

References to “Self Sufficiency”

Mainly, but not only, to those in a “ministry”

In the main the apostle Paul supported himself by manual work (tent-making) and at times he supported his colleagues too. He was not averse to receiving gifts but he did not depend on them or solicit them.

Philippians Ch 4 v 11

*Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be **content**.* (emphasis mine)

The word translated as “content” does not convey the true meaning of the text I believe.

αὐτάρκης αὐτ – ἀρκης – pronounced aw,tarkez
self - enough i.e. self-sufficient. Strongs 842

Paul was “Self sufficient” in that he depended on no one to supply his material needs

Some places where Paul states his financial policy

1 Corinthians ch 9 vv 13 - 18

*You know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple and that those who serve at the altar get their share of its offerings, don't you? In the same way, the Lord has ordered that those who proclaim the gospel should make their living from the gospel. **But I have not used any of these rights, and I'm not writing this so that they may be applied in my case.** I would rather die than let anyone deprive me of my reason for boasting. For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast about, for this obligation has been laid on me. How terrible it would be for me if I didn't preach the gospel! For if I do this voluntarily, I get a reward, but if I am unwilling to do it, I am still entrusted with an obligation. **What, then, is my reward? It's to be able to preach the gospel free of charge, and so never resort to using my rights in the gospel.*** (emphasis mine)

2 Thessalonians ch 3 vv 7 & 8

*For you yourselves know how you ought to **imitate** us, because we were not idle when we were with you,...**nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labour we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you.***

2 Thessalonians ch 3 v 9

It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate.

(if Paul had not penned this verse then we could assume that he was putting himself under some constraint and that others had a choice – however he states clearly here that he is making himself an example to be imitated by others)

2 Thessalonians ch 3 vv 10 - 12

For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. (cont) Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.
(emphasis mine)

Q. Is there any clause here that you can see that says 'except church leaders?'

1 Timothy ch 5 vv 17 & 18 (Quoting Deuteronomy ch 25 v 4 / Luke ch 10 v 7)

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

The **Day** is the basis of New Testament time / work evaluation.

If you take one day to prepare a teaching you deserve 2 days wages. Then get back to your day job.

Again, readers of the New Testament will remember that a labourer was wont to receive for a day's work in field or vineyard a denarius ([Mat 20:2](#)) Alfred Edersheim - Sketches of Jewish Social Life ch 1

There were more day workers than slaves – Allen Ross – Daily Life in the time of JESUS ch vi A.

“New Devised Slandered Version”

- *Give us this week our weekly bread Matt 6:11/ Luk 11:3*
- *After agreeing with the labourers for a denarius an hour, he sent them into his vineyard. Matt 20:2*
- *...because their widows were being neglected in the weekly distribution Acts 6:1*
- *... and every month HE was teaching in the temple Luk 21:37*
- *... One week shall you labour and do all your work Ex 20:9*

2 Corinthians ch 2 v 17

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=**
καπηλευω – pronounced - kap,ale,yoo,oh
'hucksters' retailers. 2528 Strongs

A comment from the Apostle Peter

1 Peter ch 5 vv 1 - 3

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

Further evidence of Paul putting his “self-sufficiency” work ethic into practise; also note that “The Gospel” does not only refer to evangelism, but the ensuing work of discipleship; otherwise why did Paul labour for three years in Miletus. Consider the Following:-

Acts ch 20 vv 31 – 35

***So be alert! Remember that for three years, night and day, I never stopped warning each of you with tears.
"I am now entrusting you to God and to the message of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all who are sanctified.***

I never desired anyone's silver, gold, or clothes.

You yourselves know that I worked with my own hands to support myself and those who were with me.

***In every way I showed you that by working hard like this we should help the weak and remember the words that the Lord Jesus himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'* (emphasis mine)**

Acts ch 18 vv 1 – 4 (Note the ratio of Spiritual work to manual work here)

***After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.
And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them,
and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.
And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.***

Where might the apostle Paul have obtained this work ethic?

- 1) See Acts ch 20 v 35 (previously mentioned)
- 2) However Paul was also re-interpreting his Rabbinical knowledge in the light of his new found Christian understanding

For, in point of fact, with few exceptions, all the leading Rabbinical authorities were working at some trade, till at last it became quite an affectation to engage in hard bodily labour ...

... the great Hillel was a wood-cutter, his rival Shammai a carpenter; and among the celebrated Rabbis of after times we find shoemakers, tailors, carpenters,

sandalmakers, smiths, potters, builders, etc.--in short, every variety of trade. Nor were they ashamed of their manual labour.

We can scarcely wonder at this, since it was a Rabbinical principle, that "whoever does not teach his son a trade is as if he brought him up to be a robber" (Kidd. 4.14).

Rabbi Gamaliel, the son of Jehudah the Nasi, said (Ab. ii. 2): "Fair is the study of the law, if accompanied by worldly occupation: to engage in them both is to keep away sin; while study which is not combined with work must in the end be interrupted, and only brings sin with it." All the above in Black Alfred Edersheim – Sketches of Jewish Social Life – ch 11

The Words of JESUS –

Matthew ch 6v 24 / Luke ch 16 v 13 *"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.*

In my opinion JESUS is not saying that to engage in an earnings related lifestyle or activity is wrong

HE does not say 'you cannot serve GOD or money'

In my opinion what HE is saying is don't mix the two.

I.e. If you are doing something to earn money, do it well and in a business-like manner to earn your living (e.g. the apostle Paul could not have supported himself and his companions if he was producing shoddy sub standard work, or charging risible profit margins See Acts ch 20 v 34 above)

But

If you are doing something to promote the Kingdom of GOD don't charge for it in fact leave the consideration of money completely out of the reckoning. Graciously accept gifts if they are offered but do not expect, depend upon or solicit them.

Cf. 1 Corinthians ch 9 v 18 / Philippians ch 4 v 11.

(My comments in Arial Green) Roland J. Bell B.A. Hons Theol. / BBI Diploma Theol / Christian work.