

OLD UNION MINISTERS SCHOOL
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@ OLD UNION MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
LESSON TITLE: ENTANGLED PREACHERS
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Scripture Text: Mathew 4:(17-22) *From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw two other brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.*

2nd Timothy 2:(1-4) *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

What Paul wrote to Timothy in this epistle can certainly be applied, to some extent, to all of God's people. Every child of God needs to manage his or her life, so as to prevent temporal things from hindering their service to God. However, this epistle was written by a preacher, to a preacher, and I believe primarily applies to those men whom God has called into the ministry. Notice that Paul did not say in his writing that no man that warreth, is to ever have any dealings with the affairs of this life. We know that in reality, even as preachers, there are times when we have temporal matters to attend to. However, the Apostle Paul did write, **NO MAN** that warreth is to **ENTANGLE** himself in these matters. Let's take note of the analogy Paul used in this, No man that warreth, gets himself entangled, so that he can please the one who called him to be a soldier. Paul's analogy seems to be easily understood. He compares a man who is called to preach to a soldier that goes to war. When soldiers go off to war, they are forced to leave behind things they were involved with in their civilian life. The call to the ministry is not just a calling to preach, it is a calling to a new way of life.

When we consider this account given in Matthew 4, as Jesus was walking by the sea of Galilee, and called Peter, Andrew, James and John, how can we practically apply the way they responded to our lives? The scriptures tell us that upon receiving the call they immediately followed him. Are we to believe, from this example, that every time God calls a man to preach, he is to immediately resign from his secular occupation? Speaking from my own experience, in March of 1981, when God called me to preach, I was, in fact, working at my secular job when the call came. Having experienced that, I can only say that I did not immediately leave, nor did I feel compelled by God to do so.

In Matthew 9: 9, the scriptures also tell us, *And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.*

I believe it is important for us to consider that when these things took place, it was during the Lord's earthly ministry. When he called these men, he was physically standing before them, and I believe they obviously understood that they were to leave those things behind and follow him at that very moment.

However, brethren, we must not allow ourselves to believe there is nothing in these examples that applies to you and I. I firmly believe there is something taught in these scriptures that applies to every man whom God calls to preach.

I am convinced that the great lesson taught here for all preachers is this: When God calls a man into the ministry, he expects the work of the ministry to become the top priority of his life. If we are going to please the Lord, we must do our best to avoid allowing anyone or anything to distract us from what God has called us to do.

Let's consider further what Paul wrote to Timothy, *No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.* What is the reason for not being entangled? What is to be the primary goal of any God called man? Answer: **To please the Lord.** Not to please himself, not to please his family, not to please his church, but to please the one who chose him for the task. In Galatians 1:10 Paul wrote: *For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*

Brethren, when you stand to preach, if you are seeking to please people, rather than seeking to please Christ, either get your priorities straight, or **QUIT PREACHING.** If God is calling you to a specific labor, if he is sending you somewhere to preach, and you are refusing to heed that call because it does not suit you, or you know someone else, anyone else, who would not be pleased should you obey the call, either get your priorities straight, or **QUIT PREACHING.** If you are refusing to do what God is calling you to do because you have gainful secular employment where you're at, and it would require you to leave that behind, either get your priorities straight or **QUIT PREACHING.** If you are not willing to leave your father, mother, sisters, brothers, houses or land, to honor the calling of God upon your life, either get your priorities straight, or **QUIT PREACHING, YOU SHOULD NOT BE THE SERVANT OF CHRIST!!** Should any of these things be true about those whom God has called to preach, that man is an **ENTANGLED PREACHER,** and will not be able to please the one who chose him to be a soldier.

I would like to clarify something about seeking to please Christ. It should not cause any preacher to take the attitude, **I don't care what people think of me.** We should all be concerned about what people think of us. We should live our lives before people in a

way that the ministry be not blamed. But when you know that what you are doing is of the Lord, and pleasing to Him, do it, whether people are pleased with it or not.

In 1st Corinthians 9:14, Paul wrote: *Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.* It is not at all difficult to understand what Paul was saying when he wrote that. And we should notice that Paul did not state this as his opinion, he said, the **Lord ordained it.** The scriptures teach us that it is the responsibility of the Lord's church to support the ministry. It is also the responsibility of preachers to be willing to live as the Lord ordained. In your particular ministry, if God has placed you in circumstances that make it possible for you to live your life without being entangled with the burden of secular labor, to have the freedom to devote your time fully to the ministry, **DO IT.** The Lord ordained it! If you pastor a church that is able and willing financially to pay you wages adequate to support you, and you are not willing to accept this way of life, then the only logical conclusion is you are not willing to accept what the Lord ordained, and this certainly hinders the cause! If you pastor a church that is not in the position to pay you a living wage, then you need to be willing to seek out that which will allow you to spend as little time as possible engaged in secular labor, (**SEEK GOD, HE WILL HELP YOU WITH THIS**) because we all need to strive to find a way to live of the gospel.

If the Lord sends you out on the mission field, you need to devote your time to the Lord's work. God sent you there to do his work, not man's work. There may be times when you will have no other choice than to spend time involved in secular labor, but again, seek the Lord's help in the matter, God is certainly able in those situations to provide a way for you to make ends meet without you becoming involved in something that will consume so much of your time you can't do what he sent you there to do.

What I would like to say here is not an accusation, it is an observation. It could be that the problem often times results from what the preacher may consider "living wages". Will it allow him to be able financially to do what anyone else can do. (To keep up with the Jones.) If we are content to have our needs met, it may not take nearly as much as we lead ourselves to believe it will. Remember Paul's instruction to Timothy as recorded in 1st Timothy 6: 6-8: *But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us therewith be content.*

If we are devoted to God, and sold out to the ministry, God will make a way. He would not ordain something without the plan to accomplish it.

Some believe and have taught that the ministry is not a vocation, in that it replaces a man's responsibility to have a secular job like any other man. I do not believe such teaching to be scriptural!

I would like to make a statement to all my preacher brothers. Whatever your particular work in the ministry happens to be. If you are a pastor, a missionary, someone who is

preaching by appointments, someone who is involved in a nursing home ministry, someone who preaches tent revivals, etc. If you are forsaking opportunities to preach the gospel to people because your secular job won't allow you the time to do so, you need to find another means of employment. Because if that is your situation brethren, your entangled, and won't be able to please HIM WHO CHOSEN YOU TO BE A SOLDIER!

Upon consideration of the writings of the Apostle Paul on this subject, some have used his teachings in an attempt to prove that preachers are supposed to work at secular jobs. It has been said, Paul was a tentmaker, and he worked at his craft. Well, this is true, but let's consider some of the reasons for which he did. In 2nd Thessalonians 3: 7-8, Paul wrote, *For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you.* Was Paul teaching that it is wrong for a preacher to take wages from those to whom he preaches? Absolutely not! Had he taught that, he would have been contradicting what Jesus told the seventy when he sent them out, His teaching to them was, When you enter into a house, eat and drink what they give you, **The labourer is worthy of his hire.** Furthermore, Paul would have been in contradiction to his own teaching, because we find in 1st Corinthians 9:11 he asked, *If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?*

The account given in 2nd Thessalonians 3: 6-12, Tells us that Paul had obviously encountered people there that would not work, so he himself, and those that were with him did, in order to teach by example, that no man should live in idleness and expect other people to take care of him.

From the statements found recorded in 1st Corinthians 9: 11-18, 2nd Corinthians 11: 7-9, and 2nd Corinthians 12: 11-16, Paul also encountered a problem among those in Corinth when it came to ministerial support. While laboring among them, they should have supported him, however, he did not push the issue, but took support from other churches to do the Lord's work. Or, as he put it in 2nd Corinthians 11:8, *I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.* However, Paul obviously came to realize that there were some problems that developed from the way he handled this situation. He actually felt that he had wronged the church at Corinth. **Brethren, it is a great privilege for a church to support the gospel! No church should ever consider the support of the ministry to be an unnecessary burden!** In 2nd Corinthians 12: 13 Paul wrote to this church and said, For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong. And then he immediately followed that by telling them (verse 13) that he was now ready for the third time to come, and he still did not intend to burden them. Paul's motivation in all this was that he would not do anything to hinder the gospel. * Brethren, should you ever find yourself in a similar situation, I would advise you to never demand wages. Find a way to make it. Never give anyone occasion to say, He's in it for money, he's greedy of filthy lucre. May God richly bless your labors.