

# Back To Basics

Volume 2

APRIL 2004

Number 4

**A Monthly Journal Dedicated To Teaching First Principles**

***SPECIAL EXPANDED EDITION:***

## **THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH**

*Johnie Edwards*

**M**ark it down in whatever book you mark things down in: When God's people go astray, it begins with organization. This special issue is designed to call us back to some basic Bible teaching concerning the organization of the church.

1) **ORGANIZATION IS DIVINE.** Church organization is divine because it is of God. Apostolic teachings were of God as Paul told the Corinthians, "the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). Paul appointed Titus to, "ordain elders in every city" (Ti. 1:5). An approved apostolic example tells us, "And when they had ordained them elders in every church" (Acts 14:23).

2) **ORGANIZATION IS SIMPLE.** There is no ecclesiastical organization in the divine arrangement. New Testament church organization was simply the local church with elders and deacons. A good example can be found in Paul's letter to the Philippians: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops [elders] and deacons" (Phil. 1:1).

3) **ORGANIZATION IS COMPLETE.** When we are aware that the "scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17), we will understand that the divinely revealed church organization is adequate in carrying out all of the spiritual work imposed on the church by the Lord. It must be complete since the New Testament church used no other organization.

4) **ORGANIZATION IS LOCAL.** No church organization can be found, in the New Testament, which was any larger or smaller than the local church - just a plurality of elders and deacons appointed in all the churches (Acts 14:23; Ti. 1:5; Phil. 1:1). This accounts for Paul charging, "Take heed...to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers" (Acts 20:28), and Peter writing, "feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof" (1 Pet. 5:1-2).

In our call back to basic teachings regarding church organization, may we be content with God's scheme of things!

# WHY STUDY THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH?

John Isaac Edwards

A study of the organization of the church is of utmost importance for the now and for the generations to come.

1) **TO DECLARE THE WHOLE COUNSEL.** The Lord has given counsel concerning how the church is to be organized. To leave off teaching the organization of the Lord's church is to shun to declare "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

2) **TO HELP US KNOW OUR PLACE.** One reason the Lord's people were so successful in defeating the Midianites is "they stood every man in his place" (Judg. 7:21). Do you know your place in the local church? There is disorder in the body when members are out of their place.

3) **TO ENCOURAGE YOUNG MEN TO BECOME QUALIFIED LEADERS.** We need to do a better job of providing for the future of the church, by equipping the youth of today with the information and encouragement they need to become capable, competent leaders of tomorrow. The local church would do well to keep some kind of program ongoing to help train and develop such. Young men should want to do the work of an evangelist, desire the office of a bishop and dedicate themselves to being deacons.

Young women should want to be the wives of such godly, dedicated men (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

4) **TO STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH.** Untrained, unqualified leadership retards the growth of the church.

5) **TO CLEAR UP MISUNDERSTANDING.** Misconceptions concerning the organizational structure of the Lord's church abound. The only way to clear up misunderstanding is to clearly teach the truth as it is revealed on the pages of divine inspiration.

6) **TO PREVENT APOSTASY.** The apostasy of Israel of old was brought about by changing God's form of organization (1 Sam. 8:1-6). Apostasy in the church generally begins within the organization of the church (Acts 20:28-30; 2 Th. 2:2-4). If we are not constantly reminded of the basics of church organization, we can so easily slip away from the New Testament pattern.

As long as the church exists, there will be a great need to study the organization of the church. We hope this special expanded edition of *Back To Basics* will help facilitate the accomplishment of these all-important objectives.

## Back To Basics

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*Back To Basics* is a 12 page monthly journal dedicated to teaching first principles, published by Edwards Publishers. [www.edwardspublishers.com](http://www.edwardspublishers.com)

### Subscription Information:

One Year: \$12.00  
Single Issue: \$1.00

Available in bundles of 10 or more

# CHRIST: THE HEAD

John Isaac Edwards

The New Testament church is set forth in the figure of a body with Christ as its Head.

1) **THE CORNERSTONE HEAD.** Psalm 118:22 - “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner” - was fulfilled in Christ. Jesus applied the prophecy to Himself in Matthew 21:42, and Peter applied it to Jesus in Acts 4:10-12 and 1 Peter 2:4-10. The “household of God” is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:19-20). In Christ is “all the building fitly framed together” (Eph. 2:21). He gives unity and solidity to the church. Everything depends upon Him; everything proceeds from Him.

2) **THE COMPLETE HEAD.** Paul said, “And ye are complete in him [Christ Jesus, in whom “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” v. 6, 9], which is the head of all principality and power” (Col. 1:10). To say the church needs a human head on earth, a head in addition to or in place of Jesus is to say the headship of Christ is inadequate and the church is incomplete. What can man supply that Jesus, the Son of God, does not provide? The law of Christ is sufficient to guide and govern the church of Christ.

3) **THE PREEMINENT HEAD.** “And he [Christ] is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). The “God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,” gave Jesus paramount rank “when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and

dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church...” (Eph. 1:17, 20-22). When men leave the word and will of Christ, they step above the feet Supreme and put Him beneath them! May we always give the preeminence to Jesus by doing “all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17).

Every ailment that has ever plagued the church, or ever shall plague the church, can be diagnosed as a lack of respect for the authority of Christ. The only way to rid the body of such disease is to render it in complete subjection to the decrees and directives of its Head (Eph. 5:23-24).

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# ••••• ••••• ••••• **APOSTLES AND PROPHETS: THE FOUNDATION** ••••• •••••

*Donnie V. Rader*

**P**aul wrote, “having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20). Here the comparison is between the church and the temple or a building. The point is that we, as Christians, are not only in the temple of God, but are the building itself. As stones, we are laid in the wall upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

However, the same apostle also wrote, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). Is there a contradiction? No, for both passages are pointing to Jesus Christ as the foundation. The reference to the foundation of the apostles and prophets does not mean that the church is built upon the men themselves, but upon the truth that they preached - that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

One might say that our nation was founded upon George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. That doesn't mean it was built on the men themselves, but upon the principles for which they stood.

The *apostles* mentioned in our text would obviously be the twelve. The *prophets* are New Testament prophets. Other references to apostles and prophets in the same book refer to New Testament prophets (1 Cor. 3:5; 4:8-11).

Let's consider three points about the foundation that the apostles and prophets laid.

## 1) **THE FACT: JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD.**

Jesus made claims that He was the Son of God (Jn. 5:17-19; 9:35-37; 10:36; 19:7). Evidence of that claim is abundant. The miracles He worked justify His affirmation (Jn. 5:36; 20:30-31). The testimony of the Father (Mt. 3:16; 17:5; Jn. 5:37),

John the Baptist (Jn. 5:33; 1:6-34), and the Old Testament Scriptures (Jn. 5:39; Acts 10:43) all say He is the Son of God. The ultimate evidence is His resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4).

2) **THE FOUNDATION: JESUS CHRIST.** The foundation of any building is important. It is the beginning point of the building. The whole building is supported by it. If the foundation is weak, the whole building is in danger.

The church is built upon the principle of who Jesus is. When Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God (Mt. 16:16), Jesus said that “this” (the fact that He is the Son of God) had been revealed by the Father. Then, Jesus said upon “this rock” (the fact that He is the Son of God) “I will build my church” (v. 18).

This foundation was preached and proclaimed by the apostles and prophets (Acts 2:22-36; 3:13-24; 4:1ff; 8:35; 10:34-48; 13:34-48; 17:22-31). This is how the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

## 3) **THE FORCE: ITS MEANING TO US.**

Seeing that the foundation of the church is divine, we draw the following conclusions:

- We have a solid foundation.
- The foundation we have does not shift, move or change.
- Every evidence of the deity of Christ tells us of the strength of the foundation.
- If we build on any other foundation it is not God's building.
- We are united and held together by our connection to the cornerstone.

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## EVANGELISTS: GOSPEL PREACHERS

*Raymond E. Harris*

Since the days of Noah, God has used His “oracles” to declare His will to man. With the coming of the gospel of Christ, it was no different. In Ephesians 4:8, Paul wrote, “When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” What were these gifts that Jesus gave? In Ephesians 4:11, Paul further explained, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” Before the writing of the complete New Testament, certain men spoke by inspiration. In other words, the Holy Spirit came on them and spoke through them. However, when the written word was complete, inspiration ceased and there was no further need for apostles or prophets. But, there will always be a need for evangelists, elders and teachers. In this article, we are focusing on evangelists or preachers and their place and work in the church.

In 1 Corinthians 1:21, it is written, “...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” Paul continues in Romans 10:17, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” And Jesus explained, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:32). Then in Romans 10:14-15, Paul sums up the matter by writing, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?” We can conclude from these verses that the furtherance of the gospel depends upon preachers. Really, it means that the eternal well-being of mankind depends upon faithful, godly men boldly sounding forth the “everlasting covenant,” the gospel of salvation. In Romans 1:16, Paul wrote, “For I am not ashamed

of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

All those who step forth to preach should realize the awesome responsibility of being a gospel preacher, “an oracle of God.” It means that all such will have to answer to God as to how and what they preached! In every dispensation, God has sounded out a warning against all who would be so presumptuous as to “add to” or “take from” His word. Notice John’s statement in Revelation 22:18-19: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book.” In 1 Timothy 4:16, Paul cautions young Timothy, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” Hence the preacher who is NOT faithful to the word of God will be lost eternally in hell and he will drag all those who believe and follow his false teaching into hell also! Faithful gospel preachers will fill the church of Christ with converted, knowledgeable, obedient children of God! On the other hand, renegade, preempruous preachers will lead gullible, unsuspecting masses into unscriptural work and worship that will cost them their souls!

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11).

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# PASTORS: SHEPHERDS OF THE FLOCK

Charles Carpenter

“**T**his is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1).

1) **SCRIPTURAL NAMES.** Men so qualified and appointed could be called pastors or shepherds (*poimen*), bishops or overeers (*episkopos*), or elders (*presbuteros*). Members of a local congregation are referred to as “the flock” (Acts 20:28-29; 1 Pet. 5:2). The number of elders in a local congregation must be plural (Acts 14:23); they can shepherd only one flock (1 Pet. 5:1).

2) **QUALIFICATIONS.** Basic qualifications for the office are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The qualified person must be a man, desire the office and want to work. Qualifications include the following: blameless (above reproach), husband of one wife (one only), vigilant (temperate), sober (sensible), of good behavior (well-ordered), given to hospitality (hospitable), apt to teach (able at teaching), ruleth well his own house (Greek: having faithful children, not in accusation of loose behavior or insubordinate), having his children in subjection (not accused of riot or unruly), have a good report of them which are without (a good witness from those without), a lover of good men (a lover of good), just (upright), holy (devout), temperate (self-controlled), holding fast the faithful word (Greek: clinging to the faithful word). The man is not to be: given to wine (not a drinker), a striker (not a contentious one), greedy of filthy lucre (not greedy of ill gain), a brawler (not quarrelsome), covetous (not loving money), a novice (not a new convert), self-willed (not self-pleasing), soon angry (not prone to anger). “Sometimes it is argued that no man can attain to the high standard as described by the Holy Spirit in giving the qualifications. The Holy Spirit has never re-

quired of man anything that man could not do. God encourages man to measure up to this high standard” (Boles, p. 23).

3) **AN EXAMPLE.** Elders must continue their work for the right purpose, in the right way and for the right reason. The power of love can never become the love of power. They must live lives in such a way that the flock knows what they say is what they mean. Elders stand related to the congregation as a father is to the home. Principles of cooperation and teamwork must be followed.

“The good elder must be a pattern for the church to follow. Example is a part of his duty in ruling. A shepherd sets the example for the sheep to follow. The most effective way of leading people is to be an example to them. The bishops should be good examples of workers themselves” (Phillips, pp. 193-197).

“Elders are to be examples to the flock. They should realize that they are examples to other members in faith, in purity, in love, in word, and in all manner of living. They are watched closely by other members, and should set such examples as will lead others, when they follow those examples, closer to the Lord Jesus Christ” (Boles, p. 26).

“It is a joyous experience to have members of a congregation where qualified elders work in harmony, Scripturally serving Christians who respect them as fellow-saints and as overseers” (Wallace, p. 15).

References: Boles, H. Leo, *The Eldership of the Churches of Christ*; Phillips, H.E., *Scriptural Elders and Deacons*; Wallace, William E., *Outlined Lessons on the Eldership*.

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## DEACONS: SERVANTS

Lewis Willis

The Bible term *diakonos* refers to an officer in the Lord's church. Vine says the word "primarily denotes a servant" (I, 272).

In a general sense, the word can be applied to many. Preachers are servants (Eph. 6:21; Col. 1:17; 1 Tim. 4:6). Also, every Christian is a servant (Jn. 12:26).

Additionally, there is a special sense in which the word "deacon" is used. This second usage associates it with the office and work of bishops or elders. The word, when used in this special sense, designates the office of a deacon. Note the following statement on the organization of a local New Testament church: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1).

### 1) DEACONS ARE SPECIAL SERVANTS.

Observe a contrast in the office of elders and deacons. The elders are the overseers (Acts 20:28), and the deacons are helpers or servants. Deacons work, as do all the other members of the congregation, under the oversight of the elders. But, in their office, deacons are special servants to the elders and the church. They relieve the elders of some duties that would otherwise fall on them, allowing the elders to provide the oversight they are charged to give. If the men of Acts 6:1-6 were deacons, they relieved the apostles of the duty of serving tables, enabling them to give themselves more fully to their teaching responsibilities. Deacons serve that kind of function today toward the elders and the congregation in which they serve.

### 2) THEIR QUALIFICATIONS DEFINED.

The qualifications of deacons are listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-6. Here is the list of their

qualifications, with a brief definition. (1) Grave-serious in purpose and conduct; not flighty or flippant. (2) Not double tongued- not saying one thing to one person, and another thing to others. (3) Not given to much wine- neither given to wine, nor much wine; not a drinker. (4) Not greedy of filthy lucre- not greedy for money, which leads to sinful and unethical means to get it. (5) Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience- he is sound in the faith. (6) Blameless- does not mean sinless, but rather means no charge of a continuing sin can be established against him. (7) Let these first be proved- they have lived so they are known as good, faithful servants of God. (8) Husband of one wife- he is a married man. (9) Rules his children and his own house well- he is in control of his home and family. (10) Their wives must be grave (serious minded), not slanderers (false accusers), sober (self-controlled, temperate, and discreet), and faithful in all things (to God, the church, her husband, and her family). (11) A man of honest report- has a good reputation within and without the church. (12) Full of the Holy Spirit- deacons bear the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23). (13) Full of wisdom- a man of prudence and of sound judgment.

**The church needs leaders!** It needs men who will accept special responsibility, and not shun or evade it. Families in the church need to study the need, qualifications and responsibilities of deacons, and work together to qualify themselves to perform this special, needed service. The future well-being of the church depends upon our commitment to do and be what God appoints.

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## TEACHERS: TEACHING OTHERS

*Martin F. Kennedy*

“And the things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). In Matthew’s account of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20), he used the terms “teach” and “teaching,” while in Mark’s account the term “preach” is used. The Scriptures that pertain to preaching apply equally to teaching and vice-versa. If we count ourselves faithful to the Lord, we will accept our responsibility to teach. Hebrews 5:12 states, “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.” So when sufficient time has passed for us to grow and become users of strong meat, we ought to be teachers. 2 Peter 3:18 tells us to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” If we have grown in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, then we need to tell it to others. Paul also says in his instruction to Timothy that “the servant of the Lord must not strive: but be gentle unto all men, *apt to teach*, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves” (2 Tim. 2:24-26). The meaning of “apt” is ready, prepared, able, and capable. Acts 13:1 shows there were teachers in the church at Antioch. In Ephesians 4:11-12, we find that “He gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” 1 Timothy 2:11-12 limits the woman from teaching over the man but she still has a responsibility in teaching (Ti. 2:3-5).

If one is to be a teacher of the word, he must qualify himself. We have already seen from 2 Timothy 2:24 that the servant of the Lord must be apt to teach. He must be ready and prepared.

Ezra serves as a prime example of one that was apt to teach. Ezra 7:6 states that he was a *ready* scribe in the law of Moses, and in verse ten it states, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.” In Matthew 5:19 Jesus said, “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven.” 2 Timothy 2:15 tells us to “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Rightly dividing the word of truth shows understanding of the deeper things of God. If we are capable of the meat of God’s word, we will be skilful in the word of righteousness and will have our senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:13-14). We need to hold fast the faithful word (Ti. 1:9). We are to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine (1 Tim. 4:13). We are to take heed to thyself and unto the doctrine (1 Tim. 4:16). We are to be an example of the believer (1 Tim. 4:12). Qualifying ourselves as teachers cannot be taken lightly. It requires diligent effort on our part.

There are warnings and cautions associated with teaching. James 3:1 says, “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.” James was not discouraging brethren from fulfilling their responsibility in teaching, but rather was reminding them of the grave responsibility of teaching the word of God correctly and with the proper attitude and motive.

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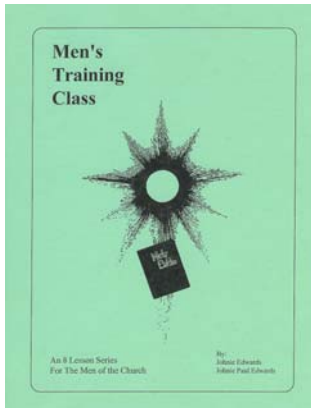
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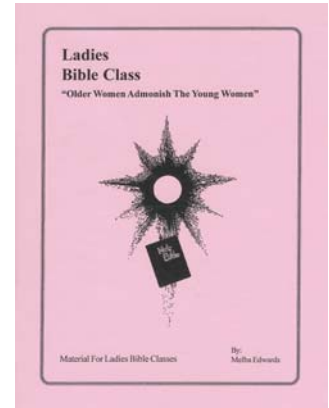
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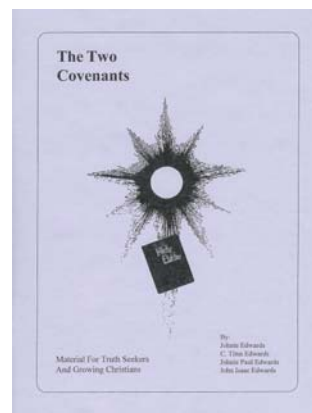
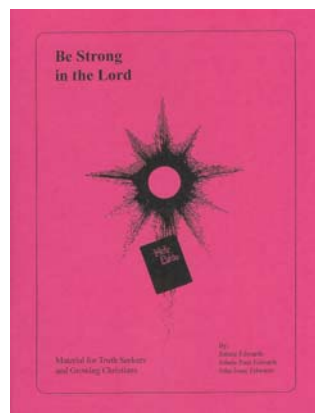


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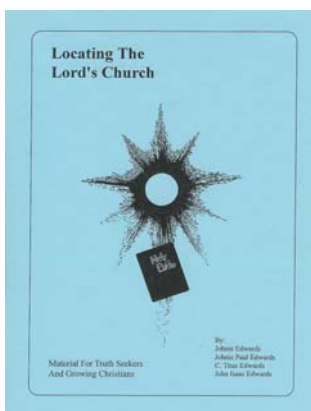
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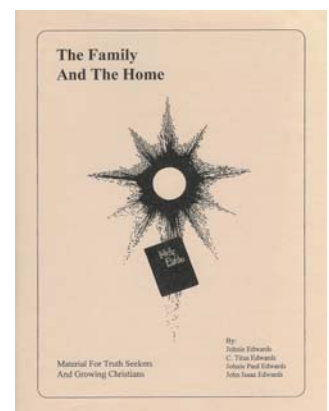


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# Kid's Activity Page

Paul Adams

**Memory Verse:** *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12).*

## Unscramble

Philippians 1:1 is addressed to three groups of people. Identifying these helps us to understand how Christ has organized the church. Unscramble the letters to find who this epistle was addressed to.

T A S N I S

\_\_\_\_\_

H P I S O B S

\_\_\_\_\_

S O D A C E N

\_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 4:11-12 tells us more about the organization of the church. Unscramble the letters to tell what Scriptural organization does for the body of Christ (the church).

Y N E I F I D G

\_\_\_\_\_

***“Suffer the little children to come unto me,  
and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14).***

# GRACE ACCORDING TO THE MEASURE OF THE GIFT

Connie W. Adams

God's arrangements have always been adequate to meet man's needs. In the Bible we have an all-sufficient revelation. It completely furnishes all we need to know (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In Christ we have an all-sufficient saviour. "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:12). In the church we have an all-sufficient relationship with God. It is the body of the saved (Acts 2:47). We are "complete in him" (Col. 2:10). The organization of the church is all-sufficient to do whatever God meant for it to do. Local churches, with their own "bishops and deacons and saints," each independent and autonomous, is adequate for whatever work He meant for us to do collectively.

1) **HE GAVE GIFTS UNTO MEN.** In Ephesians 4, Paul presented a perfect plan for unity when he said, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6). That, together with the unifying attitudes of verses 1-3, is what Paul called "the unity of the Spirit." All of that was for the accomplishment of the work He gave the church to do (vv. 12-16). But before that work could be done, there were certain functions which had to be set in place. Paul said that when Christ ascended on high He "gave gifts unto men" (v. 8). These "gifts" were the functions he listed in verse 11, "And he gave some, apostles, and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." These gifts were "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (v. 12).

Apostles and prophets provided for the *foundation* work. "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets..." (Eph. 2:20). Evangelists provided for the *work of spreading the news* about Christ and the church. It is the work of preaching the word and doing the work of an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:2-5). "Pastors and teachers" provided for the *edifying and strengthening* of the local church. The foundation has been laid. But the extension work and the edifying of the church is an ongoing work. As long as there are lost souls, there is a need for evangelists to sound out the news. As long as there are local churches with members who begin as babes in Christ, there will be a need for elders to teach and watch for souls and for teachers to instruct in the way of righteousness.

2) **GRACE ACCORDING TO THE MEASURE OF THE GIFT.** When the Lord gave these gifts, or functions for the church, He provided all the information needed for the discharge of these functions. The qualifications of an apostle are given in Acts 1:21-22. Their marching orders were in the Great Commission and in the instructions Jesus gave them while He was yet with them. Whatever the nature of the work and qualifications of these men, the grace of God supplied everything necessary for that to be done. The same was true of prophets. These were New Testament prophets. The church at Antioch had "certain prophets and teachers" (Acts 13:1). A prophet was an inspired teacher. God's grace provided what the prophet was to teach and in the age of miracles even provided some with the gift of "discerning of spirits" so they could tell the difference between a true and false prophet. These apostles and prophets laid the foundation

when they preached Christ and established churches. God's grace was according to the measure or extent of that work.

His grace was also according to the measure of the gift when it came to the evangelists. This extension work had to be done and this required men to do it. Again, His grace was according to the measure or extent of the work required. We have several books in the New Testament which are addressed in large part to the qualifications and work of an evangelist, such as 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 2 Corinthians, and much of 1 Thessalonians. From this information supplied by His grace, we learn all we need to know about this function. We don't need handbooks or creeds to tell us what His grace has already supplied.

All we need to know about elders and teachers can be found in the instruction given in the New Testament.

These gifts (functions) were necessary to accomplish the work described in Ephesians 4:12-16. The church must limit its work to what His grace supplied in the Scriptures. From all this the saints are perfected (brought to fullness), the work of ministry or service (including evangelism, edification and relief) can be fulfilled, and all of that results in the enlargement and maturity of the body of Christ (v. 12).

What is the point of all this? God gave instruction as to what He wanted the church to do and He gave all the equipment necessary to do it. His grace was according to the measure of every function He gave it. Therefore, we must be content with what His grace supplied and not seek to involve the church in something He did not ordain, nor invent extra equipment beyond what His grace supplied.

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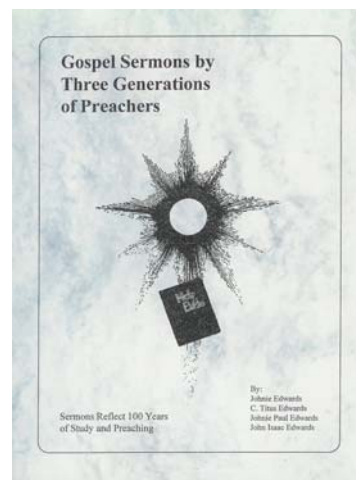


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## PROBLEMS: ABUSES OF ORGANIZATION

*Bill Cavender*

In the middle and late 1940's, through the 1950's, and into the early 1960's, I was fortunate to hear brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr. preach many times. In my opinion, he was the most outstanding, talented, knowledgeable, and best prepared gospel preacher I ever heard. He preached in those years when churches of Christ were undergoing highly visible doctrinal and organizational changes. We begin to hear and read many descriptive words and phrases in the preaching and writing of brethren, such as "our institutions;" "restored homes;" "boards of directors, 'in loco parentis,' in the place of parents;" "area-wide meetings;" "sponsoring churches;" "sponsoring elderships;" "nation-wide and world-wide outreach (Herald of Truth);" "fellowship halls;" "youth ministers;" "bus ministries;" etc., which were indicative of the concepts, institutions, and programs which brethren, papers, colleges, benevolent agencies, and churches were promoting with great assiduousness. After World War II was over, money was more plentiful, and churches and brethren were more affluent. The love of and for money, and the amounts of money available, have always been the roots of all kinds of evils in departures from truth.

These programs, whether "missionary" or "benevolent," involved centralized authority and control over the work of local churches, with planning, power and control over "programs" and "institutions" in the hands of a relatively few powerful men among brethren. In the beginnings of these movements and changes in the churches, brother Wallace was the first and foremost, the most vehement and vocal, opposer and enemy of the changes occurring in the organization and work of churches of the Lord. His preaching and his writings were filled with Scriptural teaching, histori-

cal precedents, and logical, common sense reasonings, exposing the errors and false concepts attaching to the centralizing of independent, autonomous churches into regional and world-wide working units. One of his expressions, which I heard and read a number of times, was, "The brethren get the organize bee in their bonnets," always ultimately resulting in disaster and apostasy in the churches.

Years of study, observation, and experience have taught us that all movements away from divine truth revealed in the Scriptures develop a nomenclature and speak a language peculiar to the particular error and system being advocated. Words and phrases are invented and used which describe what it is that the innovators and practitioners of religious error are believing, teaching and doing. Bible truths, Scriptural work and worship, Scriptural organization of the Lord's churches, can be expressed in the words and phrases of Scripture. If you abide in God's word of truth, you can teach and describe what you believe and practice in words and phrases you can reference and read in God's word. This is not true of false, man-made doctrines, churches, organizations, and programs.

Not only are new, different words and phrases invented to describe and teach their errors, but they often change and pervert good, true Bible words, Scriptural terms and phrases, and give them a definition, meaning, and usage different from the Bible usages and meanings of the words and phrases. Paul's warning to the Galatians is as modern as when it was first written about AD 57: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another, but there be some

that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:6-7). People who become wedded to error always speak “half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews’ language, but according to the language of each people” (Neh. 13:23-31). A novice in the Scriptures can recognize common misuses of Scriptural words and phrases in all of the Roman Catholic and denominational world about us, and in twenty-first century churches of Christ. I need not cite any examples in proof.

In the second through the fifth centuries, after the deaths of the Holy Spirit-guided apostles, changes and departures from New Testament authority and teachings abounded, in doctrines taught and organizational structures. “Holy Rome” was conceived and born, was nourished and reared, after the political structure of “civil, political Rome, the Empire.” With the passing of time, centralization of churches under “church officials,” bearing descriptive titles unknown in the Testament of Jesus, evolved into a hierarchical structure parallel to the political structure of the Roman Empire. In political Rome there was the Emperor, the Senate, the Imperial Governors, the Provincial Governors, the Civitas (city officials), and the common people. As religious Rome developed, by 606 AD, there was the Pope, the Council (now “the College of Cardinals”), the Patriarchs (now “the Cardinals” in various countries), the Metropolitans (now called “Archbishops”), the Bishops, parish priest, and the laity (the common people). Roman Catholicism began in small steps and concepts. After a few centuries, it was an apostate monster (and still is).

The major denominational bodies of the world, claiming to be believers in Jesus, are the children of Roman Catholicism in many doctrines still taught and in organizational structures. When we read of denominational church names and their types of church governments, as “Episcopacies,” “Presbyteries,” “Archbishops,” “Councils of Bishops,” “Conventions,” “Associations,” “Confer-

ences,” etc., we are not reading of New Testament concepts, words, and teachings. Yet there is as much teaching in the New Testament of Jesus for the Roman Catholic and denominational forms of church government as there is for “sponsoring churches,” “sponsoring elders,” “boards of directors,” etc., in churches of Christ.

In the New Testament, individual Christians, each child of God, must learn to individually, singly, worship and serve our Father in heaven through Jesus our Lord, in sincere faith and humble obedience. Each of us will individually, singly, give account of ourselves to God at the judgment seat of Jesus (Rom. 2:11; 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Acts 17:30-31; Mt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15). Individual Christians, in a locality, voluntarily associate themselves into congregations, churches, for mutual help, teaching, worship, work, encouragement, love, care and discipline. Congregational membership in no wise diminishes individual responsibilities to God. Congregational membership brings additional responsibilities to others, to brothers and sisters of like precious faith. These congregations, each autonomous and independent from all others; each with their own elders, deacons, and members; each with their own treasury; each with their own activities of study, worship, and work, can NEVER, Scripturally, be joined to and amalgamated with other local congregations. When such centralizing of local churches occurs, whatever may be the means, methods, forms, and purposes for doing so, digression and apostasy from New Testament teaching and practice will ALWAYS result. The Disciples of Christ, Christian Churches, and Roman Catholicism are living witnesses to that truth! If we claim to be the people of God, following the New Testament as our guide, we must ALWAYS abide in what is written (1 Cor. 4:6; 1 Pet. 4:11; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:3-4).

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## SAINTS: WORKING MEMBERS

Johnie Paul Edwards

In order for the organization of the local church to function properly, there must be working members called *saints*.

1) **SAINTS IDENTIFIED.** The Bible calls Christians saints because they have been sanctified. In writing the Corinthians, Paul referred to them as saints. “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...” (1 Cor. 1:2). The Ephesian Christians were also addressed as “saints which are at Ephesus...” (Eph. 1:1).

2) **SAINTS IN THE ORGANIZATION.** The letter written to the Philippians begins with these words: “Paul and Timotheus the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” (Phil. 1:1). It takes saints to complete the organization of the church. If there were no saints, there would be no work for the elders and deacons to do!

3) **SAINTS MUST WORK.** For the organization of the church to function well, saints must work. Paul uttered, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

4) **SAINTS AT WORK.** Every saint needs to be a worker in the kingdom of God. *Saints can visit.* Jesus said, “Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me” (Mt. 25:36). *Saints can teach.* Paul wrote Timothy, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall

be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). *Saints can restore the lost.* The Galatians were told, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). *Saints can set a good example before others.* The Corinthians were told, “Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men” (2 Cor. 3:2). Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mt. 5:16). *Saints can exhort others.* The Hebrew writer taught saints, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:25). *Saints can consider and provoke.* “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (Heb. 10:24).

5) **SAINTS’ WORK WILL BE JUDGED.** Every Christian “must...appear before the judgment seat of Christ” to “receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). Jesus said, “the word that I have spoken the same shall judge him in the last day” (Jn. 12:48). Saints need to get back to their basic work.

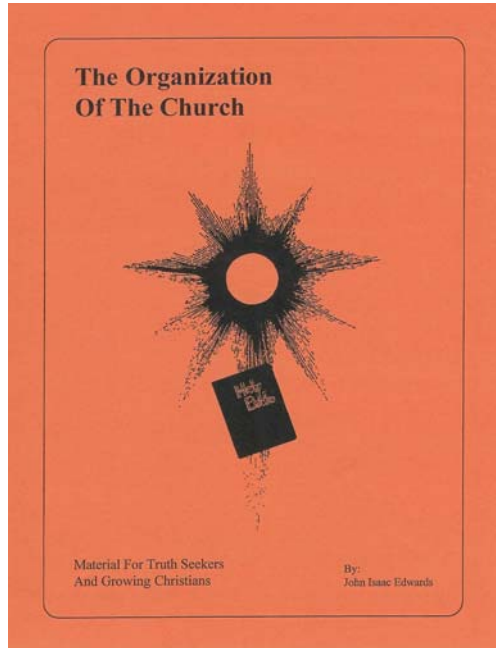
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