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Biblical Giving

Lesson 7
GIVING TO SUPPORT MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL

The basic principle of the Bible is: ***“Those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14).*** It appears that a minister of the gospel is never to seek support from a secular occupation, unless it is a particular case such as that of the Apostle Paul.

GENERAL PRINCIPLE

Galatians 6:6. ***Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.*** Every person who is taught out of the Bible by a teacher is to share (give financial help) to the one who is doing the teaching. This undoubtedly is a reference to the pastor or teaching elder.

1 Timothy 5:17-18. ***The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.”*** In the New Testament local church, there were Ruling Elders and Teaching Elders. They both ruled and they both taught, but only the Teaching Elder had the special gift of pastor-teacher (Eph. 4:11). The elders who rule well (direct the affairs of the church) are to be counted worthy of double honor, which refers to both respect and financial help. Apparently Teaching Elders receive financial help, seeing they need time to prepare, pray and present the Word. In 5:18, the Old Testament is quoted (Deut. 25:4) to refer to the fact that financial help is indicated in the word “honor.” ***“Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading the grain.”*** Also the words, ***“The worker deserves his wages”*** is a quote from the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 10:7). *The paying of Teaching Elders has the authority of the Old Testament, Christ and the Apostle Paul.*

THE SPECIAL CASE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

The general principle is that teaching elders (pastor-teachers) should be paid for their services rendered, and the Apostle Paul cannot be held up as the supreme example for paying a minister. Paul was an evangelist not a pastor-teacher, and as a pioneer missionary he used different methods for gaining financial support.

Paul Worked at Times at a Secular Job (1 Thess. 2:7-9; 2 Thess. 3:7-8; 2 Cor. 11:9-12; Acts 20:33-34). On various occasions, he preached on the Sabbath and made tents during the week. This course of action was taken so unbelievers might not misunderstand his motives. Paul felt to receive pay for preaching the gospel might hinder his testimony with the unsaved.

“Amongst the heathen there was a large class of teachers who wandered from town to town collecting money from those who attended their lectures. There was also a large class of people who wandered about as mystery mongers, exhibiting their shows and collecting money from those who attended them. For these men, philosophy and religion was a trade. St. Paul would not be counted as one of them. He refused to receive anything from those who listened to him (Allen, *Missionary Methods*, p. 66).

Paul Accepted Gifts from Converts (2 Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4:15-16). ***I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you (2 Cor. 11:8). Moreover, as you Philipians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you only (Phil. 4:15-16).*** When a local church was willing to help Paul out financially, he did not refuse the gift; in fact, he welcomed the money. Apparently, it was not until after many local churches had been founded that Paul began to speak of full support for preachers of the gospel.

THE KEY CHAPTER 1 Corinthians 9:7-14

Paul is showing he has full right of an Apostle which include full financial support, he privilege of being married, taking his family along when ministering, etc., but he sets these rights aside so as to give himself more fully to the gospel. They were wondering about Paul because he was not like the other Apostles. Why didn't he have a wife? Why didn't he take money? Paul was an exception to the rule because he had been chosen by God to do a specific ministry to the Gentiles. In 1 Corinthians 9:7-14, Paul clearly sets down the rights of a minister to be supported by other Christians.

Principle of Society (9:7)

A Soldier. ***Who serves as a soldier at his own expense?*** Society has a responsibility to pay soldiers to protect their country because a soldier is rendering a service to his country. The minister of the gospel, who is a soldier of Jesus Christ, renders a service to the church; therefore, he should be paid by the church.

A Farmer. ***Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of the grapes?*** Society states a farmer is able to eat freely of the vineyard he planted himself. If the minister of the gospel plants a spiritual vineyard by teaching the Word, then those who are the recipients of this spiritual teaching should support him.

A Rancher. ***Who tends the flock and does not drink of the milk?*** A minister feeds the flock spiritual food and the flock should feed the minister physical food (money).

Principle of Old Testament Law (9:8-10). ***Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this about us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest.*** This is a reference to Deuteronomy 25:4. An ox was used for treading corn, shaking the grain loose from the husks. While the ox trod the corn, he was not to be muzzled, which means that he could eat of the corn. The minister of the gospel, who labors among the people, should be fed physical food by the people.

Principle of Ministering Spiritual Things (9:11). ***If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?*** The minister is to reap the Christian's physical things as he ministers to them spiritual things.

Principle of Teaching in General (9:12). ***If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more?*** The Greeks were famous for paying men who would teach them philosophical truths. Therefore, how much more should they pay ministers of the gospel?

Principle of Old Testament Priests (9:13). ***Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the***

altar? The Old Testament priests were completely supported by the first tithe of all the eleven tribes of Israel, and they were given a portion of all sacrifices offered. The Levites did not work with their hands but gave themselves to the spiritual ministry of Israel. The Levites were financially well off and did not have to fret and worry about finances. No pastor should be rich nor should he have to worry about finances, for then his mind cannot be on spiritual issues completely.

Principle of God's Command (9:14). ***In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.*** It is commanded that Christians support their ministers. This is their first responsibility.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. If ministers are required to support themselves, the danger is that they will be forced to become men of the world, when they should be men of the Bible and prayer.
2. A minister should be paid well enough to keep his mind from worldly things. He should be enough money to set him free from the constant cares of the world.
3. A minister should not be expected to live in poverty simply because he is in the ministry. The paying of the pastor should be according to need, ability of the church to pay, education, type of people ministered to, etc. A good rule of thumb is to pay the pastor just a little above the average of the congregation and just a little below the average of the elders.
4. The first responsibility of every Christian is to meet the financial needs of those who teach them the Bible.
5. Clergy are usually highly educated and poorly paid. This has caused the clergy to play up the ministry as a profession rather than a calling. The emphasis is on counseling, degrees, and image rather than on character, Bible knowledge, and prayer. Poor pay for clergy has also caused bitterness in some, causing great frustration and even depression.
6. It is not wrong to "make tents" to help support the minister, but this should only be temporary until a church can pay its pastor.
7. No minister should expect to get rich in the ministry. It is a calling from God, and money, riches and an easy life should not dominate their thinking.

"A minister cannot eat without prayer,
but he cannot eat prayers either."

POSSIBLE WAYS TO PAY A PASTOR

1. By need (remember, some people never have their needs met).
2. By the average salary of the leaders (throw out the highest and lowest).
3. By average income of the congregation (then pay the pastor just a notch above the average).
4. By what a secular school teacher makes (consider degrees and years of experience and service).
5. By allowing the pastor to set his own salary (within reason and approval of leaders).