

1839 Circular Contentnea Baptist Association.

Written by
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Dearly beloved Brethren:- After enjoying the high privilege granted to us at our ninth annual association (by our Heavenly Father), we think proper to address you as our usual custom is, by way of a Circular and in searching for a subject we can find none impressed upon our minds with more force than that of the:

Support of the Gospel Ministry.

But brethren by calling your attention to the support of the ministry we do not attempt to teach you any thing more than you are already taught; but to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. And brethren, when you read this do not as we fear a goodly number do, that is, lay it down and think no more about it; but if it is according to the Scripture endeavor as much as in you lieth to put it into practice.

First, we will call your attention to the Gospel minister in a short way, and then endeavor to point out the means of his support. And in doing this – you will no doubt wish us to bring forth some proof for our assertion. Well brethren that we think to do: first then the Gospel minister is a man that is made alive as all other saints by the Holy Ghost as Paul says. Ephesians 2, 1. *“And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. 2 verse, Wherein in time passed ye walked according to the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. 3 verse, Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”*

Secondly, he has a divine call to the work of the ministry; and this call also is of the Holy Ghost, impressing his mind with the worth of souls in such a way that he can take no rest, with all the excuses he can make, with all the complaining of weakness, littleness, nothingness, ignorance, inability, &c. Nothing will do but a continual “no,” on his mind and to preaching he must go. Yes, brethren, and to preaching he does go (in the strength of the Lord,) and he will preach Jesus- and why? Because it is from Christ he gets his education and we believe he is prepared for the work of the ministry when he is taught in the school of Christ without going to any earthly seminary of learning to be better prepared for the work of the ministry. For instead of this “better preparing him,” we believe it unfits him. For when we hear one that is taught in those earthly schools he speaks in such high swelling words it is unto us as an unknown tongue. But we will

leave them, and pass along knowing that our limits are in the bounds of a Circular letter.

You know, brethren that we said above, the Gospel minister had a call and that call of the Holy Ghost; and we have said he was taught in the school of Christ. Well, if we say God or Christ or the Holy Ghost – we are right according to the Gospel recorded by St. John 1, 1: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* And in first epistle of John 5, 7: *“For there are three that bare record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.”* Much more might here be said about the call of the Gospel minister and the work assigned for him to do, but we promised to be short as such we will leave their call, and work at present, and go on to the subject proposed, that is: the means of their support.

And here brethren, do not be surprised where we treat on this delicate subject, knowing that we have lately gotten out of a war of difficulties, believing that there were too many money-hunters among us. But we will endeavor to kept good reason and Scripture close along with us, as we go on.

First, then we know that his great support is from God – for when Christ was here on the earth He called His apostles or ministers and sent them forth telling them –Matt. 10, 7-10: *“And as ye go preaching the kingdom of heaven is at hand, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils, freely ye have received freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purses; nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.”* And again the same thing; Mark 6, 7-9: *“And He called unto Him the twelve and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: but be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats. And again, Luke 9, 2,3. “And He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. And He said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, or scrip, neither bread, neither money, neither have two coats apiece. Luke 10, 7. “And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give; for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.”*

Now Brethren, mark this; Christ was here with His first Gospel ministers, and limit them in their first commission, telling them – Matt. 10, 5,6, these twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them saying, *“Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;”* telling them further to take nothing, &c., as you have already seen. But when He is about to leave them we find that He telleth them- Luke 22, 35-36, *“And He said unto them, When I sent you without purse and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, But now He that hath a purse let him take it and likewise his scrip, and he that hath no sword let him sell his garment and buy one.”*

Do not think Brethren that we mean that Gospel ministers do not receive their support from God now; no, brethren we believe it is by Him we live and have our being,

and all our blessings come from Him with whom there is no variables. And God is ever with His ministers, for saith He, Matt. 28, 20, "*Lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world.*" But this is not all we find in the Scriptures of Truth for in them we find that God has made it the duty of others to administer to their necessities. But before we bring for our proof from the Good Book we will **reason** upon it awhile, for you recollect we said something about reason being with us. Paul *reasons*, and why not we? Well, say all hands agreed. Well then we will suppose a case. We will say here is a poor preacher as to this world's goods, and he has a family that lies near his heart, and it appears from the nature of things it requires all his attention at home to support him and his family. Does not *Reason* say that that man should have something to help him along? Verily yes. Well here is this same man sometimes lays all down with the love of God constraining him, bids farewell to a loving weeping wife and tender little babes, trusting them in the hands of his Father which is in heaven not knowing that he ever shall see them again on earth, leaves them all behind and goes from one to four weeks and sometimes more, preaching as he goes; Christ and Him crucified: here reason says this man ought to have something to live upon.

But an objector would say, he has, for he lives upon the best; very true but what becomes of his poor wife and children? This, the objector must answer and clear his own conscience before his God. But supposed he only goes to the churches around him every Saturday and Sunday which Sunday you know is not counted as a day to labor for the flesh and you know that this takes up a considerable time in a year for you all know that the year has fifty-two weeks in it, and it is commonly said that twenty six working days are a month here then are two whole months in one year spent to the use of the community at large for the one half of fifty two is twenty six. Extend it to twelve years, and we see that one whole year is spent for the benefit of the churches by the minister, and the glory of God and the worth of souls, while all of his attention is lost at home.

Does not *Reason* speak loud here, and say, This preacher should have something given to him? Yes. But Brethren we must stop reason, for here we might fill pages and not tell you all the difficulties that lie in the path of the preachers of God, and say in the language of Holy Writ if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable (the preacher, *i.e.*).

Well Brethren, we have left *Reason*, and are now going to search for them whose duty it is to support the Gospel minister and the first place that we shall go is Romans 12, 13. "*Distributing to the necessity of Saints; given to hospitality.*" Here we discern that Paul was exhorting the church at Rome to several duties and among the rest that of distributing to the necessity of the saints. Objection: We know that, but not a word is said about the Gospel ministers (but to the saints) in that text. Answer: This is strange that a Gospel minister is not a saint! For if he is not a saint he is not fit to be a preacher for Christ, and cannot feed the saints with the sincere milk of the word. Well as long as you object to this we will look out again, and the next place is 1 Cor. 9, 7-14. "*Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock and*

eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man, or saith not the Law the same also? For it is written in the Law of Moses 'Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.' Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith He it altogether for our sakes; For our sakes no doubt. This is written that he that plougheth should plough in hope and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of this hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things is it a great thing, if we should reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather. Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ. Do not ye know that they which minister about holy things, live of things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel."

Here Paul notices several things and asked eleven questions. Such as, who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges; who planteth a vineyard &c. First then, they are compared to soldiers and justly too, for it is the duty of the soldier for the love he has to his country to go and undergo all the difficulties of the soldier whether he ever gets any thing or not, and that not at his own charges. Second, the vineyard is to be planted, whether it ever gives fruit to the planter or not. Third, the flock is to be fed if they never give the feeder one drop of milk. We cannot answer all these questions at this time knowing we are sending you a letter and wish to be short as possible. Mark this, the soldier must first go to war before he can expect a reward. And the planter must first plant before he can expect fruit. And the feeder must first feed his flock, before he eateth the milk of the flock.

Even so, Brethren, it is the duty of the Gospel minister to go into the spiritual war, taking the shield of faith, knowing that the weapons of his warfare are not carnal. Also to go into the vineyard of God and labor, if he gets none of the fruit of the vineyard. And to feed the spiritual flock, if the flock never gives him no milk to eat. Yes, Brethren, they recollect the solemn charge in 1 Peter 5, 2-3. "*Feed the flock of God which is among you taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock..*" Who then are those that should give unto the Gospel ministry? Why, those that have been fed by him in spiritual things. See here, 11 verse, "*If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we (Paul and other ministers) shall reap your carnal things.*" Again in Galatians 6, 2-6. "*Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden. Let him that is taught the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.*" Thess. 5, 12-13. "*And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake. And be at peace among yourselves.*" 1 Tim. 5, 17-18. "*Let the elders that rule well be counted of*

double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture saith "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that threadeth out the corn: and the laborer is worthy of his reward."- Hebrews 13, 7-8. "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith, follow considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever."

Brethren, we think we have brought forth *texts* enough to prove who are those that should support the Gospel ministers. And if you will not hear these, we feel persuaded that you would not hear if we were to bring forth more. And if you will bear with us a little, we will tell you how you are to support them.

First, he that sows spiritual things to you: you should let him reap your carnal things.

Second, he that teacheth you: you should communicate to him in all good things.

Third, And those that labor among you: you are to esteem them very highly. And the elders – and especially those that labor in word and doctrine: be counted worthy of double honor.

Fourth, And those that speak to you the word of God: you should remember.

Behold how nice all this works with Reason. For in every place where any thing is required to be given to the preacher, there must first be some benefit received of him such as spiritual things, word and doctrine, labor, &c. Yes, Brethren, they will bestow this benefit of spiritual things on you whether you ever bestow your carnal things on them or not.

Very different in this from the modern Missionaries, for they must first have their charges before they go on a warfare; they must have the fruit before they plant the vineyard; they must drink the milk, before they feed the flock; And if one comes along and you do not give him your carnal things, and that in a great plenty, too, he will not let you have much of what he may call "spiritual things." You may think this is judging, but the tree is to be known by its fruit.

Brethren, we have here brought to your remembrance, those who should receive, and those who should give. We will now say how much the giver should give. What, say some, is the amount laid down? Yes, Brethren, to a fraction if you will look – 2 Cor. 9, 7. *"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."* But, say some, "Suppose he never purposeth to give any thing, what then?" Answer: Let him alone, to his own Master he standeth or falleth. But the Apostle seems to be doubtful whether the love of God dwelleth in such a man or not, 1 John 3, 17. *"But who hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"* 18 verse: *"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue: but indeed and in Truth."* Do you not say or think sometimes, such or such a brother should have something given to him, for he is a poor man, and do you do it? If

not, here is faith without works. And what does the Apostle say about it? See James 2, 14-17. *“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith and have not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. And the 26 verse reads: “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”*

And Brethren, these good things are to be laid by, ready for the time when they should be needed- 1 Cor. 1, 1-2: *“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches at Galatia even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be no gathering when I come.”* And what says the giver – “shall I receive, for all my laying up and bestowing my goods to the preacher? Answer: We have already told you that you have his spiritual things &c. But this is not all you will have. See Cor. 8, 2: *“How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.”* You see that Christians in apostolic days received joy. Yes, Brethren, ye will feel a kind of job springing up in the heart when ye do those things that are commanded you by God. [Note: If there were any place that *conditionalism*, or *earned blessings* could have been interjected into the doctrine of good works, these was the best place in this article. And he did not do it here. We assume thereby, that the writer is not a Conditionalist, even though he does not write in the style of the other north Eastern associations- SCP.]

We will now bring forth some examples of Christians in apostolic days, and come to a close as soon as possible; for we fear we are making our letter too long. – First place we shall go is Acts 4, 34-35: *“Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessed of lands or homes, sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.”* Acts 11, 29-30: *“Then the disciples every man according to his ability determined to send relief unto the brethren, which dwelt in Judea, which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Paul.”* Romans 15, 26-27: *“For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.”*

Here are examples enough. Go thou then and do likewise. And when you see your brother has need do as the primitive Christians; send it to him according to your ability and do not say, Brother if you will come to my house, I will give you thus and thus; for if he does not go you will not like it so well, and will be ready to say, “If it was not worth coming after, it is not worth having.” And withal he feels a delicacy in going &c. So the better way is to send it to him according to the pattern above written, But you will here be ready to say, “I know no poor saint that does not have food and raiment and it is written in 1 Timothy 1, 7-8;” *“For we brought nothing into the world and it is certain that*

we can carry nothing out.” “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.” Very true, Brethren, but strictly speaking we cannot say that, that preacher who work hard to support his family and then cannot do it without always being in debt does have food and raiment. Think on it, Brethren, to see if these things be so.

The minister of God, Brethren, will preach without all this; but this does not discharge your duty towards him. Yes, Brethren, the ministers of God are governed by the same rule as the apostles. See Acts 20, 33-34. *“I have coveted no mans silver or gold or apparel. Yea, you yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me.”* See that the apostle Paul did not covet these things, although he writes to the churches and tells them their duty to their preachers; and we have said and now say he will preach whether he gets them or not. And the reason is a dispensation of the Gospel is committed to their charge. See 1 Cor. 9, 16-17, *“For though I preach the Gospel I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me. Yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel. For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto me.”* Here we see that they preach, and that to get clear of a woe, and willingly too; and look in the same chapter, and you will see it is without charge.

We are again reminded of the limits of our letter and we will close in the language of Holy Writ, Phil. 4, 8: *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise think on these things.”* 2 Peter 3, 17-18: *“Ye therefore beloved, seeing ye know things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked fall from your steadfastness, - but grown in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”*

To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen.