

MAXWELL E. OGAGA

PAUL & FULL-TIME MINISTRY

THE ONE-SIDED NARRATIVE

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The One-Sided Narrative.

I have read several one sided narrative on the ministry of Paul in the areas of ‘Full-time’ ministry and unfortunately most of this write up comes from those who are bi-vocational (Working secular job and doing ministry alongside). The danger of this is that we tend to make our personal life and also use a few one –sided narrative of Paul as a standard for the work of the Gospel globally. While we have Peter, James, Mathew, John with no record of them working to do ministry and no case of ‘dishonesty’ in financial matters against them.

What this does is two things:

1. It takes away from personal individual dealings of people with God (e.g My Dad had very strict instructions to go full time and almost lost his life in a bid to hold a Job, I had same instructions after my N.Y.S.C and have been since 11 years. Bishop Dag Heward Mills, several missionaries in church history Loren Cunningham founder of YWAM – Read His book ‘Adventures in Finances’ etc
2. It upholds Paul above the other apostles who also labored in the gospel alongside Jesus (James, Peter, John etc).

To say one cannot be totally honest in teaching finances if they are full time ministers is to make a huge generalization that is untrue. I personally know many full time ministers of the Gospel who teach the truth of God’s word and live honestly within what the Father provides for them.

Did Paul work? Yes, he did. The work was strenuous—Paul calls it “labor and toil”—and took substantial time. Paul writes that he worked “night and day” (1Thess 2:9; see also 1Cor 4:12; 2Cor 11:27).

It was common for Jewish rabbis to practice trades, but Greeks and Romans considered manual work fit only for slaves. Paul’s decision to work in a culturally Greek and officially Roman port city therefore caused some criticisms, and he had to defend his policy, arguing that working enabled him to offer the gospel message freely and without “burdening” the Corinthians (1Cor 9:15-18; 2Cor 11:7-10, 2Cor 12:14-18)

With the volume of work Paul had he worked tents as an example but Paul was quick to point out that he ROBBED other churches to be able to minister and noted in Philippians that no one church ministered to his needs. In 2 Corinthians 11, the apostle Paul made the following statement to the Corinthians, “ I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.” (v. 8)

Why did Paul say he robbed other churches?

Paul was committed to ministering the gospel for free, and he refused to impose his right to support on the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 9). If the Corinthians had willingly offered to help Paul’s ministry, certainly Paul would have graciously accepted, but insisting on their support was not something Paul was going to do.

This is the point that does not need to be missed. Though Paul had the right to be supported, he willingly chose not to make it an issue by imposing his needs on the Corinthians.

The words, “I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service,” is said within a much larger context in which Paul chastises the Corinthians for allowing false apostles to take advantage of them, which included taking their money.

He went on to be clear the duties of the church and the saints to those who labour in the word and doctrine and to himself, when he stated that his apostolic rights and privileges. (Gal 6:6, “Thus, though Paul was ready to work when necessary, his highest priority was the proclamation of the gospel message. His decisions about working or not were therefore to a degree pragmatic, based on what would facilitate the communication of his message best in a given time and place. However, Paul did decline financial support from those to whom he was proclaiming the gospel at the time. So he turned down subsidy from the Corinthian believers while in Corinth but accepted support from the Philippian believers for his ministry in Corinth.” (Sam Walton)

We have no record that James worked and there is no clear scriptures that Peter worked and this was no indication that their work was less honorable than Paul’s (Gal 2:8, 1 Tim 5:18, Deut 25:4)

Summary and Conclusions.

1. A Minister of the Gospel has to be ultimately obedient to the one that called him.

2. At the early stages of your work, you can hold a Job as not to put pressure on the ministry and the saints.
3. You can also start out in full time ministry trusting God for your needs to be met and supplied once you are convinced this is the part God has called you into
4. Paul worked to support the ministry at some point, we do not have a clear cut scripture on Peter, James working (we see no case where Mathew returned to Tax Collecting)
5. Listening to a one sided narrative from someone whose ministry engagement cannot occupy all of his time can stop you from entering the fullness of God's purpose for your life.
6. A minister of the Gospel must be honest in finances wether bi-vocational or full time.

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