

Mary Rice, Assignment 11 25-4-26

“You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.”

Deut 25:4

1 Cor 9:7–14 (statement)

Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the law say the same?

For it is written in the law of Moses: “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.”

Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does He not certainly speak for our sake?

It was written for our sake, because the ploughman should plough in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more?

Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?

In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

1 Tim 5:17–18 (statement)

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain and the labourer deserves his wages.”

Comments

First of all, don't muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain can be likened to 'Don't look a gift horse in the mouth' or 'Don't bite the hand that feeds you' meaning, be nice to people everywhere and don't make it hard for them to love you as that wouldn't be beneficial for you.

“Don't muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” means don't put a muzzle on an ox while it is working for you, treading the grain because if you do it can't eat the grain that it is treading.

A worker is deserving of his wages.

An ox is the labourer here and it deserves to eat of the crop as it goes along. If you stop it, it won't thresh out the grain very well and become angry and may harm you.

Question 1: In light of the above Scriptures, do you think Paul is over using his imagination to give a far-fetched interpretation of Deut 25:4?

Paul isn't over-using his imagination to give a far-fetched interpretation of this Scripture because in the agricultural community in which he lived and preached, people knew all about oxen treading out the grain. They would have understood that you need to feed your animal and take care of it, and if you wanted it to labour for you, you needed to feed it.

Deuteronomy 25:3 the preceding verse, talks about beating slaves and not over-beating them lest they be humiliated. It talks of fair judgement. So does not muzzling an ox whilst it treads out the grain mean too.

Deuteronomy 25:5 the verse after, talks of widows being treated fairly when their husband dies and that the husband's brother should marry the widow. This is a fair treatment because in those days women weren't provided for if they didn't have a male to look after them.

Question 2: Does Paul misinterpret the passage to suit his financial gain?

Paul does not misinterpret this passage to suit his financial gain. When he preached to the Corinthians they were money hungry and business orientated. He did not ask them to care for his financial needs, and we know this by 2 Cor 11:7-9.

'Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. And when I was present with you and in need I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself.'

Although we see in other Scriptures where the brethren do support him, there is a reason for that, and it's not for financial gain!

In Romans 16:1-2 Paul does commend to the Romans, Phoebe, who he says is our dear sister who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea. He asks the Romans to assist her in whatever business she has need of, for them for indeed she has been a helper of many, and of myself also, Paul says.

Question 3: If not, then why?

Of course, it is not and why it is not is because in 1 Cor 10:33 Paul says that he does not seek his own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. That is why he still was a tent maker, earning a living while preaching the Gospel as mentioned in Acts 18:3

Paul's working principle seemed to be "I will not accept financial assistance for serving others but you can help me serve others."

Many of the Brethren did, Particularly in Philippi. Paul said to the Philippians "No church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account" Phil 4:16-17.

There are many scriptures like this one where fellow workers like Silas (Acts 16:25-26) and Jason (Acts 17: 5-9) to name a few, spread the Gospel.

Question 4: Is the typology of an ox eating or threshing out the grain suitably applied to Paul's situation?

Yes, it is because Paul does much work for the Lord, telling the Corinthians about Jesus, the Philippians, the Thessalonians and many other church communities. Without this help from some of these churches, Paul would not have been able to spread the gospel so effectively! With no financial help, these communities would have muzzled the ox that threshed out the grain.

However, as mentioned earlier, Paul supplied his own financial needs working.

The typology of an ox being a worker and Paul being a worker, is apt because the field where the ox works to tread out the grain so other people can eat, is like the field in Paul's day being the communities, e.g. Romans, Philippians, Colossians etc. Paul does preach the Gospel of Jesus so many will be saved, and it is pertinent because if the ox doesn't eat he gets tired and grumpy and will probably eventually kick the one who is controlling him in the shins. If Paul and the others aren't financially provided for the gospel doesn't get preached and none can be saved. As it is, the oxen were treated well and Paul was, while preaching. Paul taught the Gospel and we have his writings and because the Brethren looked after him and others, Jesus and the Good News has been spread. Today, we have a chance to be saved too if we believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, as Paul and many others preached (Acts 16:31).

Question 5: Is Paul adding an extra layer of meaning and intent that wasn't in the original text?

I would have to say no here too, because in the original text Moses gave to the Israelites about not muzzling an ox, it demonstrates that God cares for animals.

Paul is saying in the same way that people need to be cared for too, and the point is in earlier Deuteronomy scriptures as already mentioned, God does care for us and them.

Paul did not want to be a burden to the Corinthian church because it was newly-established and he did not want to appear money hungry and living for himself.

He was concerned about Timothy though, as mentioned in 1 Tim 5:17-18 and his fellow workers with him, saying that they should receive double honour and that the labourer deserves his wages.

This point is also in 1 Cor 9:7-14 where Paul talks of a soldier fighting in a war not at his own expense and many other examples.

Another Scripture here talks of the Lord saying that the worker is worthy of his wages (Luke 10:7). Jesus sends the Apostles out to preach, teach and cast out demons and heal the sick. He says to the Apostles that they should stay in the home that welcomes them and eat whatever is offered.

So yes, Paul is very spot on when he requests help from the brethren to help others and himself as seen in Philemon 1:22 and Romans 15:25-27. He asked the Macedonians to contribute to the poor in Jerusalem.

Question 6: Write a passage explaining your understanding and response to the above.

My understanding and response is this: "I have muzzled an ox while it was treading out the grain. Our beloved Pastor Phil was so humble in doing work for the Lord and also contributing to the needs of us all in the Church of God Seventh Day.

He worked a part-time job (like Paul did) for many years so he could serve the Lord. He often spent \$120 a week for petrol for his car so he could travel to see troubled brethren (me included) around Adelaide, going from Tanunda to Pennington to Greenacres to Seaford to Gawler, etc.

He only asked \$120 petrol money from the church for a whole year for his car. Gladly we would have liked to contribute more to his car needs but he would not have a bar of it.

I sadly have to admit that I did muzzle him, arguing about a bible study incident and a few other things that happened in my home while he was conducting bible studies there.

I did apologise to him shortly afterwards and he lovingly forgave me. I still very much miss him.

However, Phil was not put off by my misplaced anger towards him. At one stage, always humbly coming to see me if I needed.

However, it did change the huggy relationship i had with him before I was angry with him.

The bible studies he conducted at my home proved fruitful. One of the participants who used to only come to my home for study is now baptised and attends church regularly. The other members were already attending our church, some always, some sometimes.

So my reasoning does prove that if you do muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain, there are consequences. One of them being that I didn't hug Pastor Phil the last day I saw him. Something I'll always regret.

Something also that he never insisted on was being called Pastor. The Apostle Paul says that these men should receive double honour as noted in the Corinthian Scriptures. Yes, Phil was truly a humble man!

The end.