



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Pursuit of Holiness

Tuesday, 18 March 2014

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CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY

152nd General Assembly

- TUESDAY @ 7:30 AM in 123 CAP
- TUESDAY @ 12 NOON in 328 CLOB

Capitol Commission Bible Studies are held Tuesday mornings at 7:30am and again at 12 Noon. The weekly Bible study is nonpartisan and non-denominational. The study for the 2014 General Assembly is the book of First Corinthians.

I pray that this study will be edifying to you. I am here *solely* to serve you and to be a resource for prayer and counsel. Please accept my study in the Word of God, as evidence of my desire to serve you.

– Dr. Ron J. Bigalke, Georgia State Minister, Capitol Commission

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Tuesday, 18 March 2014

First Corinthians 9 – “The Pursuit of Holiness”

Almost instinctively among Americans, we desire whatever we crave, so long as no one is hurt in the process. Freedom is one of the most sacred ideals among Americans. The first ten amendments to the Constitution (the *Bill of Rights*) affirm the priceless freedoms that all Americans enjoy. The Declaration of Independence is the most cherished symbol of liberty in the United States, and it enshrines our freedoms as including the rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Americans love to sing our freedoms in the “land of the noble free,” and often celebrate to “let freedom ring.” Freedom is our *summum bonum* (Lat. “the highest good”).

Americans greatly esteem freedom, and that cherishing of personal liberty often continues when one becomes a Christian, which is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Often the ideal for freedom continues into one’s newfound faith in Christ Jesus. Even believers sometime think we should follow the Lord Jesus in any manner we deem appropriate, so long as harm comes to no one.

First Corinthians 9 reveals that those who believe in Jesus Christ must overcome unrestrained devotion to personal freedom. Believers must be discerning as to when it may be necessary to forfeit one’s rights. Moreover, if one does not exercise discipline with our physical bodies and appetites, they will become our master, and thus we will disqualify ourselves from God’s use.

GOD-GIVEN RIGHTS

(1 Cor 9:1-14) First Corinthians 8 discussed the forfeiting of personal “rights” for the benefit of another believer in Jesus Christ. The discussion leads naturally into the next chapter, wherein the Apostle Paul defended his apostleship and authority. Apostles were primary leaders of the church; they and the prophets were the foundation of the church (Eph 2:20); thus, there were certain freedoms, responsibilities, and rights that were associated with the office (1 Cor 9:1-2).

Paul used the word “right” (Gk. ἐξουσία // *exousia*, “conferred authority”) repeatedly throughout verses 4-18 in response to those who examined his claims (9:3). Verses 4-12 contain the Apostle’s specific defense regarding his willingness to forego apostolic and ministerial rights. Paul’s basic defense is that he has every right to enjoy the benefits and privileges of his labor for the Lord (9:7), and the Bible affirms this principle (9:8-10). Nevertheless, the Apostle was willing to forego those rights for the sake of others and the Lord’s glory (9:12).

GOD-GIVEN GOALS

(1 Cor 9:15-27) Paul sacrificed his rights so his work would have greater success, and thus all believers should not immediately seek to exercise their “rights” when harmful effects could befall a weaker believer in Christ Jesus. The work that God lays upon a believer must be done, and thus there is no reason to boast (1 Cor 9:15-16).

GOD’S STEWARDSHIP IS A TRUST GRANTED BY HIM. . . . THE ONLY REQUIREMENT FOR A STEWARD IS TO BE TRUSTWORTHY. . . .

Christians must be faithful when the Lord God grants a stewardship (9:17-18). God has granted a stewardship to elected officials and their staffs (cf. Dan 2:21; John 19:11; Rom 13:1; Tit 3:1-2), and it is indispensable to understand that God’s stewardship is a trust granted by Him to be administered on his behalf. The only requirement for a steward is to be trustworthy (1 Cor 4:2).

An American proverb states, “He who pays the piper calls the tune” (Wolfgang Mieder et al. [eds.], *A Dictionary of American Proverbs* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1992] 866). Paul desired to be “free” from such obligations (1 Cor 9:19). Although he was unbound by any externally derived demands, the Apostle Paul imposed internal burdens – of his own volition – so that he made himself “a slave to all” (9:19). In order to reach others for Christ Jesus, it is often necessary to “become all things to all men” for the purpose of saving “some” (9:20-22).

In his lecture “On Christian Freedom,” Martin Luther asserted two propositions. The first proposition was with regard to spiritual liberty: “a Christian . . . is the most free lord of all, and subject to

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Tuesday (18 March) @ 7:30am – 8:00am, 123 CAP

Tuesday (18 March) @ 12 Noon – 12:45pm, 328 CLOB

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The Pursuit of Holiness

none.” The second proposition was with regard to servitude: “a Christian . . . is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to every one” [Martin Luther, *First Principles of the Reformation*, eds. Henry Wace and C. A. Buchheim (London: John Murray, 1883) 104]. **First Corinthians 9:19** and **Romans 13:8** affirm these two propositions as true.

First Corinthians 9:19 – For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.

Romans 13:8 – Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.

“Now love is by its own nature dutiful and obedient to the beloved object. Thus even Christ, though Lord of all things, was yet made of a woman; made under the law; at once free and a servant; at once in the form of God and in the form of a servant” [ibid. 104-05]. In one sense, a Christian is “subject to none,” that is, no one (other than God) can exercise compulsion or jurisdiction with regard to matters of faith. Every believer is a servant of God and accountable to Him.

THE PURSUIT OF HOLINESS NECESSITATES INTERNALLY IMPOSED BURDENS (RESPONSIBILITIES).

Verses 19-23 are crucial to understand as God intended. The eternal truth of God’s Word – which Christians proclaim – always remains the same, and never changes for anyone’s sake. However, while the message of Scripture is upheld steadfastly in all matters, one can willingly endure inconveniences that are self-imposed for the sake of making the truth of the Bible known to all. Whatever is necessary and is biblically legitimate should be done for the sake of reaching all sorts of people with the message of God’s Word. The effort to proclaim God’s absolute demands, which bind one’s actions and thoughts, often requires flexibility in addition to forgoing one’s rights.

The pursuit of holiness necessitates internally imposed burdens (responsibilities). Christians must never do what is required solely because someone else demands it; rather, the believer learns to serve God as a self-imposed compulsion to please the Lord. Fidelity to the Lord does not develop from exhortation as much as it does from loving Christ, and benefitting from his saving and sanctifying work.

1 Corinthians 9:24, 27 – . . . Run in such a way that you may win . . . I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that . . . I myself will not be disqualified.

True holiness includes control over our physical bodies and appetites. If we are to pursue holiness we must recognize that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and that we are to glorify God with them. . . .

As we set ourselves to the task in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, we will see Him at work in us. We will fail many times, but as we persevere, we will be able to say with Paul, “I can do everything through Him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13) [Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1978) 110, 116].

Romans 12:1-2 – Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice . . . do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is. . . .

. . . THE CHRISTIAN ADOPTS THOSE GOALS THAT RESULT IN ETERNAL GLORY AND REWARDS. . . .

God created our physical bodies and natural appetites, and thus the intellectual conception of our body (“thing in itself”) is not sinful because God formed it. However, if not disciplined (9:27), our bodies will become “instruments of unrighteousness” as opposed to being “instruments of righteousness to God” (Rom 6:13). We are exhorted not to indulge “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life” (1 John 2:16) for such cravings are detrimental to the pursuit of holiness that God calls his people to live (1 Pet 1:13-16).

Sin is whatever results in a greater influence of the authority and strength of your body as opposed to your mind (i.e. your inner being). If the physical appetites of your body determine your life decisions and thus order your purpose in life, and if you heed those impulses, your physical body will progressively obliterate every other aspect of your personality. If the physical overtakes your inner being, the result will be a dulling of your emotional life; and, your spiritual life will be subdued and eventually will become barren and feeble.

Scripture reveals that it is impossible to know the motives of someone else unless he or she chooses to reveal them (1 Sam 16:7). God alone judges motives and knows the secrets of one’s heart (Act 1:24). Nevertheless, it is often important to unreservedly divulge the true motives for your actions, as in the example of the Apostle Paul in the verses that conclude First Corinthians 9 (vv. 24-27).

The motivation of the believer in Christ Jesus ought to be focused upon the goal of obtaining God’s imperishable wreath (9:25). Not as those who are “beating the air” in the pursuit of those things that are perishable, the Christian adopts those goals that result in eternal glory and rewards (cf. Rom 2:7; 2 Tim 2:10; 4:8; 1 Pet 5:4). The spiritual life is comparable to that of an athlete who “competes according to the rules” (2 Tim 2:5; cf. 1 Cor 9:27).

What tragedy if our lives are not based upon God-given goals, and thus what seems to be so important *now* perishes in light of eternity. By contrast, the pursuit of holiness necessitates “self-control in all things” (9:25) and results in imperishable rewards for doing what God has commanded, as He revealed in the Holy Bible.

Thank you for allowing Capitol Commission the honor to provide Bible studies to you. If you have any questions, please talk with us, or contact us by email or phone.

About Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission state ministers teach ongoing verse-by-verse Bible studies for the entire Capitol community, and also meet personally with many government leaders (and their staff) to proclaim God’s grace in salvation, to encourage our leaders, pray with them, and provide biblical counsel.

Capitol Commission is a charitable and religious nonprofit corporation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Capitol Commission is supported by the generous gifts of businesses, churches, and individuals. Capitol Commission is not state-funded; rather, those with a heart for the Capitol community fund it. *Please join us in this ministry!*

**NEXT CAPITOL COMMISSION (INTERIM) BIBLE STUDY:
TUESDAY, 1 APRIL @ 12 NOON in 123 CAP
(always the 1st Tuesday of each month, during interim)**

Bible study luncheon sponsored by:

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