to bear.” Thus it means to “to cover, conceal” an intellectual matter (Euripides *Phoenissae*), “to hide” (Sophocles *Trachiniae*), “to keep secret” (Thucydides), “to withhold” a judgment (Polybius) and then especially “to keep silent.” (pp. 585–86)

B. The Use in Paul. In the New Testament $\sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omega$ occurs only in Paul at 1 Thessalonians 3:1, 5 and 1 Corinthians 9:12, 13:7. In 1 Corinthians 9, which deals with the rights and manner of life of the apostle, verse 12 is parenthetical. In verses 1–11 Paul emphasizes that he has the same right as other apostles to eat and drink, to take a wife with him, and to live by his missionary labors.

This should not be translated: “We bear or suffer all things,” for in the preceding and following verses the reference is not to the sufferings but to the rights and freedom of the apostle. Hence the meaning is: “But we refrain from all this (i.e., from all that pertains to the legitimate private sphere of an apostle) in order that we may not give an offence to the Gospel which belongs to Christ.”¹ (p. 586)

The present active indicative of $\sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omega$ means Paul kept on refraining from legitimate functions allowed an apostle while in Corinth: logistics, a wife, and a salary from the church. This decision to refrain may be interpreted as a form of suffering in the sense that each of them have to do with normal functions of life.

We know from other passages that Paul did take monetary remunerations from other churches, however, he never did take a wife. Some have claimed that he had a spiritual gift of celibacy but there is no such gift. The word does not appear in the Bible. Its origin is from the Latin *caelebs* which means to be unmarried or single. The English definition means the same and since the Bible forbids fornication then this means that Paul continued to refrain from sexual relationships. That is a clear example of some serious suffering for Jesus and, for Paul, it is part of the Law of Supreme Sacrifice.

The purpose of the self-imposed deprivations in Corinth is expressed next, by the conjunction $\hbar\nu\alpha$, *hina*: “that,” which introduces a negative purpose clause.

The negation is indicated by the negative particle $\mu\acute{\eta}$, *mē*: “not” followed by the plural aorist active subjective of the verb $\delta\acute{\iota}\delta\omega\mu\iota$, *didōmi*: “we give.” What is given is the direct object $\epsilon\gamma\kappa\omicron\pi\acute{\eta}$, *enkopē*: “hindrance,” the word chosen by the NASB translators.

Hindrance means to delay or interfere with progress. *Impede* implies making forward progress difficult. *Obstruct* implies the intentional placing of obstacles in the way. *Block* implies complete obstruction.²

¹ Wilhelm Kasch, “ $\sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omega$,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 7:585-86.

² *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v.: “hinder.”

Each of these words contributes to Paul's motivation to apply the Law of Supreme Sacrifice while in Corinth. Hindrance is as acceptable as any and we'll use it in this expanded translation:

1 Corinthians 9:12 - If others are exercising this right, and they are, are we not more deserving? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right for our own benefit in communicating the gospel, but we keep on refraining from all of this—under the Law of Supreme Sacrifice—in order that we not give hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

Where there is a lack of grace orientation the believer must assume a sacrificial disposition when dealing with an unbeliever or a legalistic believer. However, within the church grace orientation is an inflexible principle and when there is an absence of it the root cause is often money.

The next two verses take up the principle that Paul's decision to execute the Law of Supreme Sacrifice did not set aside the law of remuneration.

1 Corinthians 9:13 - Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar?