

“As I Have Given Orders to
the Churches”

Distinctions That Must Be Understood

- There are two distinctions that must be understood in order to apply the teaching of the New Testament for the Lord's Church:
 - Between the church universal and local churches
 - The church universal consists of all Christians in all places and at all times
 - Local congregations are gatherings of Christians committedly and collectively serve the Lord's will in a single location

Distinctions That Must Be Understood

- There are two distinctions that must be understood in order to apply the teaching of the New Testament for the Lord's Church:
 - Between individual and collective works
 - Individual works are works that are to be done by Christians working alone; context will specify
 - Collective works are works to be done by Christians working together as a local congregation

Distinctions That Must Be Understood

- The church universal has no earthly organization in which to do its work; what work it does is done as individual Christians
- The church local has organization and is the only organization authorized to do collective work for the Lord

Evangelism: Preaching The Gospel

- This is the primary work of the church because it is the purpose for which the church was built
 - 1Tim. 3:15 - “but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

Evangelism: Preaching The Gospel

- Eph. 3:8-11 - “To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; 10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord”

Evangelism: Preaching The Gospel

- The early churches were active in evangelism
 - Acts 13:1-3 - “Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers... 2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. 3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.”
 - 2Cor. 11:8-9 - “I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. 9 And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself.”

Evangelism: Preaching The Gospel

- The Lord requires this
 - Matt. 28:19-20 - “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
 - 1Peter 2:9-10 - “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.”

Edification: Preparing The Saints For Service

- Implied by its organization
 - Acts 20:28 - “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”
 - 1Peter 5:1-2 - “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly”

Edification: Preparing The Saints For Service

- Worship is designed to edify
 - Col. 3:16 - “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”
- Preaching, teaching, prayers, communion, offering all edify

Edification: Preparing The Saints For Service

- Explicitly stated in the scriptures
 - Eph. 4:11-16 - “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

Benevolence: Providing For Needy Saints

- This is neither the primary, nor the secondary work of the church
- For years this has been taught as the third work of the church
- In practice, it is an occasional adjunct of the second work of the church, edification
- In reality according to examples in the New Testament, it is a limited manifestation of fellowship in a local church

Benevolence: Providing For Needy Saints

- The early church cared for its members
- The church at Jerusalem
 - Acts 4:32-35 - “Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.”

Benevolence: Providing For Needy Saints

- The church at Antioch
 - Acts 11:27-30 - “And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. 30 This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”

Benevolence: Providing For Needy Saints

- The churches of Macedonia and Achaia toward brethren in Jerusalem
 - Rom. 15:25-26 - “But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. 26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.”

Benevolence: Providing For Needy Saints

- Its organization and worship accommodated this work
 - Deacons were appointed
 - Phil. 1:1; 1Tim 3:8-13
 - They served the congregation in this matter
 - Acts 6:1-6
 - The collection for needy saints was part of the weekly assembly
 - 1Cor. 16:1-2

Benevolence: Providing For Needy Saints

- Limitations to benevolence
 - 1Tim. 5:9-11, 16 - “Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, 10 well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work. 11 But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry... 16 If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.”

Benevolence: Providing For Needy Saints

- Examples of church benevolence are limited to needy saints. In every case of church benevolence where money was taken from the church treasury, the recipients were believers in need
 - Rom. 15:25-26 - “But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. 26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.”

Benevolence: Providing For Needy Saints

- 1Cor. 16:1 - “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also”
- 2Cor. 8:1-4 - “Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. 3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.”
- 2Cor. 9:1 - “Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you”

Benevolence: Providing For Needy Saints

- Individually, Christians are expected to be “good Samaritans” and help those in the world as they have opportunity and ability.
 - James 1:26-27 - “If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. 27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”
 - Gal. 6:10 - “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

“As I Have Given Orders to the Churches”

- The local church was not intended to be a social agency to satisfy all of the physical needs in the world. It has neither the organization nor resources to do so.
- The church has the all important work of spreading the gospel; it is not equipped or designed to do anything else
- Eph. 3:21 - “To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”