

Bedford Bulletin

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BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE
FAITH
1 Corinthians 3:9-11

Things That Divide (Part 7) The Church of Christ

In the previous issue we made reference that Paul himself was concerned about apostasy from within noting that it all starts with a perversion of the gospel that was preached (Gal. 1:6-12). How quickly believers can stray from true spirit and truth (John 4:24) and begin practicing perverted things like selling indulgences in sin which some still practice today (explained in previous issue). Anytime the church strays from “what says the scripture” they’re practicing sin, ignoring the authority of the Lord, Master and King, a lack of respect for the authority of Jesus Christ, failing to abide by the doctrine of Christ. Let’s re-visit the words of John; “9 Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, 11 for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.” Therefore, make no mistake, every church that does this, “does not have God”.

Thus, we know that division is nothing new, that it started a long time ago by brethren who departed from the faith that was preached and delivered (Jude 3). We know this resulted in Catholicism and Denominationalism. We know also that men of God went across the country begging and pleading with men and women to go back to the Bible and speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent. So, everything is fine now right? Not even close. Though churches of Christ’ were planted, again we find that brethren started making their departure from the pattern of God’s plan for His church. That is why we need to be on guard for false teaching from within and from without.

TODAY WE CHOOSE TO REJOICE

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”

Before we go on from here, we need to know and understand what the work of the

Lord’s church is, what the members of the church are authorized to do and there are only three. To help us remember I’ll share an acronym I was taught long ago; it is, “B.E.E.” which stands for Benevolence, Evangelism and Edification.

For each scripture that pertains to benevolence and the church, we’ll ask only two questions. (1) “Who are the givers in each case?” (2) “Who are the recipients in each case?” Let’s begin with Acts 2:44-45, “44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and [a]sold their possessions and goods, and divided[b] them among all, as anyone had need.” To rightly divide, to get the truthful answer you need to go back to verses 41 and 42. The answer to the first and second question in this case is the three thousand who were baptized continuing steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine. That is members of the church, gave to members of the church.

Let’s consider another example from the scripture.

Knowing & Doing God's Will

Proverbs 11:14

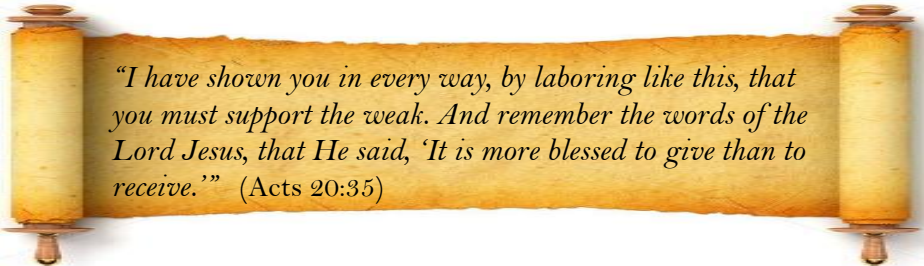
Acts 4:32-35 “32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.” Alright, same questions, who are the givers? Do you see? The saints sold their “lands or houses” laid them at the “apostles' feet”. So, the givers were Christians. Then who were the recipients? Well, what does the scripture say? The apostles “distributed to each as anyone had need”, and the each would be, “those who believed were of one heart and one soul” (v.32). Again, we see the saints made certain that none of the saints lacked anything, saints giving up their riches and sharing so that no person lacked.

In the next text we'll read about some Greek speaking Jews who were complaining that their widows were being neglected. Let's read and then answer the two questions as they apply in this case. The full account is from Acts 6:1-6 but for this we only need to read verse 1 through 4. “¹ Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists,[a] because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. ² Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. ³ Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴ but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” Who are the givers in this case? They, that is the church, chose from among themselves, “seven men of good reputation”. So, again we see that the givers are members of the church. In answer to the second question, who are the recipients? The answer is the “neglected widows”, who are members of the church also.

I hope that you'll read the remaining six accounts (Acts 11:27-30; Rom. 15:25-32; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8; 2 Cor. 9; 1 Tim. 5:9-16), all of which concern benevolence. Then apply the same two questions to each one. I know, that what you'll find in every case is that the givers are always members of the body, Christians, and that the recipients are always members of the church. This is not to say that the members of God's household cannot individually help in their community, from their own resources, for they can, and should. But not with the collection that is taken up each Lord's day.

What is the point? Why is it important to compare all these? Because my brothers and sisters, we are to follow the pattern that is found in our New Testaments for everything that we practice in the church. The apostle Paul said, “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern” (Phil. 3:17), “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:13), and “in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility” (Titus 2:7).

Can you see anywhere in the pattern where the church supplies the needs of the surrounding community? Do you see the church of the Bible, using the collection of the saints for meeting the needs of any outside of the body of Christ? The answer is no! So then, each church of Christ is authorized by command and example to provide for its own who are in need. As we will bring out in our continued studies the local church is by God's design, all-sufficient, that is, it is first able to take care of its own needs, and then when possible meet the needs of other saints as well. This I pray will be brought out more later in our studies.



“I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” (Acts 20:35)

Brethren, each member of the Lord's church is in constant training in the school for eternity. We are daily being prepared for our heavenly citizenship. For the children of God to practice true benevolence we must be trained in our character with traits of kindness, compassion, tenderheartedness, and

love. Trained to become personally involved in this service. God doesn't want "*cheerful givers*", who believe that's all there is to serving His church. His plan, though it does include giving of money, is not restricted to that. Benevolence includes being personally involved. Remember that Christ is our greatest example, and He came from Heaven, holy and pure to go among the poor, lowly and out-cast of this world, even to humbly wash His disciples' feet with his own hands. Can you imagine a Holy God doing this and not expecting the same from His children? This is true benevolence. When a local church modifies this plan, it is practicing division.

Lord willing in the next issue we'll continue some examples where the church erred from the pattern of benevolence.

As always, in Love

Dave Scarpino

Times of Our Services

Sunday Morning Bible Study	9:00 AM
Sunday Morning Worship	9:50 AM
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00 PM
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:30 PM

What Must I Do to Be Saved?

1. Hear the gospel -----John 6:45; Romans 10:17
2. Believe the gospel -----John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6
3. Repent of sins -----Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30
4. Confess Christ -----Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:10
5. Be baptized -----Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38
6. Remain faithful unto and until death -----Revelation 2:10; Matthew 10:22