

Okay, I'll repeat it. It just automatically happens when we hear these things, and we say, "Well, we're not going to do that then, are we?" No. That we immediately become proud and bitter. I am almost afraid for the next brother who drops through here who doesn't meet with us; everybody's going to be looking at him, trying to check him out. I'm going to ask you to do something in that respect. Will you be an imitator of me? You have no place to be self-righteous. You have no place to be bitter, because nobody's hurt you. You have no place to be self-righteous because you have the same black heart. And you have no place to look down on someone else, because when you look down on someone else, you're always underneath them.

I heard one of the sweetest statements of my life from a woman named Gertrude Behanna. She wrote a book entitled *The Late Liz*. She said, "I look down on people who look down on people." Of course that's not right either, but we ought to realize that there is no place, just because we don't do something everybody else does, or if we do things no one else is doing that should be done...if we are getting proud, then the sectarian spirit will grow up in us, and the Lord is just through with us.

That's the danger of dealing with a thing like this, but you answer this question to me. Which is more dangerous: dealing with it or not? They are both incredibly dangerous. I don't know what to do, except through His mercy. That's about all. I do want you to be aware. I didn't realize this would take so long. Nonetheless, I felt it was in order to review the last message. I am not sure. I am not sure we're all clear on what was said the other night.

May I review the points of the message the other night? Did Paul of Tarsus have a reason for working for a living? Paul worked for a living to be an example to the unemployed. He worked for a living to be an example to the entire church. He worked for a living even though he could have done more to save men from hell if he hadn't. He worked for a living even though he could have raised up more workers if he hadn't. He could have raised up more churches and gone to more nations if he had not chosen to earn his own living. And there was one other point: the Christians he saved and raised up would have been of higher quality if he had not earned his own living. He wasted most of his Christian life.

I also want to say, parenthetically, that no garage mechanic in the world today has an excuse for not turning the world upside down. You, my brother, have no excuse for not turning the world upside down. Even though you are a full-time employee, consider that. Consider that.

There's one other thing I want to say and remind you of: Paul of Tarsus...several things...that though he did them, never seemed to catch on in people's minds, and yet God honored them. Another thing is, he saw how valuable it was that no matter what criticism was launched against him, he had only one rejoinder. What was it? I work for a living. Would you take that testimony and throw it back into the battle? Could we begin to take that word and use it again? Would you? Could we? Let us do this thing. I work for a living. Oh, you really don't agree with that, brother? No. Did you know that that brother's a painter? What's that got to do with it? He works for a living. What do you do? I want you to know all the other messages we bought here on what...I guess the

subject is church finance...all of those things are hidden away in the deep, inner, closed, secret parts of men's hearts, and they know why they are criticizing Paul of Tarsus. Do you know why they're criticizing Paul of Tarsus? Because he is a threat to the structure that provides them with food and shelter, and they want what they have, and he threatens it.

It exposes the hearts of men that this testimony of Paul, dear precious brother Paul, has been lost. Brothers, I want to say one more thing: Paul of Tarsus stayed pure by owing no one anything and receiving nothing from anyone. He received nothing from anyone. Even in the letter to Philemon concerning Onesimus, if you read it carefully, Paul was never in debt to Onesimus. Paul pricked Philemon over and over, reminding him that only one person in this whole thing is in debt. Who is it? Philemon is in debt to Paul of Tarsus. You cannot imagine, unless you have gotten a feeling of it lately, the power there is in a man's freedom from the influence of other men. I don't mean you use it to blast people or split their skulls open, but simply being true to the Lord and your own heart's motives can expose that.

Now my brother, now my sister. All of those things are standing there. Paul could have won more people, raised more churches, gone to more nations, had a higher quality of Christians, raised more workers, rested longer, lived longer, and led more people to the Lord if he hadn't worked for a living. On top of all that, he, more than any other man, and Barnabas, both of whom worked for a living, had the entire gentile world as their personal responsibility. The blood was on their hands to win them to the Lord, and they were fiddling around mending tents.

Now tell me why Paul of Tarsus was willing to have a little church instead of a big one. Why was he willing to go to one city instead of 10 cities? Why was he willing to have only seven workers instead of dozens? Why did he let the whole Gentile world go to hell and save only a little bitty few? What was his main purpose? What was his testimony? Do you know? Can you say it? To be an example to the other believers...but what does that mean? Of money? By the way, his testimony broke that system. It broke it right down the middle. He took point-blank range and fired. That's not it yet. He wanted to present the purity. It's very possible he knew in his own heart that he was himself corrupt.

Alright, I don't think there's any question that it was the humility of the Lord coming through, but what would justify this conduct? How could it justify such an incredible law? Who is the one who is said to be an example to the flock? Brother, you know, you've answered, but that's not good enough. That doesn't get to the point. It doesn't make the real point. My whole point in the last message was brought in the last 60 seconds, and I'm not sure that you were deeply impressed.

If he had received anything, he could not say he had given all. Our brother said, "to be an example," but we get the impression he is being a wonderful example to everybody, and nobody's being like him. You know, that's what the very word "being an example" means. It bothers you a little bit; you look at it and say, "Yeah, wouldn't that be neat if we were all like that?" Paul gave everything and took nothing. He lost it all. He gave all, and more than all, as an example that all those he led to the Lord, and all the churches that rose up, would do the same. That they would also have no

excuse for gaining anything for themselves. That they would actually live as he lived. I told you that Paul of Tarsus not only worked and let the world go to hell, and no church or churches were raised up in certain places, and the Gentiles were lost, and workers were not raised up, and nations did not hear the gospel, even though he was under commission. He did all of that.

Then worked for a living. After working, sweating, and wasting his time, he took every penny he got and gave it to the Lord's people, not keeping any for himself. Some of that very money was used against him. I want to illustrate that before we go into this. Brothers, men in this room can witness that, invariably, those who do not work full-time at jobs can be used as instruments...hear my words carefully... men can use them as the main instruments to bring disunity into the church.

Brothers in this room will witness that we have sat down in meetings to decide what to do about brothers who chronically would not work. And over and over and over we have paid their way, knowing I...may I use my own life...will you allow me? I have the right, knowing that I was going out the next day to work when I could have been out winning students to Christ. I was going out and paying that brother's rent because, from the very outset, I've been one of the few brothers; there have not been many, and brothers have rarely made more than they spent.

There are brothers in this room who will witness that we continued paying those brothers' salaries and their rent and their grocery bill and even the birth of their children when they were going door-to-door for the one stated intention of destroying my life. We never backed down from paying those brothers' bills and rent, even during the darkest hour of their ugliest conduct; their conduct did not change our way. Paul did that. He went out, worked, and let everything God had called him to be lost, then let his own income be used against him, because Paul was dead set on establishing a testimony.

Now, brothers, I said to you one night: if you read history, church history, you will find this statement. Less is known about the church between 60 AD and 90 AD than at any other time in church history, and between 60 AD and 90 AD, all the great work of God was done. Who was doing it? Someday, when we get to the Ephesian line, you'll understand why I have been talking about it for so long. Tonight, you'll understand why I've always considered it so important.

Do you know who is doing the work? Do you know who was turning the world upside down? It was the churches that Paul gave his life for. A few men followed in his steps, and a new, higher standard than Jerusalem or Antioch had ever produced came out of Paul's ministry and the ministries of those who followed him.

Paul spent his whole life establishing the testimony that was just so beautifully explained. That one, Paul of Tarsus, lived on this earth and could not have left all if he had received anything. But rather, in both outward zings and in his spirit, he suffered the loss of all things, gave it away without question, and didn't even ask what would be done with it. He wasted his whole life to show brothers and sisters how to walk in the experience of having lost all interest in life on this earth.

Those of you who are sitting in this room tonight, here is the main point of the last seven meetings. A concept has been unknown among the Lord's people for hundreds of years. Only monks who have taken vows of poverty know it. They gave up everything they had on this earth, were given a change of clothing, and throughout their lives, that was all they had. But those monks were in something formal, something dead, something religious, and they did not know life. Paul's conduct has been lost, and in the hearts of everyone listening to this recording, and in the hearts of those of us in the room, we wait to see God bring back to earth a Paul who will stand before everyone as an example. One who received nothing but gave everything, worked with his hands to be that example, and that everyone sitting in the parking lot waiting for the bus would see a "Paul" on it, someone they could look at for a moment and say, "There was one who lived among us."

But Paul would rise up and say, "I did not do it so that I could be some solo example to you; I did it so that you might all live the same way," and let the brothers listening to the recording know... and let the brothers and sisters in this room right now know that if we are to be stewards of the mystery, that is the way to steward. I am asking you, are you willing to live the way Paul lived? Are you willing to live the way Paul lived?

I believe every one of you heard the verses of scripture that were read the other night. I'd like you to go back with me right now and look at a key word. 1 Thessalonians 1:6, "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all in Macedonia and in Achaia." Paul begins one of his earliest letters by telling people they should imitate him. Now we turn to the passage of Scripture where he speaks of his conduct and explains why he did what he did. It is 2 Thessalonians 3:7. This very passage was read last night. "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example."

1 Corinthians 4:16, which was also read, speaks of this very thing. Paul says, "I exhort you, therefore, be imitators of me." That was the chapter we read the night before last; now, we also read 1 Corinthians 11. I'd like for you to reread it. "Be imitators of me just as I am of Christ." And that church (Philippi) which, more than any other that we know of, imitated him." Philippians 3:17: "Brethren, join in my example and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us." *Brethren, join in following my example and look around for those in the church in Philippi who walk after the pattern you saw me walking when I was among you.* "

We are all so familiar with the passage of Scripture that was read in Acts, but I'd like for us to go back and catch that verse again, which has lost its meaning because the word "example" has lost its meaning. Acts 20:35...by the way, most of the translations use the word example here. "In everything I showed you that by working hard," he's talking about using his own hands, "you yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who are with me." "In every way I showed you by working hard with my hands, you must help the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus. It is more blessed to give than to receive." And the words

“to give is more blessed than to receive” have also been watered down to the point that they have lost their meaning.

In every passage I have read, the context concerns Paul’s testimony of working with his hands. Now, let us establish that again: here were workers not raised, nations not evangelized, churches not born, souls not saved, quality not made, Paul's work not big and not great and not seen as all the other full-time religious workers in the world, and his very commission not carried out so that he might be an example for all those who did touch his life to follow it every way completely. His way was to go and work with his hands, come home, preach the gospel, pour his life out for others, never care one whit for himself, never be interested in his own life, never answer his critics, pour out his life in the gospel, pour out his life for the needs of the church, to never be resentful or hurt. Take the very money he earned while he wasted his life and give it to the church; never ask what they did with it; keep serving without looking back; be utterly abandoned to the Lord; and give them the example of what a “Paul” looks like.

I would repeat: has anybody tried to imitate brother Paul in the last hundreds of years now? Maybe some of you know why I wept so hard when we tried to have some little sisters come visit us, because they have some faint testimony in this area. It was not the Lord's sovereign will that it be done. Brothers, we must reestablish Paul's testimony. You saw, written out before your very eyes, a small, pitiful example of how far Paul went, working far beyond his needs and giving it away to others.

A heart. Now, you say, "I don't have this kind of heart." That's okay. Just listen to the description. That's all I want you to do right now. Would you listen to the description? A heart so on fire for Jesus Christ, for His kingdom, for the salvation of souls, for the establishment of His church, His bride on this earth, and for the sharing of the mystery, that you go out and work hard six days a week, utterly disinterested in the fact of what is done with the results of it. Come and give it all. Walk out of there to go and proclaim the Gospel. Having given it all without question, where or who you had that you get, or whether you retire or how you'll die, who will bury you, or what you'll be buried in, or whether you will have security...you didn't care, but for the gospel of Jesus Christ, yes; when you spread the Gospel, you give it all.

We are a people who banded ourselves together here for one purpose, and one purpose daily: to forget to live while we are on this earth, to forget to count our interest in ourselves, and to totally pour ourselves out on the gospel, the church, and the Lord. That's why we're here. That's what we live for. That's what we breathe, eat, dream, sleep, speak, pray, testify, and spread. We have lost all interest in all other things.

Now, you know what Paul taught, and it finally caught on. That was what shook the world. From this day forward, we will expect such a standard from all the Lord's people. We won't demand it; we just expect it of all the Lord's people. You didn't come here for that, yet I don't think any of us can say, "Gene, that's more than what the Lord ever demanded." Brothers, if you have eyes to see and ears to hear, you've heard something tonight that I believe the angels may be rejoicing over.

Finally, somebody grab that flag the way it ought to be grabbed, take it the way it ought to be taken, and plant it where it ought to be planted. First-century believers who met the likes of Paul met that standard.

I want to say one encouraging word to you. If you happen to be sitting here saying, "Gene, I just plain flat don't love the Lord that much, I don't love his house that much, I don't love his gospel that much; I'm not really all that excited." I want you to know that may not be true of all of you; maybe some of you will go right now. Praise God, I believe that's where many hearts are tonight.

I want you to know something. Dear Christian brothers and sisters, when you have tasted the mystery, you won't care anymore. When you have tasted the mystery, you won't care one bit anymore. It will be a privilege in your heart, and you'll ask, "Oh Lord, what else?" For I am an unprofitable servant who has only done what I ought to have done.

All the things the world counts as something, we will count dung. We will live our lives only for Him and for the Lord's service, for the lost, His bride, for the gospel of redemption and the mystery that's hidden in it.