THE HARDWORKING FARMER

2 Timothy 2:6 The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.

Review

2 Timothy 2:7 Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

Two previous analogies: a soldier who doesn’t get involved in civilian affairs; an athlete who must compete according to the rules to be declared the winner.

The Bible on Work

Genesis 3:17-19 To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it.’ Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

I Thessalonians 4:11b&12 You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.”

Ephesians 4:28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, so they may have something to share with those in need.

Being Paid for Work

Leviticus 19:13b “Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight.”

Deuteronomy 24:14&15 Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns. Pay them their wages each day before sunset, because they are poor and are counting on it. Otherwise they may cry to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin.

Jeremiah 22:13 “Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his own people work for nothing, not paying them for their labor.”

Malachi 3:5 “So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me,” says the LORD Almighty.

James 5:4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.

New Testament Application

Luke 10:5-7 “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not it will return to you. Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.”

I Corinthians 9:3-6 This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. Don’t we have the right to food and drink? Don’t we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord’s brothers and Cephas? Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?

I Corinthians 9:7-9 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn’t the Law say the same thing? For it is written in the Law of Moses: “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.” Is it about oxen that God is concerned?

I Corinthians 9:10-12 Surely he says this for us, doesn’t he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn’t we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.

I Corinthians 9:13&14 Don’t you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, that Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

I Timothy 5:17&18 The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For Scripture says, “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.”

“Honor” is *“time,* primarily a valuing, hence, objectively, (a) a price paid or received.” (Vine’s) I Corinthians 6:19d&20 You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

In English the word “honorarium” means “a payment for a service (such as making a speech) on which custom or propriety forbids a price to be set.” Merriam-Webster online. Pastors report income from honorariums for weddings or funerals on their Income Tax.

2 Corinthians 11:28&29 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

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Applying the Passage

Since this is written to a missionary sent by a senior missionary to Ephesus to organize the church there according to the biblical pattern, the two most likely applications would seem to be: To Timothy, don’t feel guilty about expecting to be paid for the hard work you are doing there. To the church, Elders who work hard should be the first to be paid out of the funds that come into the church.

Things to Remember

It is part of the Christian life to work hard so as not to be dependent on others and so as to have a good testimony, but also to work hard so as to be able to help others in need.

Not paying people for the work they have done is a serious sin.

The New Testament applies the principle of paying workers for what they do to Christian workers, including those working in a local church.

Those who are working hard at ministry should be considered first when funds are available.