

The Biblical Basis of Support Raising

by

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People often look down on missionaries and ministers who raise support for their ministries. They call them lazy, beggars, and assert that they should work themselves for all that they have and not depend on others for help. However, the question that needs to be asked is: When we say this, is what we are saying supported by the Bible? If it is not, then we must give up these notions and conform our ideas to the Bible. My own beliefs say that this ideas are not Biblical. Missionaries/ministers are not lazy, beggars, or ought to depend solely on their own earning to minister. Being a student to go in the ministry I have learned the impracticality of such an assertion. Being on the mission field and ministering is a full-time job, in many cases if the missionary or minister were to work instead then they would not be able to devote themselves to ministry. Let us now see what the Bible says about this subject.

In 3 John verse 7 John speaks of people who have gone out for the sake of the Name. These people are those who go out to proclaim God's truth in order to advance the cause of Christ. John says of these kinds of people that we must support them in verse 8.¹ (NOTE: Notice here that it is a right of those devoted to ministering God's word to receive support from other people so that they might devote themselves to ministry.) The World Biblical Commentary explains what is being said about giving support it says, "The principle of the Church giving support to Christian workers is enunciated in 1 Cor. 9:14 ("those who preach the Gospel should receive their living from the gospel") The "support" in question ("we are bound to support such men," ...) includes the provision of practical help and supplies, as well as a hospitable welcome (cf. v. 6b). (World Biblical Commentary p. 352)" Furthermore, it is clear in this verse that "The presbyter claims that "we" (ἡμεῖς emphatic) in the community of believers as distinct from "unbelievers" (v. 7b), must support those who have "gone out in the Name" (v. 7a)." So, it is the church that is to support workers of God. In this endeavor God is meeting ministers or missionaries needs through the church while the Gospel is preach freely to unbelievers so that the Gospel is not pedaled. The World Biblical Commentary also makes an important observation when it says, "The admonition to support Christian minister "in the cause of the truth" is not incompatible with a "tentmaking ministry"(Acts 18:1-4). So Paul was ready to receive his living from the gospel (1 Cor 9:14); but he also tried not to be a "burden to anyone" while he preached the gospel of God to them (1 Thess 2:9). (World Biblical Commentary p. 353)

In Luke 10 Jesus sends out missionaries to proclaim his message. The missionaries are told to depend on the provisions given to them by people in verse 7 which says, "And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages." Here in verse 7, Jesus does not support missionaries pulling their selves up by there on bootstraps because they are to depend on the help of others to depend on their needs in their endeavor of proclaiming God's message. Notice in this verse, Jesus himself sanctions that the one who devotes himself to ministering the word of God is entitled to the support of other people. The Baker Exegetical Commentary says of this verse, "Jesus next notes the disciples' conduct and provisions: they are

¹ Some Bible translations say "we ought to support them." However, though the Greek word here is commonly translated "ought", the use of the word here is used in a stronger sense. "Ought" makes it sound optional while the stronger translation "we must" makes clearer what John intended to say. He was not merely giving them an option.

to stay in one house and accept whatever is provided for them. The expression about workers being worthy of their wages is common in the NT (Matt. 10:10, 1 Tim. 5:18 [similar to Luke]; 1 Cor. 9:14; Didache 13.2). The spiritual benefit the worker brings with the kingdom message is worthy of support. In this Lucan context, the wage is the hospitality of food and shelter (1 Cor. 9:12 makes a similar point)...The action contrasts with Cynic philosophers who begged for money (Danker 1988: 214; cf. the instructions of Luke 10:4).” (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament pgs. 998-999)

In first Corinthians 9:14 Paul says, “In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.” Garland says that Paul uses this verse, “...as the climax to his argument about the incontestable rights of persons to receive compensation for their work. “In the same way” (οὕτως καί,...thus also) means that the Lord’s command accords with reason, common practice in secular and religious occupations, and OT law. (Garland p. 415) He also notes, “Since Jesus considered the preaching mission to be a full-time task that prevented the missionary from earning income in a normal occupation, he established their right to be supported. The Synoptic tradition, however, portrays this instruction as a command, not as an arrangement. Jesus directed his disciples to adopt a lifestyle during their mission that trusted God to make provision for them (see Garland 1993: 112-13).” (Garland p. 415)

In conclusion, the Bible supports the idea that those who devote their lives to the gospel have a right to be supported by others. Therefore, the missionary that raises financial support to go on the mission field, the minister who preaches, and the seminary student who is looking to go into full-time ministry and needs financial help so that debt will not hinder him from being in the ministry later is well within his right to raise financial support to be able to minister and proclaim the word of God. The Bible therefore does not support ideas such as: the minister or missionary must support himself financially on his own (i.e. pull himself up by his own bootstraps). The Bible also does not support the ideas that a minister or missionary is lazy, a beggar, or being unbiblical for asking for financial help, in fact the Bible says exactly the opposite the minister/missionary has a right to receive support for his needs because devoting oneself to ministry hinders one from being able to meet all of one’s needs by working a normal occupation. The Bible makes clear that the concept that one must work for everything that one has does not apply to the situation of people who devoting their lives to ministry is not able to meet all their financial needs because they are working to further God’s kingdom and proclaim His message.