

“PROFESSIONAL PREACHERS”

It is not unusual to hear uncomplimentary remarks made about those who are supported by others while they preach the Gospel. Often we are referred to as “professional preachers” in a derogatory way. “He’s just preaching for the money,” is sometimes said in almost the same breath. I offer the following thoughts on the subject:

1. There is a good sense in which preachers should be “professionals.” If one refers to the seriousness with which one approaches his work and the diligent application of one’s abilities to preaching, then it is proper to call such a “professional.” A brother once used the term in reference to a sermon I had preached. I knew that he meant it as a compliment, and I thanked him for it.
2. There is a connotation to the word *professional* that is inappropriate. It is sometimes used as a synonym for “hireling,” one who works only for money and whose heart is not in his work. A brother once criticized me to the elders as “just a hired hand.” I once had a pallbearer “cuss me out” between the funeral home and the cemetery because he thus judged all preachers. He said, “Just get it over with and get your money,” among other unrepeatable things. (By the way, I received no remuneration for the funeral.) Yes, there have been, still are, and likely always will be such preachers, but they are the exceptions. The only preachers I know who are wealthy got their wealth from some other source besides preaching. Those who become preachers for the ease and the money of the work either compromise for greater pay or do not last very long.
3. It is right for a preacher to be supported while preaching the Gospel. So taught the Christ (Luke 10:7). So taught Paul (Rom. 15:27; 2 Cor. 11:8–9; Gal. 6:6; Phi. 1:5, 7, 13–16; 1 Tim. 5:18; et al.). Some, in their stubborn quest to overturn every long-

standing practice in the church, would almost resurrect the “anti-located preacher” scheme, long ago exposed as anti-Scriptural.

4. What others are driving at, I suspect, in their “pot shots” at the “professional ministry” (their term) is the elimination of the influence of a sound pulpit. Granted, the pulpit has sometimes been misused by preachers. Yet, I am persuaded that men who preach the Gospel (and their dedicated families) are more responsible for advancing the kingdom to its present level of strength than any other one group. It is evident that some want to replace Gospel preaching with “dialogue,” panel discussions, syrupy and comedic “sermonettes,” or almost any thing else. It will be a sad day in the kingdom if the “anti-professionals” get the upper hand. It is elementary that a weak or empty pulpit will produce the same sort of church.

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