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"Do we have no *right* to . . .?" "Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ." (1 Corinthians 9)

When Paul was attacked and criticized by certain members of the Corinthian church (the attack was personal and the details are not germane to my point), Paul's response was anything but the way we normally respond to criticism. He didn't enter into discussions and reasons why he was right and they were wrong. He didn't approach the problem as if he saw himself above his attackers. He still saw himself as their servant!

According to the laws of the earth, I have certain rights. Even in the Law of Moses, given by God to man on earth, God's judgments of what is right and what is wrong, are laid out. In those laws I can know what my rights are. By keeping the law I can establish my "*righteousness*" ("I'm *right* and you're *wrong!*" "But, these are my *rights.*" Etc.).

There is, however, a higher Law, one that governs a higher kingdom. That is the Law of the "Bread of *Heaven*" (John 6:26-41), the "law of the Spirit of life" (Romans 8:2-4), the Law of Christ's "new commandment" (John 13:34), and the "royal law". (James 2:8) In this law I have no self-righteousness. I have no "rights" to promote my own glory. This is the law of self-denial and sacrificial love. It is the greater law. This is the law of supreme power over sin and death.

"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:2) The law of the Spirit is a heavenly law. I walk in the Spirit by setting my "mind on things above, not on things of the earth." (Colossians 3:2) Since I have been raised with Christ, I "seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God." (Colossians 3:2) I died in Christ to my own righteousness, to my "rights". In laying aside my "rights" I also lay aside the crushing burden of achieving my own *righteousness*, sustaining it and defending it. I will find no righteousness in myself. I have no rights over my own body, mind or will. My righteousness is Christ.

When Paul was attacked and accused by his enemies in Corinth, he wrote back that he *did* have rights according to human reasoning and interests. He said he even had rights according to the Law of Moses. (How often I defend my "rights" with Scripture!) But Paul in his letter to Corinth lays aside these earthly rights. "Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ." (1 Corinthians 9:12) Paul follows in the footsteps of Christ, who laid aside his rights as God supreme and emptied himself to take on the nature of a servant, "being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:8)

In this laying aside, putting to death and counting "as rubbish" the self-righteousness of his personal "rights", Paul entered into the kingdom, authority and power of Spirit-love and obedience. He became a servant.

The Law of Moses, of self-righteousness and self-promotion produces a love that is calculating, cold and carnal. It warms nobody's soul. It is lifeless and useless. It is born out of this world, my flesh and my interests. It is thrown down and broken at the foot of the cross of Jesus. It is Jesus who died

(literally) to his own concerns, rights and glory to bring glory to the Father. It is the only way to ignite the life-giving warmth of God's love from above.

Paul laid aside his "rights" for the "sake of the gospel", that it might be pure and powerful. I pray I too may know the power of selfless service, filled with the righteousness of Christ, loving and giving, "that when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel *without charge* (they "owe" me nothing) that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:18)

Righteousness is a gift from God, because my Savior is righteous. God's love is born out of *selflessness*, because my Savior came not to do his own will but the will of the Father. *Power* to meet and overcome the earthly attacks, love my enemies and do what is right is Christ *living* in me. Christ's life is overcoming my fleshly life when I have died to my *self-righteousness*, my "rights", for the sake of Christ and his gospel.

During this year of offering English classes (ESL) to the Hispanic community of Eastern Washington State there have been many opportunities to lay aside "rights" for the sake of the gospel of Christ and simply serve the people God loves. In the four ESL centers, men and women who love Jesus have faithfully come out each week to sit down for two hours and help someone learn English. They may not speak their native language but they speak the language of love, a heavenly language, because they have known the love of Jesus. What is done in these ESL centers would not be possible without these dozens of volunteers. The prayer in everyone's heart is that the students may know they are loved by God and come to know Jesus as their savior.



In West Pasco, Kennewick, East Pasco and Prosser weekly classes were held during the year. Attendance at the beginning of the year is always very good. It is wintertime, work in the fields is not as intense, and Hispanics who live here know they need to learn English. When the invitation comes, the idea of meeting during the evening in a relaxed setting is very appealing. Then it becomes a question of making the decision, setting aside the time and following through. We offer childcare in three of our four centers. There is also a free dinner prepared for our students at two of the centers. Refreshments are served in the others. The atmosphere is friendly and the teaching is practical and personal. There is, however, a constant spiritual struggle and we stand against the enemy in the righteousness of Jesus. As the year goes by, some students stop coming. Other students are added. As spring and early summer come on, the schedule of many of our students becomes more hectic. However, we continue to contact students, encourage them to attend and pray for God's wisdom to become more effective in meeting students' needs and presenting the gospel.

Classes came to an end in May as work schedules made it impossible for many of our students to attend. We suspend classes during the summer because it is just a reality of life for the Hispanic families in our area. The work schedule most of the time involves 12 hour days, seven days a week. In September, we will start classes up again. For the over forty volunteers, summer is a busy time as well and the break is appreciated.

Before everyone said goodbye for the summer, we had special dinners in all our centers. We celebrated the students' achievements and gave gifts to all. In East Pasco we have been collaborating with a Hispanic church where Jaime and Heidi are pastors. Jaime is a student and his wife Heidi, who speaks English, is in charge of the children. Jaime spoke to the students at the goodbye dinner. He will be videotaping the classes next year and wants to use them for greater outreach into the community. I have preached a number of times at the church and several members attend ESL classes.



In the closing dinner at Prosser, one of the volunteers, Julio, brought the gospel message to the students and their families. Bethel Church in Prosser provides live Spanish translation of the Sunday morning message with sermon handouts in Spanish (I translate them each week). Julio leads the worship time. Often the church will sing the worship

songs in Spanish. Our students feel very welcome and some are attending.

Please pray for me as I contemplate opening a new ESL center this fall, possibly in Benton City, where I live. I continue to preach in different Hispanic churches in the area and make contacts to assist both English-speaking churches and Spanish-speaking churches in their outreach into the Hispanic community. I thank God for the opportunity to serve, to love and live in the righteousness of my savior Jesus Christ. Thank you for your prayers and support.



Yours for Souls,
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