

## The Laborer is Worthy of his Wages

by Hendrik Joubert

The support of a preacher is not a subject one sees too much writing about. Perhaps it is because those who do most of the writing are the ones who stand to *benefit* – or have their motives examined. The apostle Paul writes that some seem to be denied the right to financial support, and he speaks openly about the burden he avoided by not accepting payment from some. **1 Corinthians 9:1-19**. Many a preacher may be able to identify with this sentiment. We do also learn of *many peddling the word of God (2 Corinthians 2:17)*. Unfortunately that is also true. There are caring brethren who take care of more than one preacher.

I know of one denomination – there may be more – who believes it is sinful for a preacher to receive payment for preaching the gospel, based on the following words of the Lord: ***Freely you received, freely give. Matthew 10:8***. The misinterpretation of these words is obvious from what directly follows: ***Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, <sup>10</sup> or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support. Matthew 10:9-10***.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul explains that it is the Lord's will that those who preach earn their living by preaching the gospel: ***Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? <sup>14</sup> So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. 1 Corinthians 9:13-14***

In **Matthew 10** the instruction was for them not to make provisions of their own; they were to depend on those who receive the message for support. It is a basic principle; those who receive the *service* should pay for it. In this regard Paul wrote to the Corinthians: ***I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you; 2 Corinthians 11:8***. In **Matthew 10** it seems the Lord would not only hold the listeners responsible for not listening to His words delivered through His servants, but also for the way they were treated.

One of the thorny aspects of the support of the preacher concerns the amount he is to receive. Jesus supplies us with the general principle; ***the worker is worthy of his support***. Often the support of a preacher is considered a need, as if he is a needy saint, and not rewarding a worker who is worthy of his support. The income level of other men living in the area is a reasonable way to determine the income of a preacher. It would hardly seem necessary for him to receive more than others living in the same area. However, should the salaries on the lower or the higher end be the standard? It is easy to shame a dedicated man into accepting the bare necessities by playing on his emotions. No one should be preaching for the money – no Christian should be a lover of money for that matter. The preacher should not be treated as a needy saint when the Lord said he is a worker worthy of his support.

Many preachers do not have benefits paid for by a congregation. Adding fringe benefits reveals a different amount for other members, yet often the take home pay is what is set as standard. It seems that the idea of a preacher using *the Lord's money* to provide for his future is often considered sinful. The ox is muzzled so he would eat only so much.

Two individuals may earn the same amount, and one may be a better steward of his money and therefore do better. Imagine your boss, after driving by your house and noticing that you are having a pool installed, calling you in to tell you that since it is obvious that you are getting more than you really need your salary will be reduced? Or, since your wife has now taken a job, your pay will be cut?

Surely one should not use the Lord's money to build a pool! It most certainly is the Lord's money which is used to pay the laborer worthy of his support; however it becomes his money for which he labored. Churches will be held responsible for the way they use the Lord's money, and that includes the way they treat and pay His laborers. Likewise those who peddle the word will have to answer to the Lord.

Often the value attached to a position is a reflection of the estimation of its importance. I am not suggesting that since the preaching of the gospel is the most important work a man can ever do, he should receive the highest pay. What I am saying is that the under evaluation of the work may be evident from how we treat our preachers. If payment is results based the following passage should help keep the salaries down: ***For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. Matthew 7:14.***