

Rom. 14:19
So then let
us follow
after things
which make
for peace,
and things
whereby we
may edify
one another.

John 8:32 And
ye shall know
the truth and
the truth shall
make you free.

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DO WE PLEASE GOD OR MEN?

Jim Stauffer

Paul said, **Gal. 1:10** *For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ.*

There are some obvious questions needing answers when we view the organization of churches we see in the world today. Let me suggest one at the outset. Why do people know what **John 3:16** says about God's love for man and His willingness to sacrifice Christ for our sins and do not know and understand passages about the organization of God's church on the earth? Is it because one is a beautiful message of hope we are in need of and the other restricts us from doing as we wish?

Jesus said in **John 18:36**, *My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.* If His kingdom is not of this world, how is it sufficiently organized to function?

First, let it be known there is absolutely no authority in Scripture organizing the church on any level beyond the local, individual, autonomous congregations of the saints. In these local churches, the word of God tells us there are to be elders, deacons, teachers and evangelists to instruct, assist and oversee the responsibilities given those congregations. Please, at your convenience, read for verification. (**Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-4**) In these texts you will find God's plan for the achievement of the responsibilities of the local church. Study as you might you will find no work or worship responsibilities given to any level of the church larger than the local congregation.

The question that begs an answer then is why do we hear of churches with headquarters here on earth as if there were a national or world wide authority for churches as they exist. There is no Biblical authority for any organization beyond the local church, therefore, no national headquarters has any right to dictate or instruct a local church what it should be doing. Furthermore, no national organization or any that is beyond the autonomy of the local church has any right to involve these individual churches in any citywide, national or world wide activities where they are just one contributor

among many to a work larger than they can support. Why are people who represent themselves as believers in the Bible involving themselves in organized activities beyond that which the Bible has authorized the local church to carry out?

From the beginning of time man has thought the ways of God were too simple. Men do, as the old Ford commercial indicated, "have a better idea." David had a better idea for transporting the Ark of the Covenant. He put it on a new cart to be pulled by oxen rather than have it carried on the shoulders of the Levites by way of staves inserted into rings on each side. Can you believe this? It was especially designed to be carried a certain way. They had been instructed to carry it that way, and yet David was in a hurry and chose a "better" way. His way resulted in the death of Uzzah when he reached out to steady the Ark as the oxen stumbled. (**2 Sam. 6**)

In another instance, Saul was instructed to utterly destroy the Amalekites in battle. Specifically, every living thing, animal or human. Instead of doing that he chose to bring back the best of the cattle and the king himself. He explained the animals were for sacrifices to God. Samuel explained to Saul the difference between obedience and sacrifice and how God viewed each. **1 Sam. 15:22** *And Samuel said, Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*

Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, the High Priest, came to their death because they chose "strange fire" to offer incense to the Lord. (**Lev. 10:1,2**)

How many more lessons do we need? Nearly all religions claim the Bible to be the word of God. How strongly do they believe that? In many cases, not strongly enough to use it as a guide for the work and worship they offer to God. In view of the examples we have given, how do you think such efforts will be received by a God who sees it clearly as disobedience, just as He did with David, Saul and the sons of Aaron.

My final plea is "to thine own self be true". I am certain you worship God because you seek salvation. You seek salvation because you, as all men, have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. In so doing you have become separated from God by your sins. (**Rom. 3:23; Isa. 59:1,2**)

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The writer of Hebrews tells us, **Heb. 5:8** *though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; 9 and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation*; Now it is clearly stated Jesus will not provide salvation unless we obey Him. There is only one way we can obey Him. We must consult His word, the Bible.

If the place you worship cannot find authorization in God's word (not the history of the organization) you must make a personal decision to leave those ways and obey the Lord by following His commands.

Please read and study your Bible carefully and you will be able to determine what the Lord commands you.

How We Learn From The Bible

Part Five Expediency: *by Dudley Ross Spears*

The word "expedient" appears several times in the New Testament. As a noun, it has the basic meaning of "advantage." When Jesus spoke of restrictions on divorce and remarriage, his disciples concluded: *"If the case is so with a man and his wife, it is expedient (to his advantage) not to marry"* - **Matt. 19:10**. Normally it is used to state what is best or better in decisions on what to do or not do - **John 11:50; 18:4; 2 Cor. 8:10**, etc.

Paul wrote, *"All things are lawful for me; but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful for me; but I will not be brought under the power of any"* - **1 Cor. 6:12**. Expediency in doing what God authorizes must always be "in the faith" of our Lord - **Rev. 14:12**. Nothing can be expedient that is not done in execution of what the Lord has authorized.

Since the scriptures recognize expedient actions in either doing or not doing what God authorizes, a proper application of the principle includes only things not mentioned that are advantageous in doing what the Lord commands. The authority for expedients inheres in the command they are helpful and best in carrying out.

We have learned that the Lord authorized his people to come together and break bread as a memorial to his death and suffering - **Matt. 26:26-27**. To the Corinthian church Paul delivered the command given by Jesus to *"do this in memory of me"* - **1 Cor. 11:23-24**. There is an approved apostolic example that they did this *"on the first day of the week"* - **Acts 20:7**. Since they were to repeat this - **1 Cor. 11:26**, and every week has a first day, it is necessarily concluded that the observance is done every first day of the week.

The time of day for observing the memorial is a matter of choice. Here is where we apply expediency. The time best suited or most appropriate is a matter of expediency. It is not definite that the church at Troas observed it late on Sunday evening. What we know is

that they assembled on the first day of the week to break bread. The church in Jerusalem, on the day it came into being, *"broke bread"* - **Acts 2:42**. No time of day is indicated. It was after about 3,000 people were baptized for the remission of their sins.

That the church at Troas came together *"to break bread."* We can safely conclude they did so. When they did it is not relevant. It may have been expedient for some in the early church to meet early in the morning. Some of them were owned by slave masters who expected them to go to work on Sunday. It makes no difference what time the church observes the Lord's Supper as long as it is done on the first day of the week.

The command given to the church to teach is exemplified by the words of Paul to the church at Thessalonica. He commended them in that, *"from you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth; so that we need not to speak anything"* - **1 Thess 1:8**. *"Every place"* is all inclusive. There is no specific day to which the congregation of Christ's people are limited in teaching.

In discussion with those who believe all teaching done by a local church must be confined to *"one undivided assembly,"* it has been countered that there is no wrong place to teach the Bible. If so, where would it be? The early church did it in a Jewish temple. Paul did it in their synagogues and schools. A local congregation may choose to have separate Bible classes any time or any day. So long as nothing but truth is taught, so long as the result of the local church's action is simply teaching, any method of teaching is an authorized expedient.

There are specific methods God has given. God specifies that those with the capacity of hearing, believing, and repenting of their sins are the only ones who are subjects of water baptism. There is no authority to baptize infants or those who cannot reason. Therefore sprinkling or pouring water on a candidate cannot be expedient.

The only music mentioned in connection with New Testament worship is vocal music -- singing - **Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; 1 Cor. 15:15-16; Rom. 15:9; Heb. 2:12; James 5:13**. The use of song books adds nothing to the authorized action, singing. Whatever is done when a congregation sings together, when the result is nothing but singing, whatever is used to assist in the singing comes under the authority to sing.

Adults Getting Lazier

By: Matthew Allen

Friday's Rapid City Journal had a story that caught my eye. The Associated Press reports that American adults are getting lazier. The story reported on some recent statistics from the Centers for Disease control and Prevention. Only 25.4 percent of adults met government recommendations for physical activity in 1998. (The CDC recommends 30 minutes of moderate exercise 5 days per week or 20 minutes of vigorous exercise 3 days per week.) Almost 30 percent reported no physical activity at all.

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While I am not really a “fitness buff,” and at this moment would probably come close to flunking the government recommendations listed above, I found the excuses that Americans use to justify their inactivity interesting. There are some parallels between a lack of physical exercise and a lack of spiritual exercise.

“People are spending more time watching TV,” CDC statistician Sandra Ham said. Television is a major contributing factor to the lack of spiritual growth of Christians. How much time is spent watching our favorite shows or movies? What responsibilities are neglected while we vegetate on the couch? What kind of immoral behavior do we soak up from sitcoms? Bad language? Could we become desensitized to the deviant sexual behavior that is glamorized on just about every episode of every show? Remember the old saying, Garbage in; Garbage out? At the very least, watching the immoral habits portrayed on television can’t help the Christian spiritually.

Of course, there are television programs that are fit to watch—not all are bad! We must remember it is the responsibility of each Christian to make sure what he watches is good and wholesome. Paul wrote....*whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. (Phil. 4:8)*

The story pointed out that Americans see exercise as an inconvenience. This boils down to a matter of priorities. Exercise is not an inconvenience to the person who wants to do it. How many Christians would admit that their spiritual responsibilities are an inconvenience to them? If ones priorities are not in the proper place:

- * Getting up early on Sunday morning to attend Bible classes will be an inconvenience.
- * Coming back for the evening service on Sunday will be an inconvenience.
- * Studying God’s word on a daily basis will be an inconvenience.
- * Sacrificial giving of our financial resources will be an inconvenience.
- * Volunteering time to teach a Bible class and be a source of inspiration to our young people will be an inconvenience.
- * Spending time discussing God’s word with someone who is outside of Christ will be an inconvenience.
- * Business meetings of the church will not be viewed as an opportunity to plan our work in God’s kingdom but as an inconvenience to our schedule.

We must remember, it was probably a little inconvenient to Jesus to suffer, bleed, and die on a cross on our behalf. **(See Lk. 22:54-23:56.)** We have no right to become slackers when it comes to spiritual exercise. We have no right to complain about living up to our spiritual responsibilities.

Christians must guard against becoming lazy in God’s work. Paul reminded Christians that *bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. (1 Tim. 4:8-9)* Start today by working

toward obtaining the promise of life! Get busy in growing up in Christ. Get your spiritual exercise! God will provide a home in heaven to the diligent one who gave it his all to get to heaven. There will not be one lazy Christian in heaven!

Enduring Life's Trials

Human suffering has been around since the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden **(Gen. 3:16-19)**. The causes are many: sin, accidents, illnesses, wars, violation of natural laws, hatred, persecution, jealousy, betrayal of confidence, death, etc. All people experience it to some degree and in various ways. There is no escaping it in this life. Some people are overcome by it, some are embittered by it, and some become stronger through it. How suffering affects us is determined by our understanding it and by our response to it.

Though we may not always understand the cause of specific suffering, there is considerable understanding available to us, and it can help us immensely in our facing life’s trials. A major source of suffering is the Devil’s work. Remember that Job’s afflictions came from Satan and were a test of Job’s faith. Remember the sufferings of Elijah, Micaiah, and Jeremiah as the work of the enemies of the Lord. James said, *“My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience” (James 5:10)*. If we consider any trial or suffering as a test of our faith, and if we determine that we will not allow it to defeat us, we can be strengthened by it; and we can learn the precious and necessary lessons of patience by it. That is why James said, *“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing the testing of your faith produces patience.” (James 1:2,3)*. Because of understanding, Peter and John could rejoice when they had been jailed and beaten for preaching Christ **(Acts 5:41)**.

Sickness and death are often hard to understand, and many times people blame God or sometimes themselves. The death of Job’s children was the work of Satan. It was not because of any sin of Job, nor was it his fault. The blindness of the man in **John 9** was not the result of his sin or the sin of his parents, but it served a useful purpose -- that God’s works be manifest. Whether sickness or death is caused by one’s own misdoing or by an unknown source, one can turn that stone of trial into a stepping stone by gaining a stronger faith and greater determination and patience. Rather than viewing life as a struggle that we are ultimately going to lose, we ought to view life as a struggle that we must and are going to win -- even in death itself.

There is only one way that we can win the struggle of life. That way is through the strength of the Lord **(Eph. 6:10-20)**. Only by our properly preparing ourselves through humble submission and obedience to God can we expect to be victorious. That includes godly living and faithful worship and service to Him. If we want to be united with the faithful of all ages when our lives are finished, we must prepare to meet our God. That we will stand before Him in judgment is certain. That we can hear Him say, *“Well done”* is also certain. We can be *“more than conquerors through Him Who loved us” (Rom. 8:35-37)*. The decision of whether we win or lose is ours. God has made that possible. What will you do with your life?

By Gilbert Alexander-- Via The Bulletin of the Church of Christ at New Georgia, June 20, 2004

Eph. 2:19 So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;

1Pet. 2:9 But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

Visitors welcome

We conduct in home Bible Studies

We offer Correspondence Courses

Evangelist and Editor Jim Stauffer

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NEWS AND NOTES: SICK IN NEED OF PRAYERS:

J.R. DANIEL AND LILLIE KEECH CONTINUE TO RECOVER. JAN PATRICK AND IRENE HURD CONTINUE TO SUFFER POOR HEALTH. LINDA FOSTER IS IN O.P. REGIONAL AWAITING TREATMENT FOR A MALIGNANT BRAIN TUMOR. PLEASE REMEMBER HER AND LORETTA TAPP IN YOUR PRAYERS AS THEY BOTH UNDERGO CHEMOTHERAPY. REMEMBER VICKY JOHNSON AND FAMILY AS THE FATHER OF HER CHILDREN IS IN HIS FINAL DAYS.

ADULT BIBLE CLASSES:

SUNDAY - THE CHURCH
WEDNESDAY - JEREMIAH



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins

Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10