

## The Sin of Dividing A Church continued from page 1

The letter to the church at Rome has rebuke for strife and division between Jew and Gentile Christians in the church there. Paul, the writer, admonished them and said: "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15:5-6). No member of the church at Rome could encourage division without violating the same Scripture and bringing himself under the same condemnation. Again, the two letters to the church at Corinth embodied the same instruction to the church there. "Now I beseech you, 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" (1 Cor. 1:10). Here we have an earnest, pathetic appeal for unity and oneness in the church. The Holy Spirit urges the people of God here to "be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment." No member of the church at Corinth could encourage division without going contrary to this plain and positive admonition of the Holy Spirit. No member of any church of Christ today can violate this Scripture without bringing condemnation upon himself. No member of the church can promote division without going contrary to this instruction.

We are taught that the church is the body of Christ; that every member must promote the unity of the body. To cause division is to cause the members to be opposed to each other and to destroy the peace and harmony of the body. Any preacher that would lead a faction in a church to violate the unity of the body brings upon himself the condemnation of Heaven and should have the just rebuke of all who love the Lord. Divided counsel in a church is confusion; division in a church is death. The one who helps or encourages division is producing confusion and is responsible for spiritual death in the congregation. Surely no one who knows this teaching of the New Testament will be guilty of the sin of dividing a church.

The same instruction was repeated to the church at Ephesus, and each member was given the instruction to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). The argument for union was enforced by all the high consideration of the oneness of God the Father, Christ the Son, the Holy Spirit, the one body, one faith, one hope, and one baptism. These are mentioned to the church at Ephesus to promote the unity in purpose and action of the church. It was repeated again to the church at Philippi. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded... let us walk by the same rule" (Phi. 3:15-16). We see the application that the Holy Spirit made with the principle taught in the prayer of Jesus. Almost every church addressed in the New Testament was warned against division and encouraged to maintain unity. It is difficult to see how any one, with these teachings of the Holy Spirit and the prayer of the Son of God, can claim to be a servant of God and advise division and promote strife in a congregation. It is difficult to see how anyone can advise members of the body of Christ to act contrary to all of these Scriptures which teach, urge, and persuade the people of God to be one in Christ.

The man who causes division or encourages division on the part of others defiles the temple of God, destroys its peace and happiness, paralyzes its power for good, and brings it into shame and reproach before the world. The man who encourages division among the people of God tramples under foot the teachings of the Holy Spirit and destroys the unity of the institution which has been cemented by the blood of Christ. To work for division is to destroy all harmony and activity in the church of God and to bring the just condemnation of Heaven upon one.

*H. Leo Boles, Deceased  
From Gospel Advocate, January 14, 1932*

### Editorial Comment:

While the above article by the late H. Leo Boles speaks to the topic of dividing a congregation of the Lord's people, the same principles apply to those who would divide one congregation from another by the advocacy of error that would divide congregations that once were in fellowship one with the other. Also despicable are the actions of those who would seek to divide a congregation of which they are not members in an effort to promote error. Such is happening today in different parts of the country as some would seek to divide a congregation that is standing for the truth of the gospel in order to promote certain false teachers, certain error and specific programs of work that are either being conducted by those in error or are supportive and thus in fellowship with advocates of error (KJC).

# BELVEDERE BEACON

"Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)

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## The Sin of Dividing a Church

Among the sins that may be catalogued against members of the church may be found the sin of dividing a church. No sin is more severely condemned or denounced with greater emphasis as having such fatal effects on the churches of Christ than that of dividing the church. Preachers of the Gospel, who are supposed to teach the congregation love and unity, are often found leading in the sin of division. Elders of the church, who are exhorted to promote harmony and peace among the people of God, are sometimes found fomenting strife and advocating open division in the congregation. Members of the church, who have been given the instruction to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," are often found agitating those things which divide the church. It is distressing to learn of so much division among the churches of Christ. Many of these divisions are bold and open, inviting the censure and condemnation of the world, and other divisions are kept under cover and destroy the spirit and work of the church. Something should be done; something must be done.

Every sin of dividing a church is a sin against the prayer that Jesus prayed when He said, "that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:22-23). Our Savior deprecated in the most earnest agony of prayer, in view of His early death on the cross, division among His disciples. He even prayed for them that believe on Him through the words of the apostles, that they who so believe might be one, even as He and the Father are one. It is a fearful thing to wear the name of Christ and live contrary to this prayer which Jesus prayed. Let every preacher, elder, or member of the church of Christ who has led in the division of a church or who has encouraged division in a church be fearfully warned that all who have done so are under the fearful condemnation of God. It is fearful to be responsible for the people of God not being one as Christ and the Father are one. The same teaching on unity which we find in the prayer of our Savior has been elaborated upon and applied in the teachings of the Holy Spirit through the apostles and other Spirit-guided writers of the New Testament. In view of this prayer, the apostles were careful to keep down strife and promote unity among the people of God.

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### SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

#### SUNDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 10.00 am.

Morning Worship 11.00 am.

Evening Worship 6.00 p.m.

#### WEDNESDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 7.00 p.m.

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Last Friday has been given the name “Black Friday” as it is the day when many retailers plan to finally turn a profit on the year’s sales. For much of the year they run “in the red” but “Black Friday is supposed to be the day when the red ink in their financial statements is replaced with black in. However, two incidents that occurred this past Friday gave the term “Black Friday” a different meaning.

The first incident occurred on the east coast at a Wal-Mart in Valley Stream, New York. The store was set to open its doors at 5.00 am for the beginning of the “door-buster” sale. Outside there were about 2,000 people waiting to get in. At 4.55 am the crowd had turned into a mob and could wait no longer. Those in the front of the line began pounding and pushing on the glass doors. It appears that the hinges gave way as a result of the force of people against them and the doors came crashing down. One employee of the store was knocked to the ground as the mob stormed into the store. The mob continued to stomp over him as they rushed to find their bargains. This man was fatally injured and others were also injured in the mêlée. When some semblance of normality was restored the shoppers were asked to leave the store because of the death of the employee. Some resisted and tried to continue their “shopping” saying, “I’ve been in line since yesterday morning.” The police finally had to remove the unruly mob.

The second incident occurred over on the west coast a few hours later at Palm Desert, California. This one occurred in a Toys “R” Us store in which two people died. The guns in this incident were not toys but real weapons. Apparently a brawl had broken out between two women in the store. It is not known for sure, at this point, what caused the brawl as to whether it was an argument over some item in the store or about another matter entirely. However, the two men who were with these women entered the fray. Both of them pulled guns and when it was over the two men lay dead in the store that was crowded with shoppers and children.

All one can say about these incidents is that they were sheer madness! What happened with the crowd at the Wal-Mart and the two women and men at the Toys “R” Us store? All of this taking place the day after Thanksgiving Day. Where was the thankfulness in the individuals involved? Were all of the “bargains” that were purchased worth it? How many of these in the “mob” at Wal-Mart will show any remorse, let alone repentance, as a result of their actions?

*“And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:20-23).*

*“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15).*

*“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5).*

*Ken Chumbley*

**NEWS AND NOTES**

Keep in your prayers the following: Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett and mother, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, and Rachel Fitzpatrick’s aunt (Eula Baker) who has cancer, Maomi Aaron’ sister who is having health problems, Myrtle Grimsley, Lanny Niver together with his daughter and Tim Smith. The Arnolds, the Wilsons and Kathy Treadway have all been out of town for Thanksgiving. Our next pot-luck will be after the morning worship service on December 14. Plan to stay and enjoy this time together.

**THE LORD’S TIME...**

There was a story in a Rochester, Texas church bulletin about a young man who was working in a large department store, being told by his employer that he would be required to work on Sunday. It so happened that the hours assigned to him would have prevented his attending any of the worship services to which he had been accustomed to attending since childhood.

The young man informed his employer that he would not be able to continue his work under these conditions, and his employer told him he would have to go.

A few days later, the young man answered an ad in the paper from a bank which had advertised a vacancy for a teller. In checking the young man’s previous employers, the bank president contacted the department store head and inquired as to the boy’s record and whether he could recommend him. The store manager replied, “Why yes, I will be glad to recommend him. He will make you a good man. I just fired him a few days ago.”

“Fired him?” the bank president exclaimed. “Why would you recommend a man whom you just recently dismissed from your service?” The store manager explained the circumstances under which the boy was released, and remarked, “I know he will make you a good man for your bank, because if he will not steal the Lord’s time, he will not steal your money.”

*Author Unknown*