

and no one was killed, there would still be Dens Road Church!
In fact it probably would be a stronger Church! What is very
clear from this passage is that it is the **people** that make a
Church, not the bricks and mortar! Here is a **real** NT Church!

Notice first the **grand object** of the Church! “*to bring about
the obedience of faith*”[26] It is to help us live out our faith.
The Church is a gift from God. Xns need **help** – and God has
provided that help in the Church. He gave as a gift to the
Church “*apostles... evangelists...pastors... teachers to equip the
saints for the work of ministry*”[Eph4:11] The **saints** have to
minister. Every Xn has a **gift** and a **calling** from God to
minister – read [chap 12 and 1 Cor 12] - and the Church is there
to assist believers in that calling and gift!

Some Xns feel satisfied if they have **learned** something new at
church. They are happy to ‘discover’ some new doctrine to be
believed. But all over the Bible there is the clear teaching that
believing is not enough– our faith **must lead** to **service!** “*faith
without works is dead*”! What we believe must **result in service**
for we must be “*doers of the word and not hearers **only***”[J1,2].
Paul is very clear that the work of the church and the preaching
of the “*prophetic writings*” is to bring about the “*obedience of
faith*” in believers to the **glory** of the “*only wise God*”[25-27]
The sad fact of the matter is that believers, yes, believers, are
slow and sometimes very **reluctant**, to **obey** the Word! It is
interesting that at the very **beginning**, and now at the very end
of this letter, Paul speaks about the “*obedience of faith*”[1:5] It
beats me why Paul did not write that to the Corinthians!!!

But it is not only the preaching of the Word that is a means and
a help Xns to serve the Lord, but the **fellowship** of the saints

build up the people of God! The church is **His idea** – it is **not** a human institution! God brought His people out of Egypt to worship Him and **gave** it a **priesthood/officers/laws to equip** them to **serve** and **glorify** God among the **nations** of the world! The OT Church had a **mission** to make the true God known to the **nations** around them. To be an **example** and **blessing**! They were to be **witnesses** of the true God to other nations.

And there is one other thing that God has **given** the Church which enables it to be the means of building up the saints! The **Holy Spirit**! The Holy Spirit **resides** within the Church. Paul has just told them that the Gentiles have been **obedient** in their faith **by the power of the Holy Spirit**! *“For I will not venture to speak of anything except what **Christ** has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles **to obedience** - by word **and deed**..... **by the power of the Spirit of God**”* [15:18,19].

In their **daily** lives, the Holy Spirit was at work – **invisibly**! But He **was** at work. Paul told them that they had the Holy Spirit within them *“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the **Spirit of God dwells in you**. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him”* [8:9]. He also told them that Spirit of Jesus will also raise them up from their graves *“through His Spirit **who dwells in you**”*[8:11] that *“The Spirit Himself **bears witness** with **our spirit** that we **are the children of God**”*[8:16] *“Likewise the Spirit **helps us** in our weakness”*[8:26]. The **power** of the Holy **Spirit** was there.

***A Church is **not** just a preaching station – it is a **‘home’**! Where there is to be a **welcome** and **‘hospitality’** to all visitors. *“I commend to you our sister Phoebe...**that** you may **welcome** her...in a way **worthy** of the saints and **help** her in **whatever** she*

help people! People in need! Right? Being a blessing to people is supposed to be one of the Church's **main characteristics!**

One **caveat** re help! We can all **feel guilty** that we cannot do what someone else is **gifted/able** to do. But we must “*help her in whatever she may need from you*” [2] ie, what **you can** provide. We must not feel **guilty** at being **unable** or **ungifted** in one area of charity which you admire **others** are able to do. But **you must** use whatever gift **you** have from the Lord. Think of what you **can do** for people – and make sure you **do** do it! So the Church has to demonstrate **hospitality** in its **varied forms**. “*Gaius, whose is host to me and the whole church*”[23]

It is probably because of this that **women** are mentioned so much. Paul is so grateful for the work which women do in the church! Not just Phoebe, but “*Greet those **workers** in the Lord Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis who has **worked hard** in the Lord*”[12]! “*Greet Rufus...also his **mother**, who has been a mother to me **as well***”[13] Where would the church be without women? *Whoever said Paul was a **male chauvinist** was ‘way-off’ the mark and was **prejudiced** against Paul! He is **commending women** for their work in the Church!

There should be **warmth** all round the **fellowship!** In the Church everyone is part of the **family**. Think for a moment of the people **you work with!** What names do your colleagues get sometimes? Not very nice at times! Now look at how Paul **describes** his **working colleagues** - none of them he called a ‘Skinny Flint, Nuisance, Skiver,’ – and I am sure he **could have**, for **humanity** all down the centuries have not changed! Paul calls his working colleagues “*my **beloved***” [5,9,12]! He uses **terms of endearment** because they are **precious** to him!

one another from **unfair** and maybe 'fair' criticism! We must **support** one another in their times of **weakness**. We must help one another when we are struggling. That is Church.

Look at the **depth** and **degree** of their love for each other in this house-church! Priscilla and Aquila "*who **risked** their necks for **my life***" says Paul![3,4] That is wonderful!

A very common theme running through this chapter is that believers are **workers, servants, helpers**. Unless you had some work to do in the church you were not considered part of it! The Bible **characterises** true Xians as workers! Philemon also! Fellow-workers, fellow-soldiers, fellow-slaves of Jesus Christ! You see Bible again and again states we must be "*doers of the Word not hearers only*". Xianity is the most **practical** religion of all. It's **own creed stipulates** that the very **proof** of its **genuineness** is the **outworking** of faith in actual **works**! "*Faith without works is dead*"!

Where there is a Church there is always the **danger** of trouble-makers! Satan has his eye on any opening to disturb the church! There is a **special characteristic** about those who are trouble-makers! They "*cause divisions and create obstacles*" [17] "*obstacles*"= word for our **scandal**! Those whose tongues can cause problems! **APP** Sadly today in the West, the **Reformed Church** is noted for 'causing divisions'! We can be so concerned about perfections of theology that we **neglect** the fundamental **duties** of **obedience** in simple practical matters! Real religion? "*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction...*"[Jam1:27] Who would say that? James did!!