THE EVANGELIST AND THE CHURCH

The Bible has much to say on the role of an evangelist, and the nature of the relationship between the evangelist and the church. Every evangelist must be encouraged to meet the Bible standard in this relationship. Every church must be encouraged to meet the Bible standard in this relationship. This letter is an attempt to lay out the Bible’s guidelines so that the local church and the evangelist laboring among them may be better equipped to serve each other – and most importantly, God.

The evangelist has little said in terms of qualifications; only that he is a man (1 Timothy 2:12; Titus 2:15), sound in the faith (1 Timothy 1:3-5; 4:16; 2 Timothy 1:13), a soldier in the Lord’s army, ready to do battle (2 Timothy 2:2-4); knowledgeable (1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 3:16-17), and above reproach (1 Timothy 4:12; 5:21). Even then, some of these read more as exhortations and instructions than what might be considered a prerequisite or qualification. What should the congregation expect from their preacher?

To begin with, the preacher is to be a bondservant to God, doing the Lord’s work wherever he is. The preacher must oppose error (1 Timothy 1:3-4), put the brethren in remembrance of sound doctrine, right behavior (in and out of the assembly) (Titus 2), and the resurrection (2 Timothy 2:8-26), and appoint elders, setting in order what is lacking (Titus 1:5). He also must be zealous and ceaseless in spreading the Gospel (Acts 5:42). In all these things, he must be exemplary in his conduct, speech, faith, and purity. His goal is the saving of every possible soul, and the strengthening of the saved among him. The church must encourage the evangelist to meet these biblical standards, and where he is lacking or in need of assistance; approach/reprove/correct him as a brother and help him however possible.

Additionally, the church is to support the man who works for God in their midst. In 1 Corinthians 16:10, Paul commands the saints in Corinth to see that Timothy can be with (and work) among them “without fear” (i.e. without need and without cause to be insecure) as he does the Lord’s work. In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul makes a strong case for his own right – and that of all gospel preachers – to make a living by the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:11,14). The local church must – as able – support the preacher so that he can be effective in the Lord’s vineyard with minimal distractions (though he has a right to do secular work if need be – Acts 18:2-3ff).

The relationship must be one of mutual love and genuine concern. It is – and should resemble – a familial, brotherly relationship. If there is an issue, they should be dealt with privately first, and escalate from there – going both ways. If there is a need, let it be brought up and eagerly addressed – again, from either side (financial support, spiritual need, etc.). The church is the body of Christ, the living God. Let all its members be diligent to build up a respectable, living, loving, thriving church that pleases him in all things.

As to details of salaries, and vacations, and any other material matter, both parties must be diligent to guard against robbing and depriving the other – the preacher must not rob the church of the time they require, and the church ought not deprive the preacher of the financial aid he needs. Let the preacher produce a monthly report summarizing his activity, needs, and financial status and let the brethren decide what seems right.

Concerning vacations, let the preacher submit a proposed vacation at an appropriate meeting of the men/elders no less than one month ahead of when he would like to be absent. Let the church decide if the requested absence is appropriate or not, and if it is, “send him on his way in peace”.

It is wise for the preacher to be accountable for his whereabouts always. To this end, let the preacher be diligent to have a legitimate, verifiable record of his activity to be produced whenever his activities are called into question. As to the hours expected, let this be summarized in the preacher’s monthly reports, and let the church be reminded that the preacher is on call 24/7 in addition to managing “office” tasks, and “managing his household well”. If it seems good to the brethren to impose a regular number and time of office hours let this be discussed and let the preacher submit as a bondservant to their wishes.

Let all that is done be done in love.