

For Whom The Preacher Toils

"What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'" (2 Corinthians 6:16, ESV)

A person on an Internet mailing list posted a message like this: "I'm concerned for the treatment of gospel preachers at the hands of some brethren. Often, preachers are treated like they are paid by the church to do those tasks which the church is not willing to do. What really is the preacher's place in the body of Christ? Is he a servant of Christ or of the Church? Is he hired by Christ or by the church for the Christ?"

Brethren, a preacher is not an employee of the local church. A preacher is direct employee of God, to be supported of the offerings all Christians make to God on God's altar in all locations. A preacher is a soldier of the Lord, employed by the Lord. (cf. 1 Cor. 9:7) Christians who treat a preacher as a hired hand, or with scorn, muzzling the ox, risk facing up to that ox's Master, that soldier's Master, at the judgment. (1 Cor. 9:9)

A preacher has the responsibility of handling the ministry of the word. (Ac. 6:4) He is to equip the congregation for their work in serving God, one another, and strangers. (Eph. 4:11-12) So, a preacher's main work is to equip brethren for their work: not only the brethren at that location. (v12) All members of the body have work to do in ministry of God and man. A preacher is not a hired hand who should do the jobs the congregation refuses to do. Why? Because it is not expedient to give up the ministry of the word to serve tables. (Ac. 6:2) This does not mean the preacher should not do his part in any physical service, but not necessarily any more than any other member of the congregation: Christians will follow his example, where he leads in good works. (Tit. 2:7) Each stone in the Temple of God should help to maintain the Temple of God. (2 Cor. 6:16)

The focus in churches that places all of the work of the church on the shoulders of the preacher is not merely unscriptural it is counterproductive. It removes opportunities for service, training, and growth that are required for disciples to grow in Christian virtue, verity, and ability. A preacher shouldn't require another brother to write his sermons; that brother should not expect that preacher to rebuild the engines of all brethren's cars as part of his job. How do we get done these works which no one wants to do? Let us lift up our brethren, encouraging them to try new roles in which to practice using their equipment in the work of ministry. Let us each renew our minds in humility to cooperate in performing these necessary works.