

## **INTRODUCTION – 1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER NINE**

This chapter is apportioned with three (3) sections in the bible that reveal Paul's messages to the Corinthians for our study, understanding, obedience, blessings and edification.

1. A Pattern of Self – Denial: **1 Corinthians 9:1 – 18**
2. Serving All Men: **1 Corinthians 9:19 – 23**
3. Striving for a Crown: **1 Corinthians 9:24 – 27**

Clearly it portrays Paul as the spiritual father to the Church of Corinth with interest and passion to the faith of the Corinthian Believers, Christian teachings and doctrines, spiritual growth and maturity.

The first section emphasized on Paul's strong defense against those who examined his ministry works in the Church of Corinth. He elaborated on his call and ministry as divine and not earthly which had produced the Church of Corinth with many Believing Christians. Besides, he confronted his critics by revealing the right and authority he and his ministry partners had with regard to making demands for provisions from the Church. Though he had a right to marry, he practiced celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of God and the Church to fulfill his apostolic ministry in God's will.

But he never acted on it because he worked with his own hands to provide for himself and ministry the basic necessities of life. Again, Paul revealed that they had a right to marry and enjoy life just like brethren in the Church but refused to take advantage of them though in God's will. His interests was in their spiritual prosperity beyond physical prosperity hence receiving material benefits from them was something small in his eyes. In summary, his major reason for this position was not to hinder the gospel of Jesus Christ. Hence he endured all things for edification purpose (**1 Corinthians 9:12b**).

The second section emphasized on humility to serve all people for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ after silencing his critics. He revealed and counseled the Church of Corinth to use human strategies with divine connotations to win souls for Christ. Strategies of preaching Jews, Gentiles, practitioners of the Law and without the Law, and all manner of people have also been explained extensively as taught by Paul. Note that these strategies are useful in evangelistic and disciple making drives to guide the Church in winning and maintaining souls for Christ in the perfect will of God.

The third section emphasized on striving for the imperishable crown after showing various ways of evangelizing, preaching, teaching, counseling and instructing all manner of people in accordance with the Great Commission. He revealed that though the promise of receiving the imperishable crown is given to the Church, every Minister, Church worker, Church leader, Christian leader and Believing Christian must live

disciplined lives and make their bodies subject to Christ and the Holy Spirit in the perfect will of God. Hence he counseled that it is God's perfect will for both the Preacher and the Church receive the gift of eternal life and imperishable crowns in eternity with our Lord Jesus Christ.

To enable readers and the Churches and Body of Christ as a whole understand the ninth chapter of Paul's epistle, I have done my best with the grace of God upon my life and ministry to explain verse by verse or combination of verses in bringing out the quality of Paul's messages to the Corinthians.

Like a weaned child just weaned from milk and drawn from the breasts, the word of God is taught precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little **(Isaiah 28:9 & 10)**. Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes, He shall guide us unto all truths **(John 16:13)**.

Connect to other writings of the Church and bible commentaries as the Holy Spirit enlightens your understanding because grace and truth emanated from our Lord Jesus Christ **(John 1:17)**. For this study, additional biblical information from the New King James Bible Commentary added fresh revelations to enhance understanding.

Study and know its relevance to your life first as a Christian before you apply it to other Believing Christians, Church workers, Church leaders, Ministers and Christian leaders. I trust God that you will be equipped with His knowledge and continuous belief in Christ's salvation work on the cross as tied to obedience, knowledge, spiritual wisdom, humility, spiritual growth and maturity. You are not alone because the Holy Spirit is Your Helper.

The focus here is your obedience to gain insight and understanding of Paul's messages unto spiritual growth and maturity of the Church. It is my prayer and hope that you shall be an instrument in the Lord's service to bring sound Christian teachings and practices to your local Church and Body of Christ. In Jesus' name. Amen. Hallelujah!

## **DEFEND YOUR CALL AND MINISTRY IN CHRIST**

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### **INSPIRATION**

**1 Corinthians 9:1 & 2 – 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? 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.**

Apostle Paul had to defend his calling and ministry to have favour and influence in the Church over his strong and righteous positions by the Holy Spirit. It shows that some of the Christians found it difficult to accept his position of Church matters or did not see eye to eye with him and even doubted him.

**This is what the New King James Bible Commentary says: 1 Corinthians 9:1 – Am I not an Apostle – Paul substantiated his apostleship with two arguments. First he had seen the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:21 & 22). Second the Church of Corinth was his work in the Lord; a seal of his apostleship.**

### **A// AM I NOT AN APOSTLE? AM I NOT FREE? HAVE I NOT SEEN JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD?**

**1 Corinthians 9:1 – Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?**

For every challenge, the confident and the bold person has a response and defense. The above questions indicate Paul's call and ministry by the will of God as indicated in his salutation message (1 Corinthians 1:1). It is a reminder of the Damascus incident where Jesus intervened in his religious mission against Believers and the Church. He had heavenly authority and freedom to speak and write to promote and establish God's will in the Church as a changed and transformed person in the Christian faith and as a Minister.

Indeed, Paul had proven himself to be an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ as a free person and not under the bondage of the Law as well as being declared righteous and considered worthy in ministry. Hence he was free to have delivered his letters and messages to them without Jewish religious authority and supervision or Roman authority and supervision or any other authority.

Again Paul's message to the Corinthians Believers was that the Lord Jesus Christ found him worthy and necessary to reveal Himself unto him as His Apostle. With this message, he justified his call and ministry first to the Lord Jesus Christ and also as a spiritual father to the Church of Corinth with love and deep interests in their affairs; spiritual growth and maturity (1 Corinthians 4:15).

**BE BOLD AND CONFIDENT TO DECLARE YOUR CALL, MINISTRY AND REVELATIONS TO THE CHURCH AND ALL YOUR HEARERS AND EVEN CRITICS**

**TO ESTABLISH GOD'S WORD IN CHRIST BY THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THEIR LIVES, MINISTRIES AND THE CHURCH. FOR GOD IS WITH YOU. THE ANOINTING MAKES THE DIFFERENCE.**

Furthermore Paul defended his apostolic ministry by going deep in his relationship with Christ. He told them that he had even seen the Lord Jesus Christ. Whether physical eyes or spiritual eyes, it was not an ordinary encounter but purposed driven to make him fulfill his apostolic ministry.

We read

**Acts 9:15 – But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.**

This scripture was a charge to the Minister Ananias in the city of Damascus from the Lord Jesus Christ. The news of Paul in Damascus sent fear into the lives of the Believers and the Church because of authority from the Jewish religious leaders to arrests the disciples of Jesus Christ. Hence Ananias was not enthused at all about the command and assignment to go and pray and restore the sight of Saul who had been blinded by the light of Christ on the Damascus road. Yet he obeyed the Lord.

It affirmed Paul's questions to the Church of Corinth that he was chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ to bear testimony of Him especially to the Gentiles.

**IF GOD CALLS YOU, HE MAKES HIS NAME AND WORD ALIVE AND KNOWN TO HIS PEOPLE. IF THE LORD CALLS YOU INTO MINISTRY, DON'T ALLOW CRITICS OR CRITICS MESSAGES TO SILENCE YOU. SPEAK UP AND DEFEND YOUR CALL AND MINISTRY BECAUSE PEOPLE AND CHURCHES ETERNAL DESTINIES ARE CONNECTED TO THE FULFILLMENT OF YOUR MINISTRY LIKE PAUL.**

**B// ARE YOU NOT MY WORK IN THE LORD?**

**1 Corinthians 9:2a – Are you not my work in the Lord?**

The ministry of an anointed man or woman of God cannot be hidden. It is open, evident and results oriented because of the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore Apostle Paul could confidently arouse their conscience that they were Christians as a result of his ministry. They heard the gospel of Jesus Christ from him and they responded positively in obedience. No denial was necessary because they were his fruits in ministry. Truly, the bible states that Paul first went to Corinth after ministry work at Athens (**Acts 18:1**).

**EVERY UNIQUE MINISTRY HAS A BEGINNING POINT AND REFERENCE WITH SOUL WINNING AND CHURCHES. SUCH WAS THE MINISTRY OF PAUL AND FORMATION OF THE CHURCH OF CORINTH.**

Having entered and taught in the Corinth synagogue, the eternal testimony was that the ruler of the synagogue and his household believed the gospel of Jesus Christ. Besides, many of the Corinthians believed also and were baptized **(Acts 18:8)**.

It is also stated in the scriptures that Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and six months and taught the word of God. This prolonged stay in Corinth was because the Lord commanded him not to leave because He had many souls there to be won for Him **(Acts 18:9 – 11)**.

**PAUL'S APOSTOLIC WORK IN CORINTH WAS NOT BY CHANCE OR TRICKERY BUT SINCERE IN THE PERFECT WILL OF GOD TO WIN MANY SOULS FOR THE LORD. HENCE HE WAS RIGHT TO HAVE QUESTIONED THEM ABOUT BEING THE FRUITS OF HIS MINISTRY.**

Indeed if Apostle Paul perceived himself to be the spiritual father of the Church of Corinth and not the kind of instructor of the Law, then the Corinthians Believers were truly the fruits of his ministry.

It was also a reminder to them of his message against sectarianism. We read

**1 Corinthians 3:6 – I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.**

In the message of Paul, it is not he who plants and he who waters because the wisdom of God makes one obedient person begin and another obedient person continue. Yet God gives the increase. Such was the work of God in Christ by the Holy Spirit in Corinth. Paul began the Church as a planter and then Apollos played a key role as a waterer in teaching and feeding and managing the Church for spiritual growth unto maturity.

**THE APOSTLE DOES THE HARD WORK OF PLANTING IN DIFFICULT GROUNDS AND SITUATIONS TO WIN SOULS FOR JESUS CHRIST. FOR APOSTLE PAUL, HE WAS EVEN JOYFUL THAT APOSTLE APOLLOS WATERED THE CHURCH WITH SOUND DOCTRINES BASED ON THE TEACHINGS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. THIS IS THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE THAT WINS AND ESTABLISHES SOULS FOR THE LORD.**

We read

**1 Corinthians 4:15 – though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.**

Earlier Paul written to the Church in Corinth showing them his relationship with them as a father beyond an instructor. Confidently, he told them that they were the fruits of his apostleship because he had begotten them in Christ. They were how children in the Lord with so much love, care and concern about their physical and spiritual wellbeing.

**TO FATHER A CHURCH IS TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL STATE AND PROGRESS. THIS IS EASIER IN CHRIST IF YOUR MINISTRY BIRTHED THEM INTO THE CHURCH.**

When your ministry hits hard against all forms of sin and evil in the Church, there can be confrontations from all fronts; the members. You can even be questioned about your right of intervention in Church matters.

**WHO ARE YOU? WHERE WERE YOU WHEN I BECAME A CHRISTIAN? ARE YOU THE ONE WHO BAPTIZED, CONFIRMED OR ANOINTED ME?**

The response of Apostle Paul provides wisdom and spiritual direction in such confrontations. It invoked the consciences of the Corinthians Believers to truth and revelation to change their mindset about him. Likewise we must put up a positive attitude through leading questions that would convict people who have a negative mindset about us.

**C// 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.**

**1 Corinthians 9:2b – 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.**

Not everybody in the Church is a fruit of your ministry but some of them must be linked to your ministry. Jesus commands us to make disciples of all nations and your call and ministry should confirm it. Yes your ministry should shine forth to change and save people if you embrace the work of the Holy Spirit as a partner in God's salvation plan and righteousness in Christ.

Paul described the Corinthians as the seal of his apostleship in the Lord. Their conversion is the most compelling evidence of the validity of his role as Christ's apostle. Their place in God's family. Their growth in the Holy Spirit prove that Paul is a genuine apostle.

As Apostle Paul revealed, even nothing can erase it because of the irreversible and replaceable evidence and fruits of the ministry borne through prayers, fastings, evangelism, preaching, teachings, counsels with seal in the Holy Spirit. Indeed if Apostle Paul perceived himself to be the spiritual father of the Church of Corinth and not the kind of instructor of the Law, then the Corinthians Believers were the fruits of his ministry.

**YOUR FRUITS WILL SPEAK FOR YOU IN TIMES OF CONFRONTATIONS TO PROVE YOUR CALL AND MINISTRY. IT IS LIKE THE ROD OF AARON THAT PRODUCED FRUITS IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD (NUMBERS 17:7 & 8).**

Even Jesus, the Son of God, was questioned and challenged in His Messianic ministry. In His reply, He told the people not to believe in Him if He did not do the works of the Father. But if He did them, they were to believe His works though they struggled to believe Him **(John 10:37 & 38)**.

**IF YOU CAN BELIEVE IN THE WORKS OF A MINISTER OR CHRISTIAN LEADER, YOU WILL BE SAVED, ESTABLISHED, PERFECTED AND BLESSED BY IT.**

### **PRAYER**

Thank you O God for the knowledge that prayer and the word of God establishes us in the Christian faith.

Therefore we pray that we shall experience open heavens and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to revive Ministers and Christian leaders whose ministries are being questioned and challenged.

Give us the confidence and the boldness to defend our call and ministries by revealing its unique nature as well as contributions that had borne fruit from our labour.

And we know that You are a faithful God who does not disappoint us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**EVERY MINISTER OF GOD AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST MUST HAVE MINISTRY WORKS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO REMIND THE CHURCH WHENEVER THERE IS DOUBT ABOUT MINISTRY AND DIRECTION. FOR YOU CANNOT SPEAK BEYOND YOUR MINISTRY WORKS AND CONTRIBUTIONS. NANA KWAKU DUODU**

**THE SAME GOD WHO CALLS AND ANOINTS US IN CHRIST FOR SERVICE ALSO PROVIDE, PROTECT AND PRESERVE US. LEARN TO TRUST HIM FOR DELIVERANCE WHEN ENEMIES RISE UP AGAINST YOU. NANA KWAKU DUODU**

## **DEFEND CALLING AND MINISTRY IN CHRIST; KNOW YOUR RIGHTS BUT NOT ABUSE THEM**

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### **INSPIRATION**

The right of defense has existed in all civilized societies since of old. In the Jewish culture, it was a usual practice to hear both parties deliberate on the matter at stake before judgment is made. Truly, the bible says that the first person to speak over a matter seems right until his neighbour is also given the same opportunity; examines him (**Proverbs 18:17**). Let's study further.

**1 Corinthians 9:3 – 7 My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we have no right to eat and drink? Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? Whoever 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?**

The preacher man, Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ, was examined by the Church for his holy life, righteous and strong messages to either find fault with him or know the source of his authority, knowledge and wisdom. Instead of using his spiritual and fatherly authority to look arrogant before them, he chose to remind them of his life of self – denial in Christ and His gospel of salvation by the Holy Spirit.

**IT IS NOT NEW FOR A MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL TO BE CHALLENGED OR ACCUSED OF HIS OR HER MINISTRY WHEN WORKS, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND ACHIEVEMENTS ARE VISIBLE AND TANGIBLE IN CHRIST AND GOD'S WILL.**

### **DEFENSE QUESTIONS**

#### **A// DO WE HAVE NO RIGHT TO EAT AND DRINK?**

Every Minister of Christ must be confident in his call and ministry and be bold to defend it as and when necessary. It is the process to deal with critical issues and maintain law and order, unity of faith and purpose in the Church. It is one of the leading areas of the Holy Spirit which makes you not subject to the whims and caprices of people. We read

**1 Corinthians 9:3a & 4 – My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we have no right to eat and drink?**

The first defense question from Paul to Critics in the Church of Corinth was whether they did not deserve to eat and drink like them. Though he had this right as an Apostle, however, he denied himself because he considered them as burdens and stumbling blocks to his ministry.

In other words, Paul referred to receiving blessings of food and drinks from the Church as their spiritual father. They had a right to eat as apostles as the Lord's blessings. But not in the likes of the so called Believers with strong faith to eat food sacrificed to idols, and eating at idol temples **(1 Corinthians 8:4 – 6 & 10)**. Truly those who ate food in the consciousness of an idol sin against the brethren and Christ **(1 Corinthians 8:12)**. For these areas did not edify the Church but divided them.

### **BE CONSIDERATE, HUMBLE AND CONTROL YOUR RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS TO MEET THE CAPABILITIES OF THE CHURCH AND THE POOR.**

According to Adam Clarke's commentary, the use of right or authority by Paul to eat from their ministry is not from self and his office of apostleship but from the Lord who gave the ministry office to him and other apostles.

It means to say that they had a right to eat and drink as blessings from the Church and could not be criticized as if they had done something wrong.

According to Adam Clarke's commentary, though Paul laboured in the Lord he desired only food and drinks for a living and not to make a fortune through accumulated wealth.

Earlier Paul had stated that all things were lawful but not beneficial, helpful and edifying **(1 Corinthians 6:12 & 13)**. On this truth and revelation, Ministers of the Church should be careful not to abuse their ministry offices and authority to forcibly take money from their members eat and drink. For the time of defense before the Church in this area is inevitable as it was with Paul and the Church of Corinth.

It is also important to note that the Church must not deny and deprive Ministers of their daily bread as it was with the Priests and Levites who served in the Jewish temples and synagogues **(Numbers 2:3, 18:21, Malachi 3:10)**.

**PAUL PUT UP A STRONG DEFENSE OF HIS APOSTOLIC MINISTRY WITH THE QUESTION OF HAVING THE RIGHT TO EAT AND DRINK LIKE OTHER APOSTLES AND BELIEVING CHRISTIANS. THIS WAS TO EDUCATE AND SILENCE HIS CRITICS WHO MISCONSTRUED HIS APOSTOLIC MINISTRY AS ABUSE OF AUTHORITY.**

### **B// DO WE HAVE NO RIGHT TO TAKE ALONG A BELIEVING WIFE?**

Every Minister of Christ must be confident in his call and ministry and be bold to defend it as and when necessary. It is the process to deal with critical issues and maintain law and order, unity of faith and purpose in the Church. It is one of the leading areas of the Holy Spirit which makes you not subject to the whims and caprices of people. We read

**1 Corinthians 9:3a & 5 – My defense to those who examine me is this: ... Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?**

The second defense area of Paul to Critics in the Church of Corinth was whether they did not deserve to have a believing wife just like the other Apostles, the brothers of the Lord where James is known, and Cephas popularly known as Peter who became the leader of the Jerusalem Church.

To those who examined the level of integrity of his apostolic ministry, Paul made it clear that records of notable Apostles were there as having married believing spouses. Though he had the right to have a believing wife, he did not exercise this right. Why because he saw it expedient to be single and do more for the Lord, the Church and kingdom of God as an Apostle.

For Paul believed that though marriage is God ordained for procreation and beneficial also in terms of sexual purity, it was associated with responsibilities that restricted the inputs and contributions of spouses in the work of the ministry **(1 Corinthians 7:33)**.

He believed and advocated for singleness under the right circumstance of never married, a widow or widower or divorced to have time and maximize profits in the Lord's work especially as Ministers **(1 Corinthians 7:32 – 40)**.

**The New King James Bible Commentary points out Paul's defense that though he had a right to marry, he chose to remain single and achieve a lot for Christ. He did not even use his God ordained right and therefore he could not be questioned for abuse of authority in any way.**

**According to Adam Clarke's commentary, the use of right or authority by Paul is not from self and his office of apostleship but from the Lord who gave the ministry office to him and other apostles. Truly, they had a right to take believing wives just like the Apostles James, the Lord's brother, and Cephas popularly known as Peter. This was meant to quash the perception of celibacy that was associated with the apostles because of total commitment to the work of the ministry or taking advantage of younger women. Also the gospel story of Peter's mother's in-law cured of high fever is the proof of Peter as a married man.**

Besides, the use of a believing wife indicated that Paul believed in having believing wives as help mates like Eve to Adam, as God ordained, to promote the gospel of Jesus Christ and fulfill ministries. It means also that Paul did not encourage unbelieving spouses knowing the challenges associated with ministry works.

**According to Adam Clarke, having believing wives is a decisive proof against the papistical celibacy of the clergy; and as to their attempts to evade the force of this text by saying that the apostles had holy women who attended them, and ministered to them in their peregrinations. Or must have misused younger women or other people's wives in their journeys.**

Every Minister of Christ must be confident in his call and ministry and be bold to defend it as and when necessary. It is the process to deal with critical issues and maintain law and order, unity of faith and purpose in the Church. It is one of the leading areas of the Holy Spirit which makes you not subject to the whims and caprices of people.

**PAUL'S DEFENSE HERE WAS THAT EVEN MARRIAGE THAT GOD ORDAINED FOR PROCREATION WAS NOT AS IMPORTANT TO HIM AS BEING SINGLE TO MAXIMIZE MINISTRY, CHURCH AND KINGDOM PROFITS. HENCE HIS POSITION THAT BEING UNMARRIED IS THE BEST DECISION TO BE IN SERVICE TO THE LORD. HENCE HE COULD NOT BE PROVEN BY HIS CRITICS AS HAVING VIOLATED ANY MARITAL RIGHT AND ABUSED THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE.**

### **C// DO WE HAVE NO RIGHT TO REFRAIN FROM WORKING?**

Every Minister of Christ must be confident in his call and ministry and be bold to defend it as and when necessary. It is the process to deal with critical issues to maintain law and order, unity of faith and purpose in the Church. It is one of the leading areas of the Holy Spirit which makes you not subject to the whims and caprices of people. We read

**1 Corinthians 9:3a & 6 – My defense to those who examine me is this: Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?**

In Paul's third defense of his apostolic ministry, he stated clearly that though he and Barnabas had the right to receive wages, they did not use it to be burdensome on the Church. In particular as a tent maker, Paul worked with his own hands with Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth to fend for themselves **(Acts 18:1 – 3)**.

He revealed that the life of self – denial for the sake of Jesus Christ and His gospel was a conscious decision to be mission minded and achieve the heavenly mission on earth. In as much as no worldly distractions was tolerated like being involved in secular jobs all the time to make money and accumulate wealth, he and Barnabas only worked to provide for their own needs. In other words, they were not subject to the whims and caprices of people unlike the directions of the Holy Spirit in order to fulfill their ministries.

Besides, he and Barnabas could have worked like some of the Apostles but committed themselves fully to the gospel for the achievement of maximum eternal results; yes being like Jesus Christ. By this truth, he answered his critics in the Church of Corinth to build trust and unity of the brethren.

**DO NOT BE A TASK MASTER IN THE CHURCH AND PUT MATERIAL AND FINANCIAL BURDENS ON THE PEOPLE. IF YOU CAN SUPPORT YOURSELF AND FAMILY, BE GLAD TO DO IT. FOR ENEMIES LOOK FOR WEAKNESSES OF MINISTERS, CHRISTIAN LEADERS AND BELIEVING CHRISTIANS TO SABOTAGE THEIR HARD WORK, INFLUENCE AND LEADERSHIP.**

Characteristics of Paul's ministry integrity was confirmed in his farewell message to the Ephesian Elders in Miletus. Confidently and boldly, he told them that he had coveted no one's silver or gold. He mentioned also that his own hands worked to provide for the basic necessities of life for himself and those with him. What he wanted the Church leaders to now was that they were to labour and be a blessing to the poor and needy especially in their fold. In conclusion they were to obey the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: It is more blessed to give than to receive **(Acts 20:33 – 35)**.

**PAUL'S WORDS TO THE EPHESIAN ELDERS REVEALS DOING SOMETHING PROFITABLE TO PROVIDE FOR HIS OWN NEEDS AND MINISTRY PARTNERS. BY THIS RIGHTEOUS EXAMPLE, HE EMPHASIZED ON THE WORDS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST THAT IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE. HE WANTED GREATER BLESSING AND THEREFORE DECIDED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE ALWAYS FROM THE CHURCH AND SOMEHOW BE A BURDEN TO THE ALREADY POVERTY STATUS OF THE PEOPLE.**

**The New King James Bible Commentary states that though Paul and Barnabas had the right to receive wages, they did not use this right.**

### **D// WHO EVER GOES TO WAR AT HIS OWN EXPENSE?**

Every Minister of Christ must be confident in his call and ministry and be bold to defend it as and when necessary. It is the process to deal with critical issues to maintain law and order, unity of faith and purpose in the Church. It is one of the leading areas of the Holy Spirit which makes you not subject to the whims and caprices of people. We read

### **1 Corinthians 9:3a & 7a – Whoever goes to war at his own expense?**

A soldier fights for his country and people in the name of loyalty and enjoys the booty in victory, and also gets satisfied when rewarded. Likewise, a soldier of the Lord who leads the Church and fights the fight of good faith **(1 Timothy 1:18)** in prayers, preaching, teaching, establishing sound doctrine, evangelism, Church planting, training disciples, counseling, destroying the works of the devil amidst insults and persecutions all for the sake of Jesus Christ deserves rewards.

But in this context, Paul's message is that just as no soldier goes to war at his expense but is sponsored by the state, likewise the apostolic ministry is the grace of God to fulfill His eternal plans and purposes in life, ministry and the Church. Thus it is a blend of divinity and humanity where one's personal integrity plays a crucial role to enforce God's will in Christ by the Holy Spirit. Hence being corrupt and disloyal is equivalent to going to war at one's expense.

This was, however, not the case with Paul's reply because he had proven himself to be an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ with personal integrity and ministry integrity. Any form of examination would have exonerated him of alleged corruption labeled against him as the spiritual father to the Church of Corinth.

According to Adam Clarke's commentary, the common sense of man usually joins with the providence of God showing the propriety of every man living by the fruits of his labour. The first question applies particularly to the case of the apostle. Does a soldier provide his own victuals? This was used to express the military pay or wages, by the Greek writers. For the Roman soldiers were paid not only in money but in victuals. Hence corn was usually distributed among them. It is just like how John the Baptist told the soldiers to be content with their wages and not be corrupt in order to be part of water baptism and kingdom of God (Luke 3:14).

**PAUL'S MESSAGE TO THOSE EXAMINED HIM IN THE CHURCH OF CORINTH WAS COMPARATIVE WITH SOLDIERS WHO GO TO WAR AT THE EXPENSE OF THE STATE AND NOT OF SELF. IN OTHER WORDS, THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY WAS THE GRACE OF GOD COUPLED WITH PERSONAL INTEGRITY TO ENFORCE HIS ETERNAL PLANS AND PURPOSES IN CHRIST BY THE HOLY SPIRIT THROUGH MINISTERS AND THE CHURCH.**

### **E// WHO PLANTS A VINEYARD AND DOES NOT EAT OF ITS FRUIT?**

Every Minister of Christ must be confident in his call and ministry and be bold to defend it as and when necessary. It is the process to deal with critical issues to maintain law and order, unity of faith and purpose in the Church. It is one of the leading areas of the Holy Spirit which makes you not subject to the whims and caprices of people. We read

### **1 Corinthians 9:3a & 7b – Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit?**

This denotes the role of the owner of a vineyard and the expectation of fruits to be eaten and enjoyed. It involves work, planting, care and harvest. Here the best fruits are presented to the owner and he eats them and even derives wine from them as pertained in the land of the east. Jesus likens the Kingdom of God to a Vineyard with many workers and expectation of fruits and rewards (Matthew 20).

The message of Apostle Paul was that Christian ministers deserve to eat from their own Churches; tithes and offerings, and receives gifts from Church members. This is also in the likeness of the Old Covenant Priesthood and Levites who were not given an inheritance among the brethren (Eleven tribes) and were to live on the blessings of the other tribes through tithes and offerings. This was a commandment of the Lord to the Israelites. Hence Paul's message was distinctively clear that every Minister especially the Apostles like him who planted Churches need to eat of their fruits of labour.

It means to say that he would not be wrong in demanding the basic necessities of life, food, clothing and shelter from the Church of Corinth but he did not use this right. For his own hands provided for these things and that of ministry partners.

**PAUL'S MESSAGE WAS THAT THOUGH IT WAS RIGHTEOUS FOR THE CHURCH OF CORINTH TO PROVIDE FOR HIS BASIC NECESSITIES OF LIFE, HE DID NOT**

**USE THIS RIGHT TO BURDEN THEM. HENCE HE DISPROVED HIS CRITICS FOR EXAMINING HIM AS IF HE HAD ABUSED HIS APOSTOLIC OFFICE AND BEEN CORRUPT.**

### **F// WHO TENDS A FLOCK AND DOES NOT DRINK OF THE MILK OF THE FLOCK?**

Every Minister of Christ must be confident in his call and ministry and be bold to defend it as and when necessary. It is the process to deal with critical issues to maintain law and order, unity of faith and purpose in the Church. It is one of the leading areas of the Holy Spirit which makes you not subject to the whims and caprices of people. We read

#### **1 Corinthians 9:3a & 7c – Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?**

This reveals the relationship between a shepherd and a sheep like Moses and David who managed his father – in – law (**Exodus 3:1**) and father's sheep (**1 Samuel 16:19**) respectively. The reward of the shepherd was to drink free milk from the sheep he guided, fed, cared and protected from preys (**Psalms 23**).

It is easier and proper to extract and drink milk from your own sheep than somebody's sheep. Likewise, it is easier and proper to enjoy the benefits of your own people in the Church than people of different Churches. Yes I reason like Apostle Paul and say that it is easier, proper and righteous to enjoy your spouse other than somebody's spouse.

According to Apostle Paul, he had the right to claim, possess and enjoy all these privileges from the Church (**1 Corinthians 9:14**) but he chose the life of self – denial for the sake of Jesus Christ. For this cause, his preaching, teachings, counsels and rebukes were of good intentions to reshape, mold, and instruct them in righteousness for their spiritual growth and maturity.

**SELF – DENIAL IN CHRIST IS FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST AND WORKS AND FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND NOT WORKS OF THE FLESH.**

We read

**1 Peter 5:1 – 4 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being Lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.**

The position of Apostle Peter to the elders of the Church was to lead the believers righteously and in integrity. They were to provide vision and leadership just the way a

typical shepherd in ancient Israel would be ahead of the sheep and make them follow him, and never drive the sheep in front of him.

Besides, Church leaders were to serve as overseers and manage the believers with care and not under compulsion to obey God's word. In other words, the work of God is to be done joyfully and not as a duty. Not for dishonest gain where the work of God is motivated by money but by passion for the good of believers under their care. Not as lords like the masters of the world but servants over all people under their care **(Matthew 20:25 – 28)**. Christian leaders are to be good role models and believers for emulation purpose.

The promise of reward given is to be received by all shepherds of the people when the Chief Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ, returns in his glory. Only Christian leaders and Ministers who provided, protected and preserved the Believing Christians like Jesus would receive the crown of glory as explained in the New King James Bible Commentary.

The standard is set first by the early Apostles and written for our admonition as the word of God. Truly it takes the Holy Spirit to manage the Church in righteousness and integrity. We have to be careful in our response and reaction to accusations and condemnation of our ministries by enemies.

Don't use your spiritual authority to covet money and properties because you have a right to them. You have to eat from your ministry but never use force or worldly schemes to outsmart Church members. Remember you have the leadership traits of a good shepherd to lead and not to chastise. Be humble like Christ knowing well that God will reward you with the crown of glory.

**DON'T USE YOUR SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY AS A MINISTER, CHURCH LEADER AND CHRISTIAN LEADER TO EXHAUST THE FINANCES AND MATERIAL RESOURCES OF YOUR CHURCH MEMBERS. ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL OF PAUL, HE DID NOT ABUSE THIS AUTHORITY EVEN THOUGH IT WAS RIGHTEOUS FOR HIM AS THEIR SPIRITUAL FATHER TO DEPEND ON THEM FOR THE BASIC NECESSITIES OF LIFE.**

### PRAYER

**We pray O God that the Church would be mindful of the need to bless their Ministers with material and financial resources. Therefore bless the works of their hands righteously.**

**We pray O God that we will not abuse our spiritual authority to lord it over Your people. We pray that in our examinations, we would be exonerated and not found guilty.**

Help us to be like our Lord Jesus Christ and early Apostles whose righteous acts, humility and servanthood, commitment and faithfulness are commended and recommended and written to us.

May Your Holy Spirit remind us always of the promised crown of glory in order not to be misled by challenges to Church leadership.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A TIME WHEN YOUR MINISTRY WORKS IN AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH WOULD BE ACCOUNTED TO A SELECTED TEAM OF CHURCH MEMBERS OR CRITICS WHO CLAIM TO HAVE INTERESTS IN IT. HENCE LET YOUR PERSONAL INTEGRITY AND MINISTRY INTEGRITY MAKE A WAY OF ESCAPE FROM ALL ALLEGATIONS AGAINST YOU EVEN THROUGH YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO CHURCH RESOURCES AS THEIR SPIRITUAL FATHER.

**NANA KWAKU DUODU**

CHURCH MANAGEMENT MUST BE HANDLED IN THE INTEGRITY OF GOD'S WORD AND FELLOWSHIP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. PRAYERS AND INSTRUCTIONS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AS WELL AS SETTING RIGHTEOUS EXAMPLES ARE NECESSARY TO SILENCE YOUR ENEMIES AND WORK HARD TO RECEIVE THE PROMISED CROWN OF GLORY. OVERCOME EVERY CHALLENGE TO YOUR CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP BECAUSE YOU ARE THE ANOINTED OF THE LORD AND THE HOLY SPIRIT IS IN YOU. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

## **MATERIAL SUPPORT FOR CHURCH LEADERS IS INEVITABLE AND A RIGHTEOUS OBLIGATION**

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### **INSPIRATION**

There comes a time when the Christian leader who ministers to the Church reiterates the truth about the source of his or her messages and works. It awakens their conscience and make them believe and know the authority, importance, necessity and timeliness of God's word. Let's study further.

**1 Corinthians 9:8 – 12a Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? 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? 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. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more?**

### **A// THE WORDS OF A SPIRITUAL MAN; NOT A MERE MAN**

#### **1 Corinthians 9:8a – Do I say these things as a mere man?**

According to Apostle Paul, the message was not based on human principle but divinely revealed purposely to transform them and be an example to future generations of Christians. He wanted the Corinthians Believers to see and perceive him with the eye of the Spirit beyond their physical eyes. In other words, his message was spiritual and divine and purposed driven to establish them in the Christian faith; edification purpose. Hence his emphasis on the grace of God upon his life and ministry to speak and teach these things in truth and revelation.

Paul had a definition and description of who a mere man is: Earlier he stated that he could not speak to them as spiritual with deep Christian truths and revelations but as babes in Christ. For certain characteristics of persons who walked as mere men in the Church of Corinth were identified. These were carnal with envy, strife and divisions unlike knowledge and wisdom of God, unity of faith and purpose, and edification **(1 Corinthians 3:1 – 4)**.

**THE MIND OF PEOPLE CAN WAVER BETWEEN OPINIONS BUT THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S TRUTH BEING PREACHED IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR BELIEF AND PRACTICE.**

## **B// THE LAW CONFIRMS PAUL'S MESSAGE OF BLESSING MINISTERS**

**1 Corinthians 9:8b & 9 – Or does not the law say the same also? 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?**

Paul revealed further that the provisions and rewards of the Minister of Jesus Christ has connection to the Law of Moses and was the practice of the East as quoted in

**Deuteronomy 25:4 – “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.”**

Just as the ox or cow should not be denied food when treading the grain but given the opportunity to eat for strength (motivation), likewise ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ in service should be taken good care by the Church in terms of provisions and support. It means to say that one's energy is sapped when working and there is the need to replenish used energy to complete the task. Hence the mouth or nose of the ox should not shut with a guard or muzzle when working on the field. By this truth, Paul's caution to the Church of Corinth was to be careful in the way they wrongly perceived Ministers and Apostles like him to be taking advantage of the people as if they squeezed out their scarce resources from them.

To enhance our understanding of Paul's message not to muzzle an ox when treading the grain, let us take a good look at the source of the word. Muzzle comes from the Latin morsus meaning “bite”. A muzzle is the nose and mouth of an animal like a cat or dog. It is also a name for a guard made of straps that prevents the animal from biting or eating.

If God cares for animals and in the context of work, productivity and completion of treading the agricultural field as revealed in the Old Testament, then He cares more for ministers of the gospel under the New Covenant and New Testament, and expects the Church to act appropriately in that manner. Therefore whoever prevents or denies the daily bread of Ministers has violated the word of God to put a muzzle on the mouth of a treading ox or cow. Truly the bible says that the Lord delights in the prosperity of His servants **(Psalms 35:27)**.

**IF GOD CARED FOR ANIMALS UNDER THE OLD TESTAMENT GLORY, THEN HE CARES MORE ABOUT HIS MINISTERS PROSPERITY AND MATERIAL SUPPORT IN THIS NEW TESTAMENT ERA. JESUS CHRIST CAME TO FULFILL THE LAW AND NOT TO DESTROY IT.**

## **C// GOD'S WORD OF HOPE TO HIS CHURCH AND MINISTERS**

**1 Corinthians 9:9b & 10 – Is it oxen God is concerned about? 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.**

In proving to the Church of Corinth about the need to support Ministers spiritually as even confirmed by the Law, Apostle Paul provided hope to Christian ministers and the Church about the need to enjoy support and remuneration. He revealed further that God is concerned about workers in the Vineyard who produce righteous and eternal results to fulfill His purposes in Christ by the Holy Spirit. Not the oxen of trained bullock or cows or stags because he quoted this ancient and Jewish phrase as an allegory to bring out the hidden quality and meaning of his message. Therefore, this message is for the Church beyond the ancient maxim that cautions one not muzzle an ox at work on the field.

Indeed, the Old Testament scripture was a source of reference, motivation and hope to workers in the Lord's Vineyard. That is whether you are Paul who plants (sows and builds) or Apollos who waters (builds and reaps), God gives the increase and therefore rewards every one of them for faith, hard work and faithfulness. As Ministers and workers in the Lord's Vineyard, our blessings as rewards are not to be denied or sabotaged in any way and form once they are available to you.

### **THE HOPE OF A BETTER FUTURE FOR YOUR FAITH, HARD WORK, LABOUR AND TOILS IS THE MOTIVATION FOR REWARDS AND SATISFACTION IN CHRIST.**

This is a wakeup call that workers of the public sector and private sector deserve better salaries, allowances and conditions of serve as motivation and rewards for service rendered. This has been the spirit and letter of Trade Unions and Workers Unions of all institutions, organizations and companies in countries of the world.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has conventions on salaries, allowances and better conditions of service. For instance ILO Convention 100 is the Equal Remuneration Convention was formerly adopted in 1951 and entered into force in 1953. The convention focuses on gender discrimination in employment and outlines principles for the equal remuneration for work of equal value independent of whether it is performed by men or women.

The 1998 ILO Declaration on workers' rights were deemed fundamental and universally applicable. The right to work and at work established the following as inalienable rights of all people: Right to association and collective Bargaining (in effect Trade Unionism), Prohibition of all forced and compulsory labour, Prohibition of all child labour (before the end of compulsory schooling) and Prohibition of discrimination with regards to employment and occupation.

### **THE LAW OF WORK, PRODUCTIVITY AND REWARDS IN THE PHYSICAL PLANE IS APPLICABLE TO THE SPIRITUAL PLANE OF SERVICE TO THE LORD IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE CHURCH. THE SAME PRINCIPLE WORKS IN ALL.**

Though Paul's days did not have the status of current status United Nations and labour unions, it revealed his strong advocacy measures to make the Church accept the practice of remunerating Ministers. Though Paul did not make such claims of money

and resources to reveal his personal integrity and ministry integrity, the spirit and letter of remuneration was emphasized and is now universally accepted in all countries of the world.

## **PAUL'S PERSONAL INTEGRITY AND MINISTRY INTEGRITY CANNOT BE DOWNPLAYED BECAUSE HIS CRITICS EXAMINATION WAS QUASHED.**

Scriptural references for motivation include:

We read

**Proverbs 12:11 – He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread, But he who follows frivolity is devoid of understanding.**

We read

**2 Timothy 2:6 – The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops.**

On these divine knowledge and truth, Apostle Paul reveals that it is also proper and righteous for material and financial support from the Church after being a blessing to them spiritually; prayers, preaching, teaching, disciple making, appointment of elders and deacons etc. To sow spiritual things for the Church must also result in the reaping of material things from the congregation.

## **TO RECEIVE MATERIAL SUPPORT FROM THE CHURCH THAT YOU HAVE SOWED SPIRITUALLY IS A RIGHTEOUS THING IN GOD'S SIGHT AS A CHRISTIAN MINISTER.**

### **D// PROFITABILITY IN SOWING SPIRITUAL THAN MATERIAL THINGS**

**1 Corinthians 9:11 – If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?**

Paul's defense emphasized on sowing spiritual things to reap righteous and eternal results in Christ by the Holy Spirit. For him reaping material things was substandard after sowing spiritual things. It was not a great thing for his critics to label him as corrupt or abuser. It was just nice to be blessed by them and to enjoy the blessings of the people he had invested Christian doctrines and time to make them established and rich in Christ.

It is like the message: **“Charity begins at home”** should be the Church slogan to motivate members for them to willingly and joyfully bless and support the ministries of their Church leaders.

**This is the commentary of Adam Clarke: If Paul and his ministry partners have been the means to bring the Church of Corinth to the state of salvation through**

divine doctrines preached to them, it was not proper to receive temporal support when they had invested their time entirely to their spiritual growth and maturity. Every man who preaches the gospel has a right to his own support and that of his family while thus employed.

**WHEN MINISTERS SOW GOOD CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES AND TEACHINGS TO INSTILL RIGHTEOUSNESS, HOLINESS, UNITY OF FAITH AND PURPOSE AND MAKES THE HOLY SPIRIT ACTIVE AND VIBRANT IN THE CHURCH AND PEOPLE, RECEIPT OF MATERIAL THINGS AS BLESSINGS ARE SUBSTANDARD TO REVIVALS, OBEDIENCE, COMMITMENT AND FAITHFULNESS FROM THEM.**

### **E// CHURCH MINISTERS DESERVE TO BE REMUNERATED GREATLY**

**1 Corinthians 9:12 – If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more?**

Paul's message of defense took the turn of insisting on the right to be recognized and appreciated by the Church of Corinth more than other people. For they had proven ministries of investing Christian doctrines, letters and time to ensure their spiritual growth and maturity. It was a reminder of the work of Paul in Corinth where by the vision of the Lord, he spent one year and a half teaching in the synagogues and in homes the gospel of Jesus Christ and resurrection from the dead **(Acts 18:4 – 8, 9 – 11)**. Besides, he worked hard as a tent maker to provide for the basic necessities of life without being a burden to the Corinthians Believers **(Acts 18:1 – 3)**.

Clearly other people who enjoyed the right of blessings in provisions from the Church did not equal the commitment and faithfulness of Paul. Hence Paul's boldness of declaration that they deserved to be appreciated and rewarded greatly than the other beneficiaries with less concern. It is a reminder of Paul's revelation that though they had many instructors, in Christ he was their spiritual father **(1 Corinthians 4:15)**.

**IT TAKES DISCERNING PEOPLE IN CHRIST AND SENSITIVE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO WILL APPRECIATE THEIR SPIRITUAL FATHERS AND SPIRITUAL MOTHERS MORE THAN OTHER PEOPLE WITH HELPS AND SUPPORTS THAT HAS LITTLE OR NO CONNECTION TO ETERNAL SALVATION, SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND MATURITY.**

It fulfills scripture in

**Galatians 6:9 &10 – And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.**

Paul stated clearly the principle of sowing and reaping in due season to the Church in Galatia. Therefore he counseled them to be committed and never give up. Besides, he revealed that the promise to receive in due season is an opportunity to good, help and

support all people, especially the household of believers; the Church. It means to say that the Church is a fertile ground to sow and reap bountifully. That is there is a sure reward if you help and support Believing Christians, Church leaders and Ministers.

**DOING GOOD IN THE CHURCH HAS THE PROMISE OF REWARD WHICH MUST BE SEEN IN THE LIGHT OF GOD'S BLESSINGS FOR THE CHURCH BEYOND THE GIVER. FOR YOUR PROVISIONS AS BLESSINGS BOUNCES BACK TO YOU AND THE CHURCH IN MULTIPLE FOLDS.**

### PRAYER

Dear God, please awaken the Church in giving to all people and reveal Your love in Christ for their salvation.

Help us to be conscious that the Church is the most fertile ground to sow with high hopes of reaping.

We pray also that Your Holy Spirit will make us see the revelation of righteous investments in the Church to encourage and motivate us in helps and supports, in the service of the Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.

THE "IF CONDITION" OF MATERIAL SUPPORT SIGNALS THE WAVES OF OUTSIDE BENEFITS TO BE TRANSLATED INTO IN – HOUSE BENEFITS IN THE CHURCH FOR THE PREACHING AND PROMOTION OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

KNOW THAT EVERY GIVING IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE BLESSED BY GOD. KNOW THAT GIVING IN THE CHURCH IS THE MOST FERTILE GROUND TO REAP BOUNTIFULLY BECAUSE IT IS THE LORD'S VINEYARD. THEREFORE WE HAVE HIGH HOPES OF BEING BLESSED WHEN WE MAKE RIGHTEOUS INVESTMENTS IN THE CHURCH AND KINGDOM OF GOD WHETHER AS BELIEVING CHRISTIANS, CHURCH LEADERS AND MINISTERS. THE EARLIER MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH UNDERSTAND THEIR ROLE IN CONTRIBUTIONS TO MINISTERS, THE LESS CRITICS TO BE RECORDED. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

TIIME AND CHANCE HAPPEN TO US ALL AS WE MAKE VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE LIVES OF PEOPLE. BUT THE MOST FERTILE GROUND TO SOW AND BE BLESSED GREATLY IS THE CHURCH. THIS IS THE PLACE OF BLESSING AND HOPE OF RECEIPT AND EXPECTATION FOR BELIEVING CHRISTIANS, CHURCH LEADERS AND MINISTERS. IF GOD TAKES CARE OF HIS WORKERS, THEN YOU AND I ARE THE INSTRUMENTS OF HIS GLORY. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

## **YOUR RIGHT MUST SUPPORT AND PROMOTE THE VISION, MISSION AND GOALS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

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### **INSPIRATION**

Newton's third law of motion states that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. So, if object A acts a force upon object B, then object B will exert an opposite yet equal force upon object A. It means that action and reaction are equal and opposite. So it is with reactions against us when actions are meant to damage and destroy our Christian works and contributions.

Truly God's word does not tell us to accept all the bad and evil works against our Christian faith but to resist and overcome them. We are to submit to God but resist the devil and he will flee from us **(James 4:7)**. Let's study further.

**1 Corinthians 9:12b – 14 Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. 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? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.**

### **A// PERSONAL INTEGRITY AND ENDURANCE IN MINISTRY**

**1 Corinthians 9:12b – Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.**

Apostle Paul's message here is that though he and his ministry partners had the right to depend on the Church of Corinth for the basic necessities of life; food, clothing and shelter, he did not use it. This was his major reaction to the action against him by his critics. Though he deserved to be catered for as their spiritual father with spiritual investments of prayers, sound Christian doctrines and teachings, protection and preservation in their lives, ministries and the Church, yet he did not make demands and burdened them.

This buttresses his earlier message that his interest in the affairs of the Church of Corinth was nothing else but see Christ crucified and formed in them **(1 Corinthians 2:2)**. Clearly he lived by this truth to the extent that receipt of material blessings from the Church was considered substandard to the expected spiritual blessings through his apostolic ministry.

This is another emphatic area by Paul: Do not muzzle an ox while it treads the grain. Though he proved by scripture and tradition of the people of the East that he deserved to be supported and honoured by the Church, he declined it as a measure against placing material and financial burdens on the members. His concern was more about their obedience to the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ in holiness and righteousness.

**THE CHRISTIAN LEADER IS ALWAYS OFFERED A CHOICE BETWEEN SATISFYING PERSONAL AND CHURCH NEEDS. WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT IS IN CONTROL, CHURCH NEEDS SUPERSEDE PERSONAL NEEDS LIKE APOSTLE PAUL.**

As a measure to self – denial and self – discipline in righteousness, Paul endured all things, persecutions and oppositions from his fellow religious Jews who practiced the Law strictly **(Acts 18:4 – 8, 12 – 18a)**. Besides, he experienced hunger and thirst, lack of money, and lived a life of simplicity and not extravagance to promote the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was a conscious decision of self – denial based on revelation and spiritual truths. He realized that ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ could become stumbling blocks to the running speedily of God's salvation plan in Christ and the works of the Holy Spirit for spiritual growth and maturity.

Paul was also mindful of the danger and effects of lustful worldly possessions known as an old strategy of the devil to divert spiritual vision and mission, spiritual attention and focus from God and His people. That is the gospel of Jesus Christ and His Church.

**IT TAKES SELF – DENIAL AND SELF – DISCIPLINE TO PROMOTE AND SPEED UP THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST AND PROVE YOUR CRITICS WRONG. THIS IS NOT ACHIEVED ON AN EASY PLATTER BUT IN PAIN, SUFFERING, SHAME AND DISGRACE AMIDST SACRIFICES FOR THE SAKE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

For his obedience as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, nobody or nothing was going to stop him from fulfilling his ministry even if self – denial and self – discipline would cost him happiness and comfort.

To endure all things meant his readiness to suffer pain just like our Lord Jesus Christ who endured extreme pain, suffering, nakedness, shame and disgrace during his lashes, and on the cross for eternal salvation to be attainable and free to all who believe in Him. Likewise Paul's decision to endure all things was purposed driven to see Christ formed in the lives, ministries and Church of the Corinthians; spiritual growth and maturity.

He did not in any way want to be the hindrance and stumbling block to the establishment of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the Church of Corinth. Hence he took time to explain the need and reason for the Church to honour Ministers as well as reciprocation through administration of personal integrity and ministry integrity. For edification of the Church is preferred to negligence of duty and abuse of office by Believing Christians, and Ministers and Church workers respectively.

**CHOOSE SELF – DENIAL AND SELF – DISCIPLINE AND NOBODY, OR ANYTHING OR DEVIL CAN STOP YOU LIKE THE WAY APOSTLE PAUL CHAMPIONED THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST IN HIS GENERATION. IT IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS TO PROVE YOUR CRITICS WRONG AS A MINISTER OF CHRIST BEING EXAMINED BY PEOPLE.**

## **B// LIVE BY YOUR MINISTRY IN RIGHTEOUSNESS**

**1 Corinthians 9:13 & 14 – 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? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.**

As part of Paul's reaction and answer to his critics, he redirected his message to question them about knowledge of God's will for His Ministers in the Church. He asked them whether they knew that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and offerings by those who partake of the altar. By this message, Paul emphasized on temple food and care as remuneration for Ministers of Christ.

Thus he provoked their conscience to the structure of the Jewish temple and synagogues, and duties of the Priests and Levites which was partly of ministering offerings and sacrifices of sheep, goats as meat in the temple and altar. God designed it in such a way that those who ministered in the temple and altar ate from there because they did not perform any other secular duties. Besides, Priests and Levites did not have any inheritance in Israel unlike the other eleven tribes. For the LORD himself was their treasure and inheritance **(Numbers 18:20 – 26)**.

In the message of Paul, he compared himself to other Ministers in the Church who demanded the right to provisions. Again his apostolic ministry showed that his heart and mind was for the gospel of Jesus Christ beyond personal comforts and possessions. He could have asked for support just like other people but declined for their own benefits. As a result, he worked as a tent maker and joined forces with Aquila and his wife Priscilla with same trading profession. This was a man who stated boldly that he had not defrauded anybody of money, goods and possessions in his ministry. Indeed his spiritual authority reflected in his righteous and holy living worthy of emulation. Hallelujah somebody.

We read

**Acts 20:33 – I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.**

Having defended his ministry and position, he revealed further that the institution of the Levitical priesthood with Aaron as the first head and all the priests and Levites were fed from the offerings, food and meat at the altar, sanctuary and temple. Since God did not allot them any inheritance through Joshua unlike the other eleven (11) tribes because He was their inheritance, they had to be fed from the altar and temple throughout the generations. This was a generational command that required the Church to fully support their pastors in fulfillment of the law. For 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 **(Leviticus 18:1 & 2, 3 – 6, Mathew 5:17)**.

This is the Lord's command to all generations where His ministers perform their duties in the Churches. That those who preach the gospel must live by the gospel. It means to say that one of the Church's responsibility is to provide the basic necessities of life to their Ministers; food, clothing and shelter. Therefore tithes and offerings and other contributions must be given in love to edify the Church.

The Lord commands us to bring our tithes into His House so that there will be food in His storehouses and not cause His Ministers to hunger and thirst for food and water **(Malachi 3:10)**. Therefore, Ministers who demand and remind Church Members to pay their tithes and give offerings as cheerful givers are in God's will to protect and preserve the sanctity of the priesthood and the Church. Therefore be committed and faithful. But it is also important to note that the Lord does not condone abuse of ministerial office because He is the Righteous Judge.

Be it as it may, under the New Covenant and new testament, one is called and anointed to be in ministry whether rich or poor. Besides, some Ministers of the gospel have their profit making businesses. Some Ministers have become rich by virtue of family inheritances as well as provisions from the growing Church. Other Ministers have little or nothing and God expects that the Church caters for their needs. Whatever form it takes, the Lord has commanded that Ministers live by their preaching; ministries of the Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher **(Ephesians 4:11)**.

In the revelation of Paul, who are we to change or twist what the Lord has purposed? Hence stop the criticism and pray for personal integrity and ministry integrity for your Ministers and all other Ministers to be at work in them just like Apostle Paul and his ministry partners. A word to the wise is enough as the adage goes.

**This is the New King James Bible Commentary: those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel – To support Ministers of the gospel is commanded by God. Even as the priests of Israel were supported for their work, New Testament Ministers were to be provided for as well. (see 2 Timothy 5:17 & 18)**

**THE COMMAND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WAS TO ENSURE THAT THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES DO NOT SPEND THEIR TIME AND ENERGY WORKING FOR WORLDLY POSSESSIONS AND COMFORTS BUT COMMITTED FOR GOD'S USE TO HIS PEOPLE. SO IT IS WITH THE NEW COVENANT AND NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES.**

**CHOOSE THE SAME PRINCIPLE OF SELF – DENIAL AND SELF – DISCIPLINE TO PROMOTE THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST AND WORKS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AS BY APOSTLE PAUL. IT SAVES THE DAY WHEN CRITICS EXAMINE AND SCRUTINIZE MINISTRY WORKS.**

## PRAYER

Dear God, help the Church to obey Your command and provide and support Ministers of their daily needs.

Let Your Holy Spirit grant us revelation so that it will be the support of the whole Church and not just some few people.

We pray also that Ministers and Church leaders will not abuse their spiritual authority to covet and impoverish their Church members but live simple lives.

Let the attitude of self – denial and self – discipline of Paul be emulated by all Your Ministers everywhere when necessary to achieve heavenly interests on earth.

We pray also that Ministers and Church workers with skills and talents like Apostle Paul would use them to money in other righteous professions.

All these we ask in the name of Jesus. Amen.

TO HAVE A RIGHT IS GOOD BUT THE USAGE OF THE RIGHT IS THE TEST OF ONE'S CREDIBILITY AND PURITY OF HEART. DON'T FOLLOW THE CROWD TO TAKE MONEY FROM THE CHURCH BUT TEACH THE CHURCH TO UNDERSTAND GIVING TO MINISTERS AND CHURCH LEADERS AND CHURCH WORKERS AS THE COMMAND OF GOD. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

WHEN THE CHURCH GIVE AND SUPPORT THE MINISTERS AND CHURCH LEADERS IN REVELATION, THEIR SIMPLICITY AND HUMILITY PROMOTE THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST AND NEVER HINDERS IT. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

THE FACT THAT THERE IS ABUSE OF SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY OF CHURCH SUPPORT AND CONTRIBUTIONS, GIVING TITHES AND OFFERINGS, DOES NOT CANCEL THE TRUTH OF SUPPORT TO MINISTERS AND CHURCH WORKERS. THE CHURCHES MUST CONTINUE TO PLAY THEIR RIGHTEOUS ROLE IN SUPPORTING PASTORS AND OTHER LEVITES AS GOD HAS COMMANDED THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

## **PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST BEYOND MY RIGHTS AND NEEDS**

### **INSPIRATION**

Confidence and boldness are based on personal integrity and ministry integrity to establish gospel truths in defense of ministry works against critics. For Apostle Paul, he did not leave any stones unturned with his firm beliefs to promote the gospel of Jesus Christ. The bible says that the wicked flees when no one pursues but the righteous is as bold as a lion **(Proverbs 28:1)**.

**1 Corinthians 9:15 – 18 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. 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! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.**

### **A// PERSONAL INTEGRITY AND UNDENIABLE BOASTING IN THE LORD**

**1 Corinthians 9:15 – 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.**

As Paul came close to closing his defense message on personal and ministry integrity, he was confident of himself as having clean hands and dealings. He stated emphatically that he had not used his right and authority given by the Lord to depend on the Church for provisions of the basic necessities of life.

Again he stated that none of his letters did not suggest that the Church was coerced or influenced negatively to take monies from them. Indeed his messages rather revealed and educated the Corinthians Believers on the will of God for them to make contributions and assist Ministers and Church workers perform their Christian duties. He made it clear also to them that this was not a new phenomenon but has its roots in the Old Covenant Law with the institution of the Priesthood, divine selection of the Levites and Temple regulations.

By these revelations, he negated the stance of his critics to clear his name from all evil mindsets. How could Paul submit to critics in the Church of Corinth? He had the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ evident in the establishment and works in the Corinthian Church. Therefore, there was no way he would have succumbed to evil pressure at the expense of his boasting in the Lord. It means to say that Paul's righteous works in his apostolic ministry was his boasting with righteous and eternal results in the Church of Corinth and beyond. Indeed, he was not going to fold his arms

and make his righteous investments fizzle away like vapour. Hence his strong position that he would rather die than allow his boasting in the Lord to be made void and waste.

Testifying of the gospel of Jesus Christ to people was his defined mission especially to the Gentile world. He derived more joy in fulfilling his divine mission and purpose than anything else. If he could not achieve it; if people would make his testimony void and nonsense, then death was even better. That is it is better to die than his testimony about the Lord Jesus Christ be put in a box or imprisoned. This was a true Apostle of Jesus Christ who selflessly and diligently preached the gospel and demonstrated the power of the Holy Spirit in all dimensions.

It means to emulate the righteous example of Paul not to use violent approaches but systematic ways to explain God's word and make them align to realities of situations in the Churches. Indeed changing the mindset of a people indoctrinated with beliefs needs the right leadership and time to succeed. With the Church, prayers are a necessity because the Holy Spirit guides our steps in righteousness through Christ and in God's perfect will.

**PAUL'S CRITICS WERE SILENCED FOR THE FACT THAT HE DID NOT EVEN USE HIS GOD GIVEN AUTHORITY TO DEMAND REMUNERATION FROM THE CHURCH OF CORINTH. HENCE HIS CONFIDENCE AND BOLDNESS TO MAKE HIS BOASTS IN THE LORD SOUND LOUDER. FOR HIM TO SAY THAT HE WOULD PREFER DEATH TO ANYONE MAKE HIS BOASTS IN THE LORD VOID AND WASTE IS A REVELATION OF THE INTEGRITY OF HIS APOSTOLIC MINISTRY WITH RIGHTEOUS AND ETERNAL RESULTS.**

**TO BOAST IN THE LORD REVEALS THE TESTIMONIES OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST TO DELIVER PEOPLE FROM THE BONDAGE OF THE DEVIL TO THE LOVING ARMS OF GOD. IT IS BETTER TO DIE AND GO TO HEAVEN THAN ABANDON YOUR DIVINE PURPOSE.**

### **B// DETERMINED TO PREACH THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST**

**1 Corinthians 9:16 – 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!**

Paul's determination to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ was his obedience to the call and apostolic ministry (**1 Corinthians 1:1**). Having seen the righteous and eternal results, his obedience made him have no self – boasts but boasts in the Lord. For his ministry works and accomplishments was the grace of God upon his life. He did not seek self – interests and self – glory but God's glory evident in self – denial of even provisions from the Church of Corinth. In other words, Paul did not have any boasts but testimonies through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ and from the Church of Corinth.

Necessity was laid upon him to preach Christ to the Gentiles as revealed in his divine mandate through Ananias. This was his call and apostolic ministry by the will of God. He had been chosen despite his weaknesses and failures. As at that time, he had proven his apostolic ministry to be credible.

Truly Paul's focus was Jesus Christ; the reason for show of mercy and given mission to accomplish. Now he had the mind of Christ to have righteous thoughts and ideas, and perform righteous works in the power of the Holy Spirit. Woe unto him if he failed to obey Jesus Christ who called him to preach the gospel. Woe unto him if he ignored God's mercy and grace for divine selection and opportunity to change people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We read

**Acts 9:15 – But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.**

**ONCE CHOSEN, FULFILL YOUR MISSION. FOR EVERY MISSION, THERE IS A DEFINITE AUDIENCE.**

We read

**Romans 1:14 & 15 – I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.**

**I AM POOR IF I DO NOT PREACH THE GOSPEL; I AM RICH IF I PREACH THE GOSPEL TO CHANGE PEOPLE. A DEBTOR TO ALL PEOPLE MAKES YOU A PREACHER EVERYWHERE AS THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS YOU.**

To willingly offer your time, energy and resources in response to the gospel of Jesus Christ is obedience and faith and therefore results in receipt of reward. However, to do these things against your will means non – appreciation of your divine selection to preach the gospel and save people in the love God. In the absence of love, the power of the Holy Spirit would be missing and therefore works would be done as a result of obligation and stewardship, and not in the love of God. What Paul teaches us is that response and service in the kingdom of God are about willingness and not forced labour.

**According to Adam Clarke's commentary, Paul gloried in preaching the gospel free of all charges but did not glory as a preacher of the gospel because he received it by grace. He added that Paul's skill and power was by God's grace and not from self. The authority that Paul had obliged him could endanger his salvation if he failed to preach. Besides he added that woe to that man who runs when God has not sent him and woe to him who refuses to run or ceases to run when God has sent him.**

**WILLINGNESS IN PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST IS YOUR OBEDIENCE AND IS REWARDED BY GOD. UNWILLINGNESS ARE SYNONYMOUS WITH MURMURING AND COMPLAINTS AND IS CONSIDERED FORCED LABOUR DRESSED BEAUTIFULLY AS OBLIGATION AND STEWARDSHIP. INDEED WILLINGNESS TO PREACH CHRIST EMBRACES THE LOVE OF GOD UNLIKE UNWILLINGNESS WHICH EMBRACES OBLIGATION TO SERVICE. THE FORMER IS REWARDING UNLIKE THE LATTER.**

### **C// PREACHING WILLINGLY AND NOT BY COMPULSION; A REWARD**

**1 Corinthians 9:17 – For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.**

Paul built his message of being a bondservant of the Lord by stating that not only was he obliged to preach the gospel as an Apostle but do it willingly without murmuring or grudgingly. It means to say that Paul accepted his call and ministry and obeyed it to the letter. For he was filled and led by the Holy Spirit beyond self – needs and the basic necessities of life. This explains why he denied himself of Church provisions even when he knew that this was a commandment of the Lord to the Churches.

Having been committed and faithful, he communicated to the Corinthians Believers that preaching the gospel willingly was not in vain but has the promise of a sure reward; incorruptible crown.

But Paul admitted also that if he preached the gospel against his will, he had been entrusted with a stewardship. Here Paul did not refer to a faithful steward as required of all Ministers and the Church **(1 Corinthians 4:2)**, but being forced to do the work of God under compulsion. In other words, Paul revealed that those who do the work of God with love and not fear have a sure reward. For servants obey their masters and mistresses in temporary situations out of fear and being punished or driven away unlike love in obedience that exists between parents and children in a generational dispensation.

According to Adam Clarke's commentary on the phrase "For if I do this thing willingly – If I be a cordial co – operator with God, I have a reward, an incorruptible crown. He linked this to **1 Corinthians 9:25** which places emphasis on receiving an imperishable crown more than someone who competes in a race though the determination and focus are the same. That is if I freely preach this gospel without being burdensome to any, I have a special reward; but if I do not, I have simply an office to fulfill, into which God has put me, and may fulfill it conscientiously, and claim my privileges at the same time; but then I lose that special reward which I have in view by preaching the Gospel without charge to any.

**PAUL'S MESSAGE TO THE CORINTHIANS BELIEVERS WAS THAT THOSE WHO OBEY TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IN LOVE HAS THE PROMISE TO RECEIVE A**

**SURE REWARD OF AN IMPERISHABLE CROWN. BUT THOSE WHO OBEY TO PREACH THE GOSPEL OUT OF FEAR OF PUNISHMENT OR DENIAL OF BLESSING ARE OF THE KIND OF BEING ENTRUSTED WITH STEWARDSHIP.**

**D// PREACHING THE GOSPEL WITHOUT ABUSING AUTHORITY; A REWARD**

**1 Corinthians 9:18 – What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.**

As Paul ended his message on pattern of self – denial and the need to preach the gospel willingly in love and not fear, he emphasized on receipt of reward from God again as the focus. That is not just preaching the gospel willingly but without charge or fee or privileges in order to be free from abuse of authority.

By this message, Paul's righteous intent was made clear to have a reward but be righteous to receive it. He had to preach the gospel willingly, freely and in love without making demands of privileges from the Church. He did not want to be associated with abuse of authority at all; having proven himself to a pattern of self – denial in ministry.

It means to say that Ministers and Church workers whose works are first subject to demands on remuneration cannot be committed and faithful. They are likely not to do their works as the Lord's works. Those with authority can thus abuse it by making demands that compels the Church to supply their needs before they preach the gospel to the people. Therefore you cannot set the same conditions for doing the Lord's work in ministry as of secular jobs or terms of a union negotiating for salary and allowances increment and better conditions of service. In truth the work of the ministry must be done whether things are good or bad in order not to abuse authority.

**According to Adam Clarke Commentary on “That I abuse not my power...” – should not be understood in the perspective of abusing it (clear violations) but using it to the uttermost. That is anything that can be claimed by law whether good or bad.**

It shows that authority can be used to do and accomplish things in the Church without love, care, concern and edification but for the sake of decision making. Remember when Jesus came across the woman caught in committing adultery, the majority decision was to stone her death. This was using authority by the law to the uttermost without love, care forgiveness and given opportunity to repent. Amazingly the man involved was nowhere to be found because the people were unconcerned. Why was the woman alone to be stoned and not with the man who probably forced her into committing adultery? Thank God for Jesus' intervention, convictions of all the people and salvation of the adulterous woman **(John 8:1 – 12)**.

**DON'T FOLLOW THE CROWD BECAUSE ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD. PAUL TEACHES THAT THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY CANNOT BE OF THE SAME**

**STATUS AS SECULAR JOBS BECAUSE IT HAS TO BE DONE WHETHER THE CONDITIONS ARE GOOD OR BAD. FOR US NOT TO ABUSE OUR AUTHORITY, WE HAVE TO FOCUS ON THE LORD'S REWARD AND NOT USE DEMANDS AND PRIVILEGES AS NEGOTIATING TOOLS TO PREACH THE GOSPEL. BE WISE.**

Truly, Paul's desire was to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ without verifiable and justifiable condemnation. Blameless and innocent as an Apostle of Jesus Christ was his mark of distinction. This explained his messages about the prioritization of his rights to promote the gospel of Jesus Christ beyond personal interests and needs: **Self – denial and self – discipline for Jesus Christ.** He revealed that the Christian leader can abuse his or her authority in the Church through needs provision that rather become stumbling blocks other than benefits to spiritual growth and maturity.

**IF I PREACH AND I AM STILL CONDEMNED BECAUSE OF ABUSED AUTHORITY, THEN I AM A PARTNER TO THE DEVIL. IF I PREACH AND USE MY AUTHORITY TO PROMOTE TRUTH AND REVELATION, THEN I HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST.**

We read

**John 4:36 – And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.**

In this context about the salvation of the whole Samaritan village, Jesus created a picture and relationship of the sower and the reaper. Both had a role to play in the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They received wages and rejoiced together.

**According to the New King James Bible Commentary, the reaper of a spiritual harvest receives wages. That is fruit which brings joy. In this case, Jesus sowed by giving the message to the woman. He was about to reap because He would see the whole city saved. Also the disciples were going to reap the harvest that Christ had sown. Note the hundred wage promises in Matthew 19:27 – 29, 1 Corinthians 3:6 – 8, 2 Corinthians 5:10).**

Clearly both the sower and the reaper play key roles in bringing people to Christ. They labour beyond their rights and needs in prayers, preachings, evangelism, disciple making, crusades, teachings, counselings, Church plantings, training of elders and deacons and deaconesses, bible schools and other Holy Spirit inspired areas of the Church. Apart from the hope of eternal life, we believe also in the hope of receipt of eternal wages for our labours especially as reapers of what Christ has sown through His death and resurrection.

**TO THE CHURCH, WE LABOUR TO REAP THE WORK OF THE CROSS WITH THE HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE, AND PHYSICAL AND ETERNAL WAGES. YOUR ABILITY TO GATHER AND MANAGE A PEOPLE AS A CHURCH IN ANY MINISTERIAL CAPACITY IS THE BLESSING OF YOUR HARD LABOUR IN CHRIST**

**BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. YET THERE IS A SURE REWARD TO RECEIVE FROM THE LORD ON THE DAY OF RESURRECTION. BE WISE.**

### **PRAYER**

Almighty God, there is nothing that You cannot do, and would not do for us in Christ.

For the Holy Spirit is our Helper in the service at Your Vineyard.

We pray for grace to preach the Lord Jesus Christ and labour to bring people and establish them in Your Kingdom.

Help us to be focused in our calling and ministry so that our boasts in the Lord will not be in vain.

Help us to have willing hearts and minds in the course for Christ through the Holy Spirit.

May we have the grace not to abuse our rights and authority through charges, fees and privileges but avail ourselves wisely under all conditions to serve the course of Christ by the leading of Your Holy Spirit.

Help us to have the mind of Christ and believe always in the promises of eternal life, and eternal rewards and physical rewards as we labour in Your Vineyard.

All these things, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**WHEN YOU ARE FILLED AND LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST IS PREACHED BEYOND YOUR RIGHTS AND NEEDS. YOU DON'T ABUSE YOUR RIGHTS BECAUSE OF NEEDS BUT USE THEM WISELY TO PROMOTE THE AGENDA OF GOD; SAVING PEOPLE AND VILLAGES, TOWNS, DISTRICTS, COUNTIES, CITIES, REGIONS, STATES, NATIONS AND COUNTRIES. NANA KWAKU DUODU**

**DON'T FOLLOW THE CROWD BECAUSE ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD. THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY CANNOT BE OF THE SAME STATUS AS SECULAR JOBS BECAUSE IT HAS TO BE DONE WHETHER THE CONDITIONS ARE GOOD OR BAD. FOR US NOT TO ABUSE OUR AUTHORITY, WE HAVE TO FOCUS ON THE LORD'S REWARD AND NOT USE DEMANDS AND PRIVILEGES AS NEGOTIATING TOOLS TO PREACH THE GOSPEL. NANA KWAKU DUODU**

## **SIMPLICITY AND HUMILITY TO SERVE AND SAVE ALL PEOPLE FOR THE LORD JESUS CHRIST**

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### **INSPIRATION**

The bible says that a man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother **(Proverbs 18:24)**. Friendship is priceless because its benefits can even supersede blood relations.

Indeed when one identifies himself or herself with somebody, group of people, association, community, village, town, district, region, tribe, ethnicity, country and nation, religion, tradition and culture of a people, acceptance is attained. This was the master strategy of Paul adopted to preach Christ to both Jews and Gentiles and win them for Christ. Despite the anointing and in God's will, good human relations are effective in making one acceptable to the people who are recipients of the preaching of the salvation message. Let's study further.

**1 Corinthians 9:19 – 23 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; 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; 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; 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. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.**

Apostle Paul put his ministry beyond personal needs and comfort. He humbled himself to conform to circumcised and uncircumcised people, religious people, and people of diverse traditions, customs, and cultures. He became the jack of all trades playing the dual role of master and servant, and being mindful of his Christian faith and ministry to be holy and righteous at all times.

The urgency of service in the Lord is to relate with all peoples in the love of God to save them with the gospel of Jesus Christ. As an Apostle, he was free from all people and therefore not subject to their customs, traditions and controls but made himself a servant to all peoples.

The message is that you are to hate their gods, sin, and wicked lifestyles but not the people because God is always working and in the business of saving them. Be mindful that Paul never became a sinner to save sinners because Jesus did not become a sinner to save the world of sin. What Jesus did was to take form of human nature through the birth of a woman to enter the world and fulfill the messianic prophecy.

This is a far more higher and superior spiritual strategy that has the evidence of the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus Christ and save many people from different backgrounds, groups, religions, cultures, tribes, nations and countries. Truly, this strategy based on

God's wisdom and divine revelation worked effectively to win many people unto Jesus Christ.

**General Objective: To win more people in a timely manner for the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Specific Objectives:**

**A// To save Jews**

**B// To save people under the Law**

**C// To save people without the law; own traditions, cultures and customs**

**D// To save the weak and the vulnerable**

**DIVINE STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES**

**1// SERVANT TO ALL AND WIN MORE PEOPLE FOR CHRIST**

**1 Corinthians 9:19 – For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more**

Having defended his apostolic ministry in all respects, Apostle Paul revealed the urgency of service in the Lord and a Preacher to the nations. The gospel had to be preached and he was poised to fulfill this divine mandate. The Great Commission had to be fulfilled and Paul was in the business of preaching to the nations **(Matthew 28:18 – 20)**. Indeed Paul entered the city of Corinth from Athens as part of his missionary journey **(Acts 18:1)**.

As an Apostle, he was free from all people and therefore not subject to their customs, traditions and controls but made himself a servant to all peoples with the determination to win them for Christ. At that time, Christianity was now being introduced in the Gentile nations mainly by Apostle Paul in his missionary journeys.

Having this mindset can be termed as the master strategy of Paul to relate with all people and gain acceptance to preach Christ to them. Indeed Paul knew that he was venturing into unfamiliar territories of the Gentiles with diverse religions, idol worship and idol temples, religious practices, traditions and cultures with generational strongholds. Trained as a Pharisee, he knew that these people did not have the Law of Moses and did not believe in the God of Israel or believed in circumcision but he was ready to preach the gospel and save them as the Holy Spirit led him.

Adopting this master strategy of Paul is the way of righteous to go in the determination to preach the gospel to all people the Lord brings to us or encounter them. For when you step out from your comfort zone into the world arena, you come into contact with all

manner of people with various backgrounds. Jesus' message about persecutions against His disciples after return to the Father in heaven would result in them standing before kings and rulers as well as being reported to synagogues and suffer imprisonment. Yet the encouraging words was that their arrests, trials and imprisonments would turn out as an occasion for testimony **(Luke 21:12 & 13)**.

Therefore we have the promise of the Lord not to be anxious about what to say during those difficult and challenging times. For we will be given the power to speak knowledge and wisdom to outwit the intelligence of enemies of righteousness. They will not be able to contradict or resist the eternal testimony of the death and resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ **(Luke 21:14 & 15)**. **The New King Bible Commentary states that Jesus promises the disciples that the Holy Spirit will assist them in giving testimony (Luke 12:11 & 12). The initial fulfillment of this promise is found in Acts 4:8 – 14; 7:54; 26:24 – 32).**

It means to say that the name of Jesus Christ and the name of God would be honoured and glorified through their eternal testimonies. In other words, the Lord's charge was never to shut up our mouths but open and speak in defense of the gospel of salvation which every person on earth needs to be saved eternally.

Hence we go by the counsel of Jesus in these last day; by patience possess your souls **(Luke 21:19)**. It means to have patience or bear the fruit of longsuffering by the Holy Spirit to win souls for the Lord. **According to the New King James Bible Commentary, patient allegiance to Christ leads to eternal life.** It means to buttress the truth that salvation is found in no one else but the Lord Jesus Christ **(Acts 4:12)**. Yes if we have to suffer long in bringing people to the saving knowledge of Christ, we say amen. God's will be done.

**PAUL'S MASTER STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVE OF BEING A SERVANT TO ALL IN ORDER TO SAVE MANY PEOPLE FOR CHRIST IS THE BEST WAY TO SWALLOW PRIDE AND FORSTER GOOD HUMAN RELATIONS AND SPIRIT OF TOLERANCE FOR LONG. IT MEANS TO MAINTAIN YOUR FAITH IN CHRIST AND USE IT TO CHANGE PEOPLE AND NOT THE OTHER WAY ROUND OF BEING SINFUL LIKE THEM FIRST BEFORE SPEAKING TO THEM ABOUT CHRIST. BE WISE IN CHRIST.**

## **2// BECOMING AS A JEW TO SAVE JEWS**

### **1 Corinthians 9:20a – and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews**

Everywhere Apostle Paul preached whether city, town or village recorded the presence of Jews. He had to state his Jewish background and God's choice of the Jews through the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and fulfillment of the messianic promise through the Davidic line to Joseph from Abraham. Disprove the false information of being used against Jewish customs and traditions. **Acts 21:23** records that Paul made a Nazirite vow in Jerusalem temple in order to relate with them in Jerusalem.

Characteristic of Paul's apostolic ministry and preaching points was first associated with Jewish synagogues in Jewish and Gentile nations and communities. Truly the first major preaching point of Paul in Corinth was at the synagogue where he reasoned with them every Sabbath and persuaded both Jews and Greeks **(Acts 18:4)**.

He was determined to win Jews for Christ whom the promise of the fathers was with them. Even Crispus the ruler of the synagogue with his family and many Corinthians believed Paul and his ministry partners Silas and Timothy, and were baptized in the name of Jesus **(Act 18:5, 8)**.

**PAUL'S IDENTITY AS A JEW STEMMED FROM HIS MATERNAL LINEAGE AS WELL AS A WORSHIPER OF GOD WITH THE PROMISE OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT. WORSHIPPING AND PREACHING AND TEACHING IN THE SYNAGOGUES WAS ONE OF THE EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES AND ACHIEVABLE OBJECTIVES THAT MADE SOME OF THEM BELIEVERS.**

### **3// BECOMING AS A LAW ABIDER TO SAVE PEOPLE RULED BY THE LAW.**

**1 Corinthians 9:20b – to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law**

Apostle Paul had to obey the Law of Moses; the 10 commandments and other religious laws with moral benefits in order to have the opportunity to preach Jesus Christ and save them **(Acts 21:24 & 26)**. His background as disciple of Gamaliel a Pharisee and Teacher of the Law equipped him in the apostolic ministry. With this background and zealotry for the Law but against the Church, this prepared him to give correct answers by the Holy Spirit and change them for Christ. He even spoke the Hebrew language **(Acts 22:2 & 3)**.

Timothy is a good example who was circumcised by Paul to satisfy the Jews and win some for the Lord Jesus Christ **(Acts 16:1 – 3)**. Indeed a typical Jew and the Jewish nation thrived on the Law of Moses. This was so strong that the Jewish religious, traditional, cultural, political, social and judicial systems, and even external relations was structured on the Law.

The bible says that Paul rebuked Peter for refusing to eat with Gentiles when certain men came from James. This was hypocritical to Paul because it was originally part of the strategy to preach Christ to them and encourage them in their found faith. Besides, Peter feared the reaction of the circumcised and thus separated himself from the Gentile brethren. Also the rest of the Jews and even Barnabas danced to the tune of hypocrisy isolating the Gentiles Believers **(Galatians 2:11 – 13)**.

Paul preached to Peter, the Jews and Barnabas saying that they should live by example in Christ and not by the Law. For they should not compel the Gentiles to live like Jews when they lived as Gentiles. He explained further that a man is justified by faith in Christ

Jesus and not by the law. For it is the works of faith that justifies our belief in Christ and not works by the Law **(Galatians 2:14 – 16)**.

**PAUL'S IDENTITY AS A LAW ABIDER WAS PURPOSED DRIVEN TO WIN LAW ABIDERS FOR CHRIST. HE OBEYED THE LAW AND USED KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAW TO EXPRESS THE PERFECTION OF CHRIST UNDER THE NEW COVENANT. THIS MADE HIM APPEALING TO LAW ABIDERS AS JEWS AND PROSELYTES WHEN THEY UNDERSTOOD THE SALVATION PLAN THROUGH CHRIST AS THE ORIGINATION AND MASTERPLAN OF GOD.**

#### **4// BECOMING AS THOSE WITHOUT THE LAW TO SAVE PEOPLE IN THEIR OWN TRADITIONS, CULTURES AND CUSTOMS**

**1 Corinthians 9:21 – 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**

Some of his missionary journeys sent him to places and people who were strictly ruled by their own customs and traditions, and not by the Mosaic Law. As a discerning Christian leader, he ate their food and participated in things and events that promoted love, peace, prosperity and unity, and not satanic practices and principles like idol worship and prostitution. Hence the testimony to the Jerusalem Church about the salvation of the Gentiles too through their ministries **(Acts 15:4 & 12)**.

In other words, Paul did not apply Jewish laws and customs to win people outside the Law for Christ. He knew this would not make sense to them and would attract arguments and strong opposition to truth and revelation in Christ. For he was once alive and doing his own thing without the Law until the Commandment came and judged him accordingly **(Romans 7:9 – 11)**.

To the Roman Believers, Paul wrote that those who had sinned without the law would perish without the Law **(Romans 2:15)**. Again Paul wrote that Gentiles who do not have the Law do things of the Law, they conform to the Law and thus become a law to themselves **(Romans 2:14)**. Hence though they do not have the law, being doers of the Law means that the Law is written in their hearts **(Romans 2:15)**.

Characteristic of him was the use of things already familiar and known to the Gentiles such as names of many gods in the city of Athens. Having come across the inscription of the “**Unknown God**”, Paul used it reveal to them the Unseen and Omnipotent and Omniscience and Omnipresent God whose salvation work through His Son Jesus Christ has made eternal salvation free to all. That is to believers who are baptized in His name and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit **(Acts 17:15 – 23, 24 – 36)**.

Do you know that people of other religions believe Jesus Christ to be like one of those foreign gods? Hence like Paul before the Athenians, your preaching of the gospel message can be rejected or doubted. They can call you names such as a babler **(Acts**

**17:18**). But you still have to identify something that can connect you to reveal Christ. If you are before a bread seller who is of a different religion, you can use the bread to reveal Christ as Jesus said; I am the Bread of Life and whoever eats of this bread shall never be hungry and shall never thirst **(John 6:35 & 48)**.

The most important thing is that you are led by the Holy Spirit as a child of God and Minister of Christ to preach the gospel **(Romans 8:14 & 16)**. Remember when Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob, He used water to describe the “**living waters**” that emanates from Him the Messiah to all people and they drink and never become thirsty. That is it gives eternal life and is satisfying unlike the well of water they drank in Samaria. Besides Jesus used admitted the place and location of the Jerusalem temple as the centre piece of worship by the Jews. But a time was coming and was now when the true worshippers would worship the Father in spirit and truth. For the Father seeks such worshippers everywhere in the world **(John 4:22 – 24)**. Indeed Jesus revealed that the work of salvation through the Messiah would make the worship of God everywhere achievable and not at the Jerusalem temple **(John 4:6 – 26)**. It is important to note that the Jerusalem temple as the place of worship by the Jews was destroyed by fire in **AD 70** when the Romans laid siege against it because of rebellion. This was a fulfilled prophecy by Jesus that the building would be destroyed **(Matthew 24:1 & 2)**.

Indeed Jesus’ prophecy was a confirmation to His earlier prophecy to the Samaritan woman that the time of true worship of God in spirit was in place with the revelation of the Messiah and the Christ beyond the Jerusalem temple or Church buildings now. This opened the door for the gospel of Jesus Christ to be preached to all nations as another confirmation of the prophetic strings of the Great Commission **(Matthew 28:18 – 20)**.

It is important to note that Paul did not copy the ways of the Gentiles to sin against God just because he wanted to win some of them for Christ. This is not the way and direction of the gospel of Jesus Christ because Christ is God’s righteousness and we have and are led by the Holy Spirit. Don’t be an idol worshipper just because you would preach Christ and convert idol worshippers. Don’t be a thief or armed robber to steal, maim and kill people with weapons just because you want to preach and save thieves and armed robbers. Likewise don’t be a sexually immoral person by corrupting your body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit just because you want to preach and save sexually immoral people.

Was Jesus a prostitute? No, yet He saved prostitutes including the woman caught in adultery **(John 8:1 – 12)** and the woman with the alabaster flask of oil **(Luke 7:37 – 50)**. Did Jesus have fellowship with demons? No, yet He cast out demons from people including Mary Magdalene in whom He had cast out seven demons **(Mark 16:9)**. You can’t have the Holy Spirit living and working in you if involved in these sinful practices and demons at work in you and through you. Again I say by your patience, possess your souls **(Luke 21:19)**. Prayers and fasting break the strongholds of sin in people, and makes the word of God and Holy Spirit’s convictions bring repentance and forgiveness, belief in Christ and eternal salvation.

**TO BE EFFECTIVE IN PREACHING TO WIN PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE LAW IS TO STUDY THEIR WAY OF LIFE PRAYERFULLY AND MEDITATIVELY. IT IS NOT TO CONDEMN THEM BUT TO BE LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO SPEAK WORD OF WISDOM AND REVELATION USING THINGS FAMILIAR TO THEM. BE LIKE JESUS AND PAUL FOR THE GOD OF THE SECOND CHANCE IS STILL AT WORK.**

**5// BECOMING LIKE WEAK PEOPLE TO SAVE PEOPLE WHO ARE IN BONDAGES.**

**1 Corinthians 9:22 – 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.**

Paul revealed another group of people as weak and not strong who needs to be saved with the gospel of Jesus Christ. These are the vulnerable in society such as the aged, women and children, poor, homeless, sick, the imprisoned, the rejected and those with slave status. They don't belong to the class of the rich, wealthy and affluence with recognition and importance like Boaz of Bethlehem. This man was a relative of the Naomi's deceased husband with great wealth and family of Elimelech (**Ruth 2:1**). Know that a point in time, Job the strong man of God was weakened with the storms of this life with the loss of his children, destruction of properties and pressure from wife and friends to curse God and die (**Job chapters 1 – 42**).

These are people who are not strong to truth and revelation because of dominance of entrenched traditional, cultural and religious beliefs on their minds. These strongholds make them struggle to believe and live Christ. They are too analytical and do not appreciate spiritual things. Faith is not in their dictionary of belief such as the resurrection from the dead. Paul had to use their own symbols and sayings to preach and reveal Christ to them.

**According to Adam Clarke's commentary, the weak refers to those who were conscientiously scrupulous, even in respect to lawful things.** Even them, Paul's righteous agenda was to identify and save them for Christ. For he made himself of no special class by revealing his past sinful life based on ignorance and subsequent conversion to preach Christ to them. Paul once described himself as a blasphemer and a persecutor (**1 Timothy 1:13**). It means to say that Paul lived Christ and was therefore not subject to the piousness of the Pharisees in relating with people (**Acts 16:4 – 6**). He humbled himself in life and ministry and this explains why he related well with all manner of people for the gospel sake.

The bible says that the unity of faith of the early Church was very strong because they shared everything in common and there was no class distinction between the rich and the poor (**Acts 2:44 – 47**). This is the way of righteousness to go if we are to identify with the weak and save them in families and societies.

The message is that God's love towards the lost must be facilitated by the gospel of Jesus Christ in life, ministry and strategies of Apostle Paul. This is one of the most effective ways to preach and reveal Jesus Christ to save all manner of people.

Every Christian must have the mind of Paul and Christian and the mind of Christ to be simple, flexible and identify with all people at all times and situations. Even your dress code is important to the rich and poor, uneducated and educated. Do not copy their sinful lifestyles and habits but be guided by the Holy Spirit to be holy and righteous.

Speak the word and God will confirm His word with signs and wonders. Have biblical messages in preparation to preach and allow the Holy Spirit to lead you as well as in the application of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. Be evangelistic oriented and fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**YOU CANNOT ASSUME PERFECTION AND KNOW IT ALL TO PREACH CHRIST TO PEOPLE IN THE CATEGORY OF THE WEAK AND VULNERABLE. YOU HAVE TO IDENTIFY WITH THEIR WEAKNESSES AND EVEN USE YOUR PAST WEAKNESSES AS A PREACHING MESSAGE TO REVEAL GOD'S MERCY AND GRACE THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST. IT SAVES MANY PEOPLE IN THIS GROUP. BRINGING ENCOURAGEMENT AND HOPE TO THE WEAK AND SHARING YOUR TIME, MONEY AND RESOURCES WITH THEM IS THE ENERGY AND STRENGTH THEY NEED TO RISE UP IN FAITH AND BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.**

## **6// PARTNERSHIP IN PREACHING THE GOSPEL WITH THE CHURCH**

**1 Corinthians 9:23 – Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.**

Paul crowned his strategic evangelistic and preaching methods by stating the divine purpose and wisdom in them. He did it for the gospel sake so that he might be a partaker of it with them. Paul's righteous motive was to share his six effective strategies with the Corinthians Believers and make them partakers of it. It means to say that the Church was to emulate his righteous examples in ministry and win many people for Christ and the kingdom of God. Sense of unity of faith and fellowship was encouraged by Paul for edification purpose.

His commitment and determination to win people for Christ in a dynamic and cosmopolitan and religious environment made him have the quality of a chameleon; adaptation to the environment. Obedience to preach the gospel in the will of God with the Church mattered to Paul for mutual benefits and edification.

These six fold strategies was effective and successful to win all manner of people for Christ in the leading and power of the Holy Spirit. Truly, if the Church will emulate the simplicity and humility of Paul, many people would be won for the Lord Jesus Christ. It means to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in season and out of season **(2 Timothy 4:2)**.

It means to be prayerful and pray for Ministers, Church leaders and Believing Christians to fulfill the Great Commission **(Matthew 28:18 – 20)**. It means to believe the words of Jesus that the harvest is plenty but the labourers are few. Hence the need to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send forth more labourers into His vineyard **(Matthew 9:37:& 38)**.

It does not mean to worship the gods of the religions and perform their rituals and sacrifices. Already Paul warned the Corinthians about eating food sacrificed to idols for conscience sake and edification of the Church. You don't need to be a liar, deceiver, thief, armed robber, prostitute, fornicator, adulterer, idol worshiper and sin against God. You don't need to be a backslider and trample the Son of God underfoot and insult the Spirit of grace through the Lord Jesus Christ because you want to win people to Christ **(Hebrews 10:29)**.

Are a God pleaser or man pleaser? Jesus said that His food was to do the work of Him who sent Him and to finish His work **(John 4:34)**. Be holy; be righteous; be prayerful and see the salvation of the Lord. Achieve eternal results and not earthly results.

## PRAYER

**Clothe me O God in the simplicity and humility and wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and Apostle Paul to win more people into Your kingdom.**

**Help me with Your Holy Spirit to relate peacefully with all people for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

**Make me approachable and receptive, confident and bold in doing the Lord's work. In Jesus' name. Amen.**

**THE ANOINTING GIVES WISDOM TO EVANGELIZE AND WIN SOULS FOR THE LORD. THOUGH THERE ARE MANY STRATEGIES TO BE ADOPTED, GOD'S STANDARD OF HOLINESS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS HAVE NO SUBSTITUTES. USE THE RIGHT METHODS TO WIN SOULS FOR CHRIST AND ACHIEVE ETERNAL RESULTS. NANA KWAKU DUODU**

## THE MIND AND ATTITUDE OF THE CHRISTIAN TO OBTAIN AN IMPERISHABLE CROWN

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### INSPIRATION

In ancient Israel, the watchmen were the first to see and observe people running towards the city, town or village either with good news of salvation (victory) or bad news especially from the battle field **(Isaiah 52:7)**. However in the context of Paul to the Corinthians Believers, those who run the Christian race must run with good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ that saves eternally and offers an imperishable crown. For we must be carriers of the gospel of Jesus Christ; beautiful feet spiritually **(Romans 10:15)**.

The bible says that with the death of Absalom the son of David who rebelled against him, Joab sent a Cushite to break forth the news to David. Ahimaaz impressed upon Joab to run after the Cushite. When the watchmen of David first saw a man running towards David, they could not easily identify him. But when the watchman saw a second man running towards David, he was able to identify him as Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok. And David was convinced that he had come to him with good news because he was a good man **(2 Samuel 18:21 – 24, 25 – 28)**. Indeed a carrier of good news who is identified by watchmen is an instrument of the Lord and a blessing to the people.

It is in this revelation that both Peter and John ran to the tomb of Jesus when the women reported of His resurrection from the dead. The bible says also that John outran Peter and came to the tomb first but stood and peeped at the burial place of Jesus. But when Peter reached there, he entered the tomb and saw the linen clothes lying there. Then John also entered and saw the linen clothes of Jesus, and also believed in His resurrection from the dead **(John 20:1 – 8)**. We read

**1 Corinthians 9:24 – 27 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.**

One of the qualities of Apostle Paul was his ability to relate spiritual truths with the environmental conditions, economy, religion and festivals and lives of the Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles; a skill he learnt from our Lord Jesus Christ. In all situations, he emphasized on the spiritual truth as the will of God to be achieved in life and ministry. Here in this context, he wrote about the Christian race this is being ran by all Believing Christians carrying the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ as Preachers and the Church.

**THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORKS ARE ENTRENCHED IN SPIRITUAL TRUTHS THAT HAVE A BEARING IN PHYSICAL THINGS AND ENVIRONMENT.**

## **A// RUN RIGHTEOUSLY TO RECEIVE AN IMPERISHABLE CROWN**

**1 Corinthians 9:24 – Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.**

Apostle Paul described the Christian faith and service as a race that is being run by all Believing Christians, Church workers, Church leaders and Christian leaders. He revealed further that for every race, there is the need to have a winning mentality and receive a prize. The determination here is compared to a human sports like athletics where one receives the ultimate prize.

It means to say that once you become a Believing Christian, you are put in a lane to run your race. Yes run your race and not the races of other Believing Christians. It means to say also that unbelievers and sinners who are not yet born again are not in the Christian race at all and cannot be said to be lanes to run.

He created a scenario of a determined person running to receive the prize. The charge and encouragement was for the Corinthians Believers to run in such a way to obtain the prize of imperishable crown. You don't just run but in obedience to the complete gospel of Jesus Christ through whom you have believed and saved eternally. You have to believe always the doctrine of the Christian faith with the trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit where God is One and manifests Himself in three Persons. Indeed when you have revelation of your salvation through unique roles played by the Trinity, you will run your Christian race without giving up in backsliding and apostasy. When you have revelation of your call and ministry and institution of the Church, you will be led by the Holy Spirit and not be subjected to whims and caprices of the people.

Bible commentaries compared the Christian journey to the Isthmian games of athletics competition with the venue in Corinth. It was so popular and competitive you had to train for ten (10) months to qualify for participation and win prizes. It bears also close resemblance to the modern day Olympic games where athletes and other sports people train very well to compete and win medals for their countries.

**PAUL INTRODUCED THE ASPECT OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIKENED IT TO A CHRISTIAN RACE IN WHICH EVERY SINGLE BELIEVING CHRISTIAN IS ON A LANE TO RUN HIS OR HER RACE. IN TRUTH IT BEGINS FROM THE DAY YOU BECOME BORN AGAIN. TO THE CORINTHIANS BELIEVERS, THEY WERE ALREADY IN THE CHRISTIAN AND PAUL CHARGED THEM TO BE CAREFUL IN HOW THEY RUN; NOT ANYHOW BUT IN OBEDIENCE TO THE COMPLETE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST AND LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

**THE GOAL OF EVERY ATHLETE IS TO FINISH THE RACE AND WIN A PRIZE. LIKEWISE DETERMINATION IS THE POWER TO WIN THE CHRISTIAN RACE AND RECEIVE AN IMPERISHABLE CROWN.**

## **PHYSICAL TRAINING IS GOOD BUT SPIRITUAL TRAINING AND WORKS ARE BETTER AND BENEFICIAL FOR THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE EVEN IN ETERNITY.**

Apostle Paul's message was the endurance capacity of the Christian to be faithful to attain eternal life and rewards even in the midst of challenges and complexities of situations. He challenged the Christians in Corinth to have the mindset of the athlete to train, run in designated lanes by the rules, endure hardships and sufferings, and cross the finishing line to win prizes and rewards.

## **KING SOLOMON SAID THAT TO FAINT IN THE DAY OF ADVERSITY, YOUR STRENGTH IS SMALL (PROVERBS 24:10). ENDURANCE IS THE DEVELOPMENT AND MATURITY OF SPIRITUAL MUSCLES TO FINISH THE CHRISTIAN RACE.**

The good news is that there is reward for every faithful Christian who play by the rules of God in Christ and the Holy Spirit unlike worldly games. Once you are serious with your Christian life and ministry, prayerful, read and meditate on God's word, enjoy the leadings of the Holy Spirit and obeys the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is hope for eternal salvation and rewards from God. Yeah work hard in ministry to win an imperishable crown.

## **THE RESOURCES OF GOD ARE UNLIMITED AND THEREFORE EVERY FAITHFUL AND VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN WILL OBTAIN HIS OR HER IMPERISHABLE CROWN.**

### **B// BE TEMPERATE IN ALL THINGS TO WIN AN IMPERISHABLE CROWN**

**1 Corinthians 9:25 – And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.**

Paul instructed that Corinthians Believers to run with passion but in a way to obtain the crown. The key word used here is “**temperate**” with the dictionary meaning of being marked with moderation or not extreme, calm and restrained. According to the gospel of Paul, these Christian qualities must be employed in our Christian race if we are to obtain the prize. It means to say that at the awards giving day in eternity, these factors would be determinant in receipt of them. It means to say also that God does not want excesses with damaging effects on the faith of fellow Believing Christians.

For instance holy anger to correct evils in the Church like the way Paul rebuked the Church of Corinth for permitting and tolerating sexual immorality (**1 Corinthians 5:1 & 2**) is preferred to extreme anger that scatters the Church and bring divisions. Therefore moderation that brings about edification (**1 Corinthians 14:9**) of the Church would be rewarded to Ministers who managed their local Churches and Bishops with presiding Churches. This is applicable to all Believing Christians running their individual races all over the world.

That is why you must discipline yourself as a Believing Christian and look unto Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our father, and endure every permitted challenging situation to overcome. Even if you have to deny yourself of certain rights in life like no marriage, children and properties, and in ministry like depending on the Church for material and financial supports to fulfill your ministry and obtain an imperishable crown, then I dare say like Paul that this is the way of righteousness. We have the grace to be committed because the Holy Spirit is our Partner and Helper.

**SELF – DENIAL AND SELF – DISCIPLINE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT ARE INEVITABLE IF THESE WILL HELP AND PROMOTE YOUR ATTAINMENT OF ETERNAL SALVATION AND REWARDS.**

The given advice is to be calm in all situations, sober, and trust God to persist and prevail for an imperishable crown even more than the athlete who trains, runs, completes and obtain but a perishable crown. By this truth, Apostle Paul's message is that the Christian race is not about the strength to run, but also the endurance and the grace to obey the rules of the game. It is not just about the application of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (**1 Corinthians 12:1 – 7, 8 – 11**) but the fruit of the Spirit without the works of the flesh (**Galatians 5:19 – 21, 22 – 24**).

Hence to gain “**mastery**” in your Christian race according to King James Bible is not your personal business with personal business ideas and methods to gain big congregations but making them become like Christ. Know that it is not just about the quantity and physical prosperity but quality and spiritual prosperity to qualify them obtain the prize and imperishable crowns.

**DEPEND ON GOD'S GRACE IN ALL SITUATIONS AND NOT BY THE STRENGTH AND WISDOM OF THE FLESH. BEING TEMPERATE IN THE CHRISTIAN RACE IS NOT JUST ABOUT APPLICATION OF THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BUT FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT. IT IS ALSO ABOUT THE FORMATION OF CHRIST IN BELIEVING CHRISTIANS (QUALITY) BEYOND THE PASSION FOR BIG CONGREGATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL CONGREGATIONS OR THE STATUS OF A BISHOP (QUANTITY). SEEK TO HAVE THE BLESSING OF THE TWO BECAUSE YOU FULFILL GOD'S RIGHTEOUS AGENDA IN THE CHURCH.**

**C// DEPEND ON THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BE FOCUSED FOR VICTORY**

**1 Corinthians 9:26 – Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.**

Apostle Paul's message of edification to the Corinthians Believers is that he lived a purposed driven life with focus on the prize; imperishable crown. He was therefore sure of the eternal reward and blessing that awaited him if he completed the Christian race according to the set rules and standards in Christ. In other words, he could not live and do the works of God in ministry haphazardly. He had a clear mission being accomplished

and clear achievable goals. He knew his priority areas and he concentrated on them not to beat about the bush or as one who is confused.

**LIKE PAUL EVERY MINISTER AND WORKER IN THE LORD'S VINEYARD SHOULD LIVE ON THE PROMISE OF RECEIVING AN IMPERISHABLE CROWN IN ETERNITY FROM THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE AS THIS IS THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

On this revelation, they must be a people who are sure of their faith in Christ and righteous works by the Holy Spirit to be rewarded in eternity. In other words, they must live a purpose driven life with clear vision and mission and achievable goals in life. They are to be focused and not distracted. They are to run their Christian races with certainty and not uncertainty. They are to behave as Believing Christians and a Church and not as Unbelievers and a law to themselves like Gentiles without the law but obey certain portions of the law.

**BELIEVING CHRISTIANS WHO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THEIR CALL AND MINISTRIES ARE NOT JOKERS OR CRAFTY IN THEIR WORKS AND THE CHURCH. FOR THEY ARE DETERMINED AND PURPOSED DRIVEN TO FULFILL THEIR MINISTRIES IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND QUALIFY TO RECEIVE THE PROMISED IMPERISHABLE CROWN.**

Once you are living your Christian life and doing the work of God in line with divine mission and goals, there is the need to be focused and not distracted. This makes the need for self – discipline and self – denial a necessity to be righteous and holy as a Christian. You do not live and work carelessly without faith, direction and hope. You must not handle the word of God craftily because it brings a curse on you (**Jeremiah 48:10, 2 Corinthians 4:2**). Neither are you to peddle the word of God but preach and teach in sincerity as originated from God (**2 Corinthians 2:17**). Rather, you battle the devil, enemies of all righteousness and the challenges of life and ministry to prevail and attain victory in the name of Jesus. Hallelujah somebody.

**IN GAMES, WE COMPETE FOR PRIZES THROUGH FOCUS AND DETERMINATION TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES. THROUGH DETERMINATION AND FOCUS IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, WE BATTLE THE DEVIL AND ALL ENEMIES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR ETERNAL LIFE AND OUR PROMISED IMPERISHABLE CROWNS IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

**THOSE WHO SEE THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST AS MERCHANDISE AND BUSINESS TO MAKE MONEY, FAME AND POPULARITY DO NOT HAVE ETERNAL GOALS TO WIN THE PRIZE AND RECEIVE THE PROMISED IMPERISHABLE CROWN. LIKE PAUL HANDLE THE WORD OF GOD IN SINCERITY AND BE LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO DO YOUR WORKS IN CHRIST RIGHTEOUSLY.**

See yourself with the mindset of a winner even from conception. Once you are the only sperm that battled many other million sperms to be placed in the womb for conception

and birth, then have the winning mentality as a Believing Christian with the Holy Spirit. Remember the message of Apostle Paul earlier was that the right to life and things must not only be for self – motivation but edification for the Church. Therefore discipline the body and make it conform to the will of God by the Holy Spirit.

**YOU BROKE THROUGH TO BE CONCEIVED AND BORN A WINNER. EVEN THOSE BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES AS WINNERS MAKE IT IN LIFE. WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE BELIEVING CHRISTIAN IS ALSO ON THE COURSE OF VICTORY TO EMULATE THE EXAMPLE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. HAVE A VISION OF THE PRIZE AND BE DETERMINED AND FOCUSED TO RECEIVE IT.**

### **D// LIVE A DISCIPLINED CHRISTIAN LIFE TO BE APPROVED FOR A CROWN**

**1 Corinthians 9:27 – But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.**

The conclusive words of Paul with regards to striving for the promised imperishable crown was to overcome all obstacles of the flesh like anger, idol worship, sexual immorality, sectarianism, divisions, pride, arrogance and non – forgiveness among the lot as noted in the Church of Corinth. Hence he disciplined the body and brought it to subjection of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit and conform to God's will. He made sure that he stayed within the will of God just as a research work has a chapter as scope of work. He prayed and fasted, lived by example in obedience, and averted the works of the flesh before instructing the Church of Corinth in obedience to the complete gospel of Jesus Christ.

**PAUL DISCIPLINED HIS BODY AND MADE IT SUBJECT TO CHRIST AND THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONFORMITY WITH GOD'S WILL. PRAYERS, FASTINGS, HUMILITY, OBEDIENCE, DETERMINATION, FOCUS, ENCOURAGEMENT, SELF – DISCIPLINE, SELF – DENIAL ARE AMONG THE THINGS ASSOCIATED WITH HIM TO HAVE PREACHED CHRIST AND INSTRUCTED THE CHURCH IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

Indeed Paul was a genuine Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ who believed in collective faith and works in the Lord. He was also interested in making it to heaven and qualifying for receipt of the promised imperishable crown just like his fellow ministry partners and the Corinthian Believers. Hence he revealed that the purpose of disciplining his body and making it subject to Christ and the Holy Spirit as God's will was to be declared qualified and not disqualified.

It is important to note that Paul's message to the Corinthians Believers about being a servant to all in order to win many people for Christ had the righteous intention to be a partaker with them. This righteous move was for the sake of the gospel and not for selfish gains **(1 Corinthians 9:23)**. It means to say that Paul worked hard for the numerical and spiritual growth and maturity of the Church of Corinth to ensure unity of

faith and purpose and blessing. Hence his conclusive words and message was justifiably righteous and edifying to the Church.

**PAUL WAS NOT JUST INTERESTED IN PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST TO THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS AND PEOPLE TO SAVE THEM ETERNALLY BUT LIVED A DISCIPLINED CHRISTIAN LIFE WITH WORKS OF FAITH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS TO ALSO QUALIFY FOR RECEIPT OF THE PROMISED IMPERISHABLE CROWN.**

Be a doer of the gospel of Jesus Christ as a Christian and a Christian leader so that both you and your Church members will be qualified and not disqualified to obtain the promised imperishable crown by the grace of God. In desperate situations and times, pray like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane: **“Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).**

The bible says also that: **Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you (1 Timothy 4:16).** With this timely instruction and counsel from Paul to his beloved son Timothy, the purity of the gospel of Jesus Christ was preserved to make Timothy and his congregation receive the gift of eternal life and qualify for receipt of the promised imperishable crown. Hallelujah.

The New King James Bible Commentary states that the Greek word for disqualified means disapproved after testing. This is not about the gift of eternal life but the prize which is obtained as the reward for endurance and suffering in the cause of Christ **(See Philippians 1:29, 2 Timothy 2:12).**

**LIVE WHAT YOU PREACH AND INSTRUCT PEOPLE AS A CHRISTIAN AND A CHRISTIAN LEADER RIGHTEOUSLY. FOR ENDURANCE AND SUFFERING FOR THE CAUSE OF CHRIST QUALIFY YOU IN THE RECEIPT OF THE PROMISED IMPERISHABLE CROWN.**

We read

**1 Timothy 4:8 – For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.**

Paul made a distinction between bodily exercise and godliness in the lives of people. Clearly and evidentially, bodily exercise strengthens and improve the health of people. But its profitability is limited in comparison with the eternal benefits of a life of godliness. For the life of godliness with endurance and suffering in righteous works by the Holy Spirit has the assurance of receiving an imperishable crown.

It means to say that one’s righteous works would be recognized and rewarded by God. It is not a gift but a promise which is earned by God’s grace given to the Church. Once our minds and attitude make us have total commitment, we are bound to receive the

imperishable crown with the help of the Holy Spirit. This is motivation for the Church to endure shame and suffering and establish God's will in Christ by the Holy Spirit even in persecution, difficult and challenging times.

**IF THE BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL EXERCISE ARE EVIDENT WITH BUILT UP MUSCLES, STRENGTH AND HEALTHINESS, THEN SPIRITUAL EXERCISE IN CHRIST BY THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES GOD'S GRACE ABOUND ON US TO BE OBEDIENT, HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS ON EARTH AND RECEIVE THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE AND THE PROMISED IMPERISHABLE CROWN IN ETERNITY. THIS IS WHAT I CALL THE ANOINTING FOR DOUBLE BLESSINGS.**

### **PRAYER**

**We pray O God for grace to be determined, focused and temperate in our lives, ministries and Church management as we obey our call to worship and service in Your Vineyard.**

**Help us O God to have a determined mind and purpose to show total commitment to the cause of Christ through obedience, holiness and righteousness.**

**Help us to obey Your word and leading of Your Holy Spirit in order to keep our proper estate in Christ all the time.**

**Help us to maintain a high sense of discipline of our bodies to be approved and qualified for Your blessings and receipt of the imperishable crown.**

**All these we ask in the name of Jesus. Amen.**

**TO RECEIVE THE IMPERISHABLE CROWN, SERVICE TO THE LORD WITH ENDURANCE AND SUFFERING TO OVERCOME IS INEVITABLE TO THE BELIEVING CHRISTIAN, CHURCH LEADER, CHRISTIAN LEADER AND MINISTER.  
NANA KWAKU DUODU**

**DETERMINATION, FOCUS. MODERATION AND DISCIPLINE IN LIFE, MINISTRY AND THE CHURCH THROUGH SELF – DENIAL IN RIGHTEOUSNESS ARE EXPRESSIONS OF CONTINUOUS FAITH IN CHRIST BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO OBEY GOD IRRESPECTIVE OF CHALLENGING TIMES AND MOMENTS. UNDER THIS GRACE, YOU ARE BOUND TO RECEIVE YOUR IMPERISHABLE CROWN.  
NANA KWAKU DUODU**

**BE DETERMINED TO BE A PARTAKER WITH THE CHURCH AND BE SAVED ETERNALLY AND RECEIVE ETERNAL BLESSINGS SUCH AS THE PROMISED IMPERISHABLE CROWN. NANA KWAKU DUODU**



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