

## Emmaus Chapter 11 – Mike Baran

### Grasping God's Word – Chapter 11

Deuteronomy 25:4 ESV

“You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain.”

1 Corinthians 9:7-14 ESV

<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 when it treads out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned? <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? <sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>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? <sup>14</sup>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

<sup>17</sup>Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching. <sup>18</sup>For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The labourer deserves his wages.”

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?

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

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To the scriptures above we can also add the following three relevant scriptures. These are all associated with Paul's request to the churches outside of Israel for financial support for the Christians in Jerusalem who were experiencing some form of financial trial. This charitable giving of the churches outside of Israel can be related to what was known in Israel as a third tithe, although there is no requirement from Paul for people to tithe but, rather, to donate as they are able to afford.

1 Corinthians 16:1-4

<sup>1</sup>Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. <sup>2</sup>On the first day of every week, *each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper*, so that there will be no collecting when I come. <sup>3</sup>And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup>If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

<sup>1</sup>We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, <sup>2</sup>for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme

poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. <sup>3</sup>For *they gave according to their means*, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, <sup>4</sup>begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—<sup>5</sup>and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. <sup>6</sup>Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. <sup>7</sup>But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you — see that you excel in this act of grace also. <sup>8</sup>*I say this not as a command*, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. <sup>9</sup>For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. <sup>10</sup>And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. <sup>11</sup>So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. <sup>12</sup>For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. <sup>13</sup>For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness <sup>14</sup>your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. <sup>15</sup>As it is written, ‘Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.’ ”

## 2 Corinthians 9:5-15

<sup>5</sup>So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as *a willing gift, not as an exaction*. <sup>6</sup>The point is this: *whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully*. <sup>7</sup>*Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver*. <sup>8</sup>And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. <sup>9</sup>As it is written, ‘He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.’ <sup>10</sup>He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. <sup>11</sup>You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. <sup>12</sup>For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. <sup>13</sup>By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, *and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others*, <sup>14</sup>while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. <sup>15</sup>Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!”

Working in the secular world of business, we are paid a wage based on our qualifications and competence. This is just a case of “the labourer deserves his wages” (Luke 10:7; 1 Timothy 5:18). However, in the world of “theology” (gospel preaching) this principle is often extrapolated and exploited to teach that Christians are expected to tithe to the church organization – sometimes from their nett income and sometimes even from their gross income – in order to support the teaching ministry of the church. Such a tithing expectation is not taught in the NT scriptures, or even implied, but is borrowed from the OT where three different tithes are taught, with each meant for a different and particular purpose.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The first of the three tithes was for the Levites and Priests who served in the Temple (Numbers 18:21-24). The second of the three tithes was to support the people’s attendance at the three mandatory festivals in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 14:22-27). It is not evident from the NT scriptures how this second tithe was administered, if at all, in the

Today there is no physical Temple served by a Levitical priesthood where animals need to be sacrificed and so there is no need for the first of the three tithes that were mandated for Israel. Rather, Christians make up a spiritual temple where all believers make up a holy priesthood and so are all authorised to offer spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:4-5). Also, Jesus is now our spiritual high priest rather than any human being, as was formerly the case in Israel (Hebrews 4:14-16). Today, financial support for ministry is appropriate, but not necessarily as the OT concept of an obligatory first tithe.

The OT tithing system that serviced the needs of the Jerusalem temple and its officiating Levitical priesthood is no more and so the former financial system that supported the Temple and its ministry has necessarily passed. The OT Levites, who had dedicated cities among the tribes of Israel, also had pasture land surrounding those cities which was theirs to use to pasture animals and so may have provided them an additional measure of independent financial support (Numbers 35:1-5). There is also a suggestion in some of the historical literature that some Levites may also have been involved in a family trade when they were not serving in the Temple. This was to be for one week on two occasions in the year as well as on the three festivals. Even so, their work of service in their communities (as teachers and judges) deserved local support from the community by way of a share from the second and third tithes.

Today, financial support for the preaching of the Gospel can reasonably be expected of all Christians, but not necessarily to the same extent as in the days of the Jerusalem temple – not as first tithe support. At different times today the demand and the extent of financial support for ministry and Gospel preaching (especially any missionary work) may vary but is still expected if the preaching of the Gospel is to be achieved in the way that God expects and the church decides (Matthew 28:19-20). The assignment questions can, therefore, be answered in the following way:

1. Paul is not over-using his imagination to give a far-fetched interpretation of Deuteronomy 25:4. Anyone who is sent on a mission to preach the Gospel is deserving of financial support to do so.
2. Paul does not misinterpret this passage to suit his financial situation. He teaches the very obvious need for financial support but he does not raise the issue of tithing and so does not demand that he be supported as a type of Levite with an OT first tithe. Had he done so then yes, he would have misinterpreted Deuteronomy 25:4 to suit his financial situation.
3. The ox eating grain while at the same time treading grain is a metaphor that says, in a round-about way, that “the labourer deserves his wages.” Anyone employed to work deserves to be paid what is due to them, especially if they are involved in missionary work in the way that Paul was.
4. Had Paul insisted on Christians paying a Levitical first tithe, then Paul would have been adding “an extra layer of meaning and intent” to Deuteronomy 25:4. However, he did not raise the issue of tithing and so he was only stating the obvious: that “the labourer deserves his wages.”

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Gentile churches outside of Israel. The last of the three tithes was for charitable purposes to support the poor and the Levites and was collected only once every third year (Deuteronomy 14:28-29; 26:12). This need for charitable giving continues to be evident in the NT among the gentile churches.

See also Tobit 1:4-8 and also Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book 4, Ch.4:3, 4; Ch.8:8, 22 where tithing in the OT is discussed.