

Value & Conduct

When we pay a lot for something, we have high expectations, whether it is a car, computer, house, tool, animal, etc. If it fails to perform the job we desire, we become upset, even angry at times.

Christians have been purchased at a high price, the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 7:23; Acts 20:28). As such, they are valuable and a certain level of "performance," or conduct, is expected of them (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Not all are required to produce a "hundredfold," but all are expected to live up to their potential (Matt. 13:23; 25:14-30).

Christian, are you conducting yourself in a way that reflects the price paid for you? Do you resist temptation (James 4:7)? When you sin, are you remorseful and repentant (2 Cor. 7:10)? Are you searching the scriptures and growing in faith (Acts 17:11; 2 Peter 3:18)? Have you tried to reach the lost (Luke 19:10)?

- by Steven F. Deaton

A Church Kitchen at Jerusalem?

Someone has asked: "How do we know the Jerusalem church didn't have a church kitchen to use in the daily serving of food to its widows (Acts 6:1-6)?"

First, the question is not, How do we know they didn't have a kitchen? It is, How do we know they did? We can only follow the apostolic pattern (Ph. 3:17) by observing what the Bible says the early Christians did. Guessing about things they might have done, but things about which the Bible says nothing, opens the door to endless innovations.

Second, it is doubtful that the Jerusalem church even had a building at this point in its existence, much less a kitchen! There was so much poverty in the group that many were forced to sell land or houses just to meet the physical needs of their brethren (Acts 4:34-35). Given that, and the fact that their number quickly swelled into the thousands (Acts 2:41; 4:4), from whence would the funds have come to build a meeting house sufficient for so many? Acts 2:46 points to the temple courts as their meeting place.

Third, the only justification for a church having **any** facility is that it is a means of carrying out the work God has assigned the church (collectively). A building is authorized because we are commanded to assemble for worship (Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7; etc.). Classrooms for edification/instruction in God's word may be included (Eph. 4:11-12; etc.). If one is going to argue in favor of a gym, he must show that recreation is a church function. If one is going to argue in favor of a kitchen and eating hall, he must show that eating is a church function. Facilities for doing unauthorized things are themselves unauthorized.

If the New Testament contained any commands or examples that made dinners and recreation the church's work, brethren would not have to resort to arguments such as we are considering ("how do we know they didn't have one . . .?"). Not only are there no positive statements to support such things, Paul's prohibitions in 1 Corinthians 11 explicitly place eating in the realm of the home, not the church. "What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? . . . If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home . . ." (vss. 22, 34).

Fourth, who's kidding whom? What church has so many members lacking food and cooking capability that a kitchen in the meeting house is legitimately the most practical way to provide for them? In what congregation is preparing meals for indigent members the exclusive, or even the primary, use of such facilities? It is dishonest to justify building a facility for one purpose, then switching (perhaps all the while planning) to use it for others.

- by Frank Himmel

"Acappella"

The word "acappella" is defined by the dictionary as: "music without instrumental accompaniment." It comes from a Latin word which literally means "as in the church." Interestingly, the etymology (origin) of this word, proves that at the beginning of the church (and

for many centuries thereafter), the music in worship was singing only, without instrumental accompaniment.

- by Greg Gwin

Why Do Men Sin?

The question has been asked: Why do men sin? There are really only two general answers to the question: 1) Men sin because God made them that way. That is to say, men have to sin; or 2) Men sin because they make the choice to do so. They have the option to obey God or not, and they choose not to obey Him.

Consider the first option: Men sin because God made them that way, and the sin that results in their lives is unavoidable and inevitable. This conclusion is in direct contradiction to the plain statements of Scripture. For instance: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (James 1:13). Furthermore we have the case of Jesus himself, who (as a man) lived a sinless life. He was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). And we are commanded to "follow in the steps" of Him who "did no sin" (1 Peter 2:21,22). The command is senseless if, in fact, we cannot follow Him because God created us in such a way as to make it impossible. We must conclude that men sin, but not because we are made that way.

Therefore we are left with the only other option: men sin because, when faced with the choice to do good or do evil, they choose to do evil. This conclusion matches perfectly with many passages of Scripture:

a.. "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:" (Deuteronomy 30:19)

b.. "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15)

c.. "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." (Eccl. 7:29)

It is obvious that we have a choice. The reality is that we fail to make the right choice ("For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" - Romans 3:23). Contributing factors to these bad choices would surely include the fact that we live in a sinful world, completely surrounded by and brought up in an environment of sin. Furthermore, we are typically short-sighted and opt for immediate gratification instead of eternal reward. But, it is still our choice, and we are not forced to sin by virtue of the way God created us.

- by Greg Gwin