

“Beggars CAN Be Choosy”

Do you ever have those moments when you are in a quiet and reflective mood? I seem to have a lot of those lately. One of the things that floods into my mind when those times come are memories. Years ago, while attending a national CBAmerica conference in Philadelphia, we took our teenage kids into New York City to enjoy “Les Miserable” on Broadway. It was about eleven at night on a Friday and we boys were restless while being surrounded by the hustle of the Big Apple. We decided to take a walk from our hotel to famous Broadway for a McDonald’s ice cream. Along the way we encountered a homeless man lying on cardboard and before we knew it, he jumped up to take prey on a couple of Minnesota tourists.

What do you think of when you hear the word *beggar*? You probably picture a haggard person in tattered clothes with an outstretched hand asking for money or food. Would it surprise you to know that the apostle Paul was a beggar? He didn’t beg for money, but for people to follow Christ. *“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called . . .” Ephesians 4:1* The word translated “urge” in this verse means “to call out to someone with intensity” or “to plead with someone.”

Paul pleaded with many people. He begged Herod Agrippa to hear the gospel in Acts 26:2-3. He told the church at Rome, *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”* To the Corinthians he said, *“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” 2 Corinthians 5:20* Clearly Paul was asking people to respond to a principle of divine truth. Paul again feels compelled to beg in Ephesians 4:1 when he said *“I urge you to walk a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.”* Why does he beg? Because when you don’t walk worthy, God is not glorified in your life. When He is not glorified, the church cannot fully function and therefore the world cannot see Jesus for who He is.

This has been on our hearts and minds a lot, as Karen and I are traveling through the most difficult trial of our marriage. So much depends on our worthy walk. What are others seeing in us? Last week we got new next door neighbors. In a front yard conversation with them and other neighbors, the news came out again concerning Karen’s cancer. How will these new neighbors now see us? Will they be attracted to the cross and our sweet Savior? Paul pleads with us to show how vital it is to walk worthy of our calling. Paul’s passion demonstrates an important truth: while knowledge is necessary in the Christian life, it is our desire to be like Christ that compels us toward righteousness. I also noticed that when I have this desire, then it would be natural for me to beg those around me to follow Christ as well.

A divine principle in Ephesians 4:1 has taught me that having a passion for Christ is what compels me to live an exemplary life. Another principle is found on the front end of verse 1, when Paul declared himself “a prisoner for the Lord.” Here is the thought straight up. To mature in our faith, we must learn to see things from God’s perspective. Because Paul called himself a prisoner for the Lord, he had the unique ability to see everything in terms of how it affected Christ. When problems come in life, we are prone to say, “Great! This is going to cause me pain and money!”. Like a faithful prisoner for the Lord, we might consider saying, “What is God trying to teach me? How can I glorify Him in this?” This God-conscious perspective is the only right way for us to live.

Allow me to close with a verse that is on Karen’s and my heart concerning the challenges God has given and maybe it will encourage you to be a choosy “beggar” as well.

“I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” Philippians 1:12-14

Let us live such a life that others will see Christ in us and He will then give us the boldness to share the Gospel.

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