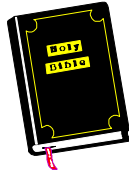


WEST COLUMBIA CHURCH OF CHRIST



“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.

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KEEP YOUR HEART CLEAN IN 2013

www.WestColumbiaChurchOfChrist.org South Carolina 2/17/2013

THE BULLETIN—VOLUME 39, NUMBER 7 February 17, 2013

SERMONS THIS SUNDAY:

AM: HARVEY ALLEN

PM: HARVEY ALLEN

JOIN US IN
NEW TESTAMENT
CHRISTIANITY
TODAY!

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

KEEP YOUR HEART CLEAN IN 2013

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
To be announced
EVANGELIST

BULLETIN EDITOR
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“PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER” - James 5:16

- **REMEMBER IN PRAYER:** *Judy Walker, Miles Johnson, Richard Ramkinson, Margaret Herring, Wilson Burton, Betty Mathis, Lamar Reeves, Elma Berrier.*
- **Stephanie Rigney** is doing well after surgery to install a port for chemotherapy. Keep her and **Steve** in your prayers through this difficult time.
- **Gail Allen** is having a stress test (6 hours worth) this Friday in Columbia.
- **Judy Walker** and others were able to be with us last Sunday.
- **Trudy Rail** fell and shattered her elbow and knee very badly. Extensive surgery is required. **Trudy** and **Ellis Rail**, attend at Long Creek and were members here at West Columbia years ago. Ellis' father was a leader in the church here.
- Keep all these, and **the church here**, in your prayers. Our thanks and gratitude to those who watch, and work and pray for the church here. To those faithful in visiting and attendance, encouraging others by talking with them. To those quietly doing the many jobs necessary to keep the congregation functioning.

"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

“AND THEY CONTINUED STEADFASTLY” - Acts 2:42

- **CONGREGATIONAL MEETING** after the morning assembly to discuss the work of the church here at West Columbia and bring members up to date on what's happening. Presentation by Jones Gamble.
- **SAVE THE DATE! CAROLINA MEN'S FELLOWSHIP, SATURDAY MARCH 9th.**
- Remember to send cards and letters to our sister **Lorraine Porter** who is unable to get out or receive visitors or phone calls due to her medical condition and sorely needs the encouragement.
- **BULLETINS BY EMAIL** sent each Friday. To subscribe, send email address to Ed.
- Remember to **send cards to our visitors.** **Marshall Mancuso** had had a bunch of nice cards printed, and **Jones Gamble** faithfully gets visitor cards posted with addresses. So help out yourself! Send a card, invite people to visit, then send more cards! Postage for a post card is \$.32, Send 3 for a dollar and keep the change!

“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

KEEP YOUR HEART CLEAN IN 2013

CAROLINA MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Saturday March 9, 2013, 9:00am-3:00pm, at Rock Hill. It's an encouraging thing for young and old. Just ask **Tommy White!** Men, let's especially try and encourage our young men to go - with us. **Ed Kelleher** plans on going and has room in his van for 7. We'll leave from the church building about 6:30 am, Lord willing.

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