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Volume XVI
Issue 395

Where Wages Are Due

by — Stephen Hill

If you are reading this article, there is a good chance that you are either not part of an institutional church or are considering leaving the one you currently attend. The closer we get to truth, the farther we get from organized religion. It goes without saying that many things change when we leave the religious system; but while the majority of those changes are for the better, some have the potential to be the opposite.



This article will focus on one of the habits common to organized religion that believers often neglect after leaving their “churches.” That habit is the practice of paying teachers. It’s no surprise that after engaging in the unscriptural practice of tithing for years, paying a high salary to a pastor who’s taught lies, and having little to no say in where their money goes, people are not thrilled with the idea of giving any of their money to faith related pursuits. The notion of paying individual men is especially off-putting, as men often have a tendency to be wasteful or unwise with the money they are given. While these concerns are certainly understandable, they do not absolve us from financially supporting those who *are* worthy of their calling, teaching truth in full commitment to the evangel.

In I Timothy 5:17-18, Paul writes,

Let elders who have presided ideally be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who are toiling in word and teaching, for the Scripture is saying, “A threshing ox you shall not be muzzling,” and “Worthy is the worker of his wages.”

Paul gives special emphasis in this passage to paying (“*honoring*”) those who teach. Fortunately, many of the expenses that eat up money in institutional churches (massive building loans, utilities, insurance premiums, fancy sound and lighting equipment, etc.) are non-existent to us when we leave; but teaching is still every bit as prevalent and necessary. When Paul wrote to Timothy, believers met in homes instead of expensive buildings and provided for others’ needs instead of securing fancy material possessions. They focused on growing in faith above growing in number. In short, their methods enabled them to spend their money on the priorities that *really* matter, and Paul made it a point to stress the payment of teachers as one of those priorities.

So we know that paying the teachers God has blessed us with is still important when we are no longer part of an institutional church. Just *how* important is it, though? Should faithful laborers be paid a small amount for their work, or should they be paid more? Should they make enough money to be able to make their living entirely from teaching, or should they make only enough to help supplement another income?

Fortunately, Paul gives us the answer to this question as well. In I Corinthians 9:14, he says,

(see *WAGES*, page 3559)

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Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

ISSN: 1936-9360

Volume XVI, No. 395 – May 7, 2013

This free weekly electronic publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

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WAGES (continued from front page)

The Lord has commanded that those who preach the evangel should receive their living from the evangel.

It doesn't get much clearer than that. Teachers should earn enough from those they teach to make a living. Why? Because this allows them to dedicate themselves fully to their teaching, thus leading more people into a greater knowledge and deeper understanding of God.

Of course, God has placed us all in different financial situations and we all make different amounts of money. One person may be able to contribute comfortably \$100 a month, while another may be able to give only \$10. Paul does not advise us on a set amount to give, and teachers are paid by members of the Body collectively rather than by one person alone. The expectation, then, is not for anyone to give beyond his or her means, but to provide as much as they are able to support those who herald the evangel for their benefit. When everyone contributes some, the total contribution should be sufficient for the recipient.

Paul addresses varying capacities for giving in II Corinthians 8:13-15. He writes,

For it is not, that, to others ease, yet to you affliction, but by an equality, in the current occasion, your superabundance is for their want, that their superabundance also may be coming to be for your want, so that there may be coming to be an equality, according as it is written: the one with much increases not, and the one with few lessens not.

In other words, the structure for giving produces an equality of care within the body of Christ. Paul is saying that we should not give so much to someone else that we can no longer meet our own needs, but that the goal is for those who don't need more to ensure that those who *do* need more are taken care of. He points out that while we may be helping others less fortunate for the time being, it may be them helping us later if we fall on hard times. The question, then, is: How much can we give to those

in need (such as teachers) without placing ourselves in need?

When asking this question, it's important that we distinguish between what we *need* and what we *want*. With every expense, we should determine if what we are spending money on is justified. To that end, what expense could be more justified than aiding the proclamation of the evangel? When placed against other costs, the evangel clearly wins. It is more important than a new television, a new pair of shoes, eating out, vacations, an x-box, movies, jewelry, and a new computer or tablet (to name a few). This being true, we should *prioritize* paying teachers above paying for these things. If we refuse to sacrifice other expenses to fund the heralding of the evangel, it is the evangel we are sacrificing.

Payment does not always have to be in the form of cash, either (although cash typically provides the most immediate help). If a teacher has written books, produced audio recordings, or done something else in a tangible form, purchasing the material for personal use or for distribution to others is a great way to support the teacher's ministry and to further the message. After all, teachers don't produce useable material for it not to be used.

If you currently donate money to certain teachers, rest assured that you are fulfilling a vital role in promoting the evangel. If you are able to give more than you currently are, make it a priority even if it means sacrificing other luxuries or non-essentials. When you are faced with the decision to spend money on an unnecessary luxury or a faithful teacher, be sure to put the teacher first. If you benefit from the teaching of several people, be sure to give to all of them as they all need financial support to continue their ministries on a full-time basis. Consider committing to an amount to donate each month and make it part of your budget, if need be, just as you would any other expense. It is, after all, worthy of being deemed a "need," not merely a "want."

Let's all follow Paul's advice by paying our workmen their due wages so they can continue their important work. The reward for ourselves and others is worth far more than the cost. ■



Cheerfulness that Mocks the Adversary

Counsel from Martin Luther

by — Michael Mercer

Martin Luther regularly gave counsel to his friends to seek *cheerfulness*. He himself was subject to discouragement and depression, which he usually attributed to the attacks of the Adversary. His letters and table-talk have much to say about ways of overcoming dark moods. Luther's advice is characteristically earthy and bold, while at the same time he clearly points his companions to Christ. This combination of utter humanity and spiritual insight is one of the features that makes Luther so attractive as a mentor.

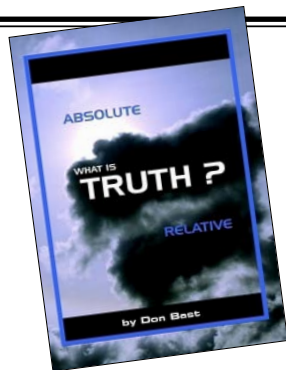
One of the best known examples is a letter to Jerome Weller at Wittenberg while Luther was away from home during the summer of 1530.

Though Luther preached strongly against drunkenness and debauchery, words like the following testify that Luther thought Christians were perfectly free in Christ to make use of God's gifts to gladden their hearts in full enjoyment of life.

Whenever this temptation comes to you beware not

to dispute with the devil nor allow yourself to dwell on these lethal thoughts, for so doing is nothing less than giving place to the devil and so falling. Try as hard as you can to despise these thoughts sent by Satan. In this sort of temptation and battle contempt is the easiest road to victory; laugh your enemy to scorn and ask to whom you are talking. By all means flee solitude, for he lies in wait most for those alone. This devil is conquered by despising him and mocking him. Therefore, Jerome, joke and play games with my wife and others, in which way you will drive out your diabolic thoughts and take courage.

Be strong and cheerful and cast out those monstrous thoughts. Whenever the devil harasses you thus, seek the company of men or drink more, or joke and talk nonsense, or do some other merry thing. Sometimes we must drink more, sport, recreate ourselves, aye, and even sin a little to spite the devil, so that we leave him no place for troubling our consciences with trifles. We are conquered if we try to conscientiously not to sin at all. So when the devil says to you, "Do not drink," an-



What Is Truth? Absolute and Relative

by — Don Bast

High above the storm clouds the sun is always shining. When we get a glimpse of God's perspective we are able to experience the Son of His love shining through the darkest storms of life.

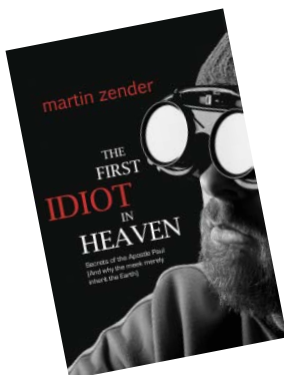
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The First Idiot in Heaven

Secrets of the Apostle Paul (and Why the Meek Merely Inherit the Earth)

by — Martin Zender

Paul was a visionary. He saw the world as no one else saw it. Jesus Christ blinded him with truth. "To live is Christ," this man said, and he lived life with singular purpose: to see and know Christ.

In Paul's evangel, God justifies sinners, not law-keepers or moral performers. According to what the terrestrial-bound Jesus taught (the gospel of the Circumcision), law-keepers and moral performers stay on Earth ("the meek shall inherit the Earth" – Matthew 5:5). So the Christians who think that imitating Jesus will get them to heaven will instead (assuming they can actually imitate Jesus) wind up on Earth.

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swer him: "I will drink, and right freely, just because you tell me not to." One must always do what Satan forbids. What other cause do you think that I have for drinking so much strong drink, talking so freely and making merry so often, except that I wish to mock and harass the devil who is wont to mock and harass me. Would that I could contrive some great sin to spite the devil, that he might understand that I would not even then acknowledge it and that I was conscious of no sin whatever. We must put the whole law entirely out of our eyes and hearts.

Luther had no scruples about whether such enjoyments as drinking alcohol offend God. Nonsense! He saw teetotalism as the Adversary's work! What else could it be, since it involves despising what God calls good, what he has given to gladden the human heart (Psalm 104:15)?

One of my favorite passages from the First Testament, which I imagine has rarely been preached, is Deuteronomy 14:22-26.

Set apart a tithe of all the yield of your seed that is brought in yearly from the field. In the presence of the Lord your God, in the place that He will choose as a dwelling for His name, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, your wine, and your oil, as well as the firstlings of your herd and flock, so that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always. But if, when the Lord your God has blessed you, the distance is so great that you are unable to transport it, because the place where the Lord your God will choose to set His name is too

far away from you, then you may turn it into money. With the money secure in hand, go to the place that the Lord your God will choose; spend the money for whatever you wish – oxen, sheep, wine, strong drink, or whatever you desire. And you shall eat there in the presence of the Lord your God, you and your household rejoicing together.

So here, we have God *commanding* His people to spend their *tithe* money on *anything they want* in order to throw a great *feast* for themselves and their households! Including *wine and strong drink*, if they so desire.

If you tend to be overly scrupulous before God and strict with yourself out of fear of offending Him, commit that text to memory and recite it to yourself over and over and over again.

Once we truly grasp God's grace toward us in Christ, we will not live timidly or refuse to relish our Creator's good gifts. For heaven's sake, life is hard enough, sad enough, stressful enough. The world, the flesh, and the Adversary exert their pressures on our spirits every day. The remedies that bring us relief are not always just "spiritual." How could that possibly be? Our Savior, who had a reputation among the righteous as a glutton and winebibber, a friend of "sinners" who loved to party and enjoy gaiety and laughter around the table, won't stand for it.

So, my brothers and sisters – play, and sing, and dance, and laugh, and raise a glass.

(see *CHEERFULNESS*, next page)

A Pastor's Editorial Answered

Here is a letter written by our dear brother and friend Matthew Rohrbach, which ran in the *Mansfield (OH) News Journal*, in response to an Easter editorial by a local church pastor. He was limited to 300 words. I think you will agree that Matt made *amazing* use of his restricted word-count.

Pastor Paul Lintern (Viewpoint, March 30) says the power of death was conquered when Jesus was resurrected. True enough. Yet, with its doctrine of eternal torment, Christianity denies this, the very reason it celebrates Easter. Lintern speaks of Jesus' sadness and agony as He approached His death. How much more sad, how much more agonized, must He be knowing Christians believe the second death, the destiny of the unsaved, is a death beyond His reach, a death more powerful than His cross.

Jesus came to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29), to draw all mankind to Himself (John 12:32), to reconcile all creation to God through the cross (Colossians 1:20), to save all mankind (I Timothy 4:10). But if there is a hell (an English word Jesus never spoke) brimming with thrown-away people (up to 95% of humanity, some say), then He failed. Say you bought 100 acres of land. You paid the price for that land, a very steep price. You go to collect

the deed and discover you're getting only ten acres, or five. You would be furious at being cheated. Yet Christian doctrine expects us to believe that Jesus will be satisfied with being cheated of something so much more valuable than an acre of land. We are to believe Jesus would quit looking for even one lost sheep, let alone billions of them!

Mistranslated Bibles make the second death eternal, though Scripture says death will be abolished (I Corinthians 15:26). Where Bibles have "eternal" judgment the inspired word is "eonian" judgment – that is, judgment which is time-limited, and corrective. An eternal second death would mean Jesus was unable to destroy Satan's works (I John 3:8), and billions of damned people would be eternal proof that, in the end, Satan was more powerful than Christ.

Matthew Rohrbach ■

CHEERFULNESS (continued from previous page)

Scripture Addendum:

[God brings forth] *wine which makes man's heart glad* (Psalm 104:14-15).

Wine, which cheers God and man (Judges 9:13).

Give ... wine unto those with heavy hearts (Proverbs 31:6).

Wine makes merry (Ecclesiastes 10:19).

How great is His goodness ... Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids (Zechariah 9:17).

For further study and consideration on the subject of alcohol read *A Look at Alcohol in the Scriptures* by Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. ■

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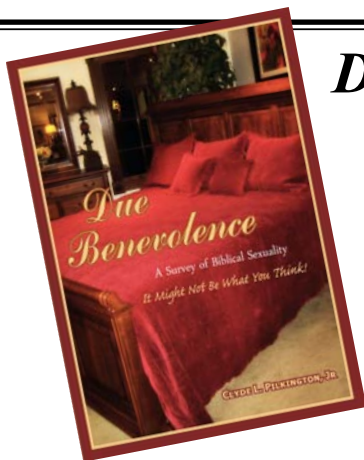


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