

How to Solve Conflicts

Fred R. Coulter—April 28, 2012

Let's look at how God operates. If you love God, keep His commandments, obey Him, you receive understanding. If you try and add to God's way with traditions and teachings of men, understanding withdraws.

When God gives a warning and a call for repentance and there is no change, understanding is further withdrawn. Plus, then in the case you can see like what happened to Israel and Judah in the book of Jeremiah, they come under more and more of the penalties of sinning against God. Just like the world today. We're all under the penalties because the whole world is in the hand of the wicked one and going against God.

That also affects understanding of just normal things concerning the Ten Commandments. The further that people remove themselves away from God and obedience, the more that they become progressively blinded. It's automatic, because we're dealing with living laws; likewise with the Sabbath; likewise with the Holy Days.

What is an important key concerning the Sabbath? *An important key concerning the Sabbath is this your relationship with God all during the week!* Not just coming to Church on Sabbath, because Sabbath is the day to meet on. That's important. That's not to downplay that. But this also applies to the teachers, to the elders, that they likewise have to maintain their relationship with God on a daily basis:

- in prayer
- in study
- in understanding the Word of God
- in serving the brethren

They must also be growing in grace and knowledge!

I'm going to refer to some Scriptures that you can just write down and you can read. Paul says to the Jews who resume themselves to be teachers, he said, 'You who teach another, do you not teach yourself?' (Rom. 2). We're to learn; we're to grow in grace and knowledge.

This is not grow and grace and knowledge on the Sabbath Day as a singular day. But we're to grow in grace and knowledge *in our daily relationship with God*. The Sabbath becomes important and becomes fulfilling when you have a living relationship, loving God with all your heart, mind, soul and being; loving your neighbor as yourself; loving the brethren as Christ has loved us; and even loving your enemy.

Loving your enemy is difficult. That doesn't mean you surrender to him. You can *do good* to him if you have opportunity. That's seen every time. That's why when Israel was fighting against the nations against them they surrendered to the Israelites. The Germans fled by the millions to surrender to the Allies in the West because they knew what was coming from Russia. That's part of loving your enemy. Our relationship with God is also very important in these things. This is our personal relationship that we have with God.

Let's talk about our relationship *to each other*. This is one of the reasons why I wanted to come today, because one of the keynote things that is happening within the Churches of God and with us—maybe not so much here but in other locations—is that brethren are fighting among brethren. And churches are fighting among churches. That affects us and that affects our relationship with God. That affects then our understanding. We need to understand that.

Let's look at a couple of Scriptures here that's very important. We see this, because Satan who is the 'prince of the power of the air' also knows that the chances of getting us to follow false doctrine are going to be very difficult. However, if he gets us mad and upset at each other and fighting each other, he's going to cause problems. We won't be able to grow in grace and knowledge. Our Sabbaths will become a burden; our fellowship with different people will become strained; all of these things.

Let's think about what happened to each of when we went through the Church Wars. Some people have not gone through the Church Wars. When they come in to be with us we need to make sure that we are healed from the Church Wars.

- How did you feel when you first understood that you were betrayed by the minister?
- How did you feel when you found out that there was corruption and sin where it ought not be?
- How did you feel when you were disillusioned?

*That's hard to take—*isn't it? That has left a scar with you, regardless of how large or how small it is right now. Let's hope it gets small. And in that then, it causes us to have strained relations with each other and it takes away from the brotherly love that we really need.

Here is a good example of good brotherly love. That is wonderful to see, but we also have to realize this. Here is what Paul says in Galatians 5:15: “But if you bite and devour one another, watch out lest you be consumed by one another...” That’s why the Church Wars are so devastating. There are two reasons why it is so devastating:

1. There needed to be a stronger relationship between you and God at the time that these things took place
2. You may have been in a low relationship with God and it compounded your reactions

That’s why! Where are some of the brethren that have left? Especially down in the area of Pasadena? It’s important that we can point to the ministry and blame them—and they have all the blame that they can receive—and upon those who are teachers there is always the sterner judgment.

But we have to accept the responsibility for our part in it too—right? During that time there was gossip and backbiting, all kinds of things going on. It was the absolute antithesis of that ‘all men shall know you because you love one another.’ What happened? *God scattered us to try us, to see if we would be faithful to Him!* That’s why I wrote the first edition of *Lord, What Should I Do?* directly for church members who had gone through the Church Wars.

Verse 15: “But if you bite and devour one another, watch out lest you be consumed by one another. Now, *this* I say, walk by *the* Spirit... [Be led by the Spirit. The Spirit comes and is maintained through your relationship with God, and that is with prayer and study, and so forth.] ...and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (vs 15-16).

We still have to fight against the lust of the flesh. We still have to fight against human nature that we have. These are things that we should bring to God and let Him, with the washing of the water by the Word:

- cleanse our minds
- cleanse our relationship
- cleanse the things that we do

on a daily basis

To just give you an example of how an innocent thing can start something that is not true. Recently I sent out a couple of CDs with two sermons by one of our elders back in the Northeast. Some got to speculating: ‘I wonder if Fred is grooming him to replace him?’ Never a phone call to me to ask. *No, I’m not!*

I’ll tell you what my prayer everyday is. I’m well aware of how old I am, which means I don’t know how long I’m going to live. I need to take care

of myself the best that I can. One of the goals as far as the Church is concerned is that *we must leave the next generation lots and lots of material that explains the Truth*, because we don’t know what’s going to happen. There are no more colleges. There are no more schools. Church becomes the school and the college. My prayer everyday is:

- Lord, I don’t know how long I’m going to live, thank you for today.
- Help me to understand what I need to do.
- Help us to know where we need to go.
- Help us to do the things that please You.
- Lead us with Your Holy Spirit.
- Guide us with Your Word.
- Whomever you want to send to replace me, if that’s the case, then make it evident to me so I will know. And please let it not be an infiltrator.

But you see how something like that can come up when someone inadvertently said something about another brother in the Church, or sister in the Church. If it’s something irritating or it’s something that is baseless, how should you respond to it? First thing you should say is: Have you talked with the person? ‘Well, no, I’m afraid to do that.’ Christ can give you the courage, but that’s what you need to do.

One of the reasons that the Churches of God are in such disarray is because they were never taught to do that and yet it’s in the Word of God, is it not? Isn’t that true? I’m talking to those of you who have been in the Church a long time. That’s good. What we want to do with the scars of the Church Wars is this:

- let them heal
- don’t be picking the scab
- put them further and further in the distance to the past

Some sins are so ingrained in our minds that the best that memory can become is a distance memory. But you have to learn the lesson. You can’t live in the past. You can’t drag the problems of the past into today and into tomorrow.

Let’s come to Matthew 5 and let’s see what Jesus said and how important that it is to God. Is God offering us eternal life to rule the world and be with Him through all eternity? *Yes, indeed!* He’s blessed us with everything that we need, and we need to be using it. But one of the things that the Church of God never taught people to do, which is this: *You* have a relationship with God the Father, and *you* are to be self-controlled, filled with the Spirit of God, led by the Spirit of God in your own personal life every day. That’s what God wants!

This way then we can all stand on our own two feet—correct? *Yes!* We all have difficulties to overcome. I do, you do, everybody does. We always will until the resurrection takes place. When we come to the end of our lives, we're going to end up like Peter, not crucified. He was gung ho, he was ready to do everything and he did. He did a lot of great things. But Jesus said, 'When you are old and gray, someone is going to lead you by the hand where you don't want to go.'

When you see people who are in various conditions leading up to the end of their life, we have to remember all flesh is grass. When we get older, we're going to be just like grass and the flower and there's going to come a day we're going to be withered. Just like the flower has served its purpose and has glorified God, the flower will fall off. But the seed is there.

Remember, it's *eternal life* that God is going to give us. That's why we're here and we keep that. Let's see how important that this is in relationship to our lives with one another. Because the truth is this: we cannot take our minds and compartmentalize our brains. 'This is for God—this is for my wife—this is for my children, this is for my boss, this is for my enemies whom I hate.' As James says, you cannot have fresh water and salt water coming out of the same fountain.

That's why the sermons that I have given, *The Washing of the Water by the Word*. I pray about that every day for myself. We have got to have that everyday. We cannot say we love God and hate our brother. We cannot say, 'I love God and just wait until I see that person in Church, and I'm going to give him a piece of my mind.' Why don't you pray about it and go to him humbly and ask God to help you? This is what has happened because the Church has never taught the brethren. It's evident in many, many places and many churches.

So Jesus says here, Matthew 5:22: "But I say to you, everyone who is angry with his brother without cause shall be subject to judgment... [God's judgment] ...Now *you have heard it said*, 'Whoever shall say to his brother, "Raca," shall be subject to *the judgment of the council*.'" But *I say to you*, whoever shall say, '*You fool*,' shall be subject to the fire of Gehenna. For this reason, if you bring your gift to the altar..." (vs 22-23). We can liken this to prayer today. Do not our prayers go before God? *Yes!* Read Rev. 5: to the golden altar, come up before God.

"...and there remember that your brother has something against you... [or you have something against your brother, either way] ...leave your gift there before the altar, and go *your way*; first be

reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (vs 23-24).

See how important that is? *It's so important that that stymies your relationship with God*—does it not? Your prayers are not going to God the way that they should—that's important. I do believe, brethren—ministers and brethren—all come to repentance, all use what God has said with His Word, that God is not going to add to us. Why should He add to us with the circumstances the way that they are? I'm sure God is going to add to us here, because circumstances here are much better than in other Churches of God, that's self-evident. But that's how important that it really is.

Let's come to Mark 11; Jesus mentioned this also in Matt. 6; let's see what God says. There needs to be forgiveness; let's see how it is. When we pray and ask for forgiveness, we want forgiveness. God gives it to us—doesn't He? *Yes!* There's something that may hold back that forgiveness though.

Mark 11:25: "But when you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive..." Some of you have had some experiences in your family when you were a child and even some of those people no longer are alive—correct? But your *lack of forgiveness* still is a block between you and God. *So, forgive!* You've heard it said, 'They haven't come to me yet.' You go to them.

Forgive! "...so that your Father Who *is* in heaven may forgive you your offenses. For if you do not forgive... [Remember, what did Jesus say about His words? '*Heaven and earth will pass. My words won't pass.*'] ...neither will your Father Who *is* in heaven forgive you your offenses'" (vs 25-26). Think about that! That's what God says. That's how important it is.

How do we react when a problem comes up, because they're going to come up? Let's also understand this. I've said it before, but it's true. If we were not called of God into the Church of God, it's very unlikely that any of us would have each other for friends, let alone considered brothers and sisters—correct? *Yes!*

This is why God gives these instructions to us, so that we can learn to love God and love each other. What if God did like some people do, say, 'I love you but I won't love you until you shape up here.' *No!* What does He do? If you have a problem or difficulty, you pray about it.

- God helps you come to a solution
- God opens a door for you.
- God leads you with His Spirit

Likewise, with what we're doing with each other. When a problem comes into Church, don't fall into denial. 'Oh, no, not me! I didn't do it! That other

person over there did it.’ Here’s one of the biggest difficulties that you have in personal relations, which is this. If something that comes up that is difficult, rather than praying about it and privately going to the person—and we’ll see this in a little bit here in Matt. 18—then you avoid that person. Have you ever seen that? Yes, come into Church and see that person, ‘Oh, oh,’ and you turn and go the other way. You’ve never done that? We’ve all done it—right? Because we were never taught, ‘Go to your brother or your sister privately.’

Here’s another adding to that problem that is difficult. When there is a personal problem, rather than solve it, they find another Church of God and bring it there. Sooner or later, you’re going to run out of Churches of God to go to. Then you’re going to have to face the situation—correct?

Yes, there are some things we need to do. Here’s something that is absolutely true. If the ministers are not teaching what is true, then yes, you should leave. If they’re not adhering to the sound words of Jesus Christ and there is refusal of repentance, then you have to leave. If you have brought the things up, asked questions about it, and you’re zonked on the head with a mallet and told, ‘How dare you bring that up.’ Here’s the criteria for that, not just because you have a problem with a brother or sister that you don’t want to heal.

But here we get into another situation, 1-Timothy 6:3: “If anyone teaches any different doctrine, and does not adhere to sound words, *even those* of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine *that is* according to godliness, He is proud and knows nothing. Rather he has a morbid attraction to questions and disputes over words, from which come envy, arguments, blasphemy, wicked suspicions, vain reasonings of men who have corrupted in *their* minds and *are* destitute of the truth—*men* who believe that gain is godliness. From such withdraw *yourself*” (vs 3-5).

We’ve all had to do that—haven’t we? And those things have taken place. Right now they’re happening in Protestant-ville big time. These people, when they come, they’re going to have scars, too. They’re going to have difficulties that they need to overcome. We’ll come back to this again here in just a little bit. But I’m just saying, there does come a time when you do have to separate.

Let’s see about our personal relations with other brethren and each other: Husband and wife, children, whatever the case may be. Matt. 18 is a whole chapter on personal relations and God’s part in it as well.

Matthew 18:1: “At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Who then is *the* greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?’.... [‘Is it I, Master?’

Notice, Jesus did not answer the question. He gave an example.] ...And after calling a little child to *Him*, Jesus set them in their midst, and said, ‘Truly I say to you, unless you are converted...’” (vs 1-3). Just put there all the trials and difficulties that you go through are to help you become converted and those are all opportunities to change and grow and overcome.

“...and become as little children... [That doesn’t take away from being wise as a serpent, harmless as a dove. That means you’re looking to God. He is your Father, you are His children.] ...there is no way that you shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, whoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. And whoever shall receive one such little child in My name receives Me. But whoever shall cause one of these little ones who believe in Me to offend, it would be better for him that a millstone be hung around his neck and he be sunk in the depths of the sea” (vs 3-6).

Now again you see the problems and difficulties involved here. That’s why they have to be solved. They’re going to come. As long as we’re in the flesh, they’re going to come. I don’t think anyone here has ever lost their temper—have you? *Sure!* Why did you lose it? Did you get up that morning and say, ‘I’m going to lose my temper this morning. Today is really going to be a bad day.’ *No, you got up, thought it was a pretty good day!* You start out your day and then something happens and WHAM! We’ll talk about how to solve that a little later, too.

But then what happens? You go take it out on everybody else. Your wife comes in for breakfast and she looks at you and you say, ‘Don’t bother me.’ Or likewise the husband comes in, and the wife says, ‘Don’t touch me.’

Christ does not want v 8 to be done. But He shows this from the point of view that if you don’t do it God’s way, this is the only way that it’s going to be solved: Verse 8: “And if your hand or your foot causes you to offend, cut it off and cast *it* from you; for it is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed than to have two hands or two feet *and* be cast into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to offend, pluck it out and throw *it* away; for it is better for you to enter into life one-eyed than to have two eyes *and* be cast into the fire of Gehenna. Take heed *that* you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that their angels in heaven continually look upon the face of My Father, Who is in heaven” (vs 9-10).

These are pretty strong words—aren’t they? God wants us to solve it spiritually, not do hacking and cutting. You can take out both eyes, you can cut

off both hands, both feet, both arms, both legs, and you can lay blind in a hospital bed and be filled with hate. God obviously doesn't want that. What does He want? He says that He goes after the one who has gone astray (vs 11-13). *Christ wants us back!*

Here is what Christ came to do. This is why He was anointed. This is why we are here, brethren. He went into the synagogue (Luke 4:16; gave Him the book of Isaiah (v 17).

Luke 4:18: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; for this reason, He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal those who are broken-hearted, to proclaim pardon to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind... [spiritually and physically] ...to send forth in deliverance those who have been crushed, To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord*" (vs 18-19). That's what God wants us to do, the same thing.

Matthew 18:14: "Likewise, it is not *the* will of your Father Who *is* in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." God doesn't want that. God wants them healed. We're very happy to help people who have been offended, who have been brutalized, who have been lorded over by a hierarchy. Help them recover and establish a relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Here is what we are to do. He brings it into an interpersonal thing with each one of us, v 15: "So then, if your brother sins against you... [Get on the phone to the minister, the very first thing you do and report him. *No! No! No!*] ...go and show him his fault between you and him alone...."

- How do I do that?
- I've never done that, what do I do?
 - ✓ first of all you pray about it
 - ✓ then you examine your own heart and mind concerning it

- Is it a real fault?
- Is it something very serious?

or

- Is it something that you can overlook?

1-John 5 says, 'If you see a brother sin a sin not unto death, pray for him.' It's not a sin unto death to lose your temper. It's not a sin unto death that the person didn't conduct his manner in the way that he should. It's not a sin unto death if you have been cut off short. Pray for them.

If they sin a sin unto death, don't pray for them. We'll talk about forbearance a little later, because there are some things we are to do in forbearance as well.

What you do is you go to him *alone*. That also means do not talk about it to anyone else. Don't go up to someone and say, 'Did you know what

happened to me last Sabbath at Church?' Or 'Do you know what happened when I talked to so-and-so on the phone?' *No!* If you're offended or sinned against, you go to the individual. What does this do? This gives you an opportunity so that you can get the beam out of your eye and then you can have things in right perspective. What if the person offended you and didn't even know it? Could that happen? What if they offended you and did it deliberately? *You still go to them!*

What does that provide? *That provides a one-to-one responsibility to each other.* Then you can discuss it. You can clear up any misunderstandings. You can forgive one another and you can restore your relationship. That's what Christ wants. He doesn't want us to go around hacking off our limbs and gouging out our eyes!

"...go and show him his fault between you and him alone. If he is willing to hear you, you have gained your brother" (v 15). What is the easiest way to do this? *The easiest way to do this is by simply saying, 'I would really like to talk to you, because we need to have a Matt. 18.'* What happens when you hear that? 'Oh, really?' That's important! So, between the two of you, you solve the problem, forgive one another, and love one another—right? Isn't that true? *That's what God wants!*

Verse 16: "But if he will not listen, take with you one or two others, so that in *the* mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." How do you do that? You get someone that you know is spiritually strong and understands the Word of God, has an attitude of love, the Spirit of love from God. You say, 'Okay, we will go.' If he won't listen to you, then you say, 'Jesus tells us that if you won't listen, we need to get one or two others and come back together at this. We need to do so. We do need to get this resolved so that we both can be right before Jesus Christ and God the Father.' Then you go ahead and do that. The next step, generally 99 times out of a 100 or 999 times out of 1,000 you will not need to do the next step.

Verse 17: "And if he fails to listen to them, tell *it* to the church. But if he also fails to listen to the church, let him be to you as the heathen and the tax collector." That's how God wants things resolved.

Sometimes this can be where someone writes something on a blog. Someone wrote something very nasty to me, which was completely untrue and I responded to him and told him that it was not true and that he knows nothing about what he is talking about and he knows nothing about the work having to do with the Bible and saying it's my own bias that I put into the Bible when it is really based upon Truth.

I let him know that he was putting out there things to other people that was contrary to the Truth. I said, ‘You don’t know. Before I even started translating the New Testament I studied Greek for 16 years to know.’ And Truth is what we need, not this fighting back and forth. Of course, he didn’t apologize. But I went to him directly. That’s how we need to handle things, *directly*.

In the case of the Internet, many times you can’t meet them personally. But within a local fellowship group, text messages are not the way to resolve differences. It may be a way to set an appointment to resolve differences. This way we learn to love each other, pray for one another, help one another. Then when we come to Sabbath services, Sabbath is a joy.

- we can learn
- we can grow
- we can overcome

(go to the next track)

Let’s see how Christ looks at this. This becomes very important and there are many principles we can get out of this verse. He says, Matt. 18:18: “Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on the earth will have already been bound in heaven; and whatever you shall loose on the earth will have already been loosed in heaven.”

In other words, we go by the Word of God, which gives us the binding and the loosing. If we come and solve a problem in forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration, God binds it. If it is that there is not reconciliation, that it cannot be solved and you have to go to the extreme thing with it, then God will bind that, because that’s the procedure that He has set.

Then He says this, v 19: “Again I say to you, that if two of you on earth shall agree concerning any matter that they wish to request, it shall be done for them by My Father, Who *is* in heaven.” Very simple! You agree to forgive one another, it’s done! You agree on certain terms to buy and sell something, then follow through and do it. God will bind it.

What did Jesus say in Matt. 5 concerning our ‘yes’ and our ‘no’? ‘Let your ‘yes’ be *yes* and your ‘no’ be *no!* Anything more than that is from the wicked one’—right? *Yes!* This is how we develop the mind of Christ. Not just the Word of God going in, but the practice of the Word of God going out and interrelating with each other in our lives. Then being with each other becomes a joy. Sabbath becomes something you look forward to. Sabbath becomes a time of

- learning
- loving

- serving
- giving

This is what God wants. The world out there is plenty bad enough. The world is going to come crashing in plenty soon enough so we need to learn to love each other. That’s what Jesus said.

The only way you learn to love each other is learn how to solve your problems. If you never learn how to solve your problems, have you learned to love? *No!* You’ve learned to be dismissive.

Verse 21: “Then Peter came to Him *and* said, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Until seven times?’” Peter probably thought he was being pretty generous at seven times. This may be some small thing, obviously it’s not a big thing. It’s not an expensive thing.

Verse 22: “Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you until seven times, but until seventy times seven.’” What does that picture? *That pictures God’s mercy and grace to us*—does it not? Do we not every day ask God to forgive us our sins? *Yes!* We should also ask God with the washing of the water by the Word to cleanse our minds.

Some things cannot be entirely removed, but you can forget and clean out of your mind the emotional impact, the bitterness, the hatred, and those things can be removed from you. Think about the Apostle Paul. When he was Saul what was he doing? Persecuting the Church, hauling them off to prison, taking them to the high priest, consenting to the death of Stephen—correct?

After he was called and had all of his sins forgiven, he had a lot he had to forget. One of them was the indelible memory of watching Stephen being stoned. How could you use that in a positive way if you had experienced that like Saul did, who became Paul? You use that as a motivation

- *to serve*
- *to forgive*
- *to preach*
- *to teach*
- *to never give up*

Likewise for the indelible things that you go through, ask God to help them to be forgotten. That’s what the Apostle Paul did.

I covered Philippians 3 somewhat during the Days of Unleavened Bread, so we’re just going to review it here a little bit. This becomes important to grasp so that you do not cling to the things in the past. They’re not going to come back. They are not going to be improved by your dwelling upon them.

Look at it this way, simplest way to look at it: You drink a glass of water. Can you drink that

glass of water again? *No, it's gone!* Nothing you can do about it. Same way with a situation that is something that you had to walk away from, couldn't be resolved, couldn't be redeemed. Someone really did something to you on the job or personally to you in your life. Your neighbor did this, or whatever it may be and you couldn't resolve it.

So, you've got this in your mind. The Apostle Paul had a lot of those things and he had a lot of things that he considered were good, that were considered lawful, that were considered official. But notice what he says here.

Philippians 3:3: "For we are the circumcision..." Remember, he had all the traditions of Judaism to repent of. He had all the persecution of the Church to repent of. He had the obedience to the high priest to repent of. He had his political access, climbing in Judaism ahead of many of the fellows that were of his own age and contemporaries of the time. All the striving, all the lifting up, all the things that he thought were good.

"...we are the circumcision, who serve God in *the* spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in *the* flesh" (v 3)—the physical things. It doesn't matter what a person's personality is. If they're not converted, they have a good personality, but they're not converted. What if they're converted and don't have a good personality? *Love them, help them, encourage them!* That's what God wants.

What's also important is this: we all want God to accept us—don't we? Even the Protestants do. They have the song *Just As I Am*. God doesn't want you just as you are. That's why He's called you to change. But everyone wants to be accepted. Everyone wants to be loved. If you can't find it in the Church of God, where are you going to find it? Isn't that true? *Yes, indeed!*

He said, 'I had a lot to trust in', v 5: "Circumcised on *the* eighth day; of *the* race of Israel, from the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; with respect to law, a Pharisee; With respect to zeal, persecuting the church; with respect to righteousness that is in the law, blameless" (vs 5-6).

But notice, even the things that were gain. So I call your attention to the things that you have gone through in different Churches of God. Even the things that seemed to be of gain maybe were tainted with so many things of men and authority and harshness that it took away from it.

But notice what he said, v 7: "Yet, the things that were gain to me, these things I have counted *as* loss for the sake of Christ. But then truly, I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count *them* as dung..." (vs

7-8). Pile of manure! Are any of those things going to be compared to eternal life? *You can't!* Then to be found in His righteousness, to know the power of His resurrection (v 10). He says, 'I haven't attained.'

This is what needs to be, v 13: "Brethren, I do not count myself as having attained; but *this* one thing *I do*—forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to the things that are ahead. I press toward *the* goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (vs 13-14).

That's how we can be perfect-minded. That's what we need to do when we have circumstances like we're discussing here in Matt. 18. Then He gives a parable of the man who owed 10,000 talents and was forgiven. Rather than being grateful and running out and saying, 'I've been forgiven. I'm going to forgive everyone that owes me something.' What a great thing that would have been! No, he went out and said, 'You owe me 100 pence.' Threw him in jail. Here's a principle that is true. He wouldn't listen to his pleadings.

Matthew 18:31: "Now, when his fellow servants saw the things *that* had taken place, they were greatly distressed; and they went to their lord *and* related all that had taken place. Then his lord called him *and* said to him, 'You wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt, because you implored me.... [he repented] ...Were you not also obligated...'" (vs 31-33). God works upon what is called *reciprocity* in many things.

- You love God—He loves you. *Reciprocity!*
- He forgives you—you forgive others. *Reciprocity!*
- God gives you everything for your physical life—you tithe and give offerings so that others may receive. *Reciprocity!*

'Freely give, because you have freely received.' That's how God operates. That way love is spread around, kindness is spread around, understanding is spread around. We end up with fewer problems and difficulties because we're not holding something against anyone.

"...obligated to have compassion on your fellow servant, even as I had compassion on you?" (v 33). You can't get on your knees and say, 'Lord, forgive me my sins,' and then get up off your knees and say, 'I don't forgive you.' Can't do that. Go work it out.

Here's what happened, v 34: "And in anger, his lord delivered him up to the tormentors, until he should pay all that he owed to him. Likewise shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each *of* you does not forgive his brother's offenses from the heart" (vs 34-35). That's what God wants us to do.

Let's see how we do it. I want you to put in there along side Eph. 4, Col. 3 because it says we are to have forbearance with one another. The reason that we have all of these things is for one goal: ***to attain to the Kingdom of God!*** We are actually in the school of eternal life, learning how to have the fruits of the Spirit, of God's Spirit

- to lead us
- to change
- to grow
- to overcome
- to love one another
- to forgive one another
- to help one another

As I was coming back from seeing Peter last night, here was this poor man standing there right where the cars come to make the left-turn lane, destitute. He had a little cardboard sign. He really looked totally out of it from being destitute. It said, 'I'm a vet. No job. I'm broke. I'm hungry.'

Here everyone is going by. I pulled up, it turned red, so I gave him a good amount of money. And he literally cried, took his sign and said, 'I'm going to get out of here and get something to eat.' You could see that he must have been wounded because he had a limp and he was very thin and gaunt. I hope that none of us get into a situation like that. But if that may be so and living in this world, somebody's got to help them—right? What did Jesus say? 'If you see your brother have need and you shut up your bowels of compassion...' what is God going to do? *Withhold from you!* That really got to me last night.

Here's what we are to do in the Church of God. First of all it talks about that the ministry is to edify the Church. That means every sermon, every teaching, everything is to edify, to build up. You can always carry a club and beat people over the head, but you really don't get very much cooperation that way—do you? *No!* God wants us to be inspired because He has called us; He has given us His Spirit. He wants us to be inspired by the teachings that the elders bring, or whoever is teaching so that the whole body of Christ can grow.

We've got all week to prepare for Sabbath. Then when we come to Sabbath services this becomes the greatest day of the week.

- we all learn more
- we draw closer to each other
- we love each other
- we're concerned for each other

—and that is great! We're also to grow up in things concerning the systematizing of the error and reject that.

Ephesians 4:15: "But holding the Truth in love... [That's the Truth of everything concerning God's way as led by the Spirit of God, as motivated by the Spirit of God, as led by the Word of God.] ...may in ***all*** things... [All things for eternal life, obviously.] ...grow up into Him Who is the Head, *even Christ.*" Isn't that something? We're all to be continually growing, *growing, growing!*

Just like that glass of water you drank. You can't drink it again, but you need one tomorrow, maybe one a little later today. But whatever it is you use each day, you use each thing, you use each situation, you use each difficulty that comes along as an opportunity to solve it God's way. And establish love and establish Truth.

Verse 16: "From Whom all the body, fitly framed and compacted together by *that which* every joint supplies... [God has a purpose for each one of us and we all have an active part in the Church of God, the body of Christ.] ...according to *its* inner working in *the* measure of each individual part, is making the increase of the body unto *the* edifying of itself in love."

Not only are the teachers and things to edify the body of Christ, we are to edify each other. If someone is down, you let them know, 'I'm praying for you.' If they have something they need help with, you can help them. If they need to be encouraged, give them a kind word. Here's what's it's going to do. Here's what God wants. Think about this. It might help you, go through and read the first verses of all the epistles of Paul and he tells you right at the beginning what he wants for you, what God wants for you.

Ephesians 1:1: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by *the* will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and to *the* faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace and peace... [we're an active part of that grace and peace] ...*be* to you from God our Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ" (vs 1-2). God the Father and Jesus Christ are involved in our lives, directly.

- Who begat you with the Holy Spirit? *God the Father!*
- Who is the Head of the Church? *Jesus Christ!*
- Who died for your sins? *Jesus did!*

God is doing a great work in preparing for the Kingdom of God. We've got to see how we fit into this and it is fantastic. So therefore, let's have between us all the time grace and peace because it comes from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice what flows with that, v 3: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the

heavenly *things* with Christ.” How do we affect this in our daily lives?

Ephesians 4:22: “That concerning your former conduct... [that may have been the big mistake you made yesterday] ...you put off the old man... [We are responsible for identifying with the Spirit of God the way of sin within us to change and grow and overcome.] ...which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts.” The more we know, the more we understand, the more slick Satan is with his deceiving. He’s not going to deceive you on the Sabbath, but if he can get you angry—prince of the power of the air—if he can disturb the Church. We’ll talk about other ways that it is disturbed in just a little bit.

Verse 23: “And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” That’s why there’s repentance and renewal and redemption and reconciliation. It says in Psa. 103 that God ‘forgives *all* our iniquities and heals *all* our diseases and puts them as far away from us as the east is from the west.’ Isn’t that what you want? Isn’t that what we all desire? Then likewise, we need to solve our own problems between each other in the same way. Want our sins forgiven, never remembered again? Then if you have difficulties, resolve the problem and forgive one another and love one another. That’s what God wants.

Verse 24: “And that you put on the new man... [This is our participation through love and free choice. This is where prayer and study and daily behavior all come together, right here.] ...which according to God is created in righteousness and Holiness of the Truth” (v 24).

God is creating this in you. When you get old, you get gray and you get weak and you get withered, God loves you and delights in you. God knows you may become forgetful in memory. God knows you may be weak. God knows that you may be hard of hearing. God knows that one day your body is going to shut down. He designed it that way.

This is why we are to love each other. Not judge one another; not condemn one another; not be angry with one another. Now if those things come up, then we know how to solve them.

Here’s how you do it, v 25: “Therefore, let each one put away lies *and* speak the truth with his neighbor because we are members of one another. *When* you become angry, do not sin.... [Try that! Do not sin! That means don’t be bitter, don’t be resentful, don’t have hatred. If you are angry and you need to work it out with a brother or sister, you go do it.] ...Do not let the sun go down on your anger” (vs 25-26). Best advice that could ever be.

I’ve had restless nights, sleepless nights, mulling things over in my mind, reliving things. Women do this a lot with their children. ‘Where are they, what are they doing, how are they doing? If I was just there.’ *You’re not there.* ‘Well, if I could just help them.’ *You’re a long way away.*

Don’t let the sun go down on your problems. Pray about it before you go to bed and leave it with God. Because no worry ever, ever cured a problem. If it’s beyond your ability to do something, pray that God will do something.

Verse 27: “Neither give place to the devil.” Do you suppose that within the Churches of God the devil has had a hayfield? *Yes, he has!* Don’t give place to him. Go be reconciled.

Verse 28: “Let the one who stole, steal no more; rather, let him labor with *his* hands, working *at* what *is* good, so that he may impart *something* to the one who has need. Do not let any corrupt communication come out of your mouth...” (vs 28-29). Take that for a challenge for a whole day. In today’s world look, brethren, we have more to fight against than any other time in the history of the Church of God. We’ve got the world at the apex of its greatest. We have Satan at the apex of his ability to influence through technological means. But we also have the Spirit of God. We also have the Word of God.

“...but that which is good and needful for edification that it may give grace to those who hear. And grieve [vex] not the Holy Spirit of God...” (vs 29-30). The *King James* says *grieve* and I think when we first translated the Bible we have *grieve* in there, but it is *vex* and it means to frustrate. How do you frustrate the Spirit of God? The Spirit of God is trying to lead you into doing the things that God wants—right? And you in carnality are working against it.

Verse 30: “And grieve [vex] not the Holy Spirit of God by which you have been sealed for *the* day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and indignation, and wrath, and clamor, and evil speaking be removed from you, together with all malice” (vs 30-31). I remember coming into Church services there were almost knock-down drag-out fights. That’s not of God.

Here’s what we need to do, 32: “And be kind *and* tenderhearted toward one another, forgiving one another, even as God has also in Christ forgiven you” (v 32).

Then Ephesians 5:1 becomes very important because this tells us how we are to do it. “Therefore, be imitators of God...” Not become narcissistic and a god unto yourself, but let your behavior be patterned

after the commandments of God and the way of God.

“...as beloved children... [God loves every one of us.] ...and walk in love, even as Christ also loved us, and gave Himself for us *as* an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor” (vs 1-2). Then he says, ‘Don’t let any of these sins even exist, in deed or in thought.’ I’ll let you read the rest of Eph. 5.

This is what is needed in the Churches of God in our lives. I need it in mine as well as every one of us—correct? *Yes!* We are all a work in progress being created after the image of Christ. That’s what God is doing within us.

Brethren, if we can, let’s see what we can do in our lives to change, to love one another, to help one another. I don’t know what it’s going to be working with other people from other churches, but this is something that they really need, they really want. But some of them are so—how shall I say—confined by their leaders and unknowingly are treating their leaders more like God than what they should. So they’re kind of trapped in fear because they haven’t known the love and grace of God.

When they come to us, brethren, let’s make sure we can help them. Let’s make sure that they can understand what God wants. *And let’s have from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ grace and peace among us!*

(go to the next track)

Now we need to talk about another aspect of difficulties within the Church. That aspect has to do with teaching doctrines that are not true. We know all the warnings we have in the New Testament church. Those warnings are all valid. Even Paul said of those that he ordained in Ephesus as elders that *those among you will rise up and become grievous wolves and would be causing problems.*

Let’s see how Paul wrote of this to Timothy. These things will happen. We have seen them happen. We have experienced them happening. Even here within this group, within other groups of the Church of God these things have happened and have been happening in some cases for quite a long period of time.

The Apostle Paul was concerned about it because at this point in his ministry he could see what was going to happen. He said, ‘After my leaving you elders in Ephesus these things are going to happen.’ Timothy was in Ephesus so he’s still referring to these problems. These problems upset the brethren; especially if it’s someone you look up to, especially if it is a friend; especially if it is someone who appears to be very kind and good.

1-Timothy 1:1: “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ according to *the* commandment of God our Savior, and of *the* Lord Jesus Christ, *Who is* our hope, To Timothy, *my* true son in *the* faith: Grace, mercy *and* peace from God our Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. When I was going to Macedonia, I exhorted you to remain in Ephesus, in order that you might *solemnly* charge some not to teach other doctrines [teachings]; nor pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which lead to empty speculations rather than to edification from God, which *is* in faith” (vs 1-4). The whole purpose of the commandment that he’s giving here is not to teach other doctrines and also the commandments of God apply as well.

Verse 5: “Now, the purpose of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and genuine faith; from which some, having missed the mark, have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of *the* law, neither understanding what they are saying, nor what they are strongly affirming. Now we know that the law *is* good, if anyone uses it lawfully” (vs 5-8).

What do you do when there is doctrine that is being taught, privately or publicly, within a fellowship group or Church? Is that like a Matt. 18, personal offense one-to-one? *No, it’s not!* If it’s widespread it must be handled especially differently in order to understand what the problem is.

Notice what he said here and how important that it was. This is here for us to learn what to do. How many were sitting in a congregation when you heard, ‘I play a good game of golf on the Sabbath’? How many were sitting in a congregation when they were told it’s okay to eat unclean meats? How many brethren went out immediately after services and went down to the Red Lobster and were gobbling up the shrimp and lobster and things that they were desirous of eating, but couldn’t eat because they were in the Church, and now the ministry said you could? Likewise with Christmas; likewise with Sunday; likewise with all of those things.

I’m talking about how it became widespread. In that case, the only thing you can do is *withdraw yourself* (1-Tim. 6). Let’s see how important this is, this charge that he just gave him concerning charging those not to preach other doctrines.

Verse 18: “This charge I am personally committing to you, *my* son Timothy, in accordance with the prophecies that were made long ago concerning you; in order that by them you yourself might wage a good war.” Those who are to teach the Truth and teach the doctrine *are to guard it against false teachings!*

Verse 19: “Holding to *the* faith and a good conscience. For some, having cast aside *a good*

conscience, have made shipwreck in regard to the faith; Of whom are Hymeneus and Alexander... [They are named. They were causing problems and preserved in the Scriptures so that we understand what we need to do when a problem arises to that magnitude.] ...whom I turned over to Satan in order that they may learn not to blaspheme” (vs 19-20). That’s pretty strong.

2-Timothy 1:11: “Unto which... [the Gospel of Jesus Christ.] ...I was ordained a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of *the* Gentiles; For which cause I am also suffering these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed. For I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He has the power to keep what I have committed to *Him* for that day. Hold *as the standard for doctrine* the sound words that you heard from me, in *the* faith and love that *are* in Christ Jesus. Guard the good thing that was committed to *you* by *the* Holy Spirit that is dwelling in us. You know this, that all those who *are* in Asia have rejected me, of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.... [again, he names those who were causing the problems] ...May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus because he frequently refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains” (vs 11-16).

2-Timothy 2:8: “Remember *that* Jesus Christ, of *the* seed of David, *was* raised from among *the* dead according to my Gospel; For which I am suffering hardship, *even* to the point of being imprisoned like a criminal; but the Word of God has not been chained. Because of this, I endure all things for the sake of the elect in order that they may obtain *the* salvation that *is* in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. This is a faithful saying: If we have died together with *Him*, we shall also live together with *Him*; If we endure, we shall also reign together with *Him*; if we deny *Him*, He will also deny us; if we are unfaithful, He remains faithful—He cannot deny Himself. See that *they* remain mindful of these things, earnestly charging *them* in the sight of the Lord not to argue over words that are not profitable in any way, *but which lead to the* subverting of those who hear” (vs 8-14).

This is what is to be done whenever there are disputes of doctrine. Whenever there are questions, you’ve got to search the Scriptures. Today we can get the answers more than ever before. That doesn’t mean we know everything.

Verse 15: “Diligently *study* to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who does not *need to be* ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of the Truth.”

You can take the Scriptures, even read them, leave out other ones that give interpretations, and create a lie out of something that is not a lie. That’s

what the Protestants do all the time. ‘Oh, we read the Scriptures. We study the Bible.’

- Which part?
- How much?
- Do you believe that every word is God-breathed?

Verse 16: “But avoid profane and vain babblings because they will only give rise to more ungodliness, And their words will eat away at the body like gangrene; of whom are Hymeneus and Philetus” (vs 16-17). He’s named six people altogether. Paul had his hands full. We’ve gone through a time of purging of the Church of that. Now then we have a little resurrection of it.

Verse 18: “Who have gone astray from the truth, claiming that the resurrection has already taken place, and are destroying the faith of some.”

Verse 24: “Now it is obligatory *that* a servant of *the* Lord not be argumentative, but gentle toward all, competent to teach, forbearing, In meekness correcting those who set themselves in opposition; if perhaps God may grant them repentance unto acknowledging of *the* truth, And *that* they may wake up *and escape* from the devil’s snare, who have been taken captive by him to *do* his will” (vs 24-26).

Let’s cover something else here so we know exactly where we are going with this. 2-Timothy 4:1: “I charge you, therefore, in the sight of God, even the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is ready to judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the Word!.... [that means all of it] ...Be urgent in season and out of season; convict, rebuke, encourage, with all patience and doctrine. For there shall come a time when they will not tolerate sound doctrine; but according to their own lusts they shall accumulate to themselves *a great number of* teachers, having ears itching to *hear what satisfies their cravings*; and they shall turn away their own ears from the Truth; and they shall be turned aside unto myths” (vs 3-4).

We’ve seen this in the Christian world. We’ve seen it within the Churches of God!

Scriptural References:

- 1) Galatians 5:15-16
- 2) Matthew 5:22-24
- 3) Mark 11:25-26
- 4) 1-Timothy 6:3-5
- 5) Matthew 18:1-6, 8-10
- 6) Luke 4:18-19
- 7) Matthew 18:14-17
- 8) 1-Timothy 1:1-8, 18-20
- 9) 2-Timothy 1:11-16
- 10) 2-Timothy 2:8-18, 24-26

- 11) 2-Timothy 4:1-4
- 12) Matthew 18:18-19, 21-22
- 13) Philippians 3:3, 5-8, 10, 13-14
- 14) Matthew 18:31-35
- 15) Ephesians 4:15-16
- 16) Ephesians 1:1-3
- 17) Ephesians 4:22-32
- 18) Ephesians 5:1-2

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Romans 2
- Revelation 5
- Matthew 6; 18:11-13
- Luke 4:16-17
- 1-John 5
- Matthew 5
- Philippians 3:10
- Colossians 3
- Psalm 103

Also referenced:

- Sermon Series: *The Washing of the Water by the Word*
- Book: *Lord, What Should I Do?* by Fred R. Coulter

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