

Helping Preachers

John Isaac Edwards

Paul had his helpers in the Lord. He wrote the Romans, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles” (Rom. 16:3-4). Again he said, “Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ...” (Rom. 16:9). If we had been Christians in the first-century, would we have gone down in the annals of sacred history as helpers to gospel preachers? I got to thinking about some ways we can help men today who have given their lives to preaching the gospel of the Son of God.

1) Recognize And Respect Their Work. One brother said of a preacher, “He gets paid thousands of dollars a year and all he does is preach!” Perhaps, he needed to learn some appreciation for an evangelist and his work. A good place to learn about the qualifications and work of an evangelist is from the books of 1st & 2nd Timothy and Titus. His work in three words is to, “Preach the word...” (2 Tim. 4:2). I don’t see very many men lined out the door for the job; do you? Do you know of any greater work than preaching the word, “...which is able to save your souls” (Jas. 1:21)? Let’s show respect for the preacher and his work in what we say and how we say it to him and about him. “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and

evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted...” (Eph. 4:31-32). Preachers need to hear words of kindness and encouragement too.

2) Pray For Them. Paul appealed to the Corinthians, “Ye also helping together by prayer for us...” Paul often asked an interest in the prayers of brethren. He entreated the Thessalonians, “Brethren, pray for us” (1 Th. 5:25). And again, “Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith” (2 Th. 3:1-2). Let’s make it a point to mention preachers and their families in private and public prayers. Pray for their health and safety. Pray for doors of opportunity to be opened for the seed to be planted in honest and good hearts. Ask the Lord to give them boldness. Pray that their needs will be fully met. Pray that they will be strong spiritually and that they will be protected from the wiles of the Devil.

3) Serve Tables. When a complaint arose about widows neglected in the daily ministrations, the apostles called the disciples together and said, “It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore,

brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:1-4). It’s not that the apostles were unable to see to these needs; they had more urgent business to tend to — prayer and the ministry of the word. Every church needs some table-serving men! I’ve met some men in local works who are very busy taking care of maintenance needs around the building, mowing the grass, trimming the landscaping, shoveling snow in the winter, updating websites, recording and duplicating cassette tapes and CDs, making copies of class materials, publishing and mailing teaching bulletins, seeing to the physical needs of widows and others and the list goes on, with the attitude, “These are things we can do to help. The more of these things we can do, the less time elders and preachers have to spend doing these kinds of things, and the more time they can spend doing what they really need to be doing.” That’s a great attitude, isn’t it? May their tribe increase!

4) Have Them In Your Home. There was a time when brethren had preachers in their homes. Now, if hospitality is practiced in some places, it’s when the preacher has the brethren in his home. Remember Lydia? Paul said,

“...she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us” (Acts 16:15). If you had been Lydia, would you have kept a group of preachers in your home like she did? The church needs some hospitality-constraining folks like Lydia today! Acts 18 tells of Aquila and Priscilla and mentions that Paul “...abode with them...” (v. 3). How about keeping and feeding a preacher in our home? We might think of the hospitality of the Shunammite who recognized the needs of a man of God saying to her husband, “Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither” (2 Ki. 4:8-10). What a help to Elisha!

5) See That They Are Able To Live Of The Gospel. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul discussed the right of preachers to “forbear working” and have their physical needs taken care of by those among whom they labor. Verse 11 asks, “If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?” Verse 14 teaches, “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” As members of the local church, we are in position to see

that those who preach the gospel are able to have their needs fully met. The church at Philippi is a good example of this as Paul said, “...ye sent once and again unto my necessity...But 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” (Phil. 4:16-18). “...The labourer is worthy of his hire...” (Lk. 10:7).

6) Supply That Which Is Lacking. Paul besought the Corinthians concerning the house of Stephanas, “That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth. I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such” (1 Cor. 16:15-18). We may observe some things lacking on the part of the church toward preachers. By coming to them and supplying their needs, we can be a great help to them and refresh their spirit! We may be able to assist them in preparing charts and slides, typing, providing transportation, and so on. As a man’s eyes dim, his health fades and he advances in years, his needs change. Let’s look for things that may be lacking that we can supply to the furtherance of

the gospel.

7) Go With Them. Acts 18:18 finds Paul sailing into Syria, “...and with him Priscilla and Aquila...” Acts 19:29 mentions “...Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul’s companions in travel...” I’ve had brethren to accompany me in work at home, throughout the United States, and in work overseas. It’s a great help when there are faithful and able brethren who desire to go.

8) Set Up Home Bible Studies And Bring Folks For Them To Teach. We can help preachers by being women of Samaria. She went into the city and said, “Come...” and they came (Jn. 4:28-30). How about inviting folks to come hear the gospel preached? We can also help preachers by being a Cornelius. He sent for Peter, a preacher, to come to his house to preach the gospel. When Peter arrived, he “...found many that were come together” as Cornelius “...had called together his kinsman and near friends” (Acts 10:27, 24). Do we have friends and relatives who need to hear words whereby they can be saved? How about setting up a time for the preacher to come to our house to study with them?

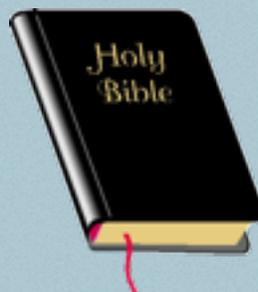
Let’s not treat preachers like pieces of old furniture or take them or their work for granted.

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