

WORK OF THE CHURCH

Scripture reading ahead of lesson:

Leviticus 10:1-3 “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.”

It is very important for us to realize that God has created us for a reason, His reason! If we remember that and set ourselves to do His will, we will be rewarded.

If we forget that, and do what WE think is best, the results can be very bad! The Lord WILL be sanctified! He will be set apart. He will NOT be bound by OUR reasoning.

The WORK OF THE CHURCH we often understand to mean the work that we as a church do. Work that has results on others. But work is also accomplished ON US as the church. Craftsmen talk of working the steel, or working the clay, or working the wood to accomplish what they want. The Lord also intends the WORK of the church to be what it accomplishes or performs on US as members of that church. Keep that in mind. The WORK of the church has MULTIPLE objectives – things that are to be accomplished. We need to be about ALL of them to be pleasing to God.

God has ordained that the church is the organization, the ONLY organization, he wants His people to be a part of to accomplish His goals.

Eph 2:19-22 “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; ²⁰And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; ²¹In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: ²²In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

God has one begotten son, Jesus Christ. The church has one foundation, the Apostles, and one cornerstone – Jesus Christ. The church is the one building built by God. There can be no other.

A house has certain things it's supposed to do: Shelter us, keep us warm, and dry. It's a place for our family in which to eat, rest and grow and get prepared for the next days labor. The same also for the house of God, the church of God. It is made for a purpose!

The work of that organization, the church is: Evangelism, Edification, Benevolence.

1. Evangelism – Reaching out with the Gospel of Christ
2. Edification – Building up the church, those who've obeyed the Gospel
3. Benevolence - Helping those who are in physical need

Let's look a little at these.

Evangelism – reaching out to the lost preaching the Gospel of Christ, the good news that Christ has redeemed us and God will receive us as His children. It IS something God wants US to do. You're familiar with this scripture:

Mark 16:15,16 “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

But look at what Jesus said to his apostles, right before that:

Mark 16:14 “Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.”

They weren't doing the work he wanted them to do. They were to bear witness to the resurrected Christ, yet they weren't believing, their hearts were hard. We don't want to be accused of that same hardness. The Lord commanded it again.

Matthew 28:19,20 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.”

GO YE! God is WANTING us to do this. “Teach all nations” Mathetuo – Make Disciples of. All of us, as disciples of Jesus, have a part in that – by our example, showing others what disciples of Christ are. Do you care enough to do that?

Did God care? Whose children are we supposed to be? Are we acting like it?

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”

God cared enough to send Jesus, He cared!

Do you think God was kidding when he said he wanted ALL to be saved?

2 Peter 3:9 “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”

If we're His children our desire will be the same - to do Our Father's will. **That** is how we show who our Father really is:

Matthew 12:50 “For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

Paul gave us an example of this:

Romans 1:15 “So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.”

How much? As much as in me is – nothing less, nothing more.

It is not our power. We aren't the ones that produce results

2 Tim. 2:24,25 “**And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,** ²⁵**In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;”**

We are the servants. We serve God.

He has told us to preach the word, so we preach the word – God's Word, not our own. The results are up to God.

But, we forget that when we focus on RESULTS! Remember:

1 Corinthians 3:6 “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase”

Then, in our misguided zeal to **glorify** God we do just the opposite, as Nadab and Abihu tried to do with results as we know.

We must do God's work, the way He has showed us – through the church – US! This is how God is **sanctified** by us – by our obedience to Him – not ourselves and our ideas.

In times past there were Missionary Societies. The American Christian Missionary Society was sanctioned by Alexander Campbell. They sincerely wanted to do good but they made an organization, outside the church that tried to do the work of the church in deciding the **where, when, how and who** of Evangelism - mission work. They raised money for this. They felt it was the most effective way to preach the Gospel to every creature, but it was **not** what the Lord intended. And brethren came to realize that.

Evangelism is the work of the church – you and me. If we give our money to someone to do it, it does NOT relieve us of the responsibility for doing it. And if we don't, we sin. We do NOT accomplish the Lord's purpose for us. We are not worked, we are not formed the way the Lords wants us to be and then we'll be likely to hear, “**Depart ye that work iniquity, I never knew you!**”

Evangelism performs a work on us! When we put aside our desires, to do what God has commanded us, “**I must be about my father's business**”.

We must feel that same way, have that same desire, have that same realization that those that do NOT obey the Gospel are L-O-S-T! Forever.

How can we claim to be God's children and NOT feel this way?

Evangelism is an important WORK of the church – it saves others, it **saves us also!** Invite people to visit, tell them of our website. Brother Dunbaker has worked up a flier to hand to people. Work so people may say of us when they do visit, “**God is in you of a truth!**”

Another work of the church is **Edification** – to build up those who have obeyed the Gospel that they might grow to mature souls especially fit to be with God for eternity.

Eph 4:11-13 “**And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;** ¹²**For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:** ¹³**Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the**

knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:”

Newborn babies are cute. But if they stayed that way and didn't grow, we'd be worried and heartsick. God doesn't want a bunch of babies in heaven either. He wants mature souls that have grown in faith, love, obedience and mercy. Edification is that process of building up babies to mature souls:

1 Peter 2:2 “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”

Grow to what? – unto salvation!

What would you think of parents who left their children to starve? It's not unusual to read about such things. Do we have that care for each other that wants to build each other up? This is the WORK of the church also. The work of you and I, all members of the church need to build one another up. It's not just Bible class teachers. It's one of the reasons we come to the assembly:

Heb 10:24,25 “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,”

What if you tried to hire someone to take your place at the assembly?

What if we hired someone to teach our classes? Turned it over to trained professionals? Would we be doing the work of the church? Would we be considering one another? Would we be caring? No. The work on OTHERS might be done, but NOT the work **on us** which is an important part of God's plan. Our caring for each other:

Php 2:4,5 “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. ⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:”

We can see then that Edification, performs a work on us. If you've ever taught you know you really start to learn when you start to teach.

The 3rd work of the church is Benevolence. Why?
 What part does this play in God's plan for the church?
 Well, what is the benevolence we offer?
 It's physical, to help people's physical suffering and want.
 Why? Is the purpose solely so people don't die?
 Remember Esau, was hungry:

Gen 25:32 “And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?”

Is that why we help people, so they don't die or go hungry?
 Or is there something more to our benevolence?

God defines “religion”, remember?

James 1:27 “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

To God's sight, why would widows and orphans want to stay in this world?
Better to be with Him, than in this world.

Why would God tie these together? Helping widows/orphans and keeping US
unspotted from the world? Because they ARE related:

Is there some blessing we derive from our benevolence?
What if we don't DO benevolence? What are we missing?
What is it that causes us to WANT to be benevolent? To help someone out.

Why is it important to God that WE be benevolent?

It's important because benevolence is our way of showing mercy.
Truly the Lord has been good – merciful to us.
The Lord makes this connection between mercy and benevolence:

James 2:13-17 ¹³For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. ¹⁴What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit? ¹⁷Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

We're physical beings in a physical world.
The Lord wants us to be merciful, in a way we can understand – physically.
He wants us to care for others and help them.

But what about the efficiency of our giving? How many we can help?
How much bang for the buck we get, is **not** as important as the effect our giving has **on us**.

If we give \$100 it's not as important HOW it's used as the fact that WE gave it in the first place.

Once we give of our time, or means, the important part is done, the WORK is done on US. Do you think I'm just making this up? Jesus told us WHERE the blessing was:

Acts 20:35 "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Benevolence is God's WORK for the church, to help form it, in the way He wants.

We have to remember it is NOT us doing this work.
Christ works through us, the church. It's not us, it's Him. Jesus will get the work done, we have a part in it. If we fail, He'll get someone else to do what needs doing.
We glorify God when we realize that and do things HIS way, and not OUR way.

Eph 3:20,21 "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, ²¹Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

Glory IN THE CHURCH. God has not established any greater organization than the **local** church to do His work.

There are no societies, diocese, conferences, synods or corporations.

He has not authorized any **lesser** organizations either, such as cells or sects.

Evangelism, Edification, Benevolence, the local church is FULLY capable of doing her work because the strength to do so comes from God – through our faith in Him.

The church is the fullness of Christ. HE is totally sufficient, we're full, we don't need to go anywhere else:

Eph 1:22,23 “And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, ²³Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

But, men want results. We want to do more.

And that's the problem, don't you see, **WE** want to do more. In effect, and this is what God hears, we say the fullness of Christ – his body, the church – is **NOT** enough!

We lack FAITH that what God has given us is sufficient!

In Evangelism we can go beyond what God has ordained.

In Edification we can go beyond what God has ordained.

In the area of benevolence we can go beyond what God has ordained.

We can form organizations OUTSIDE the church to do these things, that Jesus has said is the work of the church he died to establish.

And this is wrong. Not that the desires are wrong, or that the intent is wrong, but the MEANS is wrong, and **we are wrong**, because we lack FAITH in what God has said!

The WORK OF THE CHURCH – Evangelism, Edification, Benevolence. It is important that we as individual members of the church do these works. Both for the good of others, and the good it does for us in maturing us spiritually to be prepared to be with God in eternity.

But, are YOU ready? You're sitting here, listening to God's word. Is that enough?

1 Sam 15:22 “And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is better* than sacrifice, *and to hearken* than the fat of rams.”

The Lord wants first and foremost OBEDIENCE to His commands.

Jesus said this, If you love me, keep my commandments.

Do you love God?

Have you obeyed Him?

Acts 22:16 “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”