Question: What did the Apostle Paul mean when he said, “I have been entrusted with a stewardship”?

> *1 Corinthians 9:16–17*
>
> *“For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply entrusted with a stewardship.”*

Answer:

The Apostle Paul approached God’s work as though he were a steward or manager carefully assigned to oversee all the responsibilities placed under him. Imagine that if he neglected anything or caused any loss, he would be held accountable when his “boss” comes to settle accounts.

This is very different from someone who volunteers for a task. A volunteer may choose to help, and even if they leave midway, they are not severely accountable they may still be appreciated

or even rewarded for their contribution, but the level of responsibility is far less.

This is exactly what Paul meant by saying, “I have been entrusted with a stewardship.” In simpler terms: “I have been entrusted with someone else’s work, and I am responsible for managing it faithfully.”

Because of this, Paul could rightly call himself a servant and prisoner of Christ Jesus (Romans 1:1; Ephesians 3:1). He carried out God’s work with absolute faithfulness and diligence, even more so than some of the other apostles.

Lesson for Us

We, too, should view God’s work not as optional or voluntary, but as our assigned responsibility from God here on earth. If we perform it unfaithfully, we will be held accountable. We should serve God as we serve our jobs in the office—diligently, with integrity, and without negligence.

When we serve in this way, the result is great reward and honor from the Lord Jesus in heaven.

However, if we only serve God when we feel like it, when we have the time, when we are reminded, or when it is convenient, we are not yet His true servants or “prisoners” in faith. We are merely His helpers, but we have not fully reached the level of stewardship Paul describes.

May the Lord grant us faithful and excellent service, the kind that comes from being entrusted with a stewardship.

Shalom

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