

Working Together

2 Chronicles 31:20-21

Introduction: All of us have our own ideas as to what the perfect church should look like. We tell ourselves, “We could work with such a congregation.” But are we willing to work together when we find ourselves in a less than perfect church?

I. Working with the church.

A. Too many people are looking for the perfect congregation; one that has no flaws, no problems and no irritations.

1. That congregation doesn't have members who are too old nor too young. There are no hypocrites or apathetic members. The preacher is dynamic and never shouts. Does anyone actually know of such a congregation?

2. If such a congregation exists, we need to understand we would not fit into it since none of us are perfect either. So why do we seek it?

B. Consider the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2-3). They represent all of the Lord's churches.

1. Ephesus was a diligent worker but they lacked love (Rev. 2:1-7).

2. Smyrna was poor and suffered heavy persecution. Some were told they would soon face prison (Rev. 2:8-11).

3. Pergamos was located in a bad section of town. In fact, Jesus describes it as Satan's throne. Some of their members were killed for their faith while others were compromising the truth. They had false teachers, idolaters and fornicators among them (Rev. 2:12-17).

4. Thyatira was known for its many good works but it allowed a false woman teacher to serve in their midst. She even led some of the members into fornication (Rev. 2:18-29).

5. Sardis looks active on the surface but it is basically dead. They were once a strong congregation, but no more, though a few faithful members remain (Rev. 3:1-6).

6. Philadelphia was spiritually weak. The Lord encourages them to persevere and overcome (Rev. 3:7-13).

7. Laodicea was a wealthy congregation but was spiritually lacking. Their members were so high minded that they couldn't see how spiritually miserable they were (Rev. 3:14-22).

C. Which congregation would you join? The point is, there is no perfect church. Every congregation has problems. The problems differ from congregation to congregation.

1. No Christian is just going to drift into heaven without confronting problems in the church.

2. Church hopping doesn't solve any problems. That is just exchanging one set of problems for another.

D. Therefore, we should learn to be content to work in whatever situation the Lord places before us (Phil. 4:11-13).

II. Working with the Elders.

A. Like those who seek a perfect church, many Christians seek perfect Elders. When they discover the Elders aren't perfect, they get discouraged and start speaking out against them. This should not happen!

B. We are to obey and be submissive to the Elders (Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:5).

1. They have a big job. They watch out for our souls and they must give account to God how they do so. Would you like to be accountable to God for some of the things that are done by others? It is bad enough to be accountable for my own actions let alone trying to deal with the conduct of others.

2. So our instructions given by the Hebrew writer is to let them do their job. Don't give them grief because that is not going to help us.

C. One of the biggest concerns an Elder has is false teaching (Acts 20:28-31). The Elders know that false teaching will come from within the church. This fact alone gave Paul great distress to the point of tears. These internal false teachers will teach lies for the expressed purpose of getting others to follow them. I have experienced a number of such situations where a member divides the church just to start his own congregation. We should not embrace such error, rather we should avoid anyone who would divide the church (Rom. 16:17). Division comes from carnal members (1 Cor. 3:3).

D. Perhaps we can appreciate what Paul told Timothy concerning Elders (1 Tim. 5:17).

III. Working with the preacher.

A. The preacher is also the object of high expectations. To prove my point, let me ask, would you hire a preacher who is poorly dressed, a lousy speaker, not particularly persuasive, perhaps even having a physical deformity but a good writer? If your answer is no, your expectation for a preacher is way too high because the man I just described was the Apostle Paul.

1. Poorly clothed, hungry, beaten and homeless (1 Cor. 4:11).

2. Poor preaching, lacking persuasiveness or human wisdom, weak, fearful and trembling (1 Cor. 2:1, 3-4).

3. Contemptible speech and a poor bodily presence though admittedly an excellent writer (2 Cor. 10:10).

4. A physical infirmity with his eye (Gal. 4:13-15).

5. Paul makes me look pretty good right about now. ☺

B. The thing that we should be concerned about in a preacher is the message preached (1 Cor. 2:2,5; 1:21).

C. How many churches do you know are more concerned with the appearance of the preacher than what he teaches? Apparently, the Corinthians had the same problem (2 Cor. 10:7). Jesus said, “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

IV. Working with one another.

A. If we are to work together, we must realize we each have a part. Often we criticize others while overlooking ourselves. Time won't permit me to cover the vast amounts of passages that deal with our conduct, but please consider these:

1. If you see something needing attention, give it your all (Eccl. 9:10). Hezekiah was a good example (2 Chron. 31:20-21).
2. Serve God by serving each other (Heb. 6:10-11).
3. Live the golden rule (Matt. 7:12).
4. Correct yourself before you correct others (Matt. 7:1-5).

B. Above all, we must have love for one another that transcends words (1 John 3:18). It's easy to wish someone well and then go our way, but it's imperative that our love translates into actions (1 John 3:16-17).

Conclusion: Let us work together. Every church has problems. Elders aren't perfect and preachers aren't always dynamic. Our members often disappoint us. But does that mean we cannot work together? We must ask ourselves, “are we a part of the problem or part of the solution?”

Let us work together to further the cause of Christ regardless of our shortcomings.