

Religious Scholarship in a Changing World: Examining Flexibility as an Instrument for Spiritual Discipline

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Abstract

This study examines the complex and evolving challenges facing Christians and Christian scholars in today's rapidly changing world, emphasizing the role of flexibility as a spiritual discipline. By analyzing the relationship between spiritual discipline and adaptability, this research aims to answer how Christians can thrive in a contemporary environment marked by cultural, ethical, and digital shifts. Grounded in a socio-rhetorical and ethical framework, the study draws from the teachings of the apostle Paul, particularly his adaptable approach in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, to offer insights into how flexibility can serve both as a means of spiritual resilience and as a tool for advancing the gospel. Paul's adaptable actions under various conditions provide a model for Christians seeking to engage thoughtfully with diverse life challenges "for the sake of the gospel." The study advocates for an adaptable Christian life, equipping pastors, church leaders, and scholars to respond effectively to ethical dilemmas and shifting moral standards. As traditional theological approaches are reexamined to align with contemporary issues, the research introduces innovative methodologies to help Christian scholars engage with cultural and technological changes. It highlights the importance of interdisciplinary and adaptive theological education to address global religious trends, thereby ensuring that theological discourse remains impactful and relevant. By fostering flexibility within theological scholarship and spiritual practice, this study encourages Christians to embrace change as a

means of cultivating a resilient, thoughtful, and strategically responsive approach to the faith, enabling leadership that resonates in an ever-evolving world.

Key Words: Flexibility, Situational Ethics, Spiritual Discipline, Catalyst Nature

Prefatorial Analysis of Paul's Action as Flexibility

In life situations, there are procedures that people take that may need some changes, or circumstances that can change naturally without any human interference. Adjustments are necessary when such times seem so difficult, too slow, too broad, and sometimes too simple.¹ Similarly, the Christian life needs to be open to different changes and challenges. Looking at the style of life that Paul lived for the Corinthians, it draws an important synergy for reconsideration in this study. Many New Testament commentators had different perspectives on what the actions of Paul should be understood. Hans viewed closely at a primary note in verse 19 of 2 Corinthians 9 and proposed that,

No doubt, Paul is partly under the psychological influence of Jewish ideas of self—humiliation and accommodation. And there exists also a Christian variety of these notions (Lk. 22:25ff.). The sense in which Paul now takes over and modifies these ideas must be seen in terms of his self—self-understanding as a whole: ἐδούλωσα ἑμαυτόν, “I have made myself a slave,” is in harmony with the fact that his office is determined by the cross.²

¹ See Christopher Ash, *Remaking a Broken World*, Published by The Good Book Company, North America, 2019. 1.

² Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. (Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible), Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975, 159.

Paul's life here indicates a voluntary self-giving sacrifice for the gospel; it partly goes in line with Hans' response that portrays an unswerving imitation of Christ's work on the cross. Thus, the study disagrees with Hans' notion that Paul's styles of life was from a psychological influence of his Jewish background, for Paul's encounter with Christ in Acts 9:1-6 has made a total degradation of his narrow cultural and traditional views of the law to a general Salvific inception of human life through the gospel. This points out that any pharisaic style of life in Paul has been regenerated by Christ, even as his name changed. Paul had the right to eat whatever pleased him, but he gave up that right (because of Christ's work) so that he might win many for the gospel.³

The Bible Exposition Commentary also accepts this argument by noting that, "Paul revered the law (see Rom 7:12), but set that aside so that he might reach the lost gentiles. He even identified himself with the legalistic weak Christians so that he might help them to grow. It was not a compromise, but a total abandonment of the higher law of love. Paul followed the example of the Savior and humbled himself to become the servant of God."⁴ This assertion presents a clear summary of the current passage, and it is important because it helps to present Paul's motive and the reason for his passion for the

³ Fason S. Sturdevant, *Incarnation as Psychagogy: The Purpose of the Word's Descent in John's Gospel*, Raleigh, NC, (*Novum Testamentum*, vol. 56, 2014) 24-44. The easy question that a critical mind may have is that, why was Paul's life used to represent a flexible-life-model for Christianity (the Corinthian Church and for the Contemporary Christians) and not Jesus? The easy answer to this can also be that, Paul was once a sinner like any other Corinthian believer but became righteous through the grace of God through Christ; on the other hand, Christ have never sinned but he bore our sins on the cross to reconcile all who will believe again with the father. Christ' life is an example of a perfect man that is still perfect, while Paul's life was an example of an imperfect man striving towards perfection.

⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Expository Commentary* (Colorado: ChariotVictor Publishing, 1989).

gospel. Simon and Williams, while summarizing the whole chapter, viewed this section with a decisive thought that,

Paul refuses to avail himself of the right of material support. He wants to preach the gospel without being dependent on anyone for aid. Thus, he is not obligated to anyone, can boast, and can freely preach the gospel. He belongs to no one and is free to win various people to Christ: the Jews, those under the law, those without the law, and the weak. Paul is all things to all people.⁵

It is very important that Simon and Williams could think this way but the fact in this text is that, Paul's refusal to receive material help was not only because of the obligation to the people but the materials can (define the way he'll respond to his recipients) be an influence to the way he might preach in a particular place especially in Corinth thereby creating restrictions for the holy Spirit's work in his life. Thus, it was Christ's grace that was bestowed on him to accomplish these things. Again, Christ's power in Paul's life was geared through his intentional desire to allow the Holy Spirit to use him in those divergent ways. The effect of these writers' thoughts towards this text is that Paul would be seen as a man filled with pride and selfishness because of his trade and ability to rely on himself. In addition, if Paul is not obligated to anyone because of his skills, it will be a serious challenge for him to win or convince them about Christ (for not being obligated to anyone will also mean not being responsible to them in any way). Hence, that's a very shallow way of understanding Christ' distinctive way of work in the lives of believers.

If Paul's actions will in any form be seen as flexibility, it is then important for one to take a close look at Charles's asseveration advocating thus, "I have become all things to all men. This

⁵ Kistemaker, Simon J., Hendriksen, William. *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001). 317.

generalizes all that had been said. It was not to this or that group that he was conciliatory, but to all sorts, and this regarding all matters not intrinsically affecting salvation, so that by all possible means I might save some.”⁶ Now, even thou the writer does not go into details on the length of that generalization in verse 22 (keeping in mind the limitations of the statement in the text), homes-in to affirms the empirical methodology that Paul used as portrayed implicitly in the passage (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). Hence, this study presents Paul’s actions in this text as flexible and used as a catalyst for Paul’s spiritual discipline in his life. If that was possible for Paul, Christians today can maintain a spiritual disciplined ability of resisting sin and the temptation of ‘all sorts’.

Nature of Flexibility as an Instrument

To present flexibility as a catalyst without stating what it really means will be indefinite. The Oxford Dictionary puts it in the noun form as “being able to change to suit new conditions or situations.”⁷ Thus, on a higher contrast, Flexibility in this study should be understood as moving beyond fear with an invigorating experience of freedom, as an intentional act for discipline, which is not only physical but is being developed from one’s spiritual instinct. ⁸ An example of this is given by

⁶ Hodge, Charles: *1 Corinthians: The Crossway Classic Commentaries*. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1995).

⁷ Oxford Advanced learner’s Dictionary, 11th Edition.

⁸ The component of this story is that people today often become comfortable and secured when everything goes well with them (when they have a Job, establish a Family, a Business, a new Car, a big Savings etc), people don’t expect that their situations can natural change. Even if it does happen it will be seen as abnormal and unfair (someone MUST be responsible for it!). The life situation of people has often been turned into the arrogance of success that a social life is often built around it; and consequently, pride slowly moves in. These attitudes often makes people not to notice changes in their lives until it is too late and too difficult to be able to adjust. Adjusting things in life, is a process that is continues not a one day routine just as situations in life change on the go. There is a great difference between ‘Activity’ and ‘Productivity’ -the more regular and harder or consistent your activities are will not guarantee your productivity in life- be wise, you may need to change. Sometimes things change and they’re

Donald N. Larson, who said, “[t]he biblical mandate challenges Christians to be one with those to whom he brings the word of life.⁹ Furthermore, history shows that vulnerability and flexibility are themselves powerful witnesses to the working of the spirit within man.”¹⁰ This was said when he was speaking about the viability of a missionary in the mission field, where a missionary must consider the cultural strategies to use to communicate the message, or else the gospel will not be received appropriately. As to the mission field, a Christian needs to be flexible to be able to stand the test of time. It must be an intentional move beyond the fear of the devil’s threats to the missionary for a positive landmark to be made. So, how can

never the same again so ‘if you do not change you could become extinct’. Only the mind that is ready to be flexible can change when life situation changes. One can flexibly take control of life rather than just letting things happen. Hence, change should be anticipated and the mind should be ready to adapt to it (-it is an act of letting go of the past things and trust God for what lies ahead). *Flexibility consequently, is moving beyond fear with an invigorating experience of freedom.* When a person is flexible in life one feels Invigorated from fears, pains and anger. Believers and the entire Church today must think of what they could gain in Christ instead of what they’ve lost to life in this world. People always think that change leads to something worse, but in its real sense change often leads to something better. Listen to Spencer Johnson, *Who moved my cheese?* Simon & Schuster Inc., New York, 1998.

⁹ In Spencer’s story of “*who moved my cheese?*” he made an illustration comparing animal and human characters (but all the characters in the story presents different kinds of human behaviors). The animals were always ready for the inevitable and do not over analyze things -for them the problem and the answer were both simple, while the humans had complex brains that are filled with beliefs and emotions that made it difficult for them to change when situations change and always unprepared for things like -unemployment, being fired from a company, having an accident, a car breaking down, salary not paid, a business not moving, a house burned down, death, etc. Discouragements, disbelief and frustration often homes into the mind of people. The animals used their trial and error method because of their limited brains to find what they were looking for, while people used their complex brains which made life more sophisticated and challenging for them. One thing that is common in these two characters is that they both prepare each morning -“putting on their running gears”- and run into the ‘world’ (which is conferred in the story as ‘Maize’) to find what will make them happy and successful.

¹⁰ Donald L. Larson, *The Viable missionary: Learner, Trader, Story Teller. Perspectives on the World Christian Movement.* Ralph D. Winter and Stephen C. Hawthorne. (Pasadena, California: William Carry Library, 1992).

this be a catalyst for a person in missions? Flexibility is not some mysterious, strange power (i.e., witchcraft) but the intentional decision of believers to avail themselves to be used by the Holy Spirit to use them in multiple and challenging fronts in time, times, and half a time.¹¹ So many missionaries have retreated from the mission field because of a particular threat and have given the evil one more room to ravage the lost. They felt that all must be well in the field and had forgotten that the field had a fight that must be done. The missionary must be flexible always -for a soldier does not know where, when or how the enemy (in this case the devil through ‘men’) will attack, there must be a flexible mindset knowing that I may be vulnerable to the enemy but I’m flexible to fight, and “anyone ready to fight must also decide to win.” A proposal was made, consequently, that “the greater our faith that God will provide for our needs, the greater will be our willingness to risk giving to him. And the less we trust God, the less we will want to give to him.”¹² The writer of this paper feels that how much we trust God determines how much we materially offer towards God’s work. With these things in mind, flexibility in this respect can only be developed from one’s faith, which starts with how well we trust God to determine what we can physically do. Though this contrast is too shallow because it does not consider situations where a Christian’s faith is growing weaker because of an external force, and can affect the physical effectiveness of a Christian in the Church/mission field. Thus, Christians are powerful catalysts in God’s hands to fight for the growth of the Church, and to fight an unpredictable enemy/external force, one has to take risks flexibly so that one can switch or change a suitable plan of action when necessary. A true flexible Christian in the Church/Mission field does not retreat when the enemy attacks or threatens but fights flexibly to protect the sheep (Gal 1:6-10). To this, one can simply say that flexibility is

¹¹ See Revelations 11:3, 12:6,14

¹²Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Discipline for the Christian Life* (Tyndale: Nav Press, 2014), 174.

itself a powerful tool of witness for the work of the Holy Spirit within man.

Returning to Paul's words, he made these determinations (especially in chapter 9:20ff) with clear cognizance of the consequences attached, but still homes in on reaching a particular goal (the gospel). This is not only for Paul to achieve that goal, which is the gospel, but it has become Paul's way of life (traditional Jew to a generalist), to easily adapt to any culture or tradition with the acceptable and unquestionable symbol of Christ. Now, Warren W. reaffirmed that, "it is worth noting that our Lord followed the same approach. To the high-bone Jew Nicodemus, he talked about spiritual birth (John 3); but to the Samaritan woman, He spoke about living water (John 4). Jesus was flexible and adaptable, and Paul followed his example. Neither Jesus nor Paul had an inflexible "evangelistic formula" that was in every situation. Paul directly followed Jesus' example of life, but in a different structure, so that there would be triumph at the end. To the intelligent one can speak intelligently, to the unschooled one speak down to their level for them to understand. In other words, flexibility is a Catalytic wisdom (in contrast to Knowledge) put into physical action with a full dependence on the control of Christ's power. David E. Garland reflected Hooker's thoughts as he underscores the parallel;

Christ became what we are, he was made what we are, he was sent into our condition, so that we might become what he is. Paul, in turn, became what the men and women to whom he was proclaiming the Gospel were, so that he might gain them for the Gospel. And just as some of the statements about what Christ became needed modification—he became sin, though he knew no sin, and he came in the likeness of sinful flesh, where the word "likeness" prevents us thinking of him as sinful—so too, in the case of Paul. He came under the law, even though he was not under the law; he became as one without

law, even though he was not without God's law.¹³
(Akper)

It is very important to note that the secret that made Paul become 'all things to all men' was Jesus Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit; Jesus is the power behind the Catalytic nature of Paul's flexibility. Becoming something different than normal to achieve a particular aim is abnormal, and only through the son of God can Christians win by doing the abnormal and have victory over the enemy. The basic point is that the enemy¹⁴ knows the normal and will always expect it -the contrast thereof will make the enemy amazed and thence perplexed. Even as Christ suffered on the cross, the enemy felt that Christ's death should be the victory point, but the flexible contrast was that the death of Christ brought about his resurrection, portraying a victory over death and a consequent defeat of the enemy (sin and death).

Flexibility as a Spiritual Discipline: Modern Scholarship

Flexibility as a catalyst can be used as a spiritual discipline in the aspect of using words, in our thoughts, in times temptations, -(when we fall into sin), in our prayers, when spending money, as we worship, in our relationships, in times violence and so many other situations. In these sorts of circumstances in a Christian's life, there is a need for spiritual discipline, because life does not get easier; one only needs to get stronger. Stanley and William stated that, "[r]elated to the claim that the first task of the church is to be the Church is recovery

¹³David E. Garland, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1 Corinthians*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, Mich. 2003. 436. Hooker, 1996. 91-92.

¹⁴Note: The enemy here is not restricted to only the devil but any force in the Christian's life that creates a setback to the propagation of the Christ' kingdom. The Christian is not to be discouraged and leave because of denial, frustration, anger, non-recognition or even death. For 'By all means' to Paul means 'no matter what it takes.' Hence, the Christian can use any method that would bring glory to God's Kingdom to achieve that: being careful not to fall into sin or lead others to sin.

of habits of mind that give us the skills to understand the world in which we live on our terms and not on the world's terms."¹⁵ If Christians do not expect changes in their lives, then they are not ready to seek the kingdom of God. In this instance, the terms of the world will not only be outside the church but inside the church, for the church makes the world (not People bringing terms of dictation from outside the Church).¹⁶

To be Spiritually disciplined is the ability of the spiritual man to be prepared to resist anything that will make the person sin or go different from God's will (2 Tim 1:7). This is cultivated in the daily life of a person, -the person progressively learns how to do God's will at the right time from the right people, and in the right situation. The question is, how exactly is this possible? But Tozer will put it that, "[w]hat we need these days is a company of Christians who are prepared to trust God as completely now as they know they must at the last day. For each of us, the time is surely coming when we shall have nothing but God."¹⁷ Believers are expected to learn the worth of this discipline as the contemporary society is growing wild with

¹⁵ Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Where Resident Aliens Live; Exercises for Christian practice*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1996. 48. They further warned that, "[i]n the end, no matter how congenial the conversation, no matter how many concessions we win from politics, the bottom line for the way the world congregates and unifies people is violence. Politics and violence go together. Violence tends to be the predominant means for establishing community in a world that knows not a God who calls a family named Church" p.53.

¹⁶ Hauerwas demonstrated that, "Religious convictions, at least Christian convictions, are not primitive worldviews that must be given more sophisticated metaphysical or literal expression before they can be tested for their truth. Rather, the claims they make about the way things are involve convictions about the way we should be if we are to be able to see truthfully the way things are." Flexibility here as a claim is to make Christians see the possibility in them in a more sophisticated way than what they can possibly think. See Stanley Hauerwas, *A community of Character; toward a constructive Christian social Ethics*, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1981. 90.

There are no sources in the current document.

¹⁷ A. W. Tozer, *This World: Play Ground or Battle Ground. A Call to the Real World of the Spiritual* (Kaduna: Evangel Publisher, 1988), 11.

vices, devoid of the fear of God, rather than being disciplined to trust him. Tozer's effort is to remind people that the life they are living here on earth should be in complete trust in the holy spirit which is promised to be with us on earth (John 14:26; 12:12; Mark 13:11). If a person will live a flexible life, one needs the seed of Christ spirit to germinate in one's heart providing a pure and a firm commitment to be like Christ (Gal 5:22-23).¹⁸ In 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, Paul's words explicitly present an internal determination¹⁹ for discipline, which gives Paul the strength to discipline himself. Paul did not accommodate²⁰ sin

¹⁸ See Darrell Cole, *When God says war is right; The Christian's perspective on when and how to fight*, Water brook press, Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA, 2002. 75. Even as Christ' flexible nature is tied to his priestly office, so also believers' flexible nature is tied to their obedience to God's word through Christ. Because it is tied to an office, does not mean it should be inflexible or rigid, rather it should portray the identity it carries. One can have an identity of a pacifist and still diplomatically fight injustice and corruption-which does not matter how or when the fight is done. -For Christ' own style of fighting sin and death was to give his precious life for the salvation of the world. The coetaneous Christian's life (from the given models) can exhibit a fight with sin and corruption in multiple fronts for the purpose of godliness.

¹⁹ Oliver O'Donovan feels that, "Because God has made us a plurality of others, it is inevitable that our relationships must take on a double aspect: with God on the one hand, and with those who are not God on the other. There must be the distinction between the 'religious' and the 'secular' realms of practice. There must be prayer and praise directed to God in the first instance; there must be fellowship with neighbor and service of his welfare which is not directed to God in the first instance. Yet these two distinct spheres of active love do not represent two loves; there is no competition which will threaten the purity of heart which is to will one thing." This is not to imply that there is a conflicting interest, nor of arbitrating rival claims. In understanding how the two loves, of God and neighbor, relate, one may not forget that the true good both of loving subject and of loved object is to be realized in their loving God. And that is simultaneously seen in the changing life situation of Paul. See Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and moral order: An outline for Evangelical Ethics*, Apollos, 38 De Montfort Street, Leicester, England, 1994. 232, 234.

²⁰ On the idea of Situational Ethics Tanja feels differently on the theory of Planned Behavior. He says it uses the distinction between desire and intention, which is motivation and volition, as elements drawn from the Rubicon Model of Action Phases. Rabl, Tanja. The Impact of Situational Influences on Corruption in Organizations, (*Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 100, no. 1, 2011), 85-101. Tanja's argument does not intersect with the situation in which Paul adapted into new conditions to help show people the way to Christ. Tanja did not keep in mind the situational ethics of adaption to new conditions, instead he focus on

as he exercised his flexible ability to the Corinthians, as others might think, it was an act of humility to weakness, but not giving in to its power.

For Keener, “Paul borrows the language of populist politics, undoubtedly offending defenders of the aristocratic element. Some Jewish teachers like Hillel were similarly accommodationists to win as many as possible to the truth.”²¹ What Paul used in this respect was not a secular idea of political opinions or the system known today as situational ethics, but a divine noesis explained into human understanding, for many may not really understand how that can be possible, as Paul explained. Secular truth with Christian truths have clear boundaries, and in that case, Paul had not borrowed and any secular method to reach people with the gospel (as using lies to sustain a Church’s leadership). If that were the case, the Holy Spirit would not have a place in Paul’s life. Paul then further presented an analogy (knowing that many might struggle to understand this truth he portrays) of athletes who feel pain in a physical exercise. It is also similar in the spiritual practice of flexibility, as he explains in clear terms for lay readers in verses

corruption which will not apply to this current state: for it is not Paul’s own personal gain but for God’s glory here on earth and for the expansion of Christ’ kingdom (The Gospel). Tanja also focused on desire and intention versus the human actions; for him, ‘human action should be weighed base on the desire and the intentions behind the action’ -which this study feels may possibly be in the opposite lain. On the contrast, Paul’s desire and intentions where directly proportional to his actions as the Holy Spirit strengthens him to do, -which in turns produces fruit that edifies the body of Christ. Even though Christ sake is also a situation (as situational ethicist will view) but the choice for Paul is to gain more believers for the gospel of Christ kingdom; so as a coetaneous Christian what is your priority in life? Situational ethics indicates an individual/groups social response to the environment either positively or negatively for their common good.

²¹ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary; New Testament* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-varsity Press. This is beyond a political scope as Keener might think, but a Christ like way of accommodating sinners the way they are for salvation (John 8:5, 7), ‘to the sinners. He became like a sinner to save them from slavery to sin and death.’ He was Paul’s role model of flexibility not the secular world systems called accomodationist.

24-27. To be what God wants you to be, you must be one with Christ, carrying your cross of endurance and obedience to follow him, knowing that you are going to be rewarded for your walk and work through his gracious redemption on the cross. Paul became everything that Christ wanted him to be. It is easy to think of flexibility to be just having other people at heart and sitting in one's throne of life and expecting people to come for help. One must humbly become meek like them, and sometimes the unexpected (by all possible means... vs. 22b) must be done to be able to win their heart. On the other hand, life situations do not just get better; someone has to work to achieve it.

Paul's act of flexibility was not only seen in the current text but also in other parts of his letters he wrote to other churches (1 Cor 4:12; 2 Cor 1:8; 2 Tim 3: 5, 10,12; 4:5). Stephen Martin stated, "Paul uses the image of the soldier's solidarity focus, the athletes' laborious training regimen, and the farmer's persevering hard work to illustrate the disciplined willingness to defend and proclaim God's truth."²² The writer presents three kinds of people (a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer) with behaviors that are required of a Christian as examples presented by Paul in his letters, which are focus, training, and hard work. The contemporary Christian needs to be focus on the objective of sharing the gospel to the nations without being distracted by anything; the Christian needs training to be able to face the current challenges of the social world around it; and one also needs to work hard in every sphere to achieve the goal of sharing the gospel to all nation. But what is the place of wisdom here? -It is the judicious marginalization of the three (focus, training, and hard work) into action through the leadership of the Holy Spirit in life situations. The above are necessary because the world is changing every day, and as it changes, the church needs to be flexible²³ to these changes for

²² Steven Martin, (Ed.), *Biblical Shepherding of God's Sheep; the abuse of authority by church officers*, Day one Publications, Ryelands Road, Leominster, GR6 8NZ, 2010. 93.

²³ An example of this inflexibility is from a writer called Greg L. Bahnsen in his book *Theonomy*. In a critique done by 15 professors on that issue (*Theonomy*)

the sake of those who have not yet heard about the gospel.²⁴ In this 21st century, flexibility should become part of the Christian life phenomenon for a Christ-like life (since Paul adopted this model of life from Christ's life example in Calvary). A Christian who desires to live a life that is worthy of God's calling will learn to flexibly control the human feelings in the mind as one responds to changes²⁵ and adapts to new ways of action.

Conclusion

This paper closes with the thought that Paul's confession and life represented to the Corinthians, portrayed a flexible way of dealing with new situations. Flexibility and inflexibility are direct contrasts to each other, for any spiritual discipline that is not always ready for change will not last the tricks of the enemy. Just as Paul fit himself into new social margins for the gospel and still triumphs, so will it be to any Christian who prayerfully becomes humble to meet the spiritual needs of the 'weak'. Furthermore, just as Paul went out of his way 'like one

Bahnsen will contest with his book to this critique titled *Theonomy: An Informed Response*. The title is clever, but it betrays a somewhat snotty approach to the argument. As John Frame comments, "These authors find their position to be so plain and obvious that only a stupid, trifling, or heretical person would take issue with them.... He tends to regard anyone who disagrees as antinomian" (p. 90). See Barker, William S., and W. Robert Godfrey, eds. *Theonomy: A Reformed Critique*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1990. Another related book by Greg L. Bahnsen is *No other Standard; Theonomy and its Critics*, Institute for Christian Economics, Tyler, Texas, 1991.

²⁴ Why does it matter so much that there should be harmony in the world?

Christopher would ask, because most people think that it is perfectly possible to enjoy harmony "east of Eden," that human beings are well able to "do the peace and harmony thing" without bringing God into the picture. In fact quite a few people think that bringing God into the picture just makes things worse and causes strife. An opinion poll in Britain in 2006 showed that 82 per cent of adults "see religion as a cause of division and tension between people". People mostly feel that it is the presence of religion that has caused most of these challenge and consistent changes in the human life. Hence this is nothing new to Christians in Nigeria nonetheless others in the western developed countries. See Ash, Christopher. *Remaking a Broken World*, 2019, 19

²⁵ See Tim Chester, *You Can Change: God's transforming power for our Sinful Behavior and Negative emotions*, Intervarsity press, London. 2008. 148.

without the law and wins those without the law' for the gospel, so should it be that Christians have to take risks for correctional purposes to unravel the lawlessness that is ravaging the contemporary Christian Church. Christians are not expected to diplomatically back down when they are expected to be flexible and deal with the present-day changes that are challenging.²⁶ Again, life does not get better. Believers have to only get stronger in their faith, for wisdom may not tell how, but it will define why something is necessary (1 Thessalonians 2:1-12). In a world such as this, a Christian does not only need knowledge but a flexible wisdom that is spiritually disciplined (not to retreat or turn one's face the other way when things go wrong, especially when it relates to Christ and the gospel) to flexibly handle changes in the contemporary world.

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²⁶ Believers cannot change themselves: God is the one who changes people. Christians should participate in the process of flexibility through faith and repentance, because faith and repentance are the only true gospel discipline. See Tim Chester, *You Can Change*, 146.

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