
Words of Truth

I Thessalonians 2:9

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There were times when the Apostle Paul chose to labor with his hands to provide partial financial support for himself. For example, he did such when he was in Corinth (Acts 18:1-3; cf. I Corinthians 4:1-2). What we will look at in this study is that Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus did this when they were in Thessalonica. Here is what we will study in this article: *“For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God”* (I Thessalonians 2:9).

As we engage in this study it is important that something is made clear. Those who have given themselves to the preaching of the Gospel are authorized to receive financial support from those they teach. This pattern began first when Jesus sent the twelve out while He was still on earth. Notice: *“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city”* (Matthew 10:5-15). Such did not just apply to the Apostles. Jesus taught the same thing when He sent out the seventy to teach (Luke 10:1-12).

After Jesus died and left this world to be on the right hand of the Father in Heaven, those who taught the Gospel were still worthy to be supported by those they taught. To the Corinthians, Paul wrote this: *“Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and*

Cephas? 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? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (I Corinthians 9:1-14).

While in Corinth, Paul chose not to take support from them locally (I Corinthians 9:15). However, aside from working with his own hands there, notice this: *“I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service”* (II Corinthians 11:8). The next verse, similar to what we read about the Thessalonians, gives the reason why. Notice: *“And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself”* (II Corinthians 11:9).

Financial support is not just based on preachers being “needy” either. Notice what was written to the saints in Philippi: *“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God”* (Philippians 4:10-18).

Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus didn’t want to be “chargeable” [burdensome]. That is not the only reason they chose to labor with their hands. They chose to work with their hands to give an example for the lazy ones in Thessalonica to learn from (II Thessalonians 3:7-12). These men taught not only by word, but by deed as well (I Timothy 4:12).