

The Individual vs. The Church

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Introduction:

- A. **Excerpt from phone book:** (There are quite a few churches who wear the name)
 - 1. Occasionally someone will ask me, "Is there any difference between the church where you meet and these other churches?"
 - 2. The major difference between them and at least what I believe the New Testament teaches is the difference between the individual and the church
- B. **This difference has caused great problems for the Lord's church:**
 - 1. A major division occurred in the 50's and 60's because of this issue
 - a. Some believed that anything the individual could do the church could do
 - b. Others insisted that the Bible drew a difference in the responsibilities of an individual and the church
 - 2. By the time the 70's rolled around the dust from this great division had pretty much settled and what was left was lines of distinction separating the two groups
- C. **There is an ever-pressing need to study this topic:**
 - 1. History tends to repeat itself!
 - 2. There are many who have always been a part of a particular church who do not understand that there is a difference
 - 3. When there is a lack of teaching on this topic you have the seedbed for apostasy
 - 4. Especially in this town, you are likely to have friends who do not recognize that there is a difference and we need to be able to explain what it is

I. **The Individual and the Church – Is There A Difference?**

- A. To answer this question we need to understand what the church is:
 - 1. The church is used in two senses in the New Testament:
 - a. Universal: **(Acts 2:47)**
 - 1) "...the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved
 - 2) Comprised of all the saved of all time of all nations
 - b. Local **(Rev. 2-3)**
 - 1) "To the angel of the church of _____ write...."
 - 2) A group of individuals in a local area working together to serve God
 - 2. An Individual does not constitute a church!
 - a. Aaron Beard is not a church, Ken Kelley is not a church, Jim Keith is not a church!
 - b. The Perry Hill Road church is the group of people we have assembled here today!
 - c. An individual is called a Christian and NEVER a church!
 - 3. With this in mind, there are instructions in the Bible given to BOTH groups
 - a. There are responsibilities given directly to the individual
 - b. There are responsibilities given directly to the church
 - c. We must not confuse the two
- B. There are some people who would contend that "Anything the individual Christian can do, the church can do!" ---- THIS IS NOT SO!
 - 1. What about with the obligation of parents to their children? **(Eph 6:1-4)**
 - 2. What about with the responsibilities of the husbands to the wife (v.v.) **(Gen 2:24)**
 - 3. What about the responsibility to take up a collection or assemble?
- C. It is OBVIOUS that the above statement is not true!
 - 1. There is a difference between the individual and the church! We need to note this
 - 2. The church cannot do just anything the individual can do! – There is a difference

From this point on out I want to discuss with you the differences in an individual and the church:

II. First of all, There Is A Difference In Treasuries:

- A. Your personal treasury and the church treasury is not one in the same (**I Cor. 16:1-2**)
 - 1. Once you “lay by in store” money ceases belonging to you
 - 2. Once you give there are different guidelines for how it can be used than when it belonged to you

- B. Peter points this out to Ananias when he lied about the money he gave (**Acts 5:1-4**)
 - 1. Notice some things about verse 4:
 - a. While it remained it belonged to Ananias
 - b. After he sold it, it still belonged to Ananias
 - c. While it was still in Ananias pocket it was in his control
 - 2. There is something said here by implication:
 - a. If after he sold it, it still belonged to him – then after he gave it, it ceased belonging to him!
 - b. If before he gave it, it was in his control – then after he gave it, it ceased to be under his control!
 - 3. Peter establishes here some truths about the treasuries:
 - a. That there are in fact two: Your personal treasury and the Lord’s
 - b. That there is a difference in control of these treasuries

- C. There are certain responsibilities given to the individual in the use of his treasury and to the church in use of the Lord’s money! The church cannot just do anything the individual does!

III. Realizing this, There Is A Difference In The Financial Responsibilities Of The Individual and The Church:

- A. The majority of the responsibilities and instructions given in the New Testament are given to the individual and not the church (Here are just a couple):
 - 1. **James 1:27**
 - a. Responsibility given: Visit orphans, widows, and keep unspotted from the world
 - b. This verse is speaking to the individual and not the church!
 - 1) “Keep oneself” – This is an individual command
 - 2) Also look at the context (**vs. 23-26**)
 - c. To justify church action on this verse is a complete misapplication of scriptures!
 - 2. **Galatians 6:10**
 - a. Responsibility Given: Do good to ALL men especially those of household of faith
 - b. This verse is also speaking to the individual and not the church, why?
 - 1) Again, consider the context (**vs. 1-9**)
 - 2) Just because Paul uses the word “we” does not imply church action.
 - a) By saying “WE” Paul was including himself. He was not known to be a member of any church in Galatia!
 - b) He was simply speaking to many Christians as individuals!
 - c. To justify church action on this verse is a complete misapplication of scriptures!
 - 3. **Acts 2:46-47**
 - a.

- B. Let’s now look at a couple of passages that deal with some responsibilities of a local church:
 - 1. **II Cor. 8:1-4**
 - a. Action taken: Church at Macedonia aided the church at Jerusalem
 - b. Does this verse authorize a church aiding just anyone in financial need? NO!
 - 1) NO!
 - 2) It was a church (**vs. 1**) aiding other saints (**vs. 4**)

c. To use this verse to authorize benevolence to anyone other than saints is a misapplication of scriptures!

2. I Tim 5:9-10, 16

a. Action taken: A widow taken into the number. Financial and other help provided
b. Does this verse authorize a church to take in widows who are not Christians or to establish or support an institution to take care of widows? **CERTAINLY NOT!**

1) The widows this verse authorizes are only CHRISTIAN widows

a) Notice: **vs. 5, 10, 15**

b) There is no authorization here for the use of church funds to financially support non-Christian widows!

2) The only institutions authorized here to take care of the Christian Widows are the church and the home – everything else is excluded!

c. To use this passage to justify otherwise is a misapplication of scripture!

3. II Cor. 9:10-14 – Popular among those who don't see the difference!

a. Action taken: The needs of the Jerusalem saints are met through the gift of church

b. Does this verse authorize a church to meet the needs of those who are not saints?

1) **NO!** It spells out whose needs it meets – THE SAINTS (vs. 1, 12)!

2) What about with the sharing with all men (bottom of **vs. 13**)

a) The “men” is provided by translators – not in original text!

b) The “all” here refers to their sharing with Christians other than Jerusalem – **verse one says saints** – That's who it must be!

c) To make application to non-Christians is to add to the word!

c. To use this passage to condone the assistance of non-Christians from the church's treasury is a misapplication of scripture!

4. I Cor. 11:20-22 (Approaches this from the negative standpoint)

a. Action taken: They were assembling for a service and eating a common meal

b. This condemns their coming together as an assembly and having a common meal

1) Eating is an individual act – not to be confused with a work of the church

2) The Lord's Supper is a collective act – not to be taken as individuals

c. To assemble together as a work of the church for the purpose of eating is in direct contradiction to this passage!

C. Occasionally, the responsibilities of the individual and the church overlap – but in few instances

1. Help needy saints

2. Edify one another

3. Teach, evangelize

IV. Applications:

A. The tendency of the institutional movement is to take responsibility from the Individual and place it on the Church

1. This leads to lethargy on the part of the members – Feel if they give on Sunday they have done their duty given to them as an Individual Christian!

2. It runs in the face of Bible authority!

B. The appeal of the gospel of Jesus Christ is moved in the background and things like food, socialization, and “good works” is placed in its stead

1. Upward Basketball, Clothing Closets, Food Drives, Pizza Pig Outs, Fellowship Dinners, Carnivals, Orphan Homes, Widow Homes, and many other things are common place

2. All these sound great – Until you pair it up to the word of God! End doesn't justify means

3. **Rom. 1:16** – To use something else is to preach something other than Jesus Christ!

C. The church must follow the New Testament example for benevolence, no matter how good we think it sounds to do otherwise: → Look one more time at I Tim 5:

1. **Verse 3-5, 8-10, 16** – What is Paul trying to get across here?
 - a. If a widow is to be taken into the number, she must be a **FERVENT CHRISTIAN**
 - 1) There are many qualifications mentioned – Lot's of prerequisites
 - 2) She has to be a **ZEALOUS CHRISTIAN** to be taken into the number. It is clear that **NO** authorization is given here for non-Christians!
 - b. Paul says here that if it is **AT ALL POSSIBLE** she should be cared for by her own family – **PAUL SAYS DON'T BURDEN THE CHURCH IF YOU DON'T HAVE TO!**
2. Appeal of Institutionalism: “Look at **ALL** these good **MINISTRIES** we have undertaken!”
 - a. Well, Paul would say, “Don't burden the church!”
 - b. Granted, it does look good in our eyes – **But it is NOT the Pattern of the NT!**
3. Does the fact that we do not support these things with the church funds make us **ANTI'S**?
 - a. **NO!** – No more than dog swimming in a pond makes him a **DUCK!**
 - b. I am by no means an **ANTI!**
 - 1) Foster kids, giving of clothes and food
 - 2) I have personally seen members here doing this!

CONCLUSION:

1. The idea that anything the individual can do the church can do is **FALSE!**
2. It is the individual's responsibility to provide:
 - a. Their own food, social entertainment, recreation, and education
 - b.
3. It is the church's responsibility to provide:
 - a. Worship, edification, evangelism, and **BENEVOLENCE** to **SAINTS** – whether they be in the local church or elsewhere
 - b.
4. Must keep in our minds the distinction between the individual's responsibilities and the church