

The Church

Lesson 9
Institutionalism and The Social
Gospel

The Church

1. What Is The Church?
2. Nature of The Universal Church
3. Organization and Work of The Universal Church
4. The Only Source of Divine Authority Today
5. Establishing Divine Authority

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The Church

6. Nature of A Local Church
7. Organization and Work of A Local Church
8. Independence Autonomy and Cooperation of Local Churches
9. Institutionalism and The Social Gospel

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Independence Autonomy and Cooperation of Local Churches

1. Local churches must be independent and autonomous
2. Independence safeguards a local church from error
3. Is Acts 15 proof of centralization?
4. Two types of cooperation
5. An example of unauthorized collective cooperation of local churches
6. Examples of authorized concurrent cooperation of local churches

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Introduction

- Two errors underlie what we see regarding changes in local church organization and work
- They are Institutionalism and the Social Gospel
- Denominations have long taught and practiced these errors
- These errors are hard to see and give up because they appeal to fleshly desires and much good is done through great works

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Introduction

- But, these errors are no different than those like the Sinner's Prayer that has misled many and must be rejected so they can be saved by the gospel
- Only what God has authorized is what we should follow in all things
- God does not need our wisdom or help in devising more effective ways of church organization and work

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What is institutionalism?

- The belief that the universal church is a working organization composed of local churches that must centralize oversight and funds to do its work
- This is not a formal definition but the best description I can formulate

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How Does The Institutional Church Do Its Work?

- Believing the universal church is an organization of local churches leads to the idea of centralized work
- That is, if local churches are to work together as “one” universal church, then there must be centralized oversight and treasury
- The two main ways churches of Christ centralize their work are through human institutions and sponsoring churches

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How Does The Institutional Church Do Its Work?

- Human institutions are third-party organizations funded by local churches and individuals to oversee and do work in evangelism, benevolence and edification
- Examples would include “Bible” colleges and benevolent organizations
- Sponsoring churches are “local” churches that assume oversight and control over a project that is funded by other local churches

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Benevolent Organization Overseeing and Distributing Benevolence For Many Local Churches

- Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, Inc., warehouse in Nashville, TN
- Provides needed supplies to both Christians and non-Christians who have suffered from natural disasters
- Funded by both local churches and individuals

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Evangelistic Organization Overseeing and Distributing Teaching Materials For Many Local Churches

- World Bible School (WBS) supported by both local churches and individual Christians
- Provides evangelistic training and materials to local churches
- This is done through local churches establishing WBS training schools under WBS oversight

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Sponsoring Church Overseeing India Missions Program

- India Missions program overseen by elders of Central church of Christ, Cleburne, TX
- Purpose to evangelize India
- Funded by many local churches
- Decisions made by elders of Central church on what preachers are supported, where they preach and so on

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Sponsoring Church Overseeing Tsunami Relief Benevolent Effort

- Tsunami Relief benevolent effort overseen by elders of Central church of Christ, Cleburne, TX
- Local churches send money to sponsoring church
- Sponsoring church distributes money to needy local churches and the world

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Jesus' Universal Church Is Composed of Individuals Not Local Churches

Jesus' church is the assembly of people that He saves, those who continue submissive to Him

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Jesus' Universal Church Is Composed of Individuals Not Local Churches

Eph 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

Eph 5:24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

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Jesus' Universal Church Is Composed of Individuals Not Local Churches

Act 20:28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for 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.

1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

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No Authority For Local Churches to Allow Third Parties To Oversee Their Work

Act 14:23 When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

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No Authority For Local Churches to Allow Third Parties To Oversee Their Work

1Pe 5:2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

1Pe 5:3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

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No Authority For Local Churches To Pool
Funds Together Using Third Parties

1Co 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also.

1Co 16:2 On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.

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No Authority For Local Churches To Pool
Funds Together Using Third Parties

1Co 16:3 When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem;

1Co 16:4 and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me.

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No Authority For Local Churches Not In
Need To Receive Money

Act 24:17 "Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings;

2Co 8:11 But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability.

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No Authority For Local Churches Not In
Need To Receive Money

2Co 8:12 For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

2Co 8:13 For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality--

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No Authority For Local Churches Not In
Need To Receive Money

2Co 8:14 at this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality;

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No Authority For Human Institutions
And Sponsoring Churches

Col 3:17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Gal 1:8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

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The Scriptures Are Sufficient To Equip The Church To Do The Work God Authorized

2Ti 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;
2Ti 3:17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.
Act 2:42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

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The Scriptures Are Sufficient To Equip The Church To Do The Work God Authorized

Eph 4:11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,
Eph 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

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The Scriptures Are Sufficient To Equip The Church To Do The Work God Authorized

Eph 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.
Eph 4:14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

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The Scriptures Are Sufficient To Equip The Church To Do The Work God Authorized

Eph 4:15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,
Eph 4:16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

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The Scriptures Are Sufficient To Equip The Church To Do The Work God Authorized

2Co 11:8 I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you;
2Co 11:9 and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.

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The Scriptures Are Sufficient To Equip The Church To Do The Work God Authorized

Rom 15:25 but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.
Rom 15:26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

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Why Is Institutionalism Wrong?

1. Jesus' universal church is composed of individuals not local churches
2. No authority for local churches to allow third parties to oversee their work
3. No authority for local churches to pool funds together using third parties
4. No authority for local churches not in need to receive money
5. No authority for human institutions and sponsoring churches

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Institutionalism and The Social Gospel

1. What is institutionalism?
2. Examples of institutionalism
3. Why is institutionalism wrong?
4. How does the church do its work?

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The Social Gospel

- An error that emphasizes the physical and social desires of people above their spiritual needs, forgiveness of sins and remaining faithful to Jesus
- Local churches make these social desires a priority by providing facilities and funds for social, recreational and entertainment activities for members and the world
- Local churches may also combine together to provide social programs like youth camps

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The Social Gospel

- Although the local church has no authority to provide for and fund social activities, we do recognize that Christians have authority to be together socially such as eating together and engaging in recreation
- However, these are to be provided for and funded by individuals, not the local church
- Also, these social activities are not to be emphasized above the gospel

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What Is The Social Gospel?

- The practice of a local church using church property, facilities and funds to meet the social and material desires of members and the world
- Practices include providing social meals, athletic facilities, secular education, daycare, various forms of entertainment, economic and political activities

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A Local Church Overseeing and funding Its Own Secular School

- The Lewisville Christian School is operated by the Garden Ridge Church of Christ, Lewisville, TX
- Secular and Bible classes are provided to pre-school and kindergarten students
- They also provide daycare services for children below pre-school age

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A Local Church Providing Meals Entertainment And Recreation

- An example of these practices is found with the Poplar Springs Church of Christ, King, NC
- Quoting from their Web site, "Our Family Life Center offers a gym, kitchen, fellowship hall, and office space for our church staff."
- Justification - these things help attract the lost to hear the gospel and they provide "fellowship" occasions for members

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A Local Church Providing Meals Entertainment And Recreation

- An example of these practices is found with the Albany Church of Christ, Albany, NY
- Used church building for 2007 youth rally that included a talent show with acts showcasing talent in music, drama, comedy and other areas
- Along with talent show, meals, recreation and other entertainment was provided

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A Local Church Promoting Political and Civil Affairs

- Some local churches have gone so far as to promote politics using their facilities and resources to do so
- For example, the Kings Church of Christ in Brooklyn, NY invited its members and the lost to view a "politically" motivated movie that has nothing to do with the gospel of Christ

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A Local Church Promoting Political and Civil Affairs



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It Emphasizes The Social Above The Spiritual

Joh 6:26 Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.

Joh 6:27 "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal."

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It Emphasizes The Social Above The Spiritual

Joh 6:28 Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?"

Joh 6:29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

Joh 6:47 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.

Joh 6:48 "I am the bread of life.

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It Erases The Clear Distinction Between Social And Spiritual Activities

1Co 11:20 Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper,
1Co 11:21 for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.
1Co 11:22 What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you. 43

It Erases The Clear Distinction Between Social And Spiritual Activities

1Co 11:33 So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.
1Co 11:34 If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment. The remaining matters I will arrange when I come.

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Burdens The Local Church With Activities That Individuals Are Authorized To Do

1Ti 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.
1Ti 5:16 If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed. 45

It Perverts Edification and Evangelism

Mat 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
Mat 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Mat 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." 46

It Perverts Fellowship

- Many wrongly use fellowship to refer to Christians engaging in social activities
- Greek word "koinonia" means "communion, fellowship, sharing in common.." Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words
- The word is used to show Christians sharing in spiritual things with God and each other but never sharing with non-Christians 47

It Perverts Fellowship

1Jn 1:5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.
1Jn 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;
1Jn 1:7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 48

It Perverts Fellowship

Php 4:15 You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;

Php 4:16 for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.

Rom 15:26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. 49

It Perverts Fellowship

1Co 10:16 Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?

2Co 6:14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

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Why Is The Social Gospel Wrong?

1. It emphasizes the social above the spiritual
2. It erases the clear distinction between social and spiritual activities
3. Burdens the local church with activities that individuals are authorized to do
4. It perverts edification and evangelism
5. It perverts fellowship

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Christians And Social Activities

Act 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified."

Act 2:37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

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Christians And Social Activities

Act 2:38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Act 2:41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

The Fellowship of the Believers

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Christians And Social Activities

Act 2:42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Act 2:43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

Act 2:44 And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;

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Christians And Social Activities

Act 2:45 and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

Act 2:46 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

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Christians And Social Activities

Act 2:47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

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Christians And Social Activities

Rom 12:9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

Rom 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

Rom 12:11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

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Christians And Social Activities

Rom 12:12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,

Rom 12:13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

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Christians And Social Activities

Mat 5:16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

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Institutionalism and The Social Gospel

1. What is institutionalism?
2. Examples of institutionalism
3. Why is institutionalism wrong?
4. How does the church do its work?
5. What is the social gospel?
6. Examples of the social gospel
7. Why is the social gospel wrong?
8. Christians and social activities

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