

THE HOUSEHOLD OF STEPHANAS

In closing his first epistle to the Corinthians Paul wrote, “I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.” (I Cor. 16:15-16).

In this passage Paul alludes to the church at Corinth, having known two important facts about the household of Stephanas; that is, the members of the family of Stephanas were the first Christians in Greece and that they addicted themselves to serving Christians. On these two facts, let us give further thought.

When Paul began this epistle to the church at Corinth, he besought the disciples to follow Christ and not men. There were divisions in the church there because cliques were following their favorite preacher. Paul wrote:

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. 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? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Notice that Paul pointed out that he had baptized Crispus, Gaius and the household of Stephanas, but he did not know if he had baptized any others (By the way, this shows that inspiration did not mean that one would have total recall on all matters, but only that which God wanted revealed). He clearly stated why he did not baptize any other. It was not because he did not believe in the essentiality of baptism, but because he did not want people to

say he had baptized in his own name. Christ sent him to preach the gospel; others could do the baptizing.

One household he did baptize was that of Stephanas. What an encouragement it must have been to Paul to see the first converts he had in Achaia or Greece faithfully serving the Lord. Surely Paul could say as John: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” It must have been a thrilling experience to baptize this family, and it must have been a continual joy to know they were continuing to serve the Lord.

How were they serving the Lord? Note the text: “they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.” What does that mean? What does it mean to be addicted? The King James Version is the only version of which I am aware that translates the Greek word this way. The Greek word (Tctoaw) means “to do something with devotion, with the possible implication of systematic, regular activity - ‘to do with devotion, to give oneself to.’” One definition of “addict is “to devote or surrender (oneself) to something habitually or obsessively.” (*Merriam - Webster Online Dictionary*) The New King James Version says, “they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints.” The American Standard Version reads: “they have set themselves to minister unto the saints.”

A. T. Robertson makes a fine comment regarding this wonderful characteristic of the Stephanas’ family:

Remarkable statement worthy of attention today. This noble family appointed themselves to be ministers to the saints that needed it (the poor and needy). Personal work for Christ is still the only way to win the world for Christ, voluntary personal work. If all Christians did it! (*WordPictures*, Vol IV. p 203).

Of course, the world will never be won for Christ (Matt.7:13-14), but many more people could be won, and the gospel could be preached to the world if there were more who would set themselves to serving others. One very loose translation of the clause says, “they’ve put themselves out, serving Christians ever since then.” Do we put ourselves out in trying to bring others to Christ? In helping the needy? In teaching others the gospel of Christ? In visiting the sick and shut-ins? Some have put down the idea of a Christian’s going to a foreign field to teach the gospel

because of the dangers there. Yet, do these same “Christians” sing, “Oh, Jesus if I die upon a foreign field some day, ‘twould be no more than love demands; no less could I repay; No greater love hath mortal man than for a friend to die,..”?

Sometimes in a family one member is spiritually stronger than others and he influences the rest to grow more, do more, etc. This member might be the mother, father or a child. Paul and Peter both certainly grant the possibility that a wife can influence her husband to obey the gospel (I Cor. 7:16; I Peter 3:1-7); and if she can influence him initially to obey the gospel, she certainly could continue to influence him for good in serving the Lord (Matt. 5:13-16). May her tribe increase.

We cannot be certain as to whom the motivator (spark plug, etc). was in the house of Stephanas, but we may well have an indication from Paul’s statement when he wrote, “I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.” This Stephanas may have been the same mentioned in the preceding verses. If so, this may indicate that Stephanas was leading the way for his family in doing the Lord’s work. May his tribe increase,

What did Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus do? Paul was in Ephesus and was in much affliction and anguish of heart (1 Cor. 16:8; II Cor. 2:4). According to the text, that which was lacking on the Corinthians’ part, these brethren supplied. Evidently, a letter with questions from the church at Corinth had been received by Paul while he was in Ephesus (I Cor. 7:1). These three brethren may have gone to Paul with a fuller report of the state of the church at Corinth. They had refreshed the spirits of both Paul and the church by their efforts (1 Cor. 16:18).

Let each of us be addicted to serving others and, by so doing, refresh the hearts of others.

Ben Vick, Jr. from The Informer

**You can give a person good advice,
but not the sense to take it.**

BIRTHDAYS

Ted Thrasher, 11-30; Linda Thomas, 12-02.

ILL

Sunday: Brooke and Taylor Nemechek; Evan Phlugardt; Millie Robertson.

Those battling cancer: Jamal Abyad, Diane Cannon, David Cole, and Ledgia Campbell. Please remember these, as well as: Janice Carter, Lynda Cole, Meredith Greer, Millie Robertson, Allen Scott, and Ralph and Helen Franklin.

HOME BOUND

Bob Adams is in Room D-4 of the Johnson County Nursing Center in Olathe. Marion Stone is at home. Please remember these in your prayers and visitation.

RESTORATION

Joshua Weckley was restored at our Sunday PM worship on November 19. We are thankful for his decision to return to Christ and pray for him a faithful life of service.

SYMPATHY

Our sympathy is extended to Debra Gragg and her family in the passing of her uncle in Wichita, KS on Sunday afternoon, November 19.

OUT OF TOWN

Jeremy Keifer was visiting relatives in Oklahoma on Sunday. Chris Edwards left to visit his relatives in Portland, OR on Thursday. The Scott's left for Coffeyville, KS on Wednesday.

POT LUCK DINNER

Our monthly Pot Luck Dinner will be held next Sunday, December 3 following our AM worship. Plan to come and enjoy the good food and company.

ATTENDANCE

Sunday AM, 50; Sunday PM, 41; Wednesday PM, 43.

Those To Serve

November 26, 2006

BUILDING AND COMMUNION..... Parish

MORNING WORSHIP

ANNOUNCEMENTS..... George Thomas
SONG LEADER..... Joel Nelson
OPENING PRAYER John Dodson
PRESIDE..... Ken Greer
ASSIST.....David Parish
ASSIST.....Allen Scott
CLOSING PRAYER.....Jeremy Keifer

EVENING WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER Myron Nebergall
CLOSING PRAYER..... Jeff Nemechek
LORD'S SUPPER..... Ken Greer

WEDNESDAY 29th

SONG LEADER..... 5th Wednesday Singing
INVITATION Ted Thrasher

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Morning Worship 10:30 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Ladies Bible Study 10:00 AM
Bible Study 7:00 PM

Preacher: Ted J. Thrasher

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