

Bedford Bulletin

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

Things That Divide (Part 6) The Church of Christ

We have been talking about issues that divide us. There is good reason for division such as dividing good from evil, dividing us from the world, sometimes even our family and friends, for the sake of Christ. Then there are the bad kinds that introduce evil for good and divide the body of Christ. Isaiah had a vision and saw the wickedness of Judah (Isaiah 1). He saw the establishment of the church (Isa. 2:1-4), the judgement that would come upon Judah and Jerusalem (Isaiah 3). Then in Isaiah 4 he saw Jerusalem's future, a renewal, "*When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the [a]blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning*" (v.4). In chapter 5 Isaiah writes "*Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill*" (v.1). God compares His people to a vineyard that was planted to bring forth good fruit. In verse 4 we read God says, "*What more could have been done?*" God gave them everything they needed to be fruitful, but, and this is the point of this article, verses 8 through 30 declare a coming judgement. Within, there are seven "woes" read them. For our point the second and third woes are strikingly applicable to some in the church, and the religious world of division. God said, "*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! 21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!*" (vs.20-21).

God gave the church everything she needs (2 Peter 1:3). There is no joy in division. The church must be as one doing good in the sight of God. Remember God, "*'will render to each one according to his deeds': 7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; 8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath*" (Rom. 2:6-8). That is exactly what the Bible teaches. Every time division comes it is a sign that somebody, somewhere has violated the will of God, and behind division we find people who haven't respect for the authority of Christ. Division must be identified, it must be marked, and people must be educated and schooled as to the how and whys concerning division.

Bottom line of this entire series, "*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*" (1 Pet. 4:11). In our own generation, those who understand and accept Bible authority, have heard in the churches of Christ men say, "you can do things without Bible authority". This theology always results in God's people being separated from members who love the truth and stand firm for the truth.



"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Why? Because brethren who love the truth are not going to trade the authority of Christ for that of any man.

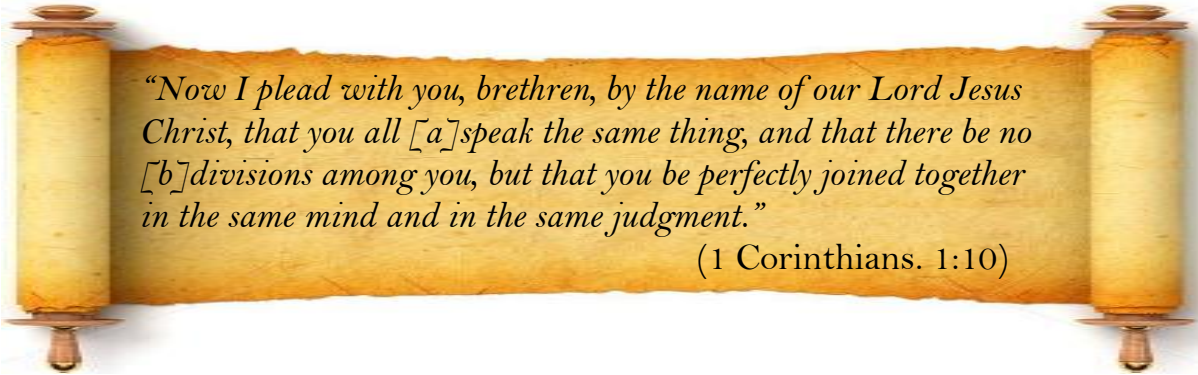
This is nothing new, Paul witnessed it in his time (Gal. 1:6-12). Example, what does the Bible say, if the church needs money, how is it to be raised? Concerning the collection for the saints: "*On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come*" (1Cor. 16:1-2). Just last week in the mailbox at the building we received an invitation from a local church of Christ to participate in a fundraiser to raise money to build a play area for its youth. These brethren are departing from the faith in more than one area. We might as well sell indulgences in sin which is what the Catholic church did to raise funds. They told the buyer; you can go out and

Knowing & Doing God's Will

Proverbs 11:14

commit sin and this will take care of it. Did you know, my friend, that this same practice is being done today. From Catholic.com "An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain defined conditions through the Church's help when, as a minister of redemption, she dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions won by Christ and the saints, (Indulgentarium Doctrina 1)." Yes, there is a "Handbook of Indulgences (New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1991)". This is foolishness, for it eliminates the need for Christ's sacrifice. I only went down this road to point out just how far any church can go from the truth of God's word whenever they set aside Bible authority for their own. "WOE!"

Now, stop for just a moment and think. Protestant denominationalism! From where did the name "Protestant" come? From protesting against Catholicism. Any historian will bear out, this is how they were born. Today we have thousands of different denominational churches different in name, different in doctrine, different in practice. We need to learn from them how terrible division is. The Lord's church must be divided from them: We are separated from them in that we chose to obey God in everything. In the United States frontier during the Second Great Awakening (1790–1840) there were men like Alexander Campbell, men like Barton W. Stone and others preaching across the country saying, in a nutshell, let's get away from all of this division and let us go back to the New Testament and let's do things like they did in Bible days. That is what the church must do, be imitators of Christ, the apostles and the early church (Eph. 5:1; 1 Thess. 2:14; 1 Cor. 11:1). Paul said, "*Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern*" (Phil. 3:17). But some people say that somehow Alexander Campbell was the founder of the church of Christ, but that is simply not so. Some still say, "Preacher, you can't find anywhere where there was a local church of Christ like you're talking about, before Alexander Campbell was ever born. Answer: I can show you first in the Bible long before Alexander Campbell was ever born; these words from the Lord, "*I will build my church*" (Matt. 16:18) and "*the churches of Christ salute you*" (Romans 16:16). Secondly, I can show you the tombstone of William Rogers with the words engraved, "United With the Church of Christ at Cane Ridge in 1807". So, what you say! My friend, Alexander Campbell didn't come to the United States till, the 29th of September 1809, two years after William Rogers died. Thirdly, and most importantly, the only doctrine I hold dear is the Bible written long before Alexander Campbell existed. He is not mentioned anywhere between Genesis 1 and Revelation 22, therefore, I cannot be a Campbellite because following anything or anyone other than Christ and the teachings of the Bible would only bring division. But the Lord's people still hold to his appeal to go back to the Bible. Christ's way is the only way to gain access to the true and living church. Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*" (John 14:6). Am I mistaken, tell me! Jesus is the only way!



"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all [a]speak the same thing, and that there be no [b]divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

(1 Corinthians. 1:10)

What these men did, is what the church must continue to strive for. They got away from the concept of denominationalism, from the idea that there are heads of all the churches other than Jesus. They wanted to simply go back and establish churches of Christ where they had elders to oversee in a local congregation, where each local congregation tended to its own business, did its own work in God's arrangement and in God's way, and be identified as a local church of Christ. This is exactly what took place. My brethren, we need to remember this and keep this in mind, for this was their plea.

So now what do we have? We had division that came, but men stood up for the word of God and fought a good fight to restore things back to where they were. People listened and the Lord's church began to be established all over this country. Then What? Behold, after churches of Christ were established, we again find that division came. You would think that brethren would learn from the past concerning division and hold fast to the faith that was "*once for all delivered to the*

saints” (Jude 3). You’d think brethren would have learned respect for Bible authority. But, even after men like James O’Kelly, Barton W. Stone, etc. went across this country establishing churches of Christ, the same problem that caused division in the first place, reared up its ugly head again. That is ignorance on behalf of many brethren who fall victim to false teachers simply because of a lack of knowledge. Remember the words of God, “*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you....*” (Hosea 4:6).

Thus far we have laid the principle before you how there came to be division-which ought not to be. It is our plea that people be one in Jesus Christ (John 17:20-21; Eph. 4:1-6) and be identified in a local church that stands for the truth of God.

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