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frankly Speaking Notes . . .

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“WHO DO YOU WORK FOR?” (FOR PREACHERS AND MEMBERS)

it's a common question. One we hear almost every day between people who do not know each other. I have asked it many times and have heard it asked many times as well. For some reason it is one I like to ask because I think it helps me to understand people better if I know what they do for a living.

When a preacher is asked that question, he usually answers that he works for a certain church (denominational name) or a certain congregation. That is the way most people understand things.

So it has been through the years with located preachers or local preachers (not loco). I sometimes wonder about how it was in the first century. Not like it is today, I am sure.

Most churches (local congregations) think of the preacher as ‘theirs.’ When they speak of him they say “our preacher.” “I want to introduce you to our preacher.” “I want you to come and hear our preacher.”

And it goes further than that in many cases as well. He is “our preacher,” here to do “our bidding.” In many cases they act that way as well.

When I started preaching I made a deal, (if you can call it that) not with the brethren, not with a local congregation, but with God. No, I was not “called” in the sense that a lot of denominational preachers put it. I decided to preach after study and contemplation because I thought that is what God would want me to do if I could do it.

Many years ago, about the time I decided to preach, I also decided to do it right. I decided to be “God’s man.” If I was going to preach, instead of catering to “the brethren,” I was going to cater to God.

Now admittedly, that has put me in difficult positions and “hot water” from time to time through the years. Since I work for God, I feel obligated to do His bidding. In other words, I do what He says and not necessarily what the brethren says.

It is The Master’s orders that I take, “And he said unto them, **Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation**” (Matthew 16:15). Paul told Timothy whose word he was to preach, so who do you think he worked for? “**preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.** (2 Timothy 4:2) See also Romans 10:8 “**The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach.**”

You think I am begging the question? You think I still work for the congregation? That does not surprise me. And it is difficult to maintain this position at times because the concept, although I believe well understood in the first century, has lost its advocates through the years

The problem with failure to understand the concept is that sometimes brethren do not appreciate it. Some elders and church leaders, who are not quite as concerned about God’s word as they should be, are wont to understand this. The problem with working for brethren instead of God is the tendency, and there are many instances, to listen to the brethren instead of the word of God.

More than once I have told elders when I went to work with a congregation, “My first obligation is to my Master. I am God’s man. I work for Him. If you work for Him we will get along because He does not give contradictory instructions. If you don’t work for Him we will have a problem because I will follow His direction instead of yours.” I have never had a group of elders to object to that, at least not in the beginning of our association.

But someone objects, “We pay your salary. How can you say you do not work for us.” Simple. I work for God and you support my work. In other words, the local congregation, being in tune with God’s word, supports me

with a salary so I can live and pay the bills, and do God's work in the process. There is nothing unusual about that.

That does not mean that I do not have to listen to the elders of the church. I have an obligation to do my work, God's work, as long as it is possible for me to do. Elders are the overseers of a local church. They make a lot of decisions and one of them is who is to work with them as a preacher. IF, and when, they decide they do not want to work with that preacher any longer, the Christian thing, and the right thing for him to do, is respect their decision.

Does the preacher serve the people of the congregation? Certainly. They are his people, his brethren, and while their ideas may differ as to how he does that service, as best he can, within parameters of what the word of God says, he will serve them.

Part of the difficulties the church faces today is the church as a whole, and preachers in particular, have forgotten, not who pays their salary, but to whom they are indebted.

There are times when I have been quite blunt in the pulpit and someone would say, "sounds like you may be thinking about a move." My answer has always been, "I was looking when I found you, and I can look again."

Preachers, the right kind, work for God and serve the brethren. Those who work for the brethren are unlikely to serve either.

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