

“You Are Not Doing Anything”

(A Serious Accusation)

INTRODUCTION:

1. Have you ever had that said to you?
 - A. Well, I used to hear that a lot right before or after my dad would tell me to do some sort of work.
 - B. But have you had it said to you as an accusation in a spiritual context?
2. The only time this has been said to me is when I have tried to discuss our differences with those of more liberally minded churches of Christ.
 - A. It has been said in response to my questioning of whether one or more of the works these churches are *scriptural* or *authorized* by the Scriptures.
 - B. The statement implies that it is better to do something *unscriptural* than *to do nothing*, which presents a false dichotomy. For, neither is truly a valid choice.
3. Though the **accusation** itself is a **serious one**, it should not be dismissed off-handedly because:
 - A. Christians who *are really not doing anything* are not being faithful Christians (1 Cor. 15:58 – “Therefore, my beloved brethren, **be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord**, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”).
 - B. Local churches that *are really not doing anything* are not faithful churches (Rev. 3:1-2 – “To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. ² Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.”).
 - C. And, what if the accusation was even partially true? Would it not be wise for us to examine our work to see if there are areas we need to address to be pleasing to the Lord.
4. So, what I want to do today is to consider this accusation in the light of *what God truly requires* of us so we can properly ask ourselves, “Are we doing the Lord’s work?”

BODY:

- **I. Christians and churches must do the Lord’s work.**
 - A. Those who might accuse us should understand what this means, but they often do not.
 - 1. It’s not enough to be “working” (Revelation 2:1-5).
 - a. Consider the church at Ephesus that was about to lose its candlestick.
 - b. Their problem was not that they were *not doing anything*. For Jesus said, “I know your deeds and your toil...” (2:2) and that they had “not grown weary” (2:3).
 - c. Their problem was they had gotten away from doing the **works God desired** (2:4-5 – “But I have this against you, that you have **left your first love**. ⁵ Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and **do the deeds you did at first**; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.”).
 - 2. I think it is easier than we might want to believe for a faithful church to *leave its first love* and *stop doing the first works*. It happens when a church and its members:
 - a. Are no longer excited about the Lord, His love, or doing His work.
 - b. Stake their claim to salvation on what *they do not do* rather than on *doing of the Lord’s work*.
 - B. So, we need to know and do “the work of Christ” (Phil. 2:30), the “work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).
 - 1. These are works the Scriptures *reveal* and *equip* us to do (2 Tim. 3:16-17 – “All **Scripture** is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be **adequate, equipped** for every good work.”).
 - 2. These are the works that can be done “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (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.”).
 - a. These are not just words said or an attitude behind works we might choose to do (Matt. 7:22-23 – “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy **in Your name**, and **in Your name** cast out demons, and **in Your name** perform many miracles?’

²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘**I never knew you**; depart from Me, you who **practice lawlessness.**’[act outside/beyond God’s law]”.

- b. To act “in the name of the Lord Jesus” is to act “according to the authority of the Lord Jesus.” And that is very important because Jesus has all authority (Matt. 28:18).
3. So, the works we must be busy doing are **not** works we deem good, but the works the scriptures **equip** us to do, works done according to **Christ’s authority**.
 - a. These are works commanded by the Spirit through the apostles of the Lord.
 - b. These are works exemplified in the N.T. that are approved by the apostles of the Lord.

• II. What are the Lord’s works?

- A. First, there is **evangelism**, or **spreading the good news** of Christ to all.
 1. Individual Christians are to spread the good news (Acts 8:4 – “Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.”; Mt. 28:18-20 – GC).
 2. Local churches:
 - a. 1 Thess. 1:8 – “For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.”
 - b. 2 Cor. 11:8 – “I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you.”
- B. Second, there is **edification**, or **building up** and **strengthening the saved**.
 1. Local churches must accomplish this in the worship assemblies (1 Cor. 14:26 – “What is the outcome then, brethren? When you **assemble**, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be **done for edification.**”).
 2. Individuals are to participate in this as part of the assemblies (Heb. 10:24-25 – “and let us consider how to **stimulate** one another **to love and good deeds**,²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging one another**; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”)
 3. This work is to be done individually (Gal. 6:1-2 – “Brethren, even if **anyone** is caught in any trespass, **you** who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; **each one looking to yourself**, so that you too will not be tempted.² **Bear one another’s burdens**, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”).
- C. Third, there is the work of **benevolence**, or helping **the needy**.
 1. Individual Christians are given this duty and should be ready to help...
 - a. All people/generic (Jas. 1:26-27 – “If **anyone** thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle **his** tongue but deceives **his** own heart, this **man’s** religion is worthless.²⁷ Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to **visit orphans** and **widows** in their distress, and to **keep oneself** unstained by the world.”).
 - b. Saints/specific (Heb. 6:10 – “For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having **ministered** and in **still ministering** to the **saints.**”).
 2. Local churches practiced a more **limited benevolence** that concerned helping **needy saints** (2 Cor. 9:1-2 – “For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this **ministry to the saints**;² for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them.”; 2 Cor. 8:1-4; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rom. 15:25-26).
 - a. There are no exceptions!
 - b. It was always and only **saints** helped by the Local church.
- D. So, for this accusation to be true, it would have to be shown that we are **doing nothing** concerning **preaching** the good news, **edifying** the brethren, or **helping** the needy.
 - 1. And that, of course, is not true, because the church here is involved in these works.
 - a. But there is more we can do as a congregation in these areas.
 - b. And, more is coming, seeing we must always be working to grow in these areas. And we are open to your suggestions as to how we might better serve the Lord in these works!
 - 2. But we must realize that *congregational work* is *no substitute* for *individual effort*!

- a. So, we should ask ourselves what we are doing *individually*, in daily life, in these areas.
- b. Am I working to exalt Jesus and spread the good news?
- c. Am I working to edify my brethren in our assemblies and out, seeking contact with them through conversation when together and through hospitality in my home?
- d. Am I ready to help others physically and financially to glorify the Lord? (Matt. 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.”).

- **III. Why would people accuse us of this?**

- A. The answer is that most people/churches today have **misconceptions** about congregational growth, evangelism, and what the biblical work of the local church is.
 - 1. And these misconceptions are the standard by which they judge our actions.
 - 2. So, I hear strange things from others about what we do and believe.
 - a. Recently I invited an acquaintance from pickleball to come to worship.
 - b. His response was, “I don’t think you want me there because I play the guitar. And you church of Christs do not believe in music.”
 - c. There are so many misconceptions behind that statement! So, you see what I mean.
- B. So, when you consider the religious misconceptions people have today, it is no wonder that they see us as those **refusing to get with the program and do something and grow**.
 - 1. What people misunderstand (and may sound strange) is that *numerical growth* is not a legitimate goal for any congregation.
 - a. There are many factors that influence numerical growth, decline, or fluctuation, some of which have nothing to do with what the local church is doing or not doing.
 - b. Christians move in and out of the community, have babies, pass away, etc., all of which can affect a congregation’s numbers.
 - 2. Legitimate goals for a congregation are:
 - a. The spiritual growth of its members (2 Cor. 5:9-10 – “Therefore we also have as our **ambition**, whether at home or absent, **to be pleasing to Him**.¹⁰ **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ**, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”).
 - b. Growth in doing the **Lord’s work** to the **extent of our abilities** and **opportunities** (2 Cor. 8:3-5, 12 – “For I testify that **according to their ability**, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord,⁴ begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,⁵ and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God...¹² For if the readiness is present, it is **acceptable** according to **what a person has, not according to what he does not have**.”). So God does not expect us to do more than we are able to do for Him, but does expect us to do what we are able to do!
 - c. So, if working diligently and lovingly in the pursuit of these biblical goals results in **numerical growth** or **decline**, so be it!
- C. So, this approach to our work, which is the right approach, we may appear to be doing **less** than what “**should/could be done**.”
 - 1. But what so few know is that increasing the local church’s numbers is not necessarily saving souls!
 - a. Food, fun, gyms, social activities, etc., can swell a local church’s numbers.
 - b. You cannot *lure, socialize, recreate, or dine* people into the kingdom, into Christ’s body!
 - 2. I know this is true because God has said:
 - a. The fight for souls is a **spiritual battle** which requires **spiritual weapons** (2 Cor. 10:3-5 – “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but **divinely powerful** for the destruction of fortresses.⁵ We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the **knowledge** of God, and we are taking every **thought** captive to the obedience of Christ”).

- b. That His **word**, the **gospel**, is the “**sword of the Spirit**” (Eph. 6:17) that welds divine power to save (Rom. 1:16 – “For I am not ashamed of the **gospel**, for it is the **power of God for salvation** to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”).
- c. It is those who are **taught** by God that **come** to Christ (John 6:45 – “It is written in the prophets, ‘and they shall all be **taught** of God.’ Everyone who has **heard** and **learned** from the Father, **comes to Me.**”).
- d. It is those who **obey Christ’s word** that will be **saved** (Heb. 5:8-9 – “Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of **eternal salvation to all who obey him**”).
- e. That it is the **Lord** who **adds** to His church (Acts 2:47), and that He **knows** those who are **His** (2 Tim. 2:19).
- f. When you put all this together, how is it that people can believe that efforts/works focused on the **flesh**—church kitchens, coffee shops, ballgames, gardening, sewing, and financial classes, camps, etc.—are acceptable weapons to save souls?!
- D. Anything but the **Lord’s work** in the **Lord’s way** is wasted effort!
 1. I know people think times are different and *more* is required to save the world!
 2. But people have always wanted more than the gospel; yet **God refuses to give it** (1 Cor. 1:21-24 – “For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was **well-pleased through the foolishness** of the **message preached to save those who believe.** ²² For indeed **Jews ask for signs** and **Greeks search for wisdom** [*they want more-rp*]; ²³ but **we preach Christ crucified**, to Jews a **stumbling block** and to Gentiles **foolishness**, ²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ **the power of God and the wisdom of God.**”).
 3. If the Lord has chosen **these works** as how God’s people shine His light in this world, who are we to think we are smarter than God and give the world more than these works?

CONCLUSION:

1. Let’s be busy, truly busy, in the **Lord’s work**!
2. Let’s do His work with **faith** and **confidence**, leaning on God’s strength and power to accomplish all that He would have us to do that we might please Him.
3. For, only in doing this will our efforts be of value to our souls and the souls of others!
4. Will you come to Jesus today, submitting to him as your Lord and Savior? That question applies to you whether you have not yet be saved or have been unfaithful to the Lord.