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“I KNOW YOUR WORKS”

INTRODUCTION

A. Revelation 2:1-2, 8-9, 12-13, 18-19; 3:1-2, 7-8, 14-15

To each of the seven churches of Asia, Jesus said, *“I know your works.”*

B. Each church must, therefore, make certain its works are pleasing to Him.

I. LEGITIMATE WORKS OF THE CHURCH

A. Evangelism

1. 1st Timothy 3:14-15

The church is the foundation of the truth.

a. God’s *“word is truth”* (John 17:17).

b. Therefore, the chief business of the church is God’s word.

2. Ephesians 3:10-11

God’s eternal purpose is for the church to broadcast His great wisdom.

3. Acts 13:1-3

The local church is the agency that sends men to preach to the lost (5).

a. Philippians 4:15

Churches are authorized to spend money in this endeavor.

b. Acts 14:26-27

Churches can expect preachers to report about their work.

4. Mark 16:15

Jesus expects the gospel to be preached to everyone.

a. Colossians 1:5-6, 23

Such a goal can be realistically accomplished very quickly.

B. 1st Thessalonians 1:8

Local churches make it happen.

- c. Contentment with the divine plan will eliminate the need for any other organizations to make it their work, thus excluding: Missionary Societies, Colleges and Universities, and other private foundations,

B. Edification

1. Ephesians 4:11-16

The Lord has assigned to His body, which is the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18), the work of edifying itself.

2. Agents of edification:

a. Evangelists

i. Romans 1:15

Evangelists are not limited to preaching the gospel to those outside the church, for Paul was “ready to preach the gospel” to saints (7).

ii. 2nd Timothy 4:1-5

“The work of an evangelist” is evident.

iii. 1st Corinthians 9:11-14; 2nd Corinthians 11:8-9

Churches owe wages to preachers locally and abroad.

b. Pastors

Pastors are, by definition, shepherds.

i. Acts 20:17, 28; 1st Peter 5:1-4

Elders, who oversee local churches, are charged to “take heed to all the flock” and “shepherd the church of God.”

- ii. **Titus 1:5-9; 1st Timothy 3:1-7, 11**
Their qualifications are evident.
- iii. **1st Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1st Timothy 5:17-18; Hebrews 13:7, 17**
They deserve recognition, honor, payment, imitation, and obedience from those whom they rule over.

c. Teachers

Although apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors all teach, it is possible to be a teacher without being one of these.

- i. **1st Corinthians 12:28**
Teachers are a necessary part of the church.
- ii. **Hebrews 5:12**
Mature Christians should teach.
- iii. **Acts 13:1**
Observe an example of teachers in a particular church.

d. Deacons

Although unmentioned in the list of church organization (**Ephesians 4:11**), the diaconship is an important office.

- i. The Greek word for deacon means “servant” and is usually translated as such. However, what we know as a deacon is a specific type of servant in the church.
- ii. **Philippians 1:1**
Deacons are described in the company of overseers, besides the general assembly of saints. Thus, they are officers within the church.

iii. **1st Timothy 3:8-13**

Their qualifications are evident.

e. **“Every part does its share.”**

Every Christian, regardless of office, should edify the church.

i. **1st Corinthians 12:12-27**

Even the seemingly less important members are essential to the body (22-24).

ii. **Romans 12:3-8**

Whatever one’s ability is, it must be put to use.

iii. **Hebrews 10:24-25**

Every member must attend the assemblies of the church.

3. Methods of edification:

A. Doctrine & Exhortation

i. **Acts 2:42; Matthew 28:18-20**

Following conversion, disciples should still be taught.

ii. **1st Timothy 4:13, 16**

Doctrine and exhortation should be given attention to for salvation’s sake.

iii. **Hebrews 13:22**

Brethren must *“bear with the word of exhortation.”*

B. LORD’S Supper

i. **Acts 2:42**

Christians ought to *“break bread”* together.

ii. **Acts 20:7**

The disciples should assemble on the first day of the week for this purpose.

iii. **1st Corinthians 11:23-34**

Breaking bread and drinking the cup is to be done in remembrance of the body and blood of the Lord.

c. Prayer

i. Acts 2:42

Christians should pray together.

ii. Acts 12:5, 12

This is a legitimate action of the church.

d. Song

Singing to the Lord is a method by which brethren may *“teach and admonish one another.”*

i. Ephesians 5:19

ii. Colossians 3:16

e. Collection

i. 1st Corinthians 16:1-2

Churches are ordered to take up a collection on the first day of the week.

ii. 2nd Corinthians 9:6-7

Giving should be done generously and cheerfully.

C. Ministry Of The Saints

1. Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37

The early church distributed to the needs of its poor members when all contributed to a common treasury for that purpose.

2. Acts 6:1-7; 1st Timothy 5:3-16

Widows are a specific class of needy saints who may require *“daily distribution”* to meet their needs, but they must undergo strict examination before receiving such.

3. 2nd Corinthians 8:1-9:14; Acts 11:27-30

In the case of ministering to the poor, multiple churches may send directly to other churches for relief of needy saints.

4. **1st Corinthians 16:1-3**

Churches are authorized to spend money in this endeavor.

II. ILLEGITIMATE WORKS OF THE CHURCH

A. Works Assigned To Christians, Individually

1. Some will say, "What the Christian can do, the church can do."

2. **1st Corinthians 12:14**

a. The Lord tells us that *"the body is not one member, but many."*

b. The body and the church are the same (**Ephesians 1:22-23**).

3. Several examples in scripture demonstrate the distinction between the church and the Christian.

a. **Matthew 18:15-17**

Christians are responsible in discipline before the church is.

b. **Acts 5:4**

Christians own private property that is not the church's.

c. **1st Timothy 5:16**

Christians owe their parents care before the church does.

B. Politics

1. **Romans 13:1**

There is no question that governing authorities are established by God.

2. **Matthew 22:21**

However, Caesar's and God's realms are distinct from one another.

3. John 18:36

The kingdom in which we are a part is not earthly in nature.

- 4.** Although Christians, individually, may participate in the political process, the work of the church must not involve:
- a.** Endorsing political candidates or ballot initiatives,
 - b.** Inviting civic leaders to address the church,
 - c.** Utilizing the facilities of the church for polling places.

C. Works Of The Home

1. Matthew 19:3-6

- a.** God joins a man and a woman in marriage.
- b.** Some seem to think He joins them in weddings.
- c.** Marriage is a relationship, but weddings are just ceremonies.
 - i.** I happen to think they're a good idea, but they are not necessary.
 - ii.** If weddings were a work of the church, then it would be wrong for them to be performed apart from the church (eloping, Justice of the Peace, etc.). Catholics say this is so; will you?
 - iii.** Just because the scriptures might be opened and taught from on such occasions does not make weddings a work of the church.

2. Ephesians 6:4; Titus 2:4

Childcare is the duty of mothers and fathers, not the church.

- a.** Churches have no business operating daycare centers, preschools, or the like.

- b. Neither do they have any business conducting a “Children’s Church.”
- c. Nor is it a legitimate work of the church to organize youth groups.

D. Commerce

1. Mark 11:15-17; John 2:14-17

- a. *“Those who bought and sold in the temple”* (Mark 11:15), were violently expelled from it by the Lord (John 2:15).
- b. *“And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple”* (Mark 11:16).
- c. Jesus said, *“Do not make my Father’s house a house of merchandise”* (John 2:16). The church cannot justify conducting bake sales, rummage sales, or the like.
- d. Notice, too, that the merchandise in this case consisted of animals that would be used in the sacrifices offered in the temple. If anything at all could be legitimately sold there, sacrificial animals would be it.
- e. Considering these things, how can we allow the church, which is God’s house (1st Timothy 3:15), to be engaged in commerce?

2. 1st Corinthians 16:1-2

The only legitimate means whereby the church can acquire funds is through freewill offerings of its members in first day of the week collections.

E. Entertainment/Recreation

1. Romans 14:17

- a. Eating and drinking is not the work of the spiritual kingdom.

- b. This eliminates potlucks, ice cream socials, fellowship banquets, and the like from the legitimate work of the church.
- 2. **1st Corinthians 11:20-22, 34**
 - a. Common meals have no place in the function of the church.
 - b. It is the duty of the home to fill the stomach.
- 3. **Acts 2:46**
 - a. The earliest disciples worshipped in the temple, but ate their daily meals in one another's homes.
 - b. Some think if the church is not arranging these events, there will be no contact among the members outside the worship assemblies. How little trust they place in one another and the divine arrangement!

F. External Poverty Relief

- 1. Although the church may relieve its own poor (Article I, Section C), no authority exists for distributing to the needs of the poor universally.
- 2. **Romans 15:25-27**
 - a. The apostle very explicitly states that a spiritual relationship must exist prior to the church establishing a material relationship with any.
 - i. This is very reasonable because there is no possible way the church could ever meet the needs of every poor person on the planet.
 - α. **John 12:8**
If that were its mission, the church would be in constant failure, because the Lord said there would always be poor people. Did Jesus assign to the church what He really didn't expect it to fulfill?

β. Psalm 37:25

Christians don't starve to death! With its ministry to the poor limited to saints only, the church is always able to meet the need.

ii. Besides, what sense does it make to open the treasury to just anyone, regardless of their intent to participate in the spiritual work of the church?

b. Notice that twice within this brief passage Paul speaks of ministering to the saints. Not one reference in the whole Bible speaks of the church giving materially to anyone else.

G. Any Unauthorized Activity

1. The aforementioned are but a few examples of works the church has no business engaging in. The fact is, anything outside the three specified works of the church are illegitimate.

A. 1st Corinthians 4:6

Christians should *"learn not to think beyond what is written."*

B. 2nd John 9

Those who go beyond the revealed will of God lose their relationship with Him.

C. Revelation 22:18-19

Adding to God's word demands His wrath.

2. Why can't we be content with the way God designed His church?

A. 2nd Timothy 3:16-17

i. Scripture is completely sufficient for our every need.

ii. Doing more than what God has authorized therein indicts God's word as less than enough for our taste.

b. **Jude 3**

What was "*once for all delivered*" has no need for our improvements.

CONCLUSION

A. Revelation 2:5

Churches that displease the Lord, that refuse to return to "*do the first works,*" will lose the lampstands whereby they are recognized as His.

B. Invitation