



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## We Give No Offense In Anything

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Paul's life epitomized the declaration, "we give no offense in anything" (2 Corinthians 6:3). A study of the life of Paul is a study in self-denial and sacrifice. He sacrificed a great deal to become a Christian (Philippians 3:4-7). He gave up even more to preach the gospel (Acts 26:19-21; 2 Timothy 1:8-12). In all this he followed the example of Christ, who gave most of all (Philippians 2:5-8).

Paul expressed his willingness to sacrifice his rights in many ways. He said that he would be willing to forego the eating of meats if such eating would cause his brother to stumble (1 Corinthians 8:13). He subjected himself as a servant to others (2 Corinthians 4:5). He then taught us not to do anything that would offend or cause our brother to stumble (Romans 14:21).

What would motivate Paul to live his life in such a way? Why be so willing to forego your rights? Let's look at Paul's life of self-denial and the motivation behind it.

First things first. Paul could willingly forego his rights because he had his priorities properly ordered. Paul was ready to sacrifice only those things that were of lesser importance. If he had been materialistic, worldly, and selfish, he would not have been willing to sacrifice for anyone or anything else.

The rich young ruler went away without the security of salvation because he wasn't willing to sacrifice. Paul exemplified a different attitude – an attitude of sacrifice. We will never be able to live up to Paul's and Christ's example until we learn to live without whatever we may be called upon to sacrifice.

Self-denial and sacrifice becomes possible and even easy once we develop the proper estimation of ourselves, our rights and our belongings. Serving God and preaching the gospel were foremost to Paul. Having his priorities ordered, Paul knew what was of utmost importance. It wasn't himself and his rights. It was the gospel. Paul was not willing that anything should impede the progress of the gospel. He knew that it was the gospel that saved man and not his personality or style (cf. Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5), but he also knew that he could, by his conduct, discredit the gospel and his preaching of it. Too many have been offended and turned away, not by the truth of the gospel, but by the attitude or conduct of the one preaching it. Would to God that every gospel preacher would mimic Paul and do nothing to discredit the gospel or give offense.

There are times when the truth, even compassionately presented, will offend someone. But this does not mean that it must offend. It seems that some preachers don't think they have done their job unless someone is offended by their preaching. Never water down or change the truth to keep from offending someone. Yet neither preach it in an attempt to offend. Be kind, be compassionate, be gentle and mild (Galatians 6:1). If the gospel is rejected, then you will know that it wasn't you that kept them from salvation, but themselves.

We must be careful that our presentation of the gospel is not offensive. We must give equal diligence to insure that our lives are not offensive. Paul made it his aim to not allow anything to offend so as to hinder the spread of the gospel or the spiritual growth of his brethren. How sad to think that one thoughtless action might cancel all the many positive efforts put forth in the cause of Christ. How tragic when a man preaches the gospel in a place for many years, lead souls to Christ, strengthens the brethren, yet when asked to leave raise such a fuss that all his good work is destroyed. Other such thoughtless actions have done much damage to the cause of Christ.

Paul loved his brethren more than himself. The "I'm number one, I've got my rights" mentality has no place in the church. There is also no place for the "I don't have to, What's in it for me" attitude. Paul was willing to forego anything and give up everything for his brethren's sake. He viewed himself as their servant (1 Corinthians 9:19) He did not seek his own best interest, but theirs (1 Corinthians 10:24; Philippians 2:4). Paul's attitude must be ours: "Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble" (1 Corinthians 8:13).

## **But He Never Enlisted!**

by Sewell Hall

He served in the army but ... "he wasn't a soldier." We believe there is a lesson in the following Associated Press report:

"An Army spokesman said Friday that 15 year old Walter Lee Martin is not recognized as a soldier — despite two periods of serving in Vietnam, because he did not enlist, was not drafted and did not enter the army through any regular means.

"He was not officially in, did not officially enlist or enter through any normal means," Barranté said. "He was, in fact, not a soldier."

Two periods of service in Vietnam, twice wounded in action; yet no purple hearts, no honorable discharge, no veterans benefits; he did not legally enlist.

This reminds us of a host of men and women whom we have observed serving among the soldiers in the army of the Lord. They serve faithfully and even sacrificially. They reject the sins of the flesh and live a pure life. They attend services regularly, give liberally of their money, and are ready unto every good work. They often study the Scriptures, defend the truth and attack error. Often they are outstanding in their performance as soldiers, except that they never enlisted.

The "Captain of our salvation" knew in advance there would be such individuals. He warned in advance of the fate they may expect: "*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*" (Matthew 7:22,23). What a pity to spend a lifetime enduring "hardships as a good soldier" only to miss the veteran's benefits because of a failure to enlist.

There was no way that the young man described above could have legally enlisted, he was ineligible. But anyone who is a sinner can enlist in the army of the Lord if he is willing to leave his sins. The conditions are simple: "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 2:38).