

THE LOCAL BODY

1Cor 1:2; 12:12,27

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Much confusion on subject of the local body or church
- B. "Church", used only in a local or universal sense.
- C. The Lord's church is not an organization as used of denominations, but in a given locality, is organized under elders (if qualified) to do work the local body is to do
- D. Let us note some characteristics of the local body to help dispel denominational concepts.

DISCUSSION:

I. EACH CHURCH IS SELF-GOVERNING:

- A. Ephesians elders take heed to flock over which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers; (Note: "among them") Acts 20:28-30
- B. Peter exhorted "tend the flock among you". 1Pet 5:2
- C. Christ head of Church no other oversight till get to local level Eph 1:22,23; Phil 1:1
- D. To have churches engage in joint activities; tied together in some organic way, must be power exerted between the local level and the head. But elders are limited to the local level and its resources.

II. DIVISION - LOCAL PROBLEM; UNITY - LOCAL EFFORT

- A. True, believers to be united on God's word Jhn 17:20
 - 1. Amazed to find individuals banded together in local churches not knowing there are others who believe as they do, and nothing but the N. T. to guide them.
 - 2. Yet, collective unity is a local accomplishment.
- B. Corinth was urged to have no division 1Cor 1:10-13
 - 1. Local endeavor concerned with unity "among them"
 - 2. They were divided but it was a local problem.
- C. Rome to mark those causing division Rom 16:17 Again, a local admonition; same for all local churches. 1Cor 4:17; 7:17
- D. Autonomy a safeguard against "brotherhood" corruption
 - 1. When one church digresses doesn't affect others
 - 2. Brethren marked and churches warned against them but because had influence beyond a local level, yet each church was to try them 1Jhn 4:1

III. DISCIPLINE IS A LOCAL EFFORT

- A. Corinth was told to, in their local assembly, remove the wicked leaven from among them 1Cor 5:1-13
 - 1. No other church had any business purging Corinth
 - 2. Mark & avoid disorderly among them 2Thess 3:6-11
- B. Read (in secular works) of church withdrawing from another church

IV. CHURCH DOES OWN WORK ACCORDING TO OWN ABILITY

- A. Acts 6 was a local benevolent pattern and that local church saw to the care of its own members Acts 6:1-6
- B. Acts 11 when Judean brethren had needs beyond their ability, Antioch sent aid, each member determining according to his own ability. Acts 11: 27-30

- C. When Jerusalem could no longer do own work of caring for indigent members, Gentile churches sent to their need, but it was all handled on a local level.

- 1. Each determined what it could send and selected own messengers to send it 1Cor 15:1-3; 2Cor 8 & 9
- 2. There were no human institutions or benevolent boards or sponsoring churches.

- D. Evangelism was done by sending to man being supported 2Cor 11:8; Phil 4:15,16

- 1. No societies through which the church operated
- 2. Each local church under its own elders controlled its own resources, sending directly to the church in need when a church had more indigent members than it could care for, and sending directly to the preacher in supporting evangelism.

V. CHURCHES JUDGED SEPARATELY, NOT AS A BROTHERHOOD:

- A. By "Judged" I do not mean we'll be judged as group in eternity, but use it in sense of determining faithfulness of congregation as in letters to churches in Rev.
- B. Hear it said: "this is happening all over the brotherhood" Does that make it right?
- C. Seven letters to the seven churches of Asia and each had a situation that was peculiar to itself.
- D. But they were all dealt with separately where we are prone to deal with congregations collectively.
- E. Sometimes designate "liberal" & "conservative", which are not names but descriptive adjectives, explaining something about the group under consideration.
 - 1. Yet, it can become a name Ex. Methodist church originally was description, but gradually its name
 - 2. We must be careful in our usage of descriptive phrases
 - 3. Church at Laodicea "lukewarm" Rev 3:14-16
 - 4. For example, if I say that is a good school, I am simply describing the quality of the school, but if that terminology is used long enough in reference to a particular school, it will eventually become its name

CONCLUSION;

- A. It seems that some are concerned with what the churches of Christ are doing collectively and want to present a "sisterhood" of churches to the world.
- B. We have "brotherhood regulators" who are concerned with keeping the brotherhood straight, but if there is an equivalent to that in the Bible it would be the apostles, and we have none today. Yes, preachers must preach against sin wherever it may be, but they are not regulators
- C. Church regulated locally and answers to none but God.
- D. We must constantly check our mooring lest we drift and find ourselves away from God.