

“These Things Do ...”

“... The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do; and the God of peace shall be with you” (Phil. 4:9). Can there be any doubt that Paul’s injunctions to brethren that the “*things*” of this verse are connected with the things of the preceding one? The word “*things*” is found six times there; things brethren were to “*think on.*” In this, the following verse, they were not only to think on “*these things;*” they were to do those things; things they had seen in Paul. Paul knew the power of example and in every place among all his brethren, he left an example for following brethren to imitate. He told the Thessalonians, “*and ye be imitators of us*” (1 Thess. 1:6). He urged the Corinthians, “*Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ*” (1 Cor. 11:1). In his farewell to the Ephesian elders he said, “*In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, it is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20:35). Paul’s behavior was exemplary; ours also ought to be.

The significance of this verse is not confined to moral conduct; it sustains a principle of defining and determining scriptural authority for those things Paul did because he was a Christian lays a foundation of what we may also do. Paul prayed. So may we. Paul kept the Lord’s Supper, so may we. Paul kept the first day of the week as a day of worship. So may we. Paul preached the gospel without. So may we. Questions: Are there some examples from Paul we cannot imitate; some things we may follow but are not required to; some examples of Paul we are obligated to do?

There are some things we see in Paul we cannot do. We see him laying hands on twelve men in Ephesus, imparting to them spiritual gifts (Acts 19:6). We see him in Lystra saying to a man crippled in his feet from birth, “*Stand upright on thy feet,*” with the result, “*he leaped up and walked*” (Acts 14:10). In the instance of the cripple of Lystra, Paul could work miracles. No one today possess such power. In the case of the twelve Ephesian men, Paul, as an apostle, had powers to impart spiritual gifts to others (Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6; Acts 8:18). No living man today is an apostle of Christ; no living man has power to impart spiritual gifts to others.

Are there some things we see in Paul that are optional: things we may or may not do? Yes, there are. Paul worked with his hands so that he might preach the gospel without charge to the Thessalonians and Corinthians (1 Thess. 2:9; 1 Cor. 9:7). Paul was not married and expressed the wish that others might be as he (1 Cor. 7:7). May men also preach the gospel without

receiving financial assistance from those to whom he preaches? Most assuredly so. May one remain celibate all his life? Certainly so.

Must one never be assisted in preaching the gospel; must he never marry? No. Paul established both the right that men be supported in gospel preaching and to be married if they so chose, showing that both were a right; but a right he did not exercise himself (1 Cor. 7:2; 9:14).

Are there some examples from Paul we must do? This is an important question. There are some things we see in Paul we must do. We see him praying. So must we. We see him keeping the Lord's Supper. So must we. We see him observing the supper on the week's first day. Must we? I believe the answer is "yes" to this question as to the former two. There is one critical, major difference between the first two examples and the last one, however. In the instance of the first two: prayer, observing the Lord's Supper, there was an underlying command that both these things be done (1 Thess. 5:17; 1 Cor. 11:26f). In the example of keeping the supper on the week's first day, no command is given of which it is an example. So, in the absence of a command, are all examples permissible, but not required? Such will be the thrust of our next study.

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