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# Words of Truth

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## This Sounds Honorable, But It's Not Ideal

By: Brian A. Yeager

Several months ago I was talking with a gentleman about preaching. This man wants to, in the future, spend time preaching the Gospel. He talked about how he is studying as much as he can to learn more. He talked about how he is putting lessons together for future use. (As a side note here, preaching is not just about having lessons prepared. Preaching is about teaching people what they need to hear, not putting Scriptures on a piece of paper [Acts 20:26-27 and Jude 3-4]). This man is really interested in trying to teach the Gospel. That is certainly a noble goal (Romans 10:14-17).

In our discussion he talked about how hard it is to find brethren willing to adequately support preachers financially. Thus, he talked about how he planned to wait until his children were grown and his financial needs were less than they are now. (Another side note here, those who really are preachers never wait for the "right time" or the "right circumstances". Those who are "cut out" to preach the Gospel can't help but preach the Gospel regardless of the consequences to themselves or their families [Jeremiah 20:9, Luke 5:1-11, Acts 4:15-20, Acts 5:40-42, Acts 17:16-17, and I Corinthians 9:16-17]). As he was discussing the financial challenges that faithful preachers always face, he declared that he would not trust brethren to support him. In fact, he said it was his plan to work a full-time secular job and "preach on the side". To some, this may sound noble. However, it is ignorant in many ways. It is not that one cannot work a secular job to support himself and his family while preaching that is the problem, but there are other matters to consider.

### How A Preacher CAN Be Supported

May one work a secular job to be able to preach the Gospel? Notice: *"After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks... For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: **Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us"** (Acts 18:1-4 and II Thessalonians 3:7-9). Secular work is authorized, but it is not God's plan for preachers.*

God's plan is **not** that preachers support themselves with secular work. Notice: *"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way. And*

*into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again. And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house... Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" (Luke 10:2-7 and I Corinthians 9:6-11; see also: II Corinthians 11:8 and Philippians 4:13-18)? The **fact** is; secular work will hinder the preaching of the Gospel.*

### **While It Sounds Noble, The Gospel Will Be Hindered**

As I write this article it is 11:33 AM right now. Today, thus far, I have had two conversations with brethren that I could not have had if I were working secularly. Both conversations were about spiritual things. One conversation was with a brother whom I assist in his local work for the Lord. Gospel preachers MUST be available to teach to do our work. Consider Timothy as an example. If Timothy worked at AutoZone today could he have traveled to Corinth (Acts 18:5 and I Corinthians 4:17), Macedonia (Acts 19:22), Asia (Acts 20:4), Philippi (Philippians 2:19), and Thessalonica (I Thessalonians 3:6)? If Timothy were working at Wal-Mart could he have traveled to and stayed in Ephesus to prepare them against false doctrine (I Timothy 1:3-7)? If Timothy worked for Verizon could he have taken the time to join Paul in writing letters to brethren (Philippians 1:1, I Thessalonians 1:1, and II Thessalonians 1:1)?

The work of a Gospel preacher not only requires him to be available to help others, but time for studying is of the utmost importance (I Timothy 4:13 and II Timothy 2:14-18). Studying is not just about putting together an article or an outline, but about knowing enough truth to be able to answer the questions you haven't spent the week preparing for (Colossians 4:6 and I Peter 3:15). God expects those of us who preach the Gospel to ALWAYS be prepared to teach (II Timothy 4:2). The most important lessons I have ever taught are the ones I did not spend time preparing! There is no sermon outline for a riverside discussion (Acts 16:13-15).

On top of the above Scriptural reasons, secular work for preachers would have to be the "side work". The gentleman I mentioned in this article has this backwards. He thinks he can "preach on the side". WRONG! A preacher who has to support himself ends up "working on the side". This presents a huge challenge. Most employers will not accept the fact that if I work for them and a need to teach arises; I am leaving work to do the work of God! How will that fly with today's employers?

### **Conclusion**

There are times when preachers must obtain secular work. However, this is a hindrance for the Gospel. If a man is setting his mind on preaching the Gospel, he better be sure he is a content individual (Philippians 4:12) who has counted the cost (Luke 14:25-33). Nobility doesn't equal truth!