



**Forest Hill
Church of Christ**

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Matthew Martin, Associate
Douglas Alvarenga, Hispanic

VISIT US SOON!

Sunday:

Bible Study..... 9:30 A.M.
Morning Worship.....10:30 A.M.
Evening Worship..... 6:00 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study7:00 P.M.

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**HOW CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE ALIKE
ON HOW THE CHURCH SHOULD BE ORGANIZED?**

(PART TWO)

BARRY M. GRIDER

Sometimes elders are identified as pastors (Eph. 4:11). This term does not have reference to a denominational preacher, but refers rather to the elders of the congregation. The concept of pastor denotes their shepherding responsibilities. The writer of Hebrews admonishes:

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17).

Jesus Himself is identified as the chief Shepherd. “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Pet. 5:4).

If elders are over the flock does this mean that all other members are inferior to them? Not at all! Wives are not inferior to their husbands, even though the husband is the head of the wife (Eph. 5:23). God is a God of order. He demands leadership so that there be stability. In the home the husband and wife are equal, yet the godly wife lovingly submits to her husband's headship because of her respect for God's order (Col. 3:18).

In the same way each congregation lovingly submits to her eldership. Deacons serve the congregation and work under the oversight of the elders. The term denotes a servant. All Christians are deacons or servants in the general usage of the word. In fact, Phoebe was a deaconess or servant (Rom. 16:1), but this is not some official office she held, rather she was a faithful member of the church at Cenchrea. However, there is the office of a deacon. Their qualifications are set forth along with the elders in the following passage:

Likewise, must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husband of one wife, ruling their children well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 3: 8-13).

Notice, the qualifications for deacons are similar to those of an elder. It is no wonder that from this pool of men we often select our elders. There is no authority granted to those who serve as deacons. They simply carry out the tasks assigned to them by the elders. Often times the work carried forth by deacons is menial, yet necessary. Hence, our deacons often receive little appreciation and are not always recognized for the service they render. Some believe that the first appointment of

(continued on page 2)

deacons is found in Acts 6. Regardless if the men appointed were deacons, the work assigned unto them by the apostles was similar to the tasks often given to deacons.

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Phillip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them (Acts 6:1-6).

A congregation organized according to God’s pattern will be overseen by qualified elders and served by qualified deacons. Of course, where there are no men who meet the qualifications set forth in the scriptures, no men should be appointed. Yet a congregation should always work toward the appointment of elders and deacons and all faithful brethren should be preparing themselves to serve in such capacity. But Paul said something about the saints at Philippi in his salutation to that congregation.

Who are these saints? Listening to the leaders of denominational churches, particularly the Roman Catholic church, saints are superior “Christians” who are sometimes even worthy of worship. Most people seem to think of a saint as an overly religious person who is spiritually minded and filled with piety. Yet, according to the Bible, a saint is simply a New Testament Christian. While the elders oversee a congregation, deacons serve the congregation, members (the saints at large) also have a role to play if the church is organized correctly and functions smoothly.

The church of Christ is often compared to the human body. In fact, the church is the body of Christ. Paul wrote, “And he [Christ] is the head of the body, the church: who is the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). While Jesus was on earth he dwelt in a physical body. In his flesh He died on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24). While he is not in that physical body today, He does have a

body. His body is spiritual in nature and it is the church. How is the church organized? It is similar to a physical body. There were problems in the church at Corinth because a division was beginning to form. This disturbed the apostle Paul. He wrote:

Now I beseech, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Cor. 1: 10-13).

Without unity the body cannot function properly. But how is unity maintained? The only way is through every member maintaining loyalty to truth. In His great prayer for unity, Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth (John 17:17). But someone asks, “Is it really possible to all speak the same thing today or have all things common?” It is possible though not probable. Peter wrote, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God...” (1 Pet. 4:11). If each one of us speaks as the oracles of God, we will be speaking the same thing, and, hence, we will have unity.

(to be concluded next week)

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY
BROTHER ELKINS!**

So many of our readers, along with the editor, have been richly blessed by the Godly life of Garland Elkins. Many of us have studied under him, been converted and baptized by him, married by him, counseled and consoled by him, and have depended upon him in battles with the enemy. As brother Elkins celebrates his 80th birthday, Saturday, August 19, please be sure to send warm greetings to this outstanding Christian gentleman and soldier of the cross. You may do so, by writing him at: 7350 Crowther Cove, Memphis, TN, 38119. Brother Elkins-we love and appreciate you so much!

WHOSE LAW AM I BREAKING?

Matthew Martin

Before Peter preached the Gospel to the Gentile Cornelius, he made this statement:

Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation... (Acts 10:28).

Basically Peter told them: "By meeting with you now, I am breaking the law." As one reads that, a question should come to mind: *Whose* law was he breaking? There was no Roman law that said a Jew and Gentile couldn't meet. There was no Christian law either that said they couldn't meet.

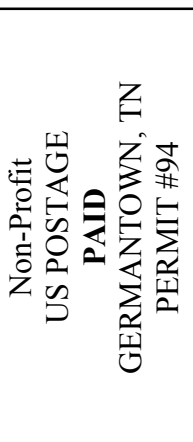
Someone may say: He was breaking the law of Moses. That answer makes the most sense, considering Peter was accompanied by several Jews: Jews who (being filled prejudice) might take offense to one of their own associating with a Gentile. In fact, it was a widely known tradition that Jews and Gentiles were not to associate with one another.

The problem, though, is that there is no **command** in the law of Moses that forbade Jews and Gentiles from associating with one another. Quite the contrary, as Moses commanded the people **not** to "vex a stranger" (a stranger was the commonly used word for 'non Jew'). The children of Israel were commanded not to insult them and belittle them because they were not Jews. Other statements in the Old Law mentioned strangers sojourning with the Jews (Lev. 19:33). Sojourning implies association.

So, how then did it come to be unlawful for a Jew to associate with Gentiles? Over the years, the Jews developed a prejudice against Gentiles, because they saw themselves as superior to all other nations. They believed their being chosen of God made them better.

God, on several occasions, had to remind them that they weren't any better than the other nations. In fact, God specifically told them they weren't chosen because they were anything special. Just the opposite: God chose them because they were **few** in number (Deut. 7:7). As time went on though, the Jews began to believe themselves as something better than the other nations. They even went so far as to **snub** other nations. In time it became an unspoken rule that Jews did not associate with Gentiles. Eventually the *unspoken* rule became a tradition, passed down throughout the generations.

To be continued...



The Forest Hill News
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