

## The Burden for the Gospel

1 Corinthians 9:16

As we continue our series, *A Gospel Centered Life*, I want to address the need for a proper burden concerning the Gospel. In my estimation, our text reveals one of the most convicting, compelling, and honest statements the apostle Paul ever made. In order to fully appreciate what he has said, one must understand the context in which he spoke. This statement was written to the church in Corinth. They were a particularly carnal church, dealing with many issues and divisions. While Paul was loved and admired, he was also forced to defend his ministry among some in Corinth. His authority as an apostle was questioned, along with his motivation for ministry. The preceding verses reveal that Paul had addressed accusations regarding his compensation for ministry. Some apparently thought he was only in ministry for the monetary and material benefits.

Having addressed those accusations, Paul revealed his heart regarding the ministry, and the preaching of the Gospel in particular. He was not engaged in ministry for the material benefits, or to acquire any personal gain; he faithfully proclaimed the Gospel because he was burdened to do so. For Paul, there was no other reason for living.

I am aware that Paul was an apostle of the Lord. He served as an itinerant missionary, church planter, and a local pastor on many occasions. All are not called into “full time vocational” ministry, but the aspirations of Paul should be evident in the heart of every believer. There is a genuine lack of desire regarding the Gospel in our day. The burden to share the good news is not there as it should be. I will admit that my burden is lacking at times, and needs to be rekindled. I trust this text will renew our desire and rekindle our burden for the Gospel. I want to consider the [assertions](#) of Paul as we discuss: [The Burden for the Gospel](#).

**I. A Proper Awareness** (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!](#) In order to possess a genuine burden for the Gospel, we must first develop a proper awareness concerning the Gospel. This involves:

**A. Our Position** – Paul was not ashamed of his calling; he was a preacher of the Gospel, boldly proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. He was well aware of the grace he had received in salvation. Through his encounter with the Lord, Paul had been placed within the body of Christ. His standing in the world had immediately and eternally changed. He was no longer his own. He no longer had the right to live as he pleased, pursuing his own desires. He was now in Christ, and Paul had a desire to please the Lord, fully surrendered to His will for his life.

- One will never develop a genuine burden for the Gospel without recognition and appreciation for their position in Christ. Like Paul, we too have been delivered from the bondage of sin. Christ came to us, while we were yet in sin, revealing His great love for us, and offering salvation by grace through faith. At the moment we received Christ, our standing was immediately and eternally changed. We were transformed from a life of sin and despair into a life of hope and reconciliation. Our sin was forgiven and we were saved by His marvelous grace. We are now positioned in Christ, no longer our own. Such standing in the Lord should motivate us to share the Gospel with others. Like Paul we need to have a desire to please the Lord, fully surrendering to His will for our lives!

**B. Our Perception** (16) – *For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of.* Paul realized that although he was blessed to have an opportunity to preach the Gospel, he was nothing apart from Christ. Within himself, he had nothing to boast. He had enjoyed great success as far as ministry was concerned. The Lord had used him mightily to reach the unsaved. Churches were planted and thriving for the Lord. Young men had surrendered to preach, being mentored and trained by Paul. All of this was wonderful, but Paul knew he had not accomplished any of it. He was simply a vessel used of the Lord to advance the Kingdom. Paul had a burden to share the Gospel because he was aware of the grace he had received. If Christ was willing to offer salvation to one who had no desire for the church or the ways of God, He was willing to save anyone. Grace compelled Paul to proclaim the Gospel.

- We need that type of perception today. Apart from Christ we have nothing to boast of. He alone provided for our salvation, willingly giving His life as the atonement for sin. He tasted death in our place, suffering the wrath of God so we wouldn't have to. Christ alone is our reason for boasting. We have received much from Him and are expected to share what we have received. It has been said that sharing the Gospel is nothing more than one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. I have received much in Christ, and I feel the need to share what I have received with those who have yet to be saved. He is the object of my affection, and I please Him when I share the good news of the Gospel with others!

**II. A Persistent Appeal** (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!* Here Paul spoke of the persistent burden he felt to proclaim the Gospel. Consider:

**A. It was Continual** – Paul spoke of the necessity he felt to share the Gospel. This was not something he could get away from or ignore. He was literally constrained to share the good news with others. Every day, in any circumstance or environment, Paul felt the need to share the

Gospel. This burden consumed his life. He was continually aware of the need to proclaim the Gospel, and always mindful of those who had yet to receive salvation.

- I will have to admit that I lack that type of burden. There are times when I am aware of the need to proclaim the Gospel. The Lord presents opportunities for me to share with individuals on occasion, but do I feel the necessity to proclaim the good news as Paul did? Does this desire consume my being? Many of us would have to admit that we don't sense the continual need to share our faith with others. This is certainly not the Lord's fault. We are commanded to share the Gospel and make disciples. I pray we will seek the Lord to create a genuine desire in us to be faithful unto Him, being continually aware of the great need to share the Gospel.

**B. It was Undeniable** (16) – Paul declared that necessity was laid upon him. This has the idea of “*being pressed upon*.” Even if he wanted to ignore the Gospel, the burden to share was always there, laying heavy upon him. He could not escape the burning desire to tell others of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. This is not to say every conversation Paul had was a Gospel conversation, but that he always felt the need to reach others.

- Do you and I have such a burden today? Do we feel genuinely pressed upon to share the Gospel? I am certain the Lord deals with us at times, but we often ignore or suppress the prompting of the Spirit. The world stands in desperate need of the Gospel. Their only hope is for the saved by grace to boldly and compassionately proclaim the good news. We need to seek the Lord to create a burden within our hearts to reach others. Wouldn't it be great if Fellowship was made up of believers who genuinely felt pressed upon continually to share the Gospel? [Jer.20:9 – Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.](#)

**C. It was Personal** (16) – [for necessity is laid upon me](#). Paul admitted that he felt the burden to share the Gospel. It was personal for him. This burden had been given to him. No doubt he encouraged and sought to equip others to share their faith, but that didn't release him from the burden he felt. He was not content to sit idly by while others shared their faith. Paul refused to remain silent. He actively shared his faith with all who would listen.

- I will admit that this convicted me as I pondered these words. As your pastor I am charged with encouraging and equipping you to share your faith with others, but that doesn't excuse me from actively sharing my faith. I fear that much too often we assume someone else will take the lead and reach that individual. We can rejoice when others do, but we too must be willing to embrace our responsibility and share our faith. The Lord has brought people into our lives that we

will have the ability to reach. We cannot expect others to reach those whom the Lord has provided the ability for us to reach with the Gospel.

**III. A Profound Ambition** (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!** Finally Paul spoke of the consuming ambition he had regarding the Gospel. Consider:

**A. The Burden** – Paul declared that he was burdened to share the Gospel. His life was not fulfilled unless he faithfully proclaimed the grace of our Lord. His life was consumed with serving the Lord and sharing the Gospel with others. He had not sought this burden, but it came with the salvation he received. Paul was not happy apart from telling others of the grace of Christ.

- Do we genuinely share that burden? Is our life consumed with serving the Lord and reaching others? These are convicting questions, but they must be answered. The Lord has saved us by His grace and called us to proclaim the Gospel to the perishing. Do we feel the need to reach others before it is eternally too late?

**B. The Liberation** – Paul revealed the source of release for him. He carried such a burden for the Gospel, and there was only one thing he could do to satisfy that great need – preach the Gospel. This brought joy and fulfillment to Paul. The only way to endure the continual, undeniable burden he felt was to share the Gospel.

- If we are to live Gospel centered lives, we too must be willing to tell others the good news. As believers we are commanded to proclaim the saving grace of Christ our Lord. We often live defeated lives spiritually. This is likely due to the fact that we are not actively and vocally living out our faith. Do you desire joy in serving the Lord? Do you want to experience victory in your Christian life? If so, a good place to start would be by actively living out your faith and telling others the good news!

**Conclusion:** Clearly this has been a convicting passage. Who among us can honestly say that they are as faithful in their witness as they should be? You might argue that you don't know how to share the Gospel. It isn't difficult to do. Jesus died for our sin, was buried and rose again. Through Him there is forgiveness and eternal life. Share what the Lord has done for you and how He changed your life. If you can do that, you can share the Gospel. Why not come and seek wisdom and courage to be a faithful witness. If you are unsaved, respond to the Gospel today. Come to Christ in repentance and faith for salvation!