

## SAVE 'EM, KEEP 'EM SAVED, DON'T LET 'EM STARVE

Bryan Matthew Dockens

Churches have overstepped the bounds of inspired authority to engage in many endeavors never intended by the Lord who purchased His church with His own blood. The role the Savior assigned the church is threefold:

**The church's primary function is to save the lost.** God has always intended for His church to broadcast His will on a universal basis. *"Now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Ephesians 3:10-11). That makes *"the church of the living God the pillar and ground of the truth"* (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:15). As the foundation from which the truth of God's wisdom is meant to be spread, the church must be actively engaged in teaching the gospel so that souls are saved. The apostle Paul commended *"the church of the Thessalonians"* because *"from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out"* (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1:8). One local congregation has the ability and responsibility to present the word of the Lord both locally and abroad.

**The church's secondary function is to retain the saved.** Having won souls to Jesus, it is incumbent upon the church to retain them because it is possible for those once saved to revert to their former sinful and lost conditions (Hebrews 10:26-31; 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2:20-22). Thus, *"the edification of the church"* is serious business (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:12). To edify is to build up, so the church needs to be occupied with its own spiritual growth. This is why the church has the workers it does. *"He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 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; 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, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ — from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which*

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*every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love"* (Ephesians 4:11-16). Edification occurs when Christians are assembling together for the purpose of exhortation (Hebrews 10:25), when the church comes together to eat the Lord's Supper in memory of the Savior's death (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:17-34), when brethren are teaching and admonishing one another in songs (Colossians 3:16), and when constant prayer is offered by the church (Acts 12:5).

**The church's tertiary function is to prevent the saved from starving.** The Lord bought His church with His own blood (Acts 20:28), the same price that affords sinners forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7), which means the church is chiefly concerned with gaining forgiveness and retaining forgiveness; it is a spiritual entity. Any undertaking of the church that is not specifically spiritual must be clearly authorized in Scripture, and the only such work that exists is ministering to the needs of the saints (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:1-2; 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:4; 9:1, 12). The reason the church, a spiritual institution, may engage in such business is: *"If [they] have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things"* (Romans 15:27). Therefore, the church is not justified in extending this ministry to all who may be in need, but is limited to relieving the needs of fellow Christians, which is not to say that disciples may not assist, on an individual basis, anyone they are able (Matthew 25:31-46), but that is not the role of the church collectively. Every example of the church giving to the poor was restricted to its own. *"All who believed were together and had all things in common"* (Acts 2:44). *"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"* (Acts 4:32). *"The disciples... determined to send relief to the brethren"* (Acts 11:29). Ensuring that church members' material needs are fulfilled is a legitimate work.

**The church must not exceed its authorized functions.** *"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son"* (2<sup>nd</sup> John 9). To transgress is to go beyond, and when Christians go beyond the teaching of Christ, they leave Him behind. Thus, churches must limit their works to those which Christ and His apostles and prophets taught. Jesus warned churches, *"Repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place"* (Revelation 2:5), and by *"lampstand"* He meant recognition of such as His church (1:20).

**"WHAT MUST I DO  
TO BE SAVED?"**

**ACTS 16:30**

**LEARN THE GOSPEL**

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

**BELIEVE IN CHRIST**

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

**CONFESS CHRIST**

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

**REPENT OF SIN**

Acts 3:19; 17:30

**BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST**

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

**REMAIN STEADFAST**

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"THE ASSEMBLING OF  
OURSELVES TOGETHER"**

**HEBREWS 10:24-25**

**SUNDAY**

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

**WEDNESDAY**

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard

Belén, New Mexico

Seekers Welcome.

Members Expected.

**"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN  
ANY TRESPASS...  
RESTORE SUCH A ONE"**

**GALATIANS 6:1**

**CONFESS TRESPASSES**

James 5:16; 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9

**REPENT OF SIN**

Acts 8:22

**PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS**

Acts 8:22

**REMAIN STEADFAST**

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"A WORD FITLY SPOKEN IS  
LIKE APPLES OF GOLD IN  
SETTINGS OF SILVER"**

**PROVERBS 25:11**

"Excuses make today easy, but tomorrow harder. Discipline makes today hard, but tomorrow easier."

**"WHOLE COUNSEL"**

**ACTS 20:27**

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**SHAKE THE DUST**

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There will come times, often, when the presentation of truth is met with resistance. Scripture upon scripture will be offered to persuade, but will only be met with stubborn refusal to acknowledge that such is right. Arguments will come from tradition (Mark 7:9), convenience (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 12:28), popularity (Matthew 7:13-14), family (Matthew 12:46-50), and personal conviction (Titus 1:15), but never *"precept upon precept, line upon line"* (Isaiah 28:10). If Scripture is cited, it will be twisted (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:16), as the devil prefers (Luke 4:9-11).

A tender-hearted Christian will want to bring these misguided souls to a proper understanding, but the efforts are constantly frustrated. The servant of Christ is not under obligation to beat his head against the wall, or, as Jesus put it, *"Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces"* (Matthew 7:6). When an opponent simply disagrees with the inspired word, cites no Scripture in support of his belief, or cannot offer a more accurate understanding of the texts under consideration, then it is time to remove oneself from the dispute.

Eventually, it becomes a waste of a godly person's time, effort, and sanity – resources God intends for good – to continue the discussion. *"Whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them"* (Mark 6:7).

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