

1 Timothy 5:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.

Analysis

For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn (λέγει γὰρ ἡ γραφή· βοῦν ἀλοῶντα οὐ φιμώσεις, legei gar hē graphē· boun aloōonta ou phimōseis)—quoting Deuteronomy 25:4, Paul argues from analogy: if oxen working deserve to eat grain, how much more do human workers deserve support? Phimoō means to muzzle, to put to silence.

And, The labourer is worthy of his reward (Καί· ἄξιος ὁ ἐργάτης τοῦ μισθοῦ αὐτοῦ, Kai· axios ho ergatēs tou misthou autou)—quoting Jesus' words (Luke 10:7), Paul affirms workers deserve wages. Misthos means wage, pay, reward. This verse combines OT law and Jesus' teaching to establish the principle: ministers deserve financial support for their labor.

Paul uses this same OT-NT combination in 1 Corinthians 9:9-14 to defend his right to support (though he voluntarily waived it). The principle is universal: those who labor for gospel ministry deserve material support from those who benefit spiritually. The ox isn't muzzled while working; the minister shouldn't labor without support.

Historical Context

Paul often worked as a tentmaker to support himself, refusing payment to avoid accusations of greed (Acts 18:3, 1 Corinthians 9:12-18). But he insists this was his

personal choice, not universal requirement. Churches should support their pastors. The combination of Moses and Jesus establishes this principle firmly: gospel workers deserve financial support for their labor.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the ox-muzzling principle apply to compensating pastors and ministry workers?
2. Why does Paul combine Old Testament law and Jesus' teaching to make his argument?
3. What does this verse teach about the relationship between spiritual ministry and material support?

Interlinear Text

λέγει	γὰρ	ἡ	γραφή	Βοῦν	ἀλοῶντα	οὐ
saith	For	G3588	the scripture	the ox	that treadeth out the corn	not
G3004	G1063		G1124	G1016	G248	G3756
φιμώσεις	καί	Ἄξιος	ό	ἐργάτης	τοῦ	μισθοῦ
Thou shalt	And	is worthy	G3588	The labourer	G3588	reward
G5392	G2532	G514		G2040		G846

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 25:4 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.

1 Corinthians 9:14 (Parallel theme): Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

Luke 10:7 (Parallel theme): And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

Matthew 10:10 (Parallel theme): Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

Leviticus 19:13 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.

James 4:5 (Word): Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

Romans 10:11 (Word): For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Romans 9:17 (Word): For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.