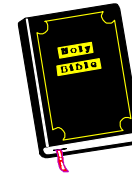


WEST COLUMBIA CHURCH OF CHRIST



“every disciple that is perfect shall be as his master.” Luke 6:40b

THE CHURCH HAS NO BRANCHES

In this day of loose talk and practice in things religious, it is more necessary than at any previous time to distinctly draw the line between the false and the true. The less people regard the sacredness of truth, the more important it is that we uphold and defend it. The more confused people are regarding the truth, the stronger our efforts should be to clearly define it.

There has perhaps been no time in the world when professed believers in the Bible were more ready to reject its teachings than now. Men deny the words of Jesus regarding the church and reject or pervert the plain commands upon which the world's salvation depends. With apparent willingness, they turn from the truth as easily as one turns his eyes from a disagreeable object.

The situation is not easy to meet, for the exact truth has become unpopular. The true gospel also interferes too seriously with man's wishes. The spirit wars against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit no less now than in Paul's time. The gospel offers no compromise to the world, and Christians must meet the situation honestly and fairly whether pleasant or not.

Perhaps no Bible teaching is more generally rejected and persistently denied by popular preachers than the unity or oneness of the church. The idea that Christ established only one church and that sinners are saved by coming into that church is especially distasteful to most people. Of course, it is their desire to have it so, rather than any Bible teaching that leads to such contention.

Human relationships — particularly those of the family — and the unwillingness to concede that "our folks" might be lost have much to do with fixing and propagating false doctrine.

It will not do, of course, to say that there is not some kind of union. Hence, the popular solution of the difficulty is to say that denominations are "branch churches", and that all of them make up the "one church" of Christ. It is sufficient refutation of this claim to say that most of those who make it will exclude some denominations from the list, such as Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, and contend that they are not branches of the one church. But any unprejudiced mind will know that such exclusions are purely arbitrary.

(Continued on page 3)

Let Your Light Shine in 2009!

VOLUME 35, NUMBER 07 February 15, 2009

RECORDS 2/8/2009

Sun 10 AM Bible Study: 56
Sun 11 AM Assembly: 88
Sun 6 PM Assembly: 59
Weds 7 PM Bible Study: 58
CONTRIBUTION: \$2205

SERMONS 2/15/2009

AM: Jerry Manning
NO THANK YOU GOD, I HAVE MY OWN PLAN
PM: Jerry Manning
THE PASSOVER

**“Let us not be weary in well doing;
for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” - Galatians 6:9**

***A Warm Welcome awaits you at all our services. Come see!
www.WestColumbiaChurchOfChrist.org***

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SERVICES

Sunday 10 AM Bible Study
Sunday 11 AM, 6 PM Assembly
Wednesday 7 PM Bible Study
Office Phone (803) 794-5320
Nursery provided
Bible Classes for all ages

LADIES CLASS
2nd Tuesday of month 7-9 PM

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“PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER” - James 5:16

- **REMEMBER IN PRAYER:** Beryl Parks, Nina Ruth Meadows (Marcella Klieves' mother), Jack and Elma Berrier, Lynn Drago (Jerry's sister) and Phyllis Johnson.
- **Jean Boyd** is doing well after shoulder surgery.
- **Doris Sheppard** requests prayers for **Arthur Kropps** who is recovering from colon cancer surgery. He is the husband of Doris' former classmate, **Glenna Jo**.
- We have many that are ill and especially need our prayers: **Ron Banks**, **Marilyn Brooks**, **Margaret Herring**, **Carolyn Lee**, **Beryl Parks**, **Anna Porter**, **Ruth Raines**, **Lamar Reeves**, **Carolyn Stidham**.
- Remember our brothers **Lamar Reeves** and **Darius Silbawa** who we have not been able to contact recently.
- **Jeanette Reeves** continues to struggle with sin. Pray for her repentance.
- Remember all these and brother **Manning** and those he studies the Bible with, in your prayers.

"The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him." - Psalm 27:1

“WEEP WITH THEM THAT WEEP” - Romans 12:15

- **Matt Shelton's** mother passed away suddenly Tuesday. Matt is a classmate of Jerry's from MSOP and minister at the church in Thompson Georgia.

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." - 1 Peter 4:19

“AND THEY CONTINUED STEADFASTLY” - Acts 2:42

- **Pantry Items needed!** We regularly give quite a bit away to those in need. Pop top lids are good, and things that don't need cooking or preparation, such as Lance cracker/cookie packs, canned fruit, Vienna sausages, beanie-weenies, etc.
- **Bible Bowl**, Saturday Feb 28 at the St. Andrews Road church of Christ.
- **Carolina Men's Fellowship**, Saturday March 14, 2009., sponsored by the Charlotte Avenue church, meeting at the Goldsboro church of Christ in Fort Mill.
- **Work Team B** Meeting at the **Kelleher home**, 4 pm Sunday.

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." - Galatians 5:13

WORK TEAM SCHEDULE: 2/15—B 2/22—C 3/1—D 3/8—A

Let Your Light Shine in 2009!

THE CHURCH HAS NO BRANCHES —(Continued from page 1)

One human institution has the same right as another to be counted in as a real branch. The rejection of any breaks the theory to pieces. To accept them all endorses such a mess of contradictions as is wholly indefensible. Moreover, these contradictions — may at least — pertain to things vital to our salvation.

Branches of anything necessarily imply the main thing from which the branches may come. Branch rivers imply a main river. Branches of a tree imply a body or stock. If there be branch churches, then what and where is that main church from which these branches come? Why should one be content to be in a "branch church" instead of the real thing?

The natural branches of the same vine do not produce a half-a-hundred kinds of fruit. Some may produce more fruit than others, but in kind and nature they are the same. If denominations were all branches of the same church, under the same head, and animated by the same spirit, they would produce the same results, and all contain the same kind of people.

If they were all branches of the church of Christ, they would make their converts simply Christians. This is too evident to need argument, and people are without excuse for failing to see it. To miss this point is a compliment to no man's intelligence. But the ordinary religious teacher makes blunders just as radical when he deals with the sacred text.

The beautiful parable of the "vine" and "the branches" (Jn. 15), has been outrageously perverted. The text does not only not say that churches are branches, but says what is utterly inconsistent with that idea. **"I am the vine, ye are the branches"** makes this a personal relationship between Christ and His disciples. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch," is final in fixing the meaning.

When Jesus uses the pronouns "ye" and "he" in referring to branches, no chance is left to misunderstand. Careless reading is responsible for much false teaching.

In First Corinthians 12:12-23, Paul calls the church the body of Christ and talks about the "members" of that body. The human body is his illustration. All members do not do the same work, but they are in perfect harmony under the same head. This proves that members are individuals — not denominations. As classes, they are divided into apostles, prophets, elders, deacons, evangelists, and those without any of those designations. Together, they make up the body, with Christ as the head. Denominations are out of the question.

In verse 18, Paul says God, set the members in. But God said nothing about denominations. Therefore, denominations are not the members Paul talks about. In verse 25, he says, the members "have the same care" for each other. This is not true of denominations. In verse 23, he says, we bestow more care upon the "weak members". Such is not the case among denominations.

From any viewpoint, the members of the body and the branches of the church are individuals and not denominations. As individuals, we should strive to honor the head of the body and maintain the "unity of the Spirit among ourselves."

- John T. Hinds, Gospel preacher, editor Gospel Advocate, died 1938