

TENTMAKING, BAH, HARDLY WORTH MENTIONING

Paul supported himself with manual labor in three cities: Thessalonika, Corinth, and Ephesus.

- “wrought with labor” in Thessalonika, AD 52 II Thes 3.8
- “preached. . .freely,” (*without charge*) in Corinth II Cor 11.7
- again bi-vocational in Ephesus Acts 20.34

Many men have beautifully served as “bi-vocational” pastors, holding down part-time employment during times when the congregation was unable or unwilling to pay them a decent wage. We are indebted to these servants; however, it is God’s plan that God’s people should pay their pastors.

“Tentmaker” is a term coined recently. Its definition today might be: *a pastor or missionary who augments his church salary with part-time employment*. Often his situation is temporary, sometimes it is permanent. Paul probably didn’t carry a satchel of tentmaking tools with him, but he did hook up with Aquila in Corinth when he ran out of cash, Acts 18.3.

The lesson to be learned from Paul’s three very brief periods over 15-20 years, is to teach the people in these places to pay their pastors. The purpose is not primarily to encourage pastors to engage in secular employment.

- a. made tents in Thessalonika, AD 52, II Thes 3.8
Paul starts [*Acts 18.3*] then evidently quits tentmaking two verses later when Timothy and Silas show up [*18.5*].
Paul was in Thessalonika more than “three Sabbaths” and while he was there the church at Philippi sent Paul relief money at least twice, *Phil 4.14-19* while Paul was living and church planting in Thessalonika.
If Paul started out with a nest egg of family cash [*pjm* opinion], it had run out by his second missionary tour.
- b. I Cor 11.7 Paul “preached. . .freely” (“*without charge*”) in Corinth, AD 54.
Later apologizes to the Corinthians for not giving them an opportunity to support him. He tells them he treated them as “inferior to other churches. . .not burdensome to you . . .forgive me this wrong”
He had been “working with our own hands” I Cor 4.12
- c. Acts 20.34 “These hands” again bi-vocational in Ephesus AD 60

The Scripture is brief but forcefully clear that the infant New Testament church was to pay its new staff but in a different method than they had paid the priestly Temple staff under Mosaic law.

A. Church must give generously.

see blog, [Tithing or Generosity in NT? www.PhilMyersBlog.com](http://www.PhilMyersBlog.com)

B. Pastors may not demand a salary.

- 1 Tim 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of **double honor**, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.
- 1 Tim 5:18 The Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. The laborer is **worthy** of his reward.
- 1 Cor 9:14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel **should live** of the gospel.

- Gal 6:6 Let him that is taught in the word **communicate** unto him that teacheth in all good things.

Jason's Gift He was about 8 years old. His name was Jason Chollar. I was his Junior Church "pastor." He came from a godly home, and one morning while he and his mother were reading the Bible together, he asked an insightful question. They had just read Galatians 6.6.

"Let the one who is taught the Word,
share all good things with him who teaches."

His mom was a friend of mine and she told me he asked what it meant to share a good thing with your teacher. She explained that this was the reason the church paid the pastor. The pastor worked hard studying the Bible so that he could explain it to the people at church. Jason asked if everybody in the church was supposed to share good things with the pastor. She said yes.

Next Sunday a small boy brought me a plate of chocolate chip cookies he had baked himself. I almost cried.

Examples:

- 2 Thes 3:8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we **might not be chargeable** to any of you:
- Phil 4:16-19 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. I have all, and abound: I am full, having **received** of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a **sacrifice** acceptable, well pleasing to God. My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
- 2 Cor 11:7-9 Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God **freely**? I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. 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.

Side note:

I have "lived of the Gospel" most of my life. I have never once brought up the subject of money or salary to any Christian employer.