

“Do We Not Have a Right?”

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August 14, 2005

*“**Do we not have a right** to eat and drink? **Do we not have a right** to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?” (1 Cor 9:4, 5)*

Read 1 Cor. 9:1-14

In the first fourteen verses of chapter nine Paul sets forth seventeen rhetorical questions with the intent of proving his point. He provides six larger reasons as to why, as an apostle, he has the “right” to be supported by those to whom he ministers. **First**, he was an apostle (vv. 1-6). **Second**, it is customary (v. 7). **Third**, it is God’s Law (vv. 8-10). **Fourth**, it is done for others (vv. 11, 12). **Fifth**, it is the Jewish custom (v. 13). And **finally**, last but not least, Jesus ordained it (v. 14).

The summary provided by verse fourteen is conclusive; the paid ministry is a legitimate principle today. Today, as there was then, hirelings exist. Many have made merchandise of God’s church. This is unfortunate. Yet the abuse cannot negate the responsibility.

Verse seven gives three illustrations of the rationale behind his right to be supported. Paul pictures the church as an army, as a vineyard, and as a flock □ all of whose workers have a right to be supported. “It is very natural, and very reasonable, for ministers to expect a livelihood out of their labors.” All three types of workers are paid for their work. It is the customary, rightful, and expected thing. Proverbs 27:18 speaks of this very thing, “He who tends the fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who cares for his master will be honored.”

This same principle is brought out and used in 1 Timothy 5 when speaking of Elders.

1 Timothy 5:17 The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

Paul uses similar language in 2 Timothy 2:1 and 6.

2 Timothy 2:1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 2:6 The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

Scriptural precept dictates providing for those who work. Paul notes this same principle in Romans 15:27.

Romans 15:27 Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. **For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.**

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This same point is brought out in Galatians 6:6-10.

Galatians 6:6 The one who is taught the word is to share all good things
with the one who teaches him.

The principle is somewhat elastic, but its direct meaning is in the area of supporting financially or materially those who have invested themselves completely to the communication of God's Word.

God expects His people to provide for those whom He has gifted to shepherd His church. It would appear that God puts an emphasis on the teaching pastor. There is no imbalance in the statement. Teaching and pastoring go hand-in-hand. There is a synergism between the two. When the two aspects are separated from each other you end up with a college professor or a Christian counselor. When combined, you have a pastor of a local church.

As a fellowship, let us weigh correctly the role of pastor/teacher (Eph. 4:11). Let us as a fellowship protect the position and encourage, through attentiveness, the role of the Word in the life of His church.

P.S. I recognize my position in the fellowship could misconstrue the nature of this article as being self-serving, but the text demands this explanation. I am not only the teaching pastor, but I am also a member of this fellowship, a steward/recipient of His lavish grace, and first and foremost a Christian. May you continue to learn of God's abundant blessings that are rooted in His Son's cross-work.

P.S.S. This past week I had the opportunity to fellowship with an individual who labored at another church and he communicated the idea that people are simply playing church and are not passionate about the things of God. As I heard him speak I reflected on the people of God at WBC and found myself counting my blessings. Folks, you are an aspect of the blessings of God to me and my family. Thank you for being used of God in our lives.