

# THE INDIVIDUAL IS NOT THE CHURCH

BY CARL McMURRAY

THE ABOVE SEEMS LIKE A STRANGE STATEMENT, DOES IT NOT? ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT THE LORD'S CHURCH IS MADE UP OF INDIVIDUALS. EACH ONE IS A STONE IN THE TEMPLE OR A PART OF THE BODY. HOWEVER, A STONE IS NOT A BUILDING BY ITSELF AND A BODY PART IS NOT A BODY IS IT? AND IT'S SURPRISING HOW OFTEN SOME FORGET THAT SOMETIMES THE LORD PLACES RESPONSIBILITIES UPON THE PERSON, AND SOMETIMES ON THE CHURCH.

IN MATTHEW 18:15FF, JESUS SAID THAT IF YOUR BROTHER SINS, GO TO HIM. THE NASV SPECIFICALLY ADDS "IN PRIVATE." IF HE REPENTS YOU HAVE WON YOUR BROTHER. IF HE WON'T LISTEN TAKE 2 OR 3 WITNESSES. IF HE CONTINUES NOT TO LISTEN, THEN JESUS SAYS, "TELL IT TO THE CHURCH." NOTICE HERE THAT FIRST IT WAS ONE, THEN TWO OR THREE, THEN THE CHURCH. ONE WAS NOT THE CHURCH. THREE WAS NOT THE CHURCH. ONLY THE CHURCH IS THE CHURCH.

ANOTHER PASSAGE BEARING THIS OUT WOULD BE 1 TIMOTHY 5:16. IN THIS PLACE PAUL IS TELLING TIMOTHY THAT IF A WIDOW IN NEED HAS BELIEVING FAMILY MEMBERS, THOSE MEMBERS ARE TO CARE FOR THEIR ELDERLY ONE SO THAT "THE CHURCH IS NOT BURDENED." HERE WE SEE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A BELIEVER (WHO IS NOT THE CHURCH), POSSIBLY MULTIPLE FAMILY MEMBERS (WHO ARE NOT THE CHURCH), AND THE CHURCH! ONE IS TOLD TO STEP UP TO THE RESPONSIBILITY SO THAT THE OTHER IS NOT BURDENED. THEY ARE SEPARATE AND DISTINCT.

THESE PASSAGES SHOULD REMIND US TO PAY CLOSE ATTENTION AS WE READ GOD'S WORD. LOOK AT THE CONTEXT OF THE PASSAGE. SHALL THE CHURCH BE A DISCIPLINARIAN FOR CHILDREN, OR IS THAT RESPONSIBILITY GIVEN TO PARENTS? SHALL THE CHURCH BE A LOVER OF WIVES, OR IS THAT A COMMAND TO HUSBANDS? LIKewise, IN GALATIANS 6:10, IS THE CHURCH TO BE "DOING GOOD UNTO ALL MEN," OR IS THIS A COMMAND TO INDIVIDUALS? IN JAMES 1:27, DOES "VISIT THE FATHERLESS AND THE WIDOWS IN THEIR AFFLICTION" MEAN FOR THE CHURCH TO BUILD A NURSING HOME, OR DOES IT MEAN THAT WE AS INDIVIDUALS SHOULD BE ASSISTING ONE ANOTHER? DOES 1 PETER 4:9 WHERE WE ARE TOLD TO "BE HOSPITABLE TO ONE ANOTHER WITHOUT COMPLAINT" MEAN THAT THE CHURCH SHOULD PAY FOR A DINNER, OR SHOULD I OPEN MY HOME?

A GREAT MANY ISSUES LIKE THOSE ABOVE AS WELL AS THE WOMAN'S HEAD COVERING IN 1 CORINTHIANS 11, OR WOMEN SPEAKING IN AN ASSEMBLY LIKE THE ONE IN 1 CORINTHIANS 14, WOULD NOT BE ISSUES AT ALL IF WE WERE TO SLOW DOWN AND EXAMINE THE CONTEXT. WHO IS SPEAKING? TO WHOM? ABOUT WHAT? IN WHAT REGARD? NOT EVERY COMMAND OF GOD IS FOR EVERYONE IN EVERY TIME. AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES CANNOT BE FULFILLED BY SITTING BACK AND LETTING THE CHURCH ACT ON OUR BEHALF. AS WE READ AND STUDY, LET'S TRY AND DETERMINE WHAT OUR LORD REALLY WANTS FOR US TO KNOW AND DO. GOD BLESS YOUR EFFORTS.