

## **A CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSIBILITY TO THE LOCAL CONGREGATION OF WHICH HE (OR SHE) IS A MEMBER**

In the New Testament we read about the church universal (Mat. 16:18); the individual Christian (Acts 11:26); and the local congregation (Phil. 1: 1). All who have become Christians are members of the church universal because the same act that makes one a Christian adds one to the church ( Acts 2:38; 2:47).

The only unit of organization known in the New Testament for carrying forward the work of the church is the local congregation (Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1; I Cor. 1:2; Rom. 16:16). This being true, it follows that for a Christian to be in full fellowship with the church he must be associated with, and be a part of, a local congregation. Paul (Acts 9:26), Barnabas ( Acts 11: 26; 13:1), and Peter (I Pet. 5: 1 -3) became a part of a local church in New Testament times.

Each member of a local congregation is doing one of two things for the church of which he is a member -- he is either building it up or he is tearing it down. Each member needs to realize that God is only pleased with work that builds up the church (Acts 20: 32; Eph. 4:16). Each person can do three things for the congregation of which he (or she) is a member:

- Live a life that becomes the gospel of Christ ( Phil. 1:27; 2:15; Matt. 5: 13 - 16).
- Help do the work that God has given the congregation to do: (a) edification (Eph. 4: 11- 12); (b) help its own in need (Acts 2: 44 - 45; I Tim. 5:16; Acts 6: 1 - 7); and (c) teach the gospel to the lost (I Tim. 3:15; Acts 11: 22 -26; Phil. 4: 14 - 17).
- Give of their money that the Lord's work might be carried on (I Cor. 16: 1 - 2).

When a Christian stops doing any one of these three things to the extent of his (or her) ability, he is not building up the church; he is tearing it down!

Let us now list some things that tear down a local congregation:

- Murmuring and disputing all the time (I Cor. 1:10; Phil. 2:14). To murmur is to complain in a discontented, rebellious spirit. To dispute is to engage in verbal controversy. Murmuring and disputing in a congregation brings discontent among the members and causes babes in Christ to fall away from the Lord.
- Endless gossip, tale bearing, lying tongues, and "hands that shed innocent blood" do great damage (I Tim. 5: 13; Prov. 6: 16 - 19; Lev. 19:16).
- People who feel no special obligation to the congregation do damage. These kind of members flit about hither and yon, just being at the "home" congregation occasionally. The local congregation cannot depend on them to carry their part of the financial load (or any part of the work).
- Last, but in no way least, are those who are failing to live a pure, godly life (Tit. 2: 11 - 12). These worldings shut up the kingdom of heaven against men (Matt. 23: 13).

Member of the church, are you doing your part and carrying your end of the responsibility where you are a member? Are you building up the church? Or are you tearing it down?? THINK!!

~ Donald Townsley