

Should Pastors Be Salaried?

by a brother in the Lord

It is absolutely not the assembly's obligation to financially support a pastor or elder. This is a very popular tradition and misconception based on misinterpretations and misapplications of various Scriptures and often leads to gross financial abuse.

We do not see salaried pastors anywhere in the Bible. The Bible teaches against "hirelings". It is crystal clear from the overall teachings of the Bible that a pastor should work with his hands, taking care of himself and his family, having something to share with others. He should not be a burden on the assembly.

Nevertheless, we hear a lot of empty excuses today from hirelings as to why they claim to have no time to work a real job. Yet the apostle Paul often made tents for a living and was way busier with spiritual duties than these guys today. In addition to everything Paul was doing, he also had the time to write two thirds of the New Testament as he was inspired by God to do.

When a man looks at the assembly as a job or career, or a business that needs to be managed, it then appears to him that he will be very busy with that endeavor. Therefore he thinks he will not have enough time to also work a real job. The truth is, the assembly is not a financial career or a business, nor is it something to be commercially administrated, and so the assembly is not a complex maze of confusion that needs to be controlled. Hence there is plenty of time for a pastor to work a job and take care of his family while helping with the needs of the assembly.

Also, an assembly is not suppose to be so large that a pastor is overburdened and has no time to get to know everyone personally and become their close friends. Again, the Bible warns of hirelings. Among other problems, hirelings really do not care about people or relationships, regardless of how clever they may be at fooling people into believing that they do care. The bottom line is they are in it for *the money*. That is their primary motivation, which creates a huge conflict of interest and even if the hireling is not a wolf himself, he leaves the congregation in danger of wolves:

¹¹I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. ¹²But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep. ¹³The hireling flees, because he is a hireling, and cares not for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. John 10:11-14

We regularly see hirelings devastating assemblies by teaching things that are in their own financial favor, such as the kind of manipulative and exploitive pleas for money that many Christians endure hearing from pulpits at least once a week. Some of these men take even wilder advantage of the congregation and buy luxury homes, luxury cars and taking expensive vacations at the assembly's expense and then have the audacity to claim that all this proves how "blessed" of God they are.

Among many problems, the hireling error propagates legalism. Being salaried is one of the reasons these men have so much extra time on their hands to become busy bodies poking their nose into areas that they have no business to, and legislating all kinds of ungodly rules and regulations that are nowhere to be found in the Bible. Some of these so-called "pastors" may be less involved with such things. Instead they may just prepare a weak empty message at the last minute on Saturday night, teach that message Sunday morning and take the rest of the week off and maybe do a hospital visit or a funeral here and there.

Some hirelings use their free time to write books full of false doctrines and other dangerous errors. Regardless, many of these people live huge lives of freedom and leisure at the assembly's expense while every ones else works hard for a living and typically struggles to make ends meet, having to endure the added burden of supporting a meddling busy body, lazy freeloader or both. The Bible forbids favoritism,

but typically there is no one in an assembly that bestows more favoritism upon themselves than a hireling does.

Overall the Bible teaches inter-believer freewill giving on a case-by-case basis as legitimate needs arise often during temporary emergency conditions. Just like any of us should endeavor to help each other in times of need, an assembly may also help a pastor in a time of real need, such as due to a job loss while he is looking for work, but this should not become a permanent thing as if being a pastor is a job.

Money is an area that God expects us to be good stewards. Money is often also a topic that many people are more sensitive to and therefore have a little better discernment and see things more quickly than they otherwise might. The money preachers target this tendency and make it sound like Christians have some kind of "heart" issue, pride, greed or selfishness problem if they are cautious, reluctant or refuse to give to them and their ungodly agendas. These preachers are almost always talking about money. These people are the ones who are obviously greedy and who are extorting money and therefore according to 1Cor 5: 9-13 should be considered wicked and should be expelled from the assembly not pampered and catered to:

⁹I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; ¹⁰I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. ¹¹But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler--not even to eat with such a one. ¹²For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? ¹³But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES. 1Cor 5:9-13 NASB

The NASB translation renders the last part of verse 13 in all caps. I did not add that! The KJV also uses the word "extortioner". Covetousness (greed) and extortion is simply not tolerated. Could the Bible be any clearer?

Lastly, a Christian simply can't keep the biblical command to be a cheerful giver and not giving under compulsion if they think they owe a compulsory tax of 10% of their income plus offerings to support a pastor's every whim and desired lifestyle. Pastors who require a salary place an ungodly and oppressive burden upon an assembly. These men are not good ministers, for one thing, because they do not set Christians free as a good minister of Jesus Christ is supposed to. 1Tim4: 1-6 clearly shows us that a good minister of Jesus Christ sets Christians free from these kind of legalistic concepts by putting them in remembrance of the truth:

¹Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; ²Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; ³Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from food, which God has created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. ⁴For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: ⁵For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. ⁶If you put the brethren in remembrance of these things, you shall be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto you have attained. 1Tim 4:1-6

Instead of bringing liberty, hirelings put Christians into bondage and these so-called pastors are the direct beneficiaries of that bondage. They make money at it, and there may not be a more devastating fuel source of abuse in the assembly than money given to hirelings. The incorrect mixing of money and ministry is very debilitating to the assembly.