
Words of Truth

Evangelists Selling Their Work

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The subject matter at hand is one that could easily be turned into a series of lessons, for there are many things to cover, but I shall attempt to address the matter briefly. Let's begin by making some things clear so as not to confuse what is actually being addressed. Namely, an evangelist can earn a wage for his work and he can teach by means other than public speaking.

The Lord very clearly authorizes an evangelist to be supported financially by faithful brethren (I Corinthians 9:1-14, II Corinthians 11:7-8, and Philippians 4:10-18). Even before the church was established the work of men teaching was supported by those being taught (Matthew 10:5-10).

The Lord very clearly authorizes the Gospel to be taught from one person to another (Acts 8:25-39), from house to house (Acts 5:42), in public assemblies (Acts 11:26), and in writing (II Thessalonians 3:17). Things can be recorded by those other than the teacher and shared as well (I John 1:1-4). In all of the things written in this paragraph, there is NO AUTHORITY for the sale of anything taught!

Teaching the Gospel certainly requires materials to be purchased and used such as paper, ink, etc. (II Timothy 4:13, II John 1:12, and III John 1:13). The written word has always required materials for it to be published (Jeremiah 36:18). However, not once in all sixty-six writings that make up the Scriptures, do we find the authority to charge a fee to recover costs for materials used in teaching. Let's start with this point in our consideration of why it is outright sinful for evangelists to sell their work.

There Is NO AUTHORITY For The Sale Of An Evangelist's Works

All of the men I have ever discussed this subject matter with agree that we MUST have authority from the Lord for all that we say and do (Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 4:4, Ephesians 5:10, Colossians 3:17, and I Thessalonians 5:21). Every so-called "evangelist/preacher" I have discussed this subject matter with agrees that it is sinful to teach something as though it is from God, when it is not (Deuteronomy 4:2, Deuteronomy 12:32, Proverbs 30:5-6, I Corinthians 4:6, Galatians 1:6-12, I Peter 4:11, and Revelation 22:18-19). Yet, every time I have discussed this matter with a so-called "preacher" (most of have been from within

churches of Christ), they have not agreed that it is wrong for a preacher to sell his writings, sermons, class materials, audio recordings, etc.

An evangelist ought to be supported and we've already covered the authority for that. From those funds, he must do what he can afford to do in teaching, supporting himself, supporting his family, etc. If that evangelist cannot afford to print materials, write to others, or whatever; he just cannot do it. There is no authority from the Lord for him to seek to profit or recover his expenses for whatever costs come from teaching by selling his material. Brethren, locally and those reading this from other places, consider what it says of a man when he is seeking to sell material written or spoken to save souls.

Consider What The Scriptures Say About Those Selling “Religious Materials”

Jesus said that those who are hirelings are thieves and they stand in no good comparison to Him (John 10:1-18). When men assembled at the temple to sell and get gain, Jesus constructed a whip and drove them out (John 2:13-17). Why did Jesus cast out those seeking profit at the temple?

Consider: *“His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant... But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (Isaiah 56:10-12 and II Peter 2:1-3).*

Several months ago a so-called “preacher” argued to me that since you can buy a Bible you can sell religious materials. Human reasoning always gets people lost (Proverbs 16:25). Just because you can buy something that doesn't mean you can sell it. We are permitted to purchase meats that may have been offered to idols from markets that sell such meats (I Corinthians 10:23-33). That does not mean we can practice idolatry or profit from it.

Conclusion

In times past, God held all of His people accountable when the spiritual leaders among the people made religion a business (Micah 3:11-12). If you're not an evangelist, you'll not escape God's judgment for allowing evangelists to get away with thievery. The blind fall in the ditch with those that lead them there (Matthew 15:14). Don't be blind!
