



The Harvester

*Preparing Souls
To Serve The Lord!*

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Scriptural Use of Local Church Funds

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The use of church funds has often been a topic of contention, even among the brotherhood. In fact, that was one of the main issues that split the brotherhood in the late 1950s/early 1960s. In a recent meeting between the preachers and leading men of two local churches (neither of which had an eldership), a list of questions was presented to see at what point the two sides disagreed, with the hope that this series of discussions would either resolve the issues toward restoring unity or let brethren know the reason why the disunity still exists. Both sides agreed on 90% of the questions, even one about whether it was sinful to eat in the church building. The only question over which the two sides disagreed involved use of church funds. Unfortunately, the side who thought it was always sinful to help “non-saints” from the church treasury called off further discussions. This article will examine Paul’s instruction in Galatians 6:6-10, showing three areas where local churches of Christ have authority to use their funds.

Supporting Gospel Preachers

Paul wrote, “Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches” (Gal. 6:6). This authorizes the local church to use their funds to financially support gospel preachers and teachers. The verb translated “share [communicate, KJV]” (from *koinoneo*, κοινωνέω) means to contribute, give a share (Rom. 12:13; 15:27; Phil. 4:15; 1 Tim. 5:22; Heb. 2:14; 1 Pet. 4:13; 2 Jn. 11). It is a verb form of the word fellowship. Lest someone make a quibble over the “him” in Galatians 6:6a, as if it only autho-

rized “individual action,” note that Paul elsewhere said that “If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? ... Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:11, 14). Also, Paul wrote Timothy, “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine ... The laborer is worthy of his wages” (1 Tim. 5:17-18). Those who teach the gospel have a right to receive financial support from those they teach. Although Paul chose not to accept support from some congregations (1 Cor. 9:14-18; 1 Thes. 2:9; 2 Thes. 3:8-9), he did accept support from others (Phil. 4:15-18). Supporting gospel preachers, evangelists, and teachers must not be viewed as a “grim duty, though some congregations seem to treat it as such;” rather, Paul spoke of it as “fellowship,” or a “partnership” (Boice, 503).

Promoting Spiritual Life

Paul continued:

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. ⁹And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. (Gal. 6:7-9)

These verses, in context, authorize the local church to use their funds for endeavors that promote spiritual life among its members. This is emphasized

in two parts. First, God's *natural* law of sowing and reaping is certain (Gal. 6:7). Because of the rhythmic nature of this verse, some think it was a common proverb of the day. "Mocked" is translated from *muktepizo* (μυκτηρίζω), which means to mock, make a fool of; to treat with contempt, to ridicule. Paul's point is that God cannot be fooled or outwitted by people who seek to circumvent His natural law (cf. Col. 1:16; Heb. 11:3). Second, God's *spiritual* law of sowing and reaping is just as certain (Gal. 6:8). Sowing to the flesh results in spiritual death (Gal. 6:8a cf. 5:19-21; Job 4:8). Sowing to the Spirit results in "life everlasting" (Gal. 6:8b). Is not maximizing the ability for its members to reap eternal life a major reason why the local church exists? Since God's law of sowing and reaping is certain, we must not quit, or "grow weary" (KJV), in sowing spiritual seed (Gal. 6:9). These verses, couched between financially supporting preachers (Gal. 6:6) and helping those in need (Gal. 6:10), show that promoting spiritual sowing and reaping is to be promoted by the church (even if it involves local church funds)! This would include a host of expediences as determined by a local eldership.

Helping Those in Need

Paul concluded, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). This authorizes the local church to help people, even

"non saints." Although the full harvest mentioned in the previous verse is future, *now* is the time to take advantage of the opportunities God presently gives (Gal. 6:10a). Two aspects of opportunity involve: (1) the true needs of those in distress; and (2) our ability to meet those needs (cf. Acts 2:43-44; 4:32-35). Good is to be done to all people when opportunities arise, not just to saints, or members of the church, but to everyone (Gal. 6:10b). The word "all [all men, KJV; all people, NAS; everyone, ESV]" (from *pas*, πᾶς), without the definite article, as here, means "each, every," or in the plural, "all." This word is found several times in Galatians (1:2; 2:14, 16; 3:8, 10, 13, 22, 26, 28; 4:1; 5:3, 14; 6:6). As with any word or statement in the Bible, it must be taken literally, unless something in the context *demand*s otherwise. If this were not the case, we could make the Bible teach anything we wanted! There is nothing in this context that demands the word "all" to mean only saints. To the contrary, the word "especially" (from *malista*, μάλιστα), which means "above all, most of all" (Phil. 4:22; 1 Tim. 4:10; 5:8; 2 Tim. 4:13; Tit. 1:10), demands that "all" include non-saints! If "all" referred only to saints, why would Paul have to say, "especially ... those who are of the household of faith"? The "only saints" doctrine of benevolence is false (cf. Mt. 15:21-28; Lk. 10:25-37; Jas. 1:27)!

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Conclusion

Everything in this world belongs to God (Deut. 10:14; Ps. 24:1; 50:10; 1 Cor. 10:26), including the money we control! While a local church must seek godly wisdom in using the money over which its leaders have control (cf. Jas. 1:5), a local church has authority from God to use those funds to support gospel preaching and teaching, to promote the spiri-

tual life of its members, and to help people in need, even if they are not members of the body of Christ (Gal. 6:6-10).

Works Cited

Boice, James Montgomery. "Galatians." *The Expositor's Bible Commentary—Vol. 10: Romans, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians*. Ed. Frank E. Gaebelin. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976.

♪♪ "Stand Up, Stand Up For Jesus" ♪♪

We sing this song to "teach and admonish one another" as we gather together. As the world becomes increasingly secular, the need for more sound preachers increases, yet the pool of those willing to commit themselves to the work seems to get smaller. If you have good men in the local church with whom you serve, please encourage them to contact us about preparing to preach!

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