

1 Cor 9

by George Verwer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of biblical principles in handling money and support for long-term missionaries, and encourages honesty and transparency in seeking support from churches and prayer partners.

Duration: 45:50

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:7

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the biblical basis for supporting workers in the work of God. He references various scriptures, including 1 Corinthians 9:7-14, to emphasize the importance of providing for those who serve in the kingdom of God. The speaker also addresses the issue of balancing a simple lifestyle with the need to evangelize the world. He shares personal anecdotes and highlights the financial challenges faced by missionaries, emphasizing the need for support in their long-term service. The sermon encourages listeners to understand and communicate the financial expectations of their church and prayer partners, while emphasizing that this support should not be based on high-pressure fundraising tactics.

Transcript

First Corinthians, chapter 9, starting at verse 7, verses 7 through verse 14. Very important biblical principle we're dealing with tonight. How many of you are fairly sure in your mind, you're not positive, but you're fairly sure God is leading you into longer term missionary service? Not just, you know, raise your hand.

That's amazing. Now I can tell you this message tonight is for your sake, not for mine. Because if you are talking and thinking about longer term missionary service, on the practical level, your greatest problem will probably be in the area of support.

Last night before I went to sleep I was reading, it was quite late, an article from the Whitcliffe Bible Translators. And this article pointed out the agony that many of their long term people have in finding the necessary support to survive. And they're known as the, you know, one of the outstanding, 50 year old outstanding mission organization with enormous linkings with the church, especially in the United States, but also England and Australia and other countries.

And this article so ministered to me, the biblical basis of how a worker is to be supported in the work of God. So let's try to get this from the Word of God tonight. And we'll have a foundation stone for the rest of

our life.

I put some copies out yesterday of Peter Maiden's book on the subject of giving. If you're fortunate to get one of these, do share it with other people. All right, let's read, starting verse 7. Follow in your own language through verse 14.

I'm reading from the New American Standard. Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Isn't that clear? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the law also say these things? For it is written in the law of Moses, He shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing. God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written.

Because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you? If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right. This is the unique calling of the Apostle Paul.

We did not use this right. But we endure all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the cause or to the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple? And those who attend regularly to the altar have their share with the altar.

So also, the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. May God give us understanding from His Holy Word. Most of your pastors receive a salary.

This is not necessarily the lack of faith. It actually is quite biblical. Some mission societies pay their missionaries a proper salary.

And in OM, for many years, we have been trying to bring things into balance by saying, though we don't feel led in that direction, we certainly do not condemn other groups that have that particular method of getting the money out to the worker. At this point, we need a good message on the birth and the growth of what is called the faith mission society. But we don't have the time to do all that we'd like to do tonight.

And this is something that within Operation Mobilization we have wrestled with for many years. I believe at our general council this year, we came into the greatest honesty and reality in the area of money that I have known at least in the last 20 years. Because at times, due to our own failures and the criticism we receive when we fail, we have reacted in pride and got into a dangerous form of extremism in certain cases.

And among many of us in Operation Mobilization, it was almost wrong, we felt a twinge of our conscience if we even talked about money. Though there has never been any policy against that. Our conservative policy, of course, forbade us to get into fundraising, and it still does.

And if you read our literature carefully, you will see that we believe in information but without solicitation. Because of other complexities, it actually became information except money, without solicitation. Now, in a number of OM countries that changed quite a few years ago because different countries took advantage of different freedoms they had as an individual country.

And there's been increasing disunity on this subject over the past few years. So after much agony of heart, I made this cassette tape called the Financial Crisis Tape, the most widely listened to tape I have ever produced. And OM has come into a great new freedom in this area.

And it is biblical, because the New Testament and the Old Testament talks about money. We are not talking about any kind of high-pressure, gimmick-ridden fundraising. We're not talking about that.

But we're talking about the need for you to be able to share with your prayer partners and your church what actually OM believes and expects of you in the area of finance. And of course, the foundation for this is found in this scripture. You are in the work of the kingdom.

If I didn't believe that God had raised up this fellowship with all of our need and with all of our weaknesses, I would excuse myself and I'd get out of here tonight with or without a ticket. You know, if you're not convinced that God is in this and that there is, spiritually speaking, a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day leading us, then, you know, I wouldn't want to get in one of those trucks and head on to, you know, eastern Bangladesh villages. OM now has a close association and linking with over 1,000 local churches.

Many of these pastors in churches believe in this work more than I do. They don't know as much as I do. They believe this is the work of the kingdom.

How many of you have been sent out, in a definite way, by your own local church? Would you raise your hand? Raise your hand. Please hold it up high. That's way over 50%.

We didn't send you. We didn't even know who you were a few months ago. We were praying that the Lord of the Harvest would send forth laborers.

But the Lord of the Harvest, and this is clear in many passages in Acts, has chosen to use His church to send forth the laborers humanly, on the human level. Of those who did not raise their hand at that moment, how many of you sense that you are sent forward by other people who have prayed for you and committed you to the Lord, even though they may not have been an organized local church? Would you raise your hand? That's another great number of people. Now, we won't get into what the rest of you are doing here, but this is where God has mightily used this fellowship of OM, to take people who don't have a very good church relationship, but they love Jesus, they want to grow in their faith, they want to serve the Lord, they may not understand yet church truths, and yet it has often been through OM that those people later on have become more church-centered than the people who came to us from the churches in the first place.

A couple of years ago, Jonathan McCrosty wrote a leaflet about, with the help of other leaders, about OM's financial policy. In our traditional conservative way, we said, any church that asks us for this can receive it. Then we had a great debate and a lot of prayer, and we said, now we're going to send it to the churches anyway.

This year we had another debate and more prayer, and now you can enclose it and send the leaflet to every prayer partner that you have. That will be the new revised edition. It's not a big change, but for the likes of us, it's quite a radical step.

The Word of God teaches that you working in the kingdom should receive what you need materially to do that work. Simple ABC biblical principle. You don't have to feel guilty that people in your church are giving their hard-earned money so that you can go to India.

You shouldn't be feeling guilty about that. And we often have difficulty when we think of a dear old-age pensioner who's sacrificing and giving to you and she doesn't have a cassette recorder. She doesn't have a typewriter.

She doesn't have a lovely colored Indian shoulder bag. She may not have a car. She may not have some other things that you have.

And when you visit her house, she hasn't painted it for several years because she's given you all the money that she was going to use to buy the paint. And you find out she's fasting every third day so that she can send other missionary support money. And you find out she doesn't have any more Christian magazines because the subscriptions cost too much.

And then you find out she doesn't go to church on Sunday because she can't afford the bus fare. She's given it all to you. I dare to say the average Joe ever could walk out of there feeling fairly guilty about the whole thing.

Now I can assure you most of our prayer partners are not like that. When I fast, I think of my poor prayer partners. And when I blow some money on a nice big pizza, I think about one of my overweight businessman friends.

Just a matter of keeping the balance. It is difficult, isn't it? There's a little memo out on the table if you can ever find it. It's one of the more dull-colored ones.

In which I share about the problem of overemphasizing simple lifestyle while trying to evangelize the whole world 4.7 million souls with two ships and 400 vehicles. Now in myself, I love the simple lifestyle kick, really. I just love to save money.

I have a miserly root. He just loves to squeeze pennies and even watch them dance. One of my great victories last week when I was walking the dog in the park picking up tins and bottles and checking what was around, I found a tin or a can we're even in England calling them cans now.

Terrible, really, what's happening. I found an unopened can of Coca-Cola. I brought it home, checked it for radioactive activity, put it in the fridge and on the journey from England I had the joy of opening that free, miraculously provided Coca-Cola.

I mean, there's a joy in this, in being simple and seeing money saved for the glory of God. I haven't bought any shoes for 28 years. I get vibrations walking in shoes that don't fit.

And I collect old shoes that people don't want. I even wore two different shoes once. That always helps in the evangelism.

But you know, the fact of the matter is if we're going to evangelize the world, if we're not careful, simple lifestyle becomes a subtle tangent. We certainly would never have gotten two ships. We would have never printed and published three to four hundred million pieces of Christian literature.

I shouldn't say printed and published. A lot of it was printed and published by others. We just distributed it.

That's why we've written this leaflet on releasing finance through prayer because it's going to take money to evangelize the world. And if you're going to be a long-term missionary, you're going to have to learn to handle this problem. Now, some of you may work with a society that pays you a salary.

And one of the reasons OM is changing its policy a little bit is so that when people leave OM, they can live with what they receive in the way of teaching when they're on OM. Because most people, and we've had 25 or more years to watch them, if they want to be career missionaries, they leave the present OM emphasis in order to get into another mission society because most mission societies will not have what OM has been teaching for the last 20 years. But here's what has happened over these 20 years.

Many people who have felt in agreement with what we have taught have used that as a determining factor that they are not to be long-term missionaries, but they are to go and take up a secular job. I wish I had time to speak about that. Because especially here in Europe, there is enormous pressure not to be a so-called full-time Christian worker.

In countries like Germany, you're going to get very little encouragement to be a full-time Christian worker, especially with an interdenominational, you know, OM type thing. And in the past 20 or 30 years in Britain, the general message coming to the young people is get a career, get a good job, then the Lord can lead you later on if you prove yourself and if it be His will, then maybe, perhaps, He can lead you into full-time Christianity. So what do we see on the mission field? Especially up until, say, 15 or 20 years ago, more and more and more Americans and less and less and less Europeans.

This, we believe, is one of the reasons God brought OM into birth 25 years ago, this very month, here in Europe. To work with the Church in Europe and to help the Church in Europe continue to be a mighty missionary force for God on a worldwide level. That is the cardinal goal and principle of OM in Europe.

And we have seen many, many answers to prayer in European churches. And there is not a single European mission society that doesn't have an XOMer or more, sometimes a dozen or two, laboring in their missionary force today as a full-time worker. But there would be many, many more if we were more biblical in our approach to money.

And we would not feel guilty about doing deputation work for the MMF mission society or some other missionary group. And we would not think only in these extremes. What are the extremes? Over here, extreme, very off-putting fundraising.

That's one extreme. The other extreme, the conspiracy of silence, total silence, I only talk to God about money, not to man. And we have seen in OM that both of these extremes are ugly.

But we have discovered that sometimes this silence extreme leads to a more subtle kind of pride than even this funny fundraising extreme over here. And in OM we have seen some very ugly pride at times. People almost boasting that their money came in and they're waving their yellow receipt slips.

What about the young person on the same team who didn't get any yellow receipt slips that month? Is he praying less? Has he got less faith? It's as simple as that. When we pray in the area of healing, we see some people healed. Others are not healed.

I was watching Jonathan McCrosty as he got into his van out the window. Every time I see him, all on his own tonight, get into the van, it takes quite a time, it's quite an event, and see him drive away, I tell you, it speaks deeply, deeply to my heart in a way that I cannot easily express. I had the joy of coordinating the medical rescue operation when Jonathan had his accident.

We mobilized immediately tens of thousands of people to pray. But then we acted. We didn't just pray.

We know God could have raised Jonathan up right from the back of that vehicle where he was crushed, or from that hospital bed in Spain. Everything within us as Christians tells us we must pray and then we must act. A top doctor was taking care of him, but through various contacts I had in other countries, I got to a better top specialist in Barcelona, and we flew him at considerable expense immediately to the hospital where Jonathan was.

And we continued to pray. He could have died. Then, after consultation with those doctors, we got the best Swiss air rescue service we could have ever heard about.

We had already been in touch with Switzerland. In fact, I was in touch with about ten different countries. And Jonathan was flown in a special air ambulance from that location in Spain to one of the best spinal cord hospitals in Europe, which just happened to be a few blocks from his home in Brussels.

That's quite an amazing fact. Not just prayer. Prayer and obedience.

Prayer and common sense. We've always said this in OM. But we found it difficult to put it together in certain ways, and we still will.

We'll still have to grow and learn. We have not arrived. Now you're going home to your churches.

What are you going to do back there? Will it be the conspiracy of silence? Or will you be able to be open with people about what God is leading you to do in your life? You have been accepted into the work of God. For the last twelve months or two years we have been processing applications preparing for this particular week right here, right now. For two years we've been working on this.

Many have not come this far. Some have gone home from here. Most of you now have been accepted into the Operation Mobilization family for the next couple of years.

We are doing a work that is on the mind and the heart of God and that is commanded in the Word of God to go and evangelize the world. You are the oxen that is spoken about in this passage. And we don't want to put a muzzle, some kind of brace on you so that you cannot do that work.

You are the laborer that's worthy of your wages. Historically that puts us in a very challenging situation. The biblical response should be that we go to our churches, we share how God has led us, and we believe and pray with them together and seek their confirmation on what we are doing.

This is complex because I don't believe we necessarily need a full-scale missionary commendation for someone to come on a one-year spiritual training program. This is what makes the first couple of years in OM a little bit complex in some of this. Some of you are financing yourself.

There's nothing wrong with that. Other people have seen money come in from their parents or from some other source. And many of these things we have as our goals because it takes time.

Because many churches don't have a missionary vision. And because of the nature of the missionary situation today, the false ideas, the traditions, the lack of vision, we at times have to go and convince people that world missionary work is worth their investment in the first place. That should not have to be, it should not have to be that the likes of us have to help convince the church of the task of world missions.

But the truth is, that is where the situation is in many places today. That's why sometimes it is difficult to explain and describe the ministry of Operation Mobilization. There are many sides to the OM personality.

There are many sides to the OM. We were born out of a protest. And from those earliest days we were selling copies of Why Revival Tarrys and giving out Herald of His Coming and distributing Calvary Road that there may come revival and vision to the church of Jesus Christ.

Our first burden wasn't to get them to send us to the mission field. Our first burden was that the fire of God may come down upon the church. And that they would send workers with all the great mission societies to complete the task that was in front of us.

Satan, of course, counterattacks in many, many different ways. I believe every spiritual movement has blind spots. For many, many years I beseeched God to show OM, to show me my blind spots as I seemed to have an ability to see them in other people.

At least I thought I did. God is patient with us. He doesn't say, now when you get everything in perfect order, then I'm going to use you.

This treasure is in earthen vessels. OM from its earliest days to this day has had areas of immaturity and areas of spiritual blindness, practical blindness, that God has slowly, slowly helped us with. Isn't it interesting how we can see the blindness the other group has? Sometimes in OM we have spoken negatively and despairingly of other groups, of the practices we felt they had which we didn't feel were the best.

Praise God for people who have not been afraid to challenge us concerning some of our blind spots, including quite a few of you who are here and who have been here in this conference. And OM, I can assure you, in the months and years to come is committed to greater honesty, greater integrity, and to a more biblical position concerning money and concerning our relationship and submission to the local church wherever we may be coming. And if your own home church doesn't feel that you should be coming on OM, then we feel one of our leaders must go there and pray together and talk this thing out.

Not a matter of you sneaking out the back window and showing up in the OM van in Lahore. Not a matter of you selling your car and draining your bank account and by that purpose bypass the church and come into OM through the chimney. Because it's not firstly the money we want to see the church is giving to support you and world missions.

It's the prayer. It's the fellowship. It's also the fact that when you return to your country, OM does not have the structure to care for you.

It must be your church who welcomes you back and helps you get on your feet in your own hometown, in your own community. We cannot possibly do that. Right now, OM doesn't have the manpower even to type out the receipt slips for the gifts that we're receiving.

I know on the ICT, International Coordinating Team, one of the married women who already has several jobs is also right now typing up receipt slips and she has two children and is her husband's secretary and is working part-time as my secretary as my secretary is on leave. But she's been going the extra mile into the office to type up receipts. You see, the key in sending out the workers is the local church, but the key to receiving the workers back, including some who may be casualties, is also the local church with all their roots and the God-given structure that they have.

We're in so many different countries and just the differences between Germany and England and some of these things are very, very great. Some of our German young people come from little evangelical

fellowships which are just a part of the big Lutheran church in their city. And some of these people, until they came in touch with OM and we gave them some information, never understood anything about personal financial support.

They just give their money to the organization and let the organization divided up among the workers. Our OM system was far more linked to the way things had been done because of certain movements of faith in Great Britain and then in America. But when we gave the German churches some information and when we told them on the telephone in person to person the basic rules of the game, because it's dangerous to use cricket rules in a baseball game or football rules in a basketball game, then many more of them started to send the money in designated to the particular individuals and oh how they were praising God that finally the Lord saw their need for personal support.

The worker is worthy of his hire. The Bible does not go into the great details that some of our mission societies do on this issue. Of all the people I admire, I guess, in my Christian life, one of them is Billy Graham.

I never met him. I was saved through his preaching. I've followed his life all of my Christian life.

He receives a salary. Billy Graham receives a salary. And I think it's about twenty grand.

Twenty thousand, somewhere around there. Not Deutschmarks, dollars. Two eighty three on today's market, Deutschmark market.

But right now, many school teachers in the United States receive a salary near that. And he did that for a number of reasons. Because he easily could have received ten times that much money and some of these famous people do.

I am convinced, and I always have been, this isn't new, God works in different ways through different fellowships and different groups.

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