

Church Wars Heat Up

Fred R. Coulter—January 28, 2012

Today I want to cover some things that are very important for all the Churches of God. The Church wars are up and heated again. Too many of the Churches of God are fighting each other. That's just kind of the nature of the seven churches.

However, let's go back to Revelation 2 and 3. Let's look at the seven churches there. I know we've covered them before, but these are very important. Some people have said, 'Well, Jesus never wrote anything in the Bible.' That's not quite exactly true. If He inspired all of it, then He did write. He had secretaries—didn't He? *Yes!*

However, Revelation 2 and 3 are different. These are personal letters to the Churches of God. Christ is the Head of the Church—no man. If you don't have the booklet, *Is the Ministry God's Government?*, be sure and get it. Online we have quite a few sermons dealing with church government. Christ is the Head.

Let's understand something very important. We are all, by the Holy Spirit, directly connected with God the Father and Jesus Christ; there is no man in between. Just like with the children of Israel, God started out with them with the system of judges—remember? The system of judges was to be so that everyone would have equality within the land. But the people didn't like that. They wanted a king like all the other nations. God gave it to them. So, *be careful what you ask for*, because God may give it to you but the results may not be what you desire. He told them that as long as they kept His commandments, and that the king would be righteous, that He would be with them and bless them.

However, none of the kings of Judah—after it was split off, the ten tribes—ever sought God, not one. They wanted freedom of worship, so what did they do? *They went to Baal worship, golden calf, Asheroth*, thinking they're doing right. Judah still had the king. Some of the kings were very good. God blessed them, fought for them, were with the people.

We have all the history of Israel. We have the New Testament writings to the Church of the first century. What we have in Revelation 2 and 3 is a prophetic history of the Churches of God from the time of the Apostle John to Christ's return. Let me just say this. Church eras and the Churches listed in Revelation 2 and 3 are not defined by an organization, especially a corporate organization. You've heard the saying in the past: 'Stay in this organization, because if you go somewhere else,

you're not going to receive salvation.' You heard that? *No, that's not true!* You must be right with God the Father and Jesus Christ directly, not through an organization, nor to have a ministry set itself up as a hierarchy, like the Israelites did in setting up kings.

There have been so many mistakes that have been made in the Churches of God that it seems as though they never learn a lesson. God intervenes with His churches. What we find in Revelation 2 and 3 are the major thing that cuts the people off from God. When He says to the angel that also can mean to the messenger. In other words, it then is to the ministry concerning their service to the Church. It's also a message to each of the Churches, each one of us individually. Because we can all from time-to-time have any one of the attitudes of the seven churches. So, these letters are direct from Christ to His church. This is the closest that Jesus came to writing directly something in the Bible, but He had John write it for Him. It's just like if you get a letter and a secretary typed it, but who's signature is on it?

I'm not going to go through each one in detail, but I want to cover some specific things that we need to be aware of. Some specific things that—the Churches of God—Jesus forewarned they would do. Then also He gives a solution of repenting, and then He ends each letter with a very signature message: *'The one who has ears to hear, let him hear.'*

Church at Ephesus:

Revelation 2:1: "To the angel of the Ephesian Church write... [you know this message is direct from Christ, all seven letters] ...These things says He Who holds the seven stars in His right hand, Who walks in *the* midst of the seven golden lampstands." This is not the menorah that was next to the Holy of Holies in the temple or tabernacle. Those represent the seven Spirits of God. These are like in a circle, because you can't be in the midst of a straight line, like a menorah would be. These are in a circle.

- Christ is in His church
- Christ is the Head of His church
- Christ is leading and directing each one of us

I like what Michael Heiss said that He's *staffing for the Kingdom*.

Verse 2: "I know your works..." He knows everything we do. He commended them, because they tested all of those who were evil. Found out

those who were false apostles and lied. They endured. They didn't grow weary.

Notice what He says, this becomes the important thing and this is the major test commandment of God. All commandments are test commandments—are they not?—but here's the major one because everything in your relationship with God flows from this. This is the first one that He brings out.

Verse 4: “Nevertheless, I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.” What is a first love? The Greek there is ‘protos’—*primary*. What is our first love? *It's got to be God the Father and Jesus Christ*—correct? ***‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, with all your being, and all your strength’***—isn't that true?

This is what they began to fail to teach. This is the most important thing to teach. When you come to church on the Sabbath, we're together for what? If we have all-day services and we come early and we stay late, maybe six hours—right? And we don't see each other again except if we live close enough or by phone or now by e-mail. You can even do laptop face-to-face, but that's still, you're not with the person. This applies to what the Church is teaching and preaching. This applies to each one of us individually. This is why those who are teaching and preaching need to learn the lesson: Don't get so involved in work and doing things and building buildings and creating schools. It's good to have schools if you teach what is right. Wouldn't you agree to that?

Verse 5: “Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works... [loving God is the primary work] ...for if *you do not*, I will come to you quickly; and I will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent.”

We've seen that happen in our age right here, right here in Southern California. A lot of people say, ‘I wonder why it happened?’ *Because of what the ministers did not do and what they did do and what the brethren did not do and what the brethren did!* Everybody's involved. You can't blame and say, ‘The minister...’ unless you stand for the Truth in spite of him. When something goes wrong among the whole group, you can't say it's his fault. He may have a great deal of difficulty and problems in it. Maybe it's 90% his fault, whoever the leader may be. But then how many people went along with it?

I did on *Transhumanism*, I mentioned about Christmas how everybody falls in like lemmings for Christmas. This was on ChurchatHome.org. Randy just finished *Transhumanism #6*. He showed the crowds just rushing into department stores to buy

their Christmas presents, running all over each other, stomping on each other. Then he got some pictures of lemmings running out over the cliff—very effective. But too many in the Churches of God are like that. ***Left their first love!***

They have one thing, v 6: “But this you have: that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans...”—which then is a hierarchical structure of church government. We'll cover about who is to rule you. How should the ministers conduct their ministry? These are the things that Jesus expects us to make observations and judgments concerning how we are conducting our lives before Him and also how the ministers who are teaching them are conducting their lives and what they are doing. Because if there's one thing that is very important to understand, the principle of a little leaven—right? ‘A little leaven leavens the whole lump.’ If these things grow and grow and grow, then God has to intervene and correct. Isn't that true? Did He do it? *Yes, He did!*

So, what those ministers who are building replica auditoriums and buildings and asking brethren to mortgage their homes—first, second, third mortgage—‘Sell your home, cash in your IRA's, your 401k, your Keogh account. Send it in, we're going to build buildings.’ Is that what God wants? Buildings aren't wrong, ***but they can't come until the brethren are taught how to have a relationship with God!*** Look at what happened when we had all the buildings. Everyone said it was beautiful; it's nice.

I've got a picture taken by Robert McDonald III. How many remember him, the photographer? I've got a nice picture framed up, right at the top of the stairs going up on the campus where the water would come and then go downstream. There I'm sitting with some other students and it shows beautiful picture of Pasadena and the background with no smog in all the mountains. You look at that and everybody said one time or another, ‘This is just like the Kingdom of God on earth.’ Hmmm!

Is God more interested in building buildings and taking money? *or* Is He interested in the brethren and the ministers repenting and being converted? This is not an attack upon ministers who do those things. It is an analyzing of the facts of what have happened in the past and beware. You're space of time, unless you repent, is going to be a whole lot shorter.

Church at Smyrna:

They didn't have any problems. They gave their lives. They didn't necessarily have a whole lot of doctrinal understanding, but they were faithful,

they were loyal. They stood unto death and Jesus said, 'I'm going to give you a crown of life.'

Church at Pergamos:

Now let's come to one of the real problem churches—and we've seen some of this, too. The next church is in Pergamos or Pergaman. There was a big temple dedicated to Zeus. That was where Satan's throne was. The king of Pergamos willed to the Roman Empire everything of Pergamos—its religion, its temple, and everything. What you have then is a Babylonian Mystery Religions coming down, being built up there in Pergamos, then passed on to the Roman Empire. But notice what happens when you are right in the middle of where Satan dwells or in the world we're living in today. Is he deceiving the whole world or not? *Yes, he is!* Notice How Christ introduces Himself:

Verse 12: "And to the angel of the Church in Pergamos, write: These things says He Who has a sharp two-edged sword." He's giving a warning.

- Has He used this before? *Yes, He has!*
- What is He upset about?
- Why does He warn them?

Verse 13: "I know your works... [We all have works; we're going to be judged according to our works—are we not? Everyone's going to have to give an account to God—are we not? Individually? *Yes, indeed!*] ...and where you dwell, where the throne of Satan *is*; but you are holding fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days in which Antipas *was* My faithful witness... [or martyr] ...who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.... [after that they didn't remain faithful] ...But I have a few things against you because you have there those who hold the teaching of Balaam..." (vs 13-14). Balaam wanted to curse the children of Israel, couldn't do it.

After Balaam tried to curse seven times, and he could only bless seven times, he told Balak, 'You can seduce them by having a nice religious festival out here. Get all the beautiful women of the empire. Get all of the best food. Remember, they'd been eating manna for forty years and they haven't had any meat, so the wafting over of the lambs and the goats and the oxen cooking—that'll get them. 'Come on over. We're good people. Come and be with us. Don't worry about it. Just a little food will help you out.'

What did God say? *You should not eat any bread until you've entered into the 'promised land' and it was made from the harvest of that crop!* The same thing applies here today with the Churches of God. How do the Protestants grow their churches and how do they preach? *Same thing!* What has happened with some of the doctrine? That gets a

little deep in Thyatira there. We'll talk about that in just a little bit.

I saw a recent—Randy sent it to me just yesterday and I saw it on Albert's iPad. He said, 'Fred, I want to show you something.' Here are two presenters on a Church of God web site trying to explain that we celebrate the resurrection through the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Nowhere does it say celebrate the resurrection—does it? 'A little leaven leavens the whole lump.' Why would that come up that way? Remember the first thing that happened before the changes began? Remember what that was? *It was impossible for Jesus to sin!* Remember that? He was 100% man/100% God. Remember that? All of this sounds very logical, *but it's not true.*

How did that happen? *Because all the brethren were never taught beyond the basics!* It's like coming to school every week, but you never get out of sandbox. If you do, the highest you're able to go is to the third-grade box. Whereas, God is preparing us for eternal life to reign as kings and priests. So therefore, we need the complete knowledge of God's Word as much as we can, especially in the age that we are living.

So, you see how all of these things has affected the Church of God and has affected everyone of you. It's affected me.

"...to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication" (v 14). *Spiritual fornication* then is incorporating the practices of other religions. That's why Christ's bride is going to be a virgin. You commit fornication, you're no longer a virgin—right? Isn't that correct? *Yes!* 'Eat things sacrificed to an idol': that is changing the Passover to communion and the Eucharist and the mass, which got developed even more in Thyatira.

Church at Thyatira:

Let's see what Jesus said to them, v 15: "Moreover, you also have *those* who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate." Overbearing hierarchy of a ministry. Did you ever go to church in the past and it was a fearful experience because of what was said? *Yes, indeed!*

Jesus said we're to 'love one another as He loved us'—right? We're not to have all this fear and hell and fire and brimstone. 'And if you don't follow me and if you're not in this organization, and if you don't send in your money and sell your house...' ***That's nothing but fear!*** Is that the love of God? *We're to fear God, yes!* We're to love God, but ministers cannot get up and cover their sins when everybody else knows what was going on, and saying, 'What you've been hearing is only rumors and gossip and you're all a bunch of dumb sheep!'

No! What it really was, was underground truth, because you wouldn't face it.

When I heard, 'You're all a bunch of dumb sheep,' I said to myself, 'That may be true, but does God want us to remain dumb?' What are we to do? *We are to grow up unto Christ*—is that not true? *Yes, indeed!* God loves us. God cares for us. They had men coming in as, Well, what do we have with the Roman Catholics? We've got the pope and then we have the cardinals, then we have the bishops, then we have the archbishops, then we have the priests. Then we have the deacons, then we have the teachers. All a hierarchical thing, and the Catholics say that if you do not belong to the Catholic Church there is no salvation. It's probably the other way around: if you belong to it, you don't have salvation.

And the only one man to be the initiator and originator of Truth is ***the resurrected Christ!*** No pope, no apostle, no evangelist. We'll see the purpose of the Church in a little bit. But see these are direct messages from Christ.

Verse 16: "Repent! For if *you* do not *repent*, I will come to you quickly, and will make war against them with the sword of My mouth." How about that? Would Jesus fight against His own church because of sin? *He says so!* He's going to do it with the sword of His mouth. What is that? Whatever His Word says is the penalty for the sins that are being committed, that's the sword that's going to cut them asunder.

Verse 17: "The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches. To the one who overcomes..." What do they have to overcome? *They have to overcome that!* The Church at Thyatira really got themselves in deep, deep trouble. And it's perhaps the worst of all the Churches. They did have love, they did have works, they did have faith.

Verse 19: "...and the last are more than the first. But I have a few things against you, because you allow the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants into committing fornication and eating things sacrificed to idols" (vs 19-20). That is a perfect description of the Roman Catholic Church. Jezebel was the daughter of the priest of Baal that King Ahab of Israel married. What religion did they have in the northern ten tribes? *Baal worship!* Who was the only one to speak for God? *Elijah!*

When he had the confrontation, when the drought was going to end, and had all the priests of Baal come and give their sacrifice at Mount Carmel, he asked the Israelites: 'How long do you jump from one opinion to another?'—as to who is Lord—'If it's God, get on His side.' So then, you know what happened with the sacrifices and you know Elijah's prayer was very short. God answered with fire, etc.

Here's what God always does, v 21: "And I gave her time to repent of her fornication, but she did not repent." No, she even got worse, bought out the Inquisition, killed those who were trying to follow Christ.

The next two verses are very, very important to be considered, v 22: "Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation..." That's when they had the bubonic plague, when they had all the wars just before the beginning of the Reformation—200-300 years. How'd you like to live back then?

I get up in the morning and I turn on the hot water and I think, I wonder how many people had that in the history of the world? Hot water. Run out into the kitchen, push a button, the stove goes on. Push a dial and a button and you've got an oven. Want a little heat? *Touch a thermostat!* Want a little light? *Flick of the switch!* You cold? *You've got a closet full of clothes!* Want something to eat? *You go to the supermarket and the world is right in front of you!* I think many times: How are we as God's people supposed to respond to God when we live in a world like this and everything is right there and we put God on the side because we get so busy living? Sometimes it's really good to think of that. How about when you're traveling? *Get in your car; go on a plane!* Wherever you go, there's one convenience that a lot of the world doesn't have in the same way; that's called a bathroom.

We have all of these things so we can develop the kind of relationship with God that He wants us to have!

"...unless they repent of their works.... [God always offers repentance; always remember that, brethren.] ...And I will kill her children with death..." (vs 22-23). Think about that for a minute! If you kill someone, are they dead? What does it mean to kill with death? Does that also mean the Lake of Fire? Could very well, because if you kill someone they're dead. But if you kill them with death, is this talking about the second death? *Possible!*

"...and all the Churches shall know that I am He Who searches *the* reins and hearts; and I will give to each of you **according to your works**" (v 23). God is going to do that. God is a God of promises and He fulfills them. Jesus is 'the way, the truth, and the life.'

- He's called us to the greatest thing that could possibly be—*eternal life*
- He's given us of His Spirit
- He's given us His Word

Now at the end time we have all the Word of God. He's given us all of these things and lot of technology to really get the Gospel out.

So my prayer for every one of the Churches of God, not to condemn them, but that they would examine their lives and their works and their attitudes. Just like all of us are to do in our lives—are we not? And do like Jesus said: **Repent!** Do the things that are right. Treat the other churches as brothers and sisters in Christ. We're not going to steal anybody. We don't want your money. As a matter of fact, we can probably help you. You want to set up some schools? Contact us, we'll sell you some books that have the Truth! Perhaps a lot of more Truth than you may have because you've stuck with the little booklets that were kindergarten and grade school. Glad to help you.

So that the primary thing can be, is to feed the Church of God and preach the Gospel in the way that God would have us do it. Let's not label each other enemies. We pray for all the Churches of God every day. We know people in them, don't we? Do we wish them harm? *No!* We wish that they grow and change and overcome and attain to the Kingdom of God—is that not right? *Yes, indeed!* That's what God wants in it. That's what I'm trying to convey here in this.

- We must *stand for the Truth*
- We must *defend the Truth*
- We must *not be deceived* by clever men who have set themselves up in high places
- We better all *yield to God* now

Church at Sardis: their works were not complete.

Church at Philadelphia: stayed faithful. But He warned them, 'Don't let anyone take your crown.' And He encouraged them because they were faithful to the Word of God.

Church at Laodiceans: they got rich and increased with goods, and you know the rest of the story from that.

Christ said, 'I stand at the door. I'm knocking. You going to open up and let Me in? What is it that you've done with your life? What is it that it's going to be for you?' *And in every case He tells us to repent!*

(go to the next track)

Since we left off in Revelation 3, let's go back there again and let's look at the most important thing that we need to do. People get deceived on doctrine because they do not do like the Bereans and prove everything. You have to make sure that you get all the Scriptures and information possible so that you can make a right determination on what the Scriptures are telling us.

Too many times, ministers and brethren get an idea, or they get a Scripture—and the Protestants are famous for this. They get a Scripture, 'If you believe in Jesus, you're saved.' *That's the first step.* It's like your children growing up. When they take their first step you don't say, 'Hooray, look, he's got it made for life. Stop, don't do anything else.' *No!* You've got a whole lifetime ahead of you of walking and things like that. Believing in Jesus is just the first step. If you never go beyond the first step—they're called believers. What did James say about believers? '*You believe there's one God, you do well; the demons do and they tremble and fear.*' So believing is not conversion.

- conversion is a *process*
- conversion is an *education*
- conversion is a *preparation for eternal life*

That whatever we have learned up to this point and know, that's fine. But remember, the mind of God Who is eternal, inspired the Bible and the Bible is full of things—'precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little,' that we go back and it is never old. We constantly learn new applications of things that we thought we already knew.

So likewise, what do we need to do to be faithful to God, to not let ourselves be led down any garden paths, to not be deceived by a ministry intent on ruling over us, that we can learn to love each other and serve each other and love God. When we come together, as we do as brethren, that we're not confronted with pet doctrines, like they were in Corinthians. Paul said, 'You get together in a church and it's like an insane asylum. You've got people speaking in tongues. The unbeliever comes in and says you're mad. Someone's got a Psalm, someone's got a prophecy, someone's got a word, some are following Peter, some are following Paul, some are following Apollos.' I think that describes what's going on today—right? *Yes!*

What did Paul say of himself and Apollos? He said, 'Who is Apollos, who is Paul? We're nothing, we're servants of God.' We have to be stewards. A steward is someone who faithfully takes care of someone else's property. If you're bought by Christ with a price, with His sacrifice, you belong to Christ—do you not? *Yes, you do!* The thing of a ministry and teaching is to teach you. We all learn together. We grow together. We overcome together. As Michael has brought out, if someone has some strengths, he also has some big weakness. Who here is perfect? *None!*

However, if we have love and forbearance and forgiveness, then we can keep things on an even and good keel so that we're not having upsets and bitterness and non-communication. 'He did this to me. She did this to me. Until they come and

apologize to me, I'm not going to say anything to them.' Is that the love of God? That'll never happen.

If it's a personal matter, it's a Matt. 18. Go! Matt. 18 won't kill you. You may have to humble yourself a bit. You may have to repent. You may have to rethink what you thought you heard and you really didn't hear. All of those things are involved. Unfortunately, too many of the brethren in the Church have become chattel to the ministry and that 'you must do what we say. Those brethren that you love in that other church, don't you dare go see them.' Is that the love of God? *No!* I know one grandson who couldn't see his grandfather, because his grandfather wasn't in this particular church—and he committed suicide. How's that for the love of God? Is that not a mockery to God, to Jesus Christ, to what the Church ought to be? We have some things that we all need to learn.

Church of Philadelphia: Church of Brotherly Love.

You can't love your brother unless you first love God—right? If there is no brotherly love, there is a lacking of love of God—correct? Would you think that would be a correct analysis of the situation? *Yes, indeed!*

Revelation 3:7: "These things says the Holy One, the one Who *is* true; the one Who has the key of David, Who opens and no one shuts, and Who shuts and no one opens." All right, let's stop here for just a minute concerning Truth.

Jesus is true. He said, ***'I am, the Way, the Truth and the Life!'*** What does He send to us spiritually? *The Spirit of Truth!* Isn't that true? What are we to use as our guide? *The Word of Truth!* We're to be led by the Holy Spirit. We are in a sonship relationship with God. All the brethren of God have had a calling from God. God the Father

- drew them
- opened their minds
- led them to repentance
- accepting Jesus Christ, the sacrifice
- He loves us.
- the Father loves us

This is how the Church needs to be run. This is what all those in the Church of God need to hear!

The day of the corporate church and the corporate believers *God has spewed out of His mouth.* Those who go back to reconstruct the same thing are going back and eating vomit.

- we didn't have the love of God
- we didn't have the repentance
- we didn't have the serving of the brethren the way that it should be

They were all kept as corporate robots, *ruled over by the ministry.* Turned them all into Laodiceans! God doesn't want that. Here's what He wants.

Verse 8: "I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no one has the power to shut it because you have a little strength... [I know we've heard this before, but let's look at it for what it really says] ...and **have kept My Word...**" If you keep His Word, what does that mean?

- you know it
- you study it
- you live by it

The whole role of the ministry is:

- to teach
- to build up
- to inspire
- to edify
- to give hope

—all of those things so:

- that you can be strong in the Lord
- that you can have faith and hope and love
- that you can have confidence

—so that all of us together can enter into the Kingdom of God, and Christ can say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' to all of us. That's what God wants! All the fighting going on among the Churches of God, what do you think God thinks of that?

Verse 9: "Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan... [we've got to fight the synagogue of Satan in the world; that's the world elite that control everything in the world] ...who proclaim themselves to be Jews and are not... [proclaiming themselves to bring the right way of living; also applies to being Jews, as well.] ...and are not, but do lie—behold, I will cause them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you."

That doesn't mean they're going to worship us. I know we thought in past time that's what it was going to be. But they're going to come before our feet and worship God. Just think of that! Let's take this group right here as it is and let's run by the elite of the world. Wouldn't it be something to see them fall on their knees and worship God in our presence? Think of that, that's what it will be.

Verse 10: "Because you have kept the Word of My patience... [or patiently keeping My Word] ...I also will keep you from the time of temptation which *is* about to come upon the whole world..." We're about ready to enter into that time, and the temptation is the time leading up to the Great Tribulation, which then includes many things. The

toughest one's going to be the coming *mark of the beast*.

And it will "...come upon the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly; hold fast that which you have so that no one may take away your crown" (vs 10-11). So, there are some things we need to be watching and doing.

Verse 12: "The one who overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall not go out any more; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven from My God; and *I will write upon him My new name.*"

Let's see what the Apostle Paul had to do in fighting some of these things. It involves the ministry and it involves the brethren. We will see what the Apostle Paul wrote: 2-Corinthians 1:24: "Not that we exercise lordship over your faith, but because we are working with you *to increase* your joy. For you stand by faith." That's a completely different philosophical approach, which is a Biblical approach of serving the brethren.

You love all the brethren, because they are the future sons and daughters of God. Remember what Jesus told Peter just before He ascended into heaven, some time before that. He said, 'Peter, do you love Me?' He said, 'Yes, Lord, I love You.' He said, 'Feed My sheep.' He said it the second time, 'Do you love Me?' He said, 'Yes, Lord, You know I love You.' He says, 'Shepherd My sheep.' And He asked him a third time, 'Peter, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?' And he got all grieved and said, 'Yes, Lord, You know I love You. You know all things.' He said, 'Feed My lambs.'

There's a difference between sheep and cattle. Cattle you *drive*. Sheep you *lead*. You cannot drive a flock of sheep like you would on a cattle roundup. He said that to him three times because Peter denied Him three times. He wanted to make sure, because what did He also tell Peter on the night before He was arrested? '*Peter, Simon, Satan has desired to have you to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you so that your faith will not fail!*' And when you're converted strength your brethren.' That tells us Peter wasn't converted at that time. Late in his life, sometime before he died Peter wrote 1st and 2nd Peter. Here's what he said to the elders and we see that he learned the lesson there that we find at the end of the Gospel of John.

1-Peter 5:1: "*The elders who are among you I exhort, even as a fellow elder, and an eye-witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that is about to be revealed.... [He went up on the Mount of Transfiguration and saw Christ*

transformed.] ...Feed the flock of God *that is* among you, exercising oversight not by compulsion, but willingly; not in fondness of dishonest gain... [the *King James* says 'filthy lucre'] ...but *with an eager attitude*" (vs 1-2). In other words, not with a motive of getting money.

Yes, we are to tithe and give offerings. That is true, but that should never be the central focus of what is done. The central focus is to teach the brethren that we all grow in grace and knowledge.

Verse 3: "Not as exercising lordship over *your* possessions; but *by* being examples to the flock of God. And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you shall receive an unfading, *eternal* crown of glory" (vs 3-4). That's how God wants the ministry and the elders to be—to serve, to teach, to be knowledgeable. Paul says, 'You who teach others, don't you teach yourself?'

Are we not to be studying and growing as well? If we do and apply ourselves the way that God wants us to, will we grow in grace and knowledge and be able to teach brethren more so they can grow in grace and knowledge? Can we also learn from the brethren as they study, and say, 'I was studying this and what about this?' *Of course we can!* We're not an entity unto ourselves. We're like coaches on the sidelines, not lords over you.

Paul knew what was going to happen after he left. Here was his last visit with the elders from Ephesus and he had them come down to Miletus. He gave this closing discourse to them. Here's what he said.

Acts 20:27: "For I have not held back from preaching to you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore to yourselves..." (vs 27-28). And all of us have to take heed to ourselves—don't we? Ever have those nice little conversations with yourself? *Yes!* One of my favorites is, 'Fred, don't do anything stupid.' We all do enough of it. Remember the prodigal son? *He left in pride*, lost everything he had, ended up feeding swine, and that's when he came to himself. We all need to come to ourselves.

Verse 28: "Take heed therefore to yourselves..." Don't get lifted up. Remember what happened to Nebuchadnezzar? *He stood out there and said, 'Look what I've made. Oh, how great I am!'* BINGO! Whatever we can do, we do. If God blesses us, don't take credit for it. Give credit to God.

"...among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers..." (v 28). Now there's a difference between an overseer and an overlord. An overseer is to see that things are done decently and in order and by the methods and Spirit and love of God.

“...among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, **to feed the Church of God...**” (v 28). Not as dumb sheep to beat up and take their money, police them. *No! Feed the Church of God!* What? We’ll see a little later the reason for it.

And always keep this mind whoever is an elder or minister: “...which **He purchased with His own blood**” (v 28). We can trust God! How many remember the sermon that Michael Heiss gave: *God’s Justice System, Redeemer, Blood Avenger?* “...purchased with His own blood.” You better *never, ever* take advantage of the brethren and run them like cattle, look down upon them, because *they have been purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ!* That being the case, you’ve got to conclude that Christ means business—don’t you? *Yes!*

Verse 29: “For I know this: that after my departure grievous wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.” We’ve got to be on guard! We’ve got to know! I’ve heard two things already that I know is going to change one of the Churches of God, incrementally step-by-step:

1. it was impossible for Jesus to sin
2. we celebrate the resurrection with the Days of Unleavened Bread

You’ve got to be able to distinguish between Truth and near-Truth, *which is not true!*

“...not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves” (vs 29-30).

We’ve got to be on guard on that. Every elder has got to be on guard against his own human nature. That’s why prayer daily is absolutely essential. You like to breathe? Want to take a deep breath and feel good? I won’t ask how long you can hold it. *Prayer is spiritual breathing!* You can’t get along without prayer. After all, if the Sovereign of the universe is dealing in your life, how do you think a message in your mind, ‘Well, I don’t have time to pray right now; I don’t have time to pray today,’ resonates with Him? He may be merciful and gracious and kind, but if this continues and becomes a habit—whoever you are, teacher or brethren.... We have to watch out for those who exalt themselves. I could tell you some accounts that are true, but we don’t have time for that.

2-Corinthians 2:17: “For we are not like the many... [I want you to think about all Protestantism, all Catholicism, even Churches of God] ...who for *their own* profit are corrupting the Word of God; but we speak with sincerity, as from God, *and* before God, *and* in Christ.” That says it all right there—doesn’t it? *Yes, it does!* We have to be alert to that. To be faithful and faithfully keeping the Word of

God, as Jesus said to the Church at Philadelphia, this is what we have to be watching for.

2-Corinthians 3:1: “Do we again begin to commend ourselves?” The great so-and-so, the great this, the great that, the one only? *No!* If God has given a gift, rejoice. But be careful; don’t get exalted. If He gave it, He can take it away. If we’re all flesh, which we are, and we’re all temporary, which we are, and God gives a gift, that’s fine. It comes from God. Acknowledge God! Give Him all the credit! After all He made you—isn’t that true? *Sure!*

“...Or do we, as some, need epistles of commendation to you, or *epistles* of commendation from you?... [No, we don’t!] ...You are our epistle, and are inscribed in our hearts, being known and read by all men” (vs 1-2).

What I’m doing, I’m following the thread of the ministry so that we will not get entrapped in it. 2-Corinthians 4:1: “Therefore, having this ministry...” How did Paul get his? *Not like Job!* Job said, ‘Hey, I’m so good, I need a referee. I’m going to take God to court so He can put His hand on my shoulder and on God’s shoulder and let God know how right I am.’ *No! No! No!*

How did Paul received his ministry? He got a smack-down on the way to Damascus. POOF! ‘Who’s that?’ He had in his hand arrest warrants for those who were following Christ. He had the blood of Stephen on his hands. So, here he is on the ground. Get knocked down like that, the bright light shine. The voice came out and said, ‘Saul Saul, why do you persecute Me?’ Interesting statement—isn’t it? Think of that. Doesn’t that tell us we’re all in the body of Christ? *If he persecutes the brethren, he’s persecuting Christ!* Think about that in relationship then to the misconduct of ministers.

Verse 1: “Therefore, having this ministry, according as we have received mercy, we are not fainthearted.... [This is what his conversion experience caused him to do.] ...For we have personally renounced the hidden things of dishonest gain, not walking in *cunning* craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the Truth...” (vs 1-2). Where did we start out with this? *‘I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.’*

- The Spirit of the Truth
- The Word of the Truth
- The Way of the Truth

“...we are commending ourselves to every man’s conscience before God. But if our gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are perishing; In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is *the* image of God, should

shine unto them.... [that's precisely what has happened to a lot of churches] ...For we do not preach our own selves... [Think of that!] ...but Christ Jesus *the* Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." (vs 2-5).

That's where it has to be, brethren, because in the Church wars they're going on big time right now. 'Anyone who doesn't join this church is an enemy. Anyone who says what we're doing is wrong is an enemy.' Just *make sure you don't make yourself an enemy of Christ*, because you're going to be in bad shape if you do. I'm sure that all of you, as well as I, we hate to see it going on. We know brethren involved, maybe even relatives involved. We know ministers involved, and it's going to be a difficult thing. So therefore, we have to be strong in the Lord; that way we can help people.

2-Corinthians 11:3: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds might be corrupted from *the* simplicity that *is* in Christ. For indeed, if someone comes preaching another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you did not receive, or a different gospel, which you did not accept, you put up with it as *something good*" (vs 3-4).

That's what's happened in the Churches. Here's another thing that's true, too: All of you have come from different churches, maybe you've been to two or three or four different churches. I know I got a letter from a man saying that in the last ten years he's been to five different churches, and every one there was something that just didn't click. What was that? *A different attitude or spirit!* 'You put up with it *as* something good.'

Verse 5: "But I consider myself in no way inferior to those highly exalted *so-called* apostles." This wasn't a fight between Peter and Paul. This was the *false* apostles; the 'hot-shot' apostles. There's one man who says, 'I'm God's apostle for the twenty-first century.' Really? How'd that happen? 'And I'm likened unto Joshua the high priest and Zechariah.' How'd that happen? 'And I will be over the two witnesses.' Well, one's already in jail. How'd that work? And he's run the course of 1,260 days and hasn't called one plague down from heaven yet. You see? When people get all exalted, that's what happens. So, he talks about it.

The Greek is this:

- pseudo—false
- pseudochristos—*false Christ*
- pseudochristoi—*false Christs*
- pseudoadelphos—*false brethren*

Verse 13: "For such *are* false apostles—deceitful workers who are transforming themselves

into apostles of Christ. And *it is* no marvel, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, *it is* no great thing if his servants also transform themselves as ministers of righteousness—whose end shall be according to their works" (vs 13-15).

A lot of things look good, sound good. How many of heard of the Rick Warren church down in Southern California? *Saddleback Church!* He wrote the book, *The Purpose Driven Church*. When someone said he's going to lead them right back to Rome, 'Oh, no!' Every false doctrine poured forth, and lo and behold on two Christmases in a row on Fox News guess who led the Christmas Eve program? *Rick Warren!* Signed, sealed and delivered to Rome. But when that was first said, 'Oh, no, you're judging people.' Are we to judge them by their fruits? Are to listen to what they say? Make judgments by what they say? You can take a good cause, you can apply carnal means to make it run, but will that accomplish spiritual things? Let's see what the Apostle Paul went through. And don't anyone say, 'I want to be like the Apostle Paul,' because God may take you up on it.

Verse 16: "Again I say, no one should consider me a fool; but if otherwise, receive me even as a fool, that I also may boast a little." He said, 'I'm going to do something really stupid. They're bragging.' I imagine a lot of those were Jews who came into Corinth and said, 'I'm a Levite.' *Really, you are?* 'Yes, and I'm from Judea.' *Yes, really?* 'And I saw Jesus heal and do miracles.' *Really?* 'Yes, I followed Him around.' But did Jesus ordain him as apostles? *No!*

Verse 17: "What I am *now* saying, I do not speak according to *the* Lord, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting. Since many boast according to *the* flesh, I also will boast" (vs 17-18). 'You're a Levite, chosen of God. You have the Scriptures of God. Oh, you have a wonderful sounding voice. Oh, you preach good sermons.' Little switch and bait, wrong Christ, wrong spirit.

Verse 19: "For since you are *so* intelligent, you gladly bear with fools. For you bear *it* if anyone brings you into bondage, if anyone devours *you*, if anyone takes *from you*, if anyone exalts himself, if anyone beats you on the face" (vs 19-20). Sound like your church experience? 'You're wise, you're intelligent, you know more than me. Hooray.'

Verse 21: "I speak as though we were under reproach for being weak; but in whatever way anyone else is bold (I speak in foolishness), I also am bold. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they *the* seed of Abraham? So am I." They were beset with a lot of problems

there—weren't they? It's kind of like 'eeny, meeny, miney, mo.'

Verse 23: "Are they servants of Christ? (I am speaking as if I were out of my mind.) So am I, above *and beyond measure*... [Then he says what he went through. Okay, he's saying in so many words, 'Bring in these apostles. Let's go ahead and strip them down to the waist and let's examine their ministry.' Here's what Paul did.] ...in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in imprisonments more frequent, in deaths often. Five times from *the Jews* I received forty *stripes* less one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I spent in the deep" (vs 24-25). How's that for a wonderful Christian life? You want to be an apostle like Paul?

Verse 26: "*I have been* in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from *my own race*, in perils from *the Gentiles*, in perils in *the city*, in perils in *the desert*, in perils on *the sea*, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness... [Of course, if you've been stoned and if you've been beaten, your back has got scars and you have painfulness. And there wasn't any Alevé around at that time either.] ...in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (vs 26-27). How about all the palatial things that ministers like to bring to themselves today?

Verse 28: "Besides *all* these things from the *world* outside, pressing on me daily is the care of all the Churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I do not burn? If it is necessary for me to boast, I will boast *in* the things concerning my weakness. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is blessed into the ages of *eternity*, knows that I do not lie" (vs 28-31).

If anyone starts getting lifted up, if they're a minister or an elder or a teacher, why don't you read 2-Cor. 11 on your knees and *ask God for mercy and kindness and forgiveness*. And if that if these things come upon you or me that *God will give us the strength to bear up under it*. That's what it has to be.

(go to the next track)

It was brought to my attention that I need to clarify what I mean—a corporation. I mean an abuse of a corporation. You must be incorporated to function in the world, in the business world. But that corporation is not the governing body of the Church. That is necessary *to conduct business* in the world. The two should be separate. But when they're married together and then the corporate structure is applied to the Church, then you can get yourself into trouble with over-lordship and all of these other

things that come along with it. So, I thought I would just give that little clarification.

Let's look at a couple of other things here we need to cover. Let's talk about what Christ said to the apostles concerning *church government*. We just read Paul's attitude and what it was. That doesn't mean that there weren't elders and deacons and those who served, because we saw he had a meeting with all the elders of Ephesus and what he warned them. It just means that it is not good today to take the corporate image of the world and make that the structure of the Church.

- there needs to be order
- there needs to be understanding
- there needs to be serving

But the thing that we saw that Peter was against was the *self-exaltation* of the elders. He gets this from here in Matt. 20, as well as John 21.

Here's where the mother of the sons of Zebedee wanted to come and get an inside track for her sons to be on the right hand and on the left hand. Then He told them that He had a baptism to be baptized with, and He asked, 'Are you able to be baptized with the baptism that I'm going to be baptized by?' (Matt. 20:22). And they said, 'We are, we're able.' What happened to James? *He was beheaded by Herod!* What happened to John? He lived a lot longer, but they threw him in boiling oil, and God delivered him out of it. Then gave him the book of Revelation.

Matthew 20:24: "And after hearing *this*, the ten were indignant against the two brothers." Anger can be in two ways:

1. They were angry because they didn't there first to ask, or
2. They're angry because those two brothers were putting themselves forward when they shouldn't have

But they used the cover of nice, sweet mother.

Verse 25: "But Jesus called them to *Him and* said, 'You know that the rulers of the nations exercise **lordship** over them... ['kata kurio'—*downward lordship*. In other words, a dictatorship.] ...and the **great ones** exercise... [the religious ones] ...exercise **authority** over them.... ['kata exousiazō'—*authority*] ...However, it shall not be this way among you...' (vs 25-26). Here He sets the tone of what it should be. And I think that whatever the Christian church in the world is, most of it has lost that, too—isn't that true? Even the Churches of God, many have lost it, too—haven't they?

"...but whoever would become great among you, let him be your servant; And whoever would be first among you, let him be your slave.... [to serve,

to help the Church; not everybody served that one individual] ...Just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life *as* a ransom for many” (vs 26-28). How do you do that then? I think it’s very interesting when you go through and re-read the Gospels and re-study the Gospels, and put things together.

Matthew 16:24: “And Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desire to come after Me, let him deny himself... [In other words, if you want to serve Christ, you do it God’s way.] ...and let him take up his cross and follow Me.’... [whatever the difficulty is] ...For whoever desires to save his life shall lose it; but whoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his life?... [Self explanatory] ...Or what shall a man give in exchange for his life? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall render to everyone according to his doings. Truly I say to you...” (vs 24-28). Then there were some that would see the vision of transfiguration.

Here’s another one right along those lines. Here’s something that happens. You can see it happen over and over and over again. This is a life principle everywhere in the world:

Luke 14:11: “For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled...” Have we seen that over and over again? In politics, in religion, in sports, in churches, in business? *Yes, indeed!*

Verse 26: ...If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, and, in addition, his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not carry his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (vs 26-27).

There are some things that are going be difficult. There are some things that are going to be trials, whatever they may be. Then He talks about counting the cost. Once we’ve done that and we’re in the body of Christ, let’s see how we are to be. This is the key that helps us through everything. Because remember, love is the greatest. And love is that which edifies. Love is that which is understanding. (1-Cor. 13)—the love chapter. That shows the expression of love and also as one of the greatest chapters in overcoming.

This is what is so important in our relationship with God, because we are to have fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. That’s what our relationship needs to be. With that then, we can with the Spirit of God reflect the fruit of the Spirit:

- love
- joy

- peace
- longsuffering
- understanding
- helping
- serving
- giving
- learning

All of those things together and here’s how it’s done.

John 15:1, Jesus said: “I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman.” Go back to Isa. 5 and there Israel is likened to a vine that God planted, that was supposed to bring forth wonderful fruit that was given the best of everything. When He went out to get the fruit, what did He find? *Wild grapes*. Sometimes that’s the way we end up being, but we can recover ourselves. The Father is the one Who is doing the work within us and Christ is doing the work within us—two parts of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 2: “He takes away every branch in Me *that* does not bear fruit; but He cleanses each one that bears fruit, in order that it may bear more fruit.” If you live in a farming area or a ranching area or a vineyard area you see that. Every year they go out and prune the vines. The older that the trunk of the vine becomes, the better the wine. We can liken that to the Church. We’re to have a good strong trunk and we’re to bring forth good fruit.

Verse 3: “You are already clean through the word that I have spoken to you.” That’s why we need to study. We pray—we’re speaking to God. We study—God is speaking to us, because these are the words of God.

Verse 4: “Dwell in Me... [or live in Me, either one] ...and I in you... [That’s by the Spirit of God. Because God is doing an eternal work in us in preparing us for the Kingdom of God.] ...As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, but only if it remains in the vine, neither can you *bear fruit* unless you are dwelling in Me.” Always have to remain connected to Christ.

Verse 5: “I am the vine, *and* you *are* the branches. The one who is dwelling in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; because apart from Me you can do nothing.” I’ll tell you one way that we can really gauge whether we’re growing in grace and knowledge or not: ***When we come to understand that in everything, in God and through Christ we live and move and have our being.*** Everything! That’s what’s important.

This brings us into the relationship with God. This brings us into the fellowship that we are to have daily. Sometimes a prayer is answered, but it isn’t delivered until later. With that in mind, you look back at all of your prayers that you have prayed

down through time and you will see they have all been answered, but they've been delivered at different times.

Whatever your prayer is. I know one man, he just couldn't think. He just didn't understand how to think. He couldn't figure anything out and he prayed and said, 'Oh, God, help me to think. I just don't know how to think. Help me to think.' He gradually began to teach him how to think. Answered that prayer over a period of time and is still answering it.

Whatever it is, *God will hear it!* God is a God of promises and His Word is true and endures forever. That's why we're to dwell in Him. "...neither *can* you *bear* fruit unless you are dwelling in Me. I am the vine, *and* you *are* the branches. The one who is dwelling in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; because apart from Me you can do If anyone does not dwell in Me, he is cast out as a branch, and is dried up; and men gather them and cast *them* into a fire and they are burned" (vs 4-6).

There's one other process. Through repentance, even if you are cut off, you can take and be grafted back in. Now just like you plant a seed, you water it, you don't know how it grows. You take a branch from a tree, you put it in the ground and you water it, and in many cases it'll start growing, sending down roots and it will grow into be another tree. If things have been difficult and you feel as though you've been cut off and lost, then what you need to do is come to yourself and repent and you can be grafted back in. You can be put into the good soil and you can start growing again. But if not:

"...and is dried up; and men gather them and cast *them* into a fire, and they are burned. If you dwell in Me..." (vs 6-7). This is what God wants as the prevailing thing within His church, brethren. That's more important than preaching the Gospel to the world, because the Gospel can't be preached to the world unless there is the Church working together the way that God wants it. Then preaching the Gospel to the world can come. You can't neglect the one for the other. You can't put one over the other. Jesus said, 'Go into all the world and make disciples and preach the Gospel'—the two things.

Verse 7: "If you dwell in Me, and My words... [this is what is to be in our mind] ...dwell in you, you shall ask whatever you desire, and it shall come to pass for you." If you've had some prayers that are a long time being answered, then go to these passages like this, and in John 14, and claim the promise. Now be sure and repent, be sure and examine yourself. But you can always remind God, 'God, You have promised. God, You have given Your Word.' It will come to pass.

Verse 8: "In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples."

That's why Sabbath services then, when we come together, when we're doing this every day of the week, Sabbath services become a joy, not a stress. Sabbath services become a learning opportunity, not a regurgitation of something you've heard a thousand times before.

If the ministers and teachers are doing this, and learning and growing in grace and knowledge, then they'll be able to teach the brethren. We are to learn, constantly learn, constantly add to what we have.

Verse 9: "As the Father has loved Me... [You get down and out and you are at the end of your rope, and we're coming to a time when people are going to come to the end of their ropes, because of the situations that are going to happen in the world, remember this]: ...**As the Father has loved Me...** [Did they have perfect love between one another? *Yes, indeed!*] ...**I also have loved you; live in My love.**" We can also summarize it this way, so write this down:

1. *stand in grace*
2. *walk in faith*
3. *believe in hope*
4. *live in love*

Take those four things, four simple things, and everything from the New Testament flows from that. If we understand that, sometimes just remind yourself of it: *stand in grace, walk in faith, believe in hope, live in love!*

Verse 10: "If you keep My commandments..." What's the greatest commandment that we need to keep among ourselves? *Loving God!* But among ourselves?

John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you: that you love one another in the same way that I have loved you." That's how you are to love one another. If we do that and we don't come in with an ax to grind, a private doctrine to whisper into someone's ear, having a grudge against anyone for anything—if we forgive and have forbearance—*we'll be loving each other as Jesus loved them.* That's what it's to be. When the brethren get together it is to be a joyous occasion, not an oppressive, stressful event.

John 15:10: "If you keep My commandments, **you shall live in My love;** just as I have kept My Father's commandments and live in His love." This doesn't mean you aren't going to have troubles. *This is the solution to your troubles!* This doesn't mean that friction might not come up between brethren, because we're all individuals. We all have strengths and weaknesses. *But love gives us the solution to resolve it!* As you go to your brother and sister and say, 'I got carried away, I'm sorry. I

didn't mean it. I said something I shouldn't have said. Forgive me.' If someone comes to you like that, what do you do? Say, 'Oh, of course I forgive you.' Give them a big hug.

That's how love covers a multitude of sins!
It gets rid of them. Love is not this little weak namby-pamby thing that accepts sin, and that's how it's covered. *No!* Love is that which gets rid of and covers sin through:

- forgiveness
- forbearance
- repentance

This is how we need to live our lives. There it is right there and this is all part of the New Covenant.

"...shall live in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and live in His love. These things I have spoken to you, in order that My joy may dwell in you, and *that* your joy may be full. **This is My commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you**" (vs 10-12).

There we have it again. Always remember this: If it's repeated, it's important. There we have that. What I want you to do, brethren, with all the things that I've covered today concerning the Church wars, and so forth, what we need to do is this:

- express love to them
- help teach them what they need to know in case there's something bothering them
- help them to understand the things that are happening
- turn them to Christ

It's too easy to look at a person and blame this one and blame that one, and so forth. That will help restore them to Christ. What they do and where they attend, that's up to them. Here's what Jesus did, and we need to really grasp the significance of what He did.

Verse 13: "No one has greater love than this: that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do whatever I command you" (vs 13-14). We're the friends of God, friends of Christ.

- God loves you
- God cares for you
- God has called you
- God is watching over you
- God has given you His Holy Spirit
- God has given you the Word of God
- God is giving you life and time to grow and change and overcome

Brethren, that's what it's all about. So all of these things that we're prone to do, ***let's set all of those aside and let's concentrate on loving and serving***

God and loving and serving each other and do what we can to extinguish the Church wars.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Revelation 2:1-2, 4-6, 12-16, 19-23
- 2) Revelation 3:7-12
- 3) 2-Corinthians 1:24
- 4) 1-Peter 5:1-4
- 5) Acts 20:27-30
- 6) 2-Corinthians 2:17
- 7) 2-Corinthians 3:1-2
- 8) 2-Corinthians 4:1-5
- 9) 2-Corinthians 11:3-5, 13-31
- 10) Matthew 20:24-28
- 11) Matthew 16:24-28
- 12) Luke 14:11, 26-27
- 13) John 15:1-10
- 14) John 13:34
- 15) John 15:10-14

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Matthew 18
- John 21
- Matthew 20:22
- 1-Corinthians 13
- Isaiah 5
- John 14

Also referenced:

- Sermon: *God's Justice System, Redeemer, Blood Avenger* (Michael Heiss)
- Sermon Series: *Transhumanism*
- Booklet: *Is the Ministry God's Government?*
- Book: *The Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren

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