

Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

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Is It Scriptural For A Preacher To Be Paid By The Church?

By
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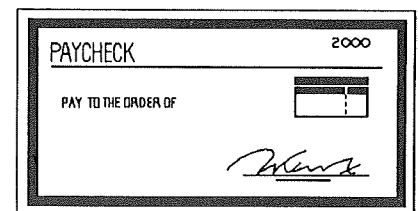
There are some in the religious world (our brotherhood included) who would answer the above question, "No!" To these individuals it is unscriptural to pay the preacher. In their minds, every preacher should be like Paul, a "tent making" preacher. Does Paul really teach that every preacher should support himself? Does Paul teach that it is wrong to pay a preacher committed to "local" work? In answering this question, let us turn to the words of Paul in First Corinthians 9.

First Corinthians 9 belongs to a section which begins in 8:1 and continues through 11:1. This section deals with the "eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols" (8:4). Paul declares that there is nothing inherently wrong with eating meat that was used in sacrifice to idols (8:4-6, 8). However, if the eating of that meat causes a stumbling block to the one of "weak" conscience, then it is a sin for one to eat such meat (8:7, 9-12). The main point here that leads us into Chapter 9 is this: because we have a right to do something does not mean that we always have to exercise that right. In fact, as with the case of eating meat sacrificed to idols, the exercising of one's rights may be sinful (8:12). In chapter 9, therefore, Paul illustrates his practice of foregoing his rights for the betterment

of the church.

Paul begins by affirming that he is an apostle with certain liberties. Others may question his genuine apostleship, but the Corinthians should know better (9:1-3). Some apparently challenged Paul's apostleship based upon the liberties he forsook (i.e. "Real apostles are supported by the church, but you are not; therefore, you are not a real apostle") (9:3 cf. Gal. 1:11-2:2). However, Paul has the same rights as other apostles. He has a right to support (9:4); a right to involve a believing wife in his work (9:5); and a right to refrain from manual labor and be supported by the church (9:6). Before going further, it is important to note here that Paul's refusal to exercise his right of full support proves that he had a right to such support from the church. This he will further prove in the verses to follow.

Paul declares that all workers have a right to receive support from their occupations (9:7-14). The soldier, the farmer, and the shepherd are all supported by their occupations, whether in wages or produce (9:7). This entitlement is not of human origin ("say I these things as a man?") (9:8), but is God ordained. "For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn" (9:9a cf. Dt. 25:4). God did not give this law only



for oxen, but for all workers, including apostles (and elders cf. 1 Tim. 5:17-18) (9:9b-10a). Paul further shows that "he that ploweth" and "he that thresheth" work with the expectation of partaking in the fruits of their labors (9:10b). Most recognize this principle in the secular world. A worker has a right to be paid for his labors. If all worked for "free" how could they support their families? Would Paul make and sell tents free of charge? Why not?

This recognized principle in the secular world, Paul declares, is also applicable for those whose work is spiritual. "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are we not rather?" (9:11-12a). Paul labored among the Corinthians in spiritual matters (3:6 cf. Lk. 8:11), and was, therefore, entitled to receive "carnal [material NKJ] things" from them. However, Paul did not exercise this right—not because he was not an apostle, but because it might hinder the Gospel (9:12b cf. 2 Thes. 3:7-9).

Those who preach the Gospel should be supported by those to whom they minister. *"Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar. Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel"* (9:13-14). The principle involved in the preacher's right of support is no different from the Levitical priests who were supported by the people to whom they ministered (cf. Num. 18:8-32; Dt. 18:1-2). This was God's will then, and it is God's will now.

Paul, however, refused to exercise his right to receive support from them. Paul does not defend his right to be supported in order to lay a "guilt trip" on them so that they will support him (9:15a). Instead, Paul's "glory" is that he may preach the Gospel without asking for their support. Paul feels so strongly about his practice that he would rather die than to change it (9:15b-16). Paul's commission was laid upon him by God (Acts 9:15; 26:15-18); therefore, he feels compelled to preach (cf. Jer. 20:9; Am. 3:8). Paul is responsible to God and must, therefore, discharge his God-given commission (9:17). The apostle declares that his "reward" is his ability to preach the Gospel "without charge" (9:18). His pay is to serve without pay! Although Paul had the right to receive material support, he chose not to exercise this right. One reason for this was to prevent the false accusations of his enemies and some immature Christians who might claim that he preached for material gain. Paul would not allow his motives to be questioned. Over a century ago, Charles Hodge, while commenting on this passage wrote: "A physician may attend the sick from the highest motives, though he receives a remuneration for his services. But when he attends the poor gratuitously, though the motives be no higher, the evidence of their purity is placed beyond question."

Having shown his practice of foregoing his right to receive material support from the Corinthians, he then shows them that this is not the only

right he forgoes. Paul forgoes other rights, adapting himself to the customs of his hearers that he might win some to Christ (9:19-23). Of course, this does not mean that Paul compromised the Gospel when he became "all thing to all men" (9:22), but in matters of indifference he forsook his rights so as not to arouse any unnecessary prejudices that would close the minds of some to the Gospel. Paul refused to exercise his rights that he "might by all means save some" (9:23). And this, as Paul illustrates from the athletic world, displays the self control that all Christians must possess (9:24-27).

Now that we have considered this context, let us again ask, "Is it scriptural for a preacher to be paid by the church?" The scriptural answer is a definite "Yes." *"Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel"* (9:14). Because Paul refused support from the Corinthians does not mean that it is unscriptural for preachers to be paid. Paul did receive support from the church at Philippi (Phil. 4:15-17). People today fail to realize that the one doing the preaching has the right to accept or refuse financial aid if it is offered (cf. 1 Cor. 9:15). It is interesting to note, however, that Paul later asked the Corinthians to forgive him for not allowing them to support him (2 Cor. 12:13).

Let us close by considering two observations concerning the right of a preacher to receive pay from the church. First, all preachers are not "worthy of their hire." Like in the secular world where some workers are lazy and try to do as little as possible, there are some preachers who are lazy and try to do as little as possible. Are such individuals entitled to receive pay? Is the soldier who deserts his post worthy of his hire? What about the farmer who refuses to work, or the shepherd who does not tend the flock? Indeed, we can understand the point. Gospel preachers, like all other Christians, need to work "heartily, as to the Lord" in all they do (cf. Col. 3:23). However, just because there are some lazy preachers does not mean that all preachers are lazy. Those who

truly work as preachers have a right to receive support from the church.

Second, congregations have a responsibility to support their preachers to the best of their ability. Although hiring a preacher lies within the realm of expediency, the fact that a laborer is worthy of his hire does not—it is a God-given principle (9:11-14)! Untold numbers of men have not pursued careers as preachers partly due to the lack of financial support given to some preachers they know. Obviously, some congregations are better able to support their preacher than other congregations, but all must recognize that faithful Gospel preachers have a right to be paid for their labors. A faithful preacher does not preach for money, but (like most other people) he needs money to live. Although Paul speaks these words in the context of supporting one's family, First Timothy 5:8, in principle, has some applications in the matter of a congregation's support of its preacher(s). *"If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."* Yes, it is scriptural for a preacher to be paid by the church!



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- 9:00 If The Foundations Be Destroyed, Who Will Care For The Helpless: Orphan, Aged, Needy? J. Kenneth Gossett
- 9:45 Foundation Principles For The Home Samuel Roney
- 10:45 The Church And The Home Wendell Winkler
- 11:30 LUNCH
- 1:30 Confusion Over The Authority Of Elders Joseph Meador
- 2:30 The Obligation To Support Faithful Preachers Flavil Nichols
- 3:30 Joseph In Potiphar's House Wendell Winkler
- 4:30 DINNER
- 7:00 How May We Know Who Is A Christian? British Carlton
- 7:45 The Obligation Of The Church To Train Preachers B. C. Carr

Tuesday

- 9:00 The True Foundation For The Home, Civil State And Church Derrel Davis
- 9:45 Consequences Are Predictable When The Foundation Of The Home Is Destroyed V. P. Black
- 10:45 Autonomy Of The Local Congregation William Woodson
- 11:30 LUNCH
- 1:30 Religious Division Destroys The Foundation Of The Church Robert Clemons
- 2:30 Forced To Obey God Rather Than The Civil State Richard Sain
- 3:30 Why Are There Violent Children In Our Society? Roy Dicks
- 4:30 DINNER
- 7:00 Confusing The Subject Of Worship Brian Kenyon
- 7:45 Distinguishing Lines Must Be Recognized William Woodson

Wednesday

- 9:00 "Restoration Fellowship" and Bible Based Fellowship Bernard Smith
- 9:45 Consequences Are Predictable When The Foundation Of The Church Is Destroyed V. P. Black
- 10:45 Unequal Yoke Between Church And State Winfred Clark
- 11:30 LUNCH
- 1:30 The Obligation Of The Church To Support Faithful Preachers Flavil Nichols
- 2:30 Confusion Over Service: Deacons And Women Paul Sain
- 3:30 Devoted Service Is The Key To Self Esteem Walter Slayden
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- 7:00 The King Of Kings And Civil Governments Greg Harmon
- 7:45 Making Shipwreck Of The Faith Jimmy Clark

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- 9:00 Following Social Fads Rather Than Divine Principles Joe Worndle
- 9:45 The Obligation Of The Church To Develop Congregations Dan Wheeler
- 10:45 How May The Church Assist Dysfunctional Families Kenneth Franklin
- 11:30 LUNCH
- 1:30 Difficult Questions Related To Serving In The Civil Government Terry Hightower
- 2:30 When Foundations Are Destroyed, They Thwart World Evangelism Guy Dickinson
- 3:30 Man Made Laws Destroy The Foundation Of The Church Jimmy Clark
- 4:30 DINNER
- 7:00 Serving As An Agent Of The Civil State Ulysses Richardson
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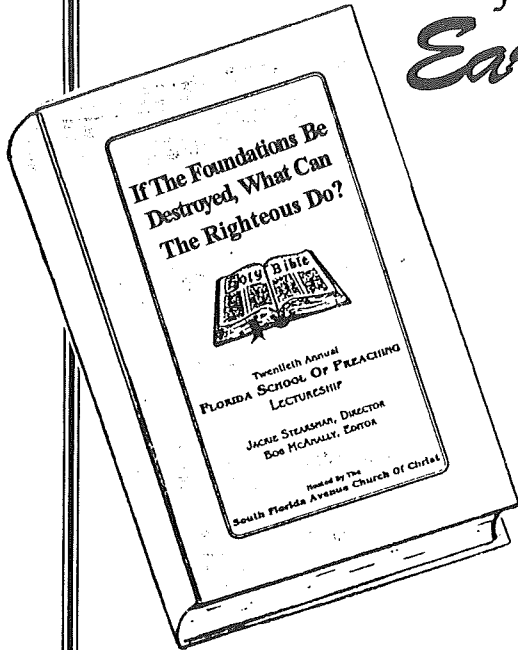
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