

## Assignment 11

### Levels of Meaning

**Deuteronomy 25:4** ESV “You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain.

**1 Corinthians 9:7-14** ESV 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? (8) Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? (9) For it is written in the Law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned? (10) Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. (11) If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? (12) 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. (13) 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? (14) In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

**1 Timothy 5:17-18** ESV Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching. (18) For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The labourer deserves his wages.”

*There is a tense issue here – “let the elders (old men) who have presided well be counted worthy of double respect or honour” – “make sure they don’t get neglected and left to go hungry.” The importance of context is not to be overemphasised. The whole chapter is advice to young Timothy about how to treat and deal with the elderly in the assembly – starting out with advice on responsibility towards widows. Although it is not quoted, Paul would have had this in mind -*

**Lev 19** <sup>32</sup> ‘You shall <sup>19</sup>rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I *am* the LORD.

In the light of the above scriptures, do you think Paul is over-using his imagination to give a far-fetch interpretation of Deuteronomy 25:4? Does Paul misinterpret this passage to suit his financial situation? If not, then why? Is the typology of an ox eating threshing grain suitably applied to Paul’s situation? Is he adding an extra layer of meaning and intent that wasn’t in the original text?

*The answer to all the above questions is no -except one – it can be suitably applied to Paul’s situation. The needs of humans take precedence over those of animals, although the righteous are not to neglect the creatures in their care (Matt 12:11-12, Prov 12:10). If a work*

ox is “treading out the grain” all day, it has no time to feed – at the end of a long work day it needs to lie down and rest. There is a practical application of Prov 12:10 here. Paul mentions a principle of equity and justice in the Scriptures below – concerning the genuine needs of individuals or groups of people in the assembly.

**Rom 15** <sup>25</sup> But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. <sup>26</sup> For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup> It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. **For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.** <sup>28</sup> Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit (*produce from the land*), I shall go by way of you to Spain.

*As Jesus told the Samaritan woman (John 4:22) “You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.” (although most of them rejected it [they were custodians of Holy Scripture Rom3:2] – by God’s purpose, so salvation could come to the uncircumcised – Rom11:25)*

**2 Cor 8:** <sup>13</sup> For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; <sup>14</sup> but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality. <sup>15</sup> As it is written, “He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.” (Ex 16:18)

*Again, one needs to read the whole chapter to get the full context (bearing in mind chapter breaks can break up context). It appears that Paul’s adversaries were putting it out there that because he was not exercising the rights of an apostle it was proof that he was not one.*

**1 Cor 9** Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? <sup>2</sup> If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

<sup>3</sup> This is my defence to those who would examine me. <sup>4</sup> Do we not have the right to eat and drink? <sup>5</sup> Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife,<sup>[a]</sup> as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? <sup>6</sup> Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? <sup>7</sup> 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?

<sup>8</sup> Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? <sup>9</sup> For it is written in the law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.” Is it oxen God is concerned about? <sup>10</sup> Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written, that he who plows should plow in

hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. <sup>11</sup> If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? (using the same reasoning as used in Rom 15:27)<sup>12</sup> If others are partakers of *this* right over you, *are we not even more? (of course they were, because they were doing their job as apostles – messengers sent by Christ, with the good news of salvation – and showing them the way to achieve it)*

**Nevertheless, we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.** <sup>13</sup> Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat *of the things* of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of *the offerings* of the altar?

<sup>14</sup> In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

<sup>15</sup> **But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision.** For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting.

*We need to understand what these rights were, that the Lord had given the apostles – those sent out to preach the good news. They were not about salary or pay – that was proscribed. It was about being looked after and fed on their missions by a willing household, and not being in their debt – they were worthy of this, and not “bludging.”*

**Matt 10** <sup>5</sup> These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup> but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup> And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ <sup>8</sup> Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; **give without pay.** <sup>9</sup> **Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, <sup>10</sup> no bag for your journey,** or two tunics<sup>Ⓜ</sup> or sandals or a staff, for **the laborer deserves his food.** <sup>11</sup> And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. <sup>12</sup> As you enter the house, greet it. <sup>13</sup> And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.

**Luke 22** <sup>35</sup> And he said to them, “When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, **did you lack anything?**” They said, “**Nothing.**” <sup>36</sup> He said to them, “But **now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack.** And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. <sup>37</sup> For I tell you that **this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors.’** For what is written about me has its fulfillment.” <sup>38</sup> And they said, “Look, Lord, here are two swords.” And he said to them, “It is enough.”

*For an apostle to be in possession of "a moneybag" was one of the things that would "count him with the transgressors."*

*(Note, Mark 15:28 is known to be an addition to the text – and as such many translations delete it)*

**2Cor 2** <sup>17</sup> For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

*(peddlers are people who try to sell things ...)*

**2 Cor 4** Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God,<sup>1</sup> we do not lose heart. <sup>2</sup> But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

*It was not just in Corinth and the surrounding regions that Paul declined his right to be supported – as a "labourer in the Word" (Acts 6:2) – it was everywhere – in Asia (Ephesus) and also Macedonia (Thessalonica). He did get some voluntary help and support at times (Phil 4:15) – particularly when he could not work, and was imprisoned - under "house arrest".*

**Acts 20** <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. <sup>31</sup> Therefore be alert, **remembering that for three years** I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. <sup>32</sup> And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. <sup>33</sup> I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. <sup>34</sup> **You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me.** <sup>35</sup> In all things I have shown you that **by working hard in this way we must help the weak** and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, **'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'**"

**2 Thess 3** <sup>6</sup> Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. <sup>7</sup> For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, <sup>8</sup> nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor **we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you.** <sup>9</sup> It was not because we do not have that right, **but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate.** (ref 1Peter 5:3)<sup>10</sup> For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. <sup>11</sup> For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. <sup>12</sup> Now such persons we

command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>13</sup> As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. <sup>14</sup> If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. <sup>15</sup> **Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.**

*Translators have made attempts to provide Scriptural backing for a paid ministry (particularly in verse 8-9 below). These can be translated differently, and in ways that make much more sense with what is recorded elsewhere*

**2 Cor 11**<sup>5</sup> Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. <sup>6</sup> Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things.

<sup>7</sup> Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? <sup>8</sup> **I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you.** <sup>9</sup> And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. <sup>10</sup> As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. <sup>11</sup> And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

<sup>12</sup> And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. <sup>13</sup> For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup> And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. <sup>15</sup> So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

### **1599 Geneva Bible**

<sup>8</sup> I robbed other Churches, and took wages *of them* to do you service.

<sup>9</sup> And when I was present with you, and had need, I was not slothful to the hindrance of any man: for that which was lacking unto me, the brethren which came from Macedonia, supplied, and in all things, I kept, and will keep myself, that I should not be grievous unto you.

*The following is a valid translation – adapted from the Geneva above – that is not contradictory of what Paul wrote elsewhere.*

*"I deprived other assemblies (of service) and brought rations (with me) to serve you – and when I was present with you and falling short (in service), I was not slothful to the*

*hindrance of any man – for that which was lacking from me (in terms of service), the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied, and in all things I kept and will keep myself, that I should not be grievous to you ”*

*Thessalonica was a city in Macedonia, and they greatly helped Paul in his work of preaching and spreading the gospel – mostly by their example.*

**1Thess 1** <sup>6</sup> And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, <sup>7</sup> so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. <sup>8</sup> For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. <sup>9</sup> For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, <sup>10</sup> and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

*Another example of distortion in translation is in Gal 6 <sup>6</sup> Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. “things” is not in the Greek – and it can be validly rendered – “Let him who is taught the word participate in all good with him who teaches.” – referring to living by and following the teaching. (ref Eccl 5:1)*

*Paul warned Timothy about the potential for money to corrupt in the assembly (chapter 6 of 1 Tim – ref also Acts 8:20) – and gave this advice “And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” Jesus being aware of the dangers and also the needs of life, established (one could say as a statute) the right of an apostle – those who travel about preaching the word – to be supported in that function*