THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE by Leslie Diestelkamp

A good preacher appealed to an able church for support while he worked with a small group of Christians in a vast metropolitan field. His request was declined because the elders felt he was preaching to too few people. “He only preaches to thirty-five or forty people, “they complained.

Another able, experienced preacher determined to go to a completely new field to help establish a congregation in a good city there. One elder wrote him advising against it. The elder’s plan seemed to be as follows: such new churches should get by with local talent so that the full-time preachers could be available for work with larger congregations.

The two paragraphs above demonstrate the “cart before the horse “attitude. According to such ideas, Paul should have stayed at Antioch. He should have declined the “Macedonian call,” explaining to the Lord that he could preach to more brethren in Antioch.

The fact is that some brethren want to hire an “errand boy” for the church, but they have to designate him as “our preacher “to justify the expenditure. Other brethren seem to measure the worthwhileness of a preacher’s support by the number of people he preaches to even if 99% of them are already Christians.

A few years ago I heard from an older preacher who said, “If I were a young preacher I’d pick me out a good church and settle down for life.” This kind of statement almost makes me vomit! And if that sentiment (or the attitude described in the first two paragraphs of this article) represents a scriptural approach to gospel work and a scriptural discernment of the will of Christ, then I surely don’t know enough to come in out of the rain!

But this must not be construed to mean that I believe it is wrong for a preacher to work with a well-established church or that it is wrong for a preacher to stay a long time in one community. I just believe many brethren have established wrong priorities. The first matter of concern for any gospel preacher should be to preach the pure Word and preach it where it is needed most. Likewise, the first priority for the expenditure of money from the church treasury should be to be sure it is spent for support of faithful men in whatever field may present the greatest need and/or opportunity. ”The field is the world,” and Jesus said, “Go teach.“

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